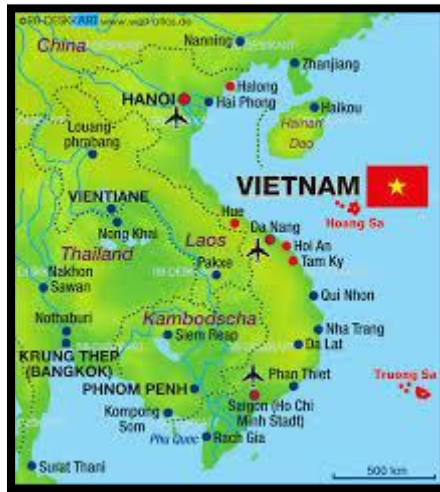


# Vietnamreisen - februar 2014



## Travel Report concerning "Lotuslandet – 18 days cultural tour in Vietnam"

**Tour Guide:** Martin Smedebøl, writer of this report.

**Time:** February 2. – 19. 2014.

**Meeting the group in Kastrup Airport:** 2 persons arrived 40 minutes late due to late arriving train from Jylland. 2 ladies travelling together were booked as double room, but they needed twin beds (should have been noted on the rooming lists).

**Air transportation:** international transportation with Turkish Airlines (Boeing 777), and 2 domestic flights with Vietnam Airlines (Airbus 320). Group reservation always gives some problems with seating. All flights were done according to plan and on time. All luggages arrived on time. OBS: Our flight had an intermediate stop in Bangkok, which surprised the participants – it should have been mentioned in the letter of departure!

**Local transportations in Vietnam:** all buses and drivers were good. Night train from Hanoi to Dong Hoi were OK (a myriad of Vietnamese travelers slept on the floors in the corridors due to Tet). It is not optimal to arrive in Dong Hoi at 4.40 a.m. – a later arrival would be better! The hotel boat in Halong Bay was not big enough for our group – a second boat was needed, and 4 passengers had to climb between the boats, when they went to sleep.

**Hotels in Vietnam:** all hotels were OK, but Asian Ruby 3 in Saigon had not enough capacity for breakfast for 33 pax ++. Medaillion Hotel in Hanoi was charming and good situated. Moonlight Hotel in Hué was very new, good and with a nice restaurant at the top floor. Phu Tinh Hotel in Hoi An was good with a very attentive staff. One couple was upgraded. An oasis Resort in Long Hai was very good with high standard service – they made a very nice farewell dinner for us, and they also contributed substantially to the birthday celebration for one of our guests. But there is a lot of stairs in the area. All hotels had WiFi. \$ can be changed to Dongs in hotel receptions.

**Restaurants:** generally the restaurants were good and with some variations in the menus. But after a week all the meals looked more or less alike. Elephant Ear Fish in Can Tho was a positive experience.

**Local guides:** all the 3 local guides in HCMC, Hanoi/Halong and Dong Hoi/Hué/Hoi An were good and professional with longstanding routine. HCMC: Mr. Dzung (Nick), Hanoi: Mr. Phuong and Hué/Hoi An: Mr. Nguyen Thanh Do (Jo).

**Sightseeing:** we completed the sightseeing according to the planned program. In addition we visited Paradise Cave in Dong Hoi (very impressive – and electrical cars were also included for our guests). On the tour we also had the opportunity to experience many Vietnamese holidays: Tet Festival, Full Moon Festival in Hoi An, Valentine's Day, and the 84 years birthday of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Optionally we took a drink in the well-known rooftop bar in Rex Hotel in Saigon (21 participated). We visited the War Museum in HCMC and not in Hanoi. We did not go inside the HO Chi Minh Mausoleum. Due to heavy fog we passed the tunnel under the Hai Van Pass.

**The Participants in the tour:** 32 participants – all had lots of previous travel experiences –I one had been in Vietnam 3 times before. Through the tour I noticed a good atmosphere among the participants with no tendencies to subgroup formation or isolation of individuals. There was a very high degree of precision regarding meeting times. One participant became ill (bronchitis/pneumonia) and was treated with penicillin – he could follow the group all the time except one days sightseeing in Hanoi. One participant hit his head on the television in the bus, but otherwise we experienced no accidents or diseases – no episodes of stomach problems. One participant celebrated birthday and she and her husband were photographed as empress and emperor in Tu Ducs mausoleum in Hué.

**The weather:** the weather was OK, but not 100 % perfect – sometimes a little rain, no sun in Halong Bay, and heavy winds in Hoi An. But in Long Hai we were blessed by some beautifully sunny days with temperatures over 30°.

**General impression of the tour:** The tour is well-designed and gives the opportunity to experience a lot of Vietnam's geography, nature, highlights, etc. The Local Agent – Discovery East – did a very good job in my opinion. The participants were generally happy and satisfied and no one expressed complaints except they would have appreciated information on the intermediate stop in Bangkok and some unhappiness with the breakfast restaurant in Asian Ruby Hotel in Saigon.



**Pakkeliste:** Pas – visum – penge (dollars, dong) – kreditkort - flybillet  
Pengekat – mobiltelefon + lader – fotokopi af pas - pasfotos  
2 par sko (plasticsko), sokker, undertøj, 2 par bukser, shorts, poloshirts, skjorte, paraply? Baseballkasket, badebukser  
IPad  
CPAP-apparat, adapter, reservebriller, tandtråd  
Toiletsager, pincet, el-tandbørste med lader, vatpinde  
Karins kamera + lader  
Guidebøger, notesbog, kuglepen, dansk flag, lommelygte  
Medicin: sprays, sovepiller, smertestillende, plaster  
Rejsesygeforsikringskort, grønne first aid kit  
Nødtelefonnumre til forsikringer, banker, etc.  
Desinficerende servietter, papirlommetørklæder, plasticposer, schweizerkniv, lån en ny guidebog på biblioteket, gul overstregningspen

**Underholdning:** CD'er, DVD'er, tryllekunstner, vittigheder  
Sange til evt. underholdning– "Se hvilken morgenstund", "My Way", 2 danske bordflag til evt. fødselsdage, sølvbryllup el. lign. (Check efter)  
Lave nogle quiz om Vietnam, seddel med vietnamesiske ord  
Informere om [www.smedebol.dk](http://www.smedebol.dk)

**(3 kinesiske arbejdere):** 3 arbejdere blev arresteret på en kinesisk fabrik. Den ene kom 10 min. for sent; han blev anholdt for sabotage. Den anden kom 10 min. for tidligt; han blev anholdt for spionage. Den tredje kom til tiden; han blev anholdt for sortbørshandel - han måtte jo have et udenlandsk ur...

Hvad kalder man kinesiske rockere? Gulerødder! ....Hvad hedder Jehovas Vidner på kinesisk? - Ding-dong!

På en international lægekongres i Schweiz sad tre deltagere fra Kina, England og Danmark en aften og hyggede sig. - Hos os, pralede kineseren, var der en mand, der var så uheldig at få hovedet hugget af. Men vi fik det syet på igen, og nu er han landets førende EDB-ekspert. - Hos os, sagde englænderen, var en mand så uheldig at miste begge ben. Men vi fik dem sat på igen, og nu er han verdens bedste marathonløber. - Ha, grinede danskeren. Det er da slet ikke noget at prale over. Næh, i Danmark fandt man et røvhul, og det satte man ører og det hele på, og nu er han statsminister!

Statsministeren gik til lægen pga. skrubtudse i panden – det begyndte som en byld i røven.

Lægekongres – man drømte om hustruernes lange ben og smalle midjer – det er fordi jeg har så kort arbejdstid.

To advokater er på cafe. De bestiller to glas cola, sætter sig ved et bord og tager hver især deres medbragte madpakker op af tasken. Tjeneren ser dette og skynder sig hen til dem: - I må altså ikke spise jeres egen mad herinde. Advokaterne kigger et kort øjeblik på hinanden og bytter derefter madpakke.

Engelsk: god mad – her vil jeg ikke bo..... masochister – pain i Frankrig  
thai: democracy – free erections every 4th year  
fransk: udtale høst.... pere, mere, fils.... madame mitterand og happiness  
brev fra italiensk ung mand til London YMCA

hvorfor måtte Kina ikke deltage i wm i fodbold – åbner grillbar hver gang de får et hjørne

**Personhistorier:** Prins Henrik, Ho Chi Minh, Giap,

**Vigtige råd:** ikke drikke vand fra hanen, passe på sine ting, husk at drikke vand i varmen, lær nogle vietnamesiske ord, meddel hvis du forlader gruppen, vietnamesisk etikette, ikke efterlade penge og værdier i bussen, brug pengekat under tøj, pas på kopivarer (tolden), brug safety boks i hotellet, undgå tasker i Ho Chi Minh's mausolæum, skal vi udveksle mobilnumre? Skal vi have et vietnamesisk SIM-kort – medbring ekstra telefon? Hav gerne 2 kopier af passet med og evt. 2 pasbilleder.

**Guidearbejde:** Vietnams historie  
De enkelte lokaliteter  
Religion i Vietnam – pengesedler – kalender –  
Mad og drikke i Vietnam  
Livsforhold i Vietnam, takt og tone  
Traditional vietnamesisk medicin og Sundhedsforhold i Vietnam – mit skrift  
Vietnams økonomi og politik  
Shopping i Vietnam  
Litteratur og film om Vietnam  
Minoritetsfolk – Opium  
Vietnams jernbaner og Slangebid

**Andet:**  
kunsten at bedøve en elefant  
minder fra ture med SOS International, cruiserejser, nytårsrejser, mc-rejser  
erfaringer med krydstogter  
partikelfysik, astronomi, Indiens rumprogram

**Øvrigt:** pas på lommetyve, arbejder som sourvenirsælgere (ofte i par), snyder ved veksling, vendt med shopping til senere, bagage i bussen (- penge og værdier), penge og værdier i pengekat under tøj, rygsæk bæres foran

Ingen tasker, mobiltelefoner, etc. ved sightseeingsteder. Brug hotellets safe. Afgifter for kamera og video.

Hav kopi af pas og visum i kufferten.

Lås bagagen fast i toget.

Drik kun vand fra flaske – drik meget og jævnlige – hav flasken ved hånden – hold god håndhygiejne – medbring papirservietter

Hvilken kinesiske minister går sulten i seng? Udenrigsministeren!

Visum: formular? 2 pasfotos! Afgift ved ankomsten?

Afgift ved ind- og udrejse?

Tet: er alt bestilt?

Tog: hvilken type togkupé?

Myggespray vigtig

1 \$ = 21.073 Dong 10 D.Kr. = 38.652 Dong

Penge med? Tips: Guide: Chauffør: Bellboys: Bådpersonale:

Penge med til min mad?

## Velkommen og Gode råd:

1. Velkommen til Vietnam og præsentation'
2. Har alle stillet uret til den korrekte vietnamesiske tid?
3. Spise og drikke: drik kun vand fra flaske, brug også dette til tandbørstning, undgå rødt kød, forsigtig med isterninger, salat, etc.
4. På hotelværelset findes måske vandflasker mærket "complimentary" – så er de gratis
5. Varer i minibaren skal der betales for
6. Hav omhyggelig håndhygiejne, vask hænder, brug desinfektionsservietter
7. Vær beredt på alternativ toiletstandard, medbring papir og desinfektionsservietter, nogle steder må man ikke skylle papir ud, men det skal i en spand
8. Brug hotellets safebox, gå ikke rundt med for store værdier, pas, smykker, etc., - bær rygsæk på maven for at undgå tyveri, brug pengekat under tøjet
9. Undgå om muligt at slæbe rundt på for meget, når vi er på sightseeing
10. Vær forberedt på at betaling opkræves ved fotografering af vigtigste turistseværdigheder, forskellig takst for fotoapparat og videoapparat
11. Sko skal af, når vi besøger templer og moskeer
12. Man skal være tækkelig klædt, når man besøger templer og moskeer
13. Vær meget forsigtig, når I færdes i trafikken – løb aldrig
14. Slæb om muligt selv kufferterne op til værelset – så får man dem hurtigst. Undertiden kan det være svært at undgå at bruge hotellets piccolo, og så må man give dem drikkepenge f.eks. 1-2 dollar. Ofte er der mange piccoloer (svært at få job), og alle forsøger at tjene til at overleve
15. Alle bliver vækket i morgen tidlig – hvornår?
16. Kom ikke for sent – sig til, hvis I ikke vil med i nogle af programpunkterne (ærgeligt at andre skal vente)
17. Medbring gerne hotellets adresse, så I altid kan finde hjem
18. Veksle penge – 38.000 don er ca. 10 kr.
19. Mit værelsesnummer kan man få oplyst i hotelreceptionen ved behov
20. Vi har ikke faste pladser i bussen – sørg for at flytte rundt
21. Kig gerne efter hinanden og hjælp hinanden – og lær hinanden at kende
22. Mødetid i receptionen næste morgen aftales daglig
23. Hvor mange har været i Fjernøsten tidligere?
24. Hvem føler sig usikre i det engelske sprog?
25. Er der nogle spørgsmål?
26. Alt vigtigt og alle guideinformationer vil blive gentaget flere gange, så man skal ikke være ked af det, hvis man ikke hørte alt første gang
27. Nogle gange er jeg nødt til at tælle om alle er med – det er svært, hvis alle bevæger sig samtidig – stå venligst stille den korte stund
28. Og lige et ord om mobiltelefonering – det kan blive dyrt at være indkoblet på internettet konstant, men denne funktion kan vist slås fra på smartphones
29. Hvor bor nationalguiden og hans mobilnummer
30. Mit mobilnummer kan udleveres til nødsituation

Rejsevejledningen for Vietnam er senest opdateret den 20. december 2013. Det overordnede sikkerhedsniveau er ikke ændret.

**Resumé:** Der er ingen særlige sikkerhedsrisici i Vietnam, og trafikken udgør den største trussel for rejsende til landet. Vietnam har tropisk monsunklima med store variationer fra nord til syd. Der er tropiske storme og tyfoner, ligesom voldsomme regnskyl forekommer med efterfølgende oversvømmelser og jordskred i regntiden.

**Sikkerhed og terrorisiko:** Risikoen for terror i Vietnam vurderes at være minimal. Langt de fleste rejsende har et problemfrit ophold i landet, dog skal man som rejsende være opmærksom på, at sikkerhedsstandarder i Vietnam kan være meget anderledes end i Europa, og at man som rejsende ofte selv er ansvarlig for egen sikkerhed (se også nedenfor under Transport).

**Kriminalitet:** Kriminalitetsrisikoen i Vietnam er generelt ikke høj. Man bør udvise forsigtighed i forhold til tasketyverier og trick-tyverier. Dette gælder også i forbindelse med aften- og natkørsel med cykel- og motorcykeltaxi. Et eksempel på nyere svindel er, at den rejsende gennem et tilsyneladende tilfældigt, venligt møde på gaden inviteres med hjem for at deltage i, hvad viser sig at være hasardspil om rigtigt mange penge. Med den rejsende som den store taber i sidste instans efter at have følt sig både truet og presset af medspillerne.

**Transport:** En væsentlig risikofaktor i Vietnam er trafikken, som er kaotisk og kan synes helt uden regler og system. Vietnam har et af de højeste antal dødsfald i trafikken pr. indbygger i verden, og rejsende bør derfor udvise særlig forsigtighed. Mange trafikuheld involverer motorcyklister. Når man som fodgænger krydser gaden, bør man gå i jævnt tempo og undgå bratte opbremsninger eller løb.

Man bør altid kontrollere standarden på køretøjer, sikkerheden på hoteller og guest houses, især flugtruter ved brand. Hertil kommer sikkerheden ved arrangerede udflugter med turistbureauer eller med turbåde langs Vietnams kyster. Der har været flere alvorlige ulykker i kystområderne med turistbåde involverede, for eksempel i Halong Bay, som er et meget populært rejsemål i det nordøstlige Vietnam. Man bør sikre sig gennem sin rejseleder eller -arrangør, at den pågældende båd opfylder de nødvendige sikkerhedskrav, inden man påbegynder turen.

Al kørsel om natten uden for storbyerne bør undgås, men hvis man alligevel vælger at køre, bør der udvises særlig forsigtighed. Især uden for byerne er vejene i dårlig stand og en medvirkende årsag til trafikulykker. Vejenes belysning er mangelfuld, og skiltningen er minimal. Mange køretøjer kører uden lys.

Danske og internationale kørekort er ikke gyldige i Vietnam. Såfremt man fører bil eller motorcykel uden vietnamesiske kørekort, risikeres bøder og/eller fængsling. Læs mere om erhvervelse af vietnamesisk kørekort på ambassadens hjemmeside (på engelsk). Man bør altid tegne en egen ansvarsforsikring ved benyttelse af motorkøretøjer.

Den lange regntid fra maj til november, og de hyppige tyfoner, som rammer Vietnam, forårsager jordskred og oversvømmelser på togskinner og veje, hvilket kan resultere i forstyrrelser i både tog- og vejtrafikken. Også flytrafikken kan være berørt.

**Andre risikoforhold:** Vietnam har tropisk monsunklima med store klimaforskelle mellem nord og syd. Vietnams regntid strækker sig fra maj til november, hvor vandstanden i floderne stiger, og store oversvømmelser forekommer. Vietnams kyststrækninger bliver i samme periode ramt af mange og kraftfulde storme og tyfoner. Stormene kulminerer normalt i perioden fra september til november, hvor især den centrale del af Vietnam rammes hårdt. Stormene og tyfonerne kan medføre oversvømmelser og jordskred.

Rejsende, som opholder sig i Vietnam i regntiden, bør holde sig orienteret om vejrforholdene og planlægge deres rejseaktiviteter derefter. Rejsende, som opholder sig i eller er på vej til områder, der er ramt af tunge regnskyl eller tropisk stormvejr, opfordres til at udvise forsigtighed, at holde sig opdaterede om udviklingen i området via nyhedsmedier og følge de lokale myndigheders anvisninger.

Rejsende skal være opmærksomme på, at enhver form for besiddelse af narkotika straffes hårdt og kan medføre dødsstraf. Rejsende må ikke opholde sig nær militære områder og i visse grænseområder. Der skal udvises forsigtighed i områder, hvor krigshandlinger tidligere har fundet sted, hvor der ofte er en stor koncentration af landminer og ueksploderet ammunition. Rejsende bør udvise høflig og respektfuld adfærd over for myndighedspersoner.

**Særlige indrejseforhold:** Danmark bistår danske statsborgere og andre personer med fast ophold i Danmark. Personer med dobbelt statsborgerskab kan dog normalt ikke ifølge folkerettens regler påkalde sig Danmarks beskyttelse over for Vietnam, hvis Vietnam modsætter sig det. Personer af vietnamesisk oprindelse, der agter at rejse til Vietnam, bør på forhånd nøje overveje, hvorvidt der måtte være forhold i relation til de vietnamesiske myndigheder, som f.eks. ikke afsonede straffedomme, aftjening af værnepligt eller stempler i pas, der tilsiger, at rejsen ikke bør finde sted, eller at særlig forsigtighed bør udvises.

Når man indrejser i Vietnam, får man et stempel i passet, som angiver udrejsedatoen. Denne dato afhænger af, om man indrejser med visumfrihed (max. 15 dage), eller om man indrejser med et visum (visummets udløbsdato). Det hænder, at 1) det udstedte visum ikke er i overensstemmelse med det tidsrum eller det antal dage, der er søgt om, 2) at lufthavnspolitiet stempler en forkert udrejsedato. Det anbefales derfor, at visum og stempler tjekkes nøje og bliver rettet i tide. Selv om det er de vietnamesiske myndigheder, der har begået fejlen, vil der i givet fald skulle søges om nyt visum hos Immigration Department efter ankomsten, og det tager tid og koster penge.

I Vietnam skal man aflevere sit pas, når man tjekker ind på et hotel, for at hotellet kan registrere gæster hos det lokale politi. Det tilrådes, at man altid bærer en kopi af sit pas på sig.

De mest gængse kreditkort accepteres i de fleste større byer på hoteller og restauranter. Alt efter rejserute kan man medbringe valuta i relevant omfang. Der findes også pengeautomater i de større byer.

**Rejsesygeforsikring:** Danskere i Vietnam er ikke dækket af det gule sygesikringsbevis, ligesom det blå EU-sygesikringsbevis heller ikke dækker. Alle danskere, der rejser til eller opholder sig i Vietnam opfordres derfor til at tegne en privat rejsesygeforsikring.

**Sundhedsforhold:** Information om sundheds- og sygdomsforhold kan findes på hjemmesiderne for Statens Serum Institut (SSI) eller Sundhedsstyrelsen (SST). SSI rådgiver ikke private borgere, men personlig henvendelse kan ske til egen praktiserende læge, vaccinationsklinikker samt SST.

**Registrér dig på Danskerlisten:** Danskere, der rejser til eller opholder sig i Vietnam, opfordres uanset opholdets varighed til at registrere sig på Danskerlisten, som er Udenrigsministeriets tilbud til danskere, der opholder sig i udlandet med henblik på kontakt i tilfælde af krisesituationer

## De vigtigste officielle begivenheder gennem de sidste 40 år - et overblik

- 1971:** Vietnam og Danmark etablerer diplomatiske forbindelser den 25. november. I de følgende år bevilger Danida de første statslån til bl.a. genopbygning efter krigsødelæggelser og til flere større industriprojekter i nord og syd.
- 1980:** Den danske ambassade åbner i Hanoi, ledet af en chargé d'Affaires.
- 1983:** Ambassaden lukker, Danmark og de fleste øvrige vestlige lande reducerer kontakten til et minimum grundet Vietnams invasion i Cambodia i 1978.
- 1991:** Bistandssamarbejdet genoptages i begrænset omfang med reservedels-leverancer til tidligere dansk finansierede projekter.
- 1992:** Den første danske erhvervsdelegation besøger Vietnam.
- 1993:** Folketingets Finansudvalg besøger Vietnam.
- 1994:** Den danske ambassade genåbner i Hanoi under ledelse af ambassadør Niels Julius Lassen. Vietnam udpeges til programsamarbejdsland for Danida. Udviklingsminister Helle Degn besøger Vietnam. Erhvervsfremstødet 'Danske Dage' holdes i Hanoi og Ho Chi Minh Byen. Fiskeriminister Ta Quang Ngoc besøger Danmark.
- 1995:** Danmark og Vietnam indgår dobbeltbeskatningsaftale. Premierminister Vo Van Kiet besøger Danmark. Udviklingsminister Poul Nielson besøger Vietnam.
- 1996:** Skatteminister Carsten Koch besøger Vietnam.
- 1997:** Fiskeriminister Ta Quang Ngoc besøger Danmark.
- 1998:** Ambassadør Ove Ullerup afløser Niels Julius Lassen. Udenrigsminister Niels Helveg Petersen besøger Vietnam.
- 1999:** Hans Kongelige Højhed Prinsgemalen, der er vokset op i Hanoi, besøger Vietnam for første gang siden sin ungdom. Udviklingsminister Jan Trøjborg besøger Vietnam.
- 2000:** Vietnam åbner ambassade i København. Vice-justitsminister Uong Chu Luu besøger Danmark.
- 2001:** Planlægnings- og Investeringsminister Tran Xuan Gia besøger Danmark. Ambassadør Bjarne H. Sørensen afløser Ove Ullerup.
- 2002:** Premierminister Phan Van Khai, udenrigsminister Nguyen Duy Nien og handelsminister Truong Dinh Tuyen besøger Danmark i forbindelse med ASEM IV topmødet i København.
- 2003:** Hans Kongelige Højhed Prinsgemalen besøger Vietnam med en stor erhvervsdelegation. Folketingets Udenrigsudvalg besøger Vietnam. Indenrigsminister Do Quang Trung og miljøminister Mai Ai Truc besøger Danmark.
- 2004:** Ambassadør Peter Lysholt Hansen afløser Bjarne H. Sørensen. Udenrigsminister Per Stig Møller besøger Vietnam i forbindelse med ASEM V topmødet i Hanoi. Folketingets Arbejdsmarkedsudvalg besøger Vietnam. Vicepremierminister Vu Khoan besøger Danmark.
- 2005:** En stor erhvervsdelegation besøger Vietnam. Udviklingsminister Ulla Tørnæs besøger Vietnam.
- 2006:** HKH Prins Joachim besøger Vietnam og Cambodia i sin egenskab af protektor for ulandsorganisationen Care Danmark.
- 2007:** Udviklingsminister Ulla Tørnæs besøger Vietnam og leder sammen med Vietnams landbrugsminister Phat mødet i Mekong River Commission. Udenrigsministeriets direktør, Ulrik Federspiel, besøger Vietnam. I forbindelse med de politiske konsultationer oprettes Joint Governmental Committee vedr. handel, investeringer og teknologisk samarbejde. Det første møde i komitéen afholdes i København.
- 2008:** Vicepremierminister Nguyen Sinh Hung besøger Danmark den 9.-11. juni og mødes med værten vicedstatsminister Bendt Bendtsen, H.M. Dronningen, udviklingsminister Ulla Tørnæs, klima- og energiminister Connie Hedegaard samt deltager i en større DI-konference.
- 2009:** Udviklingsminister Ulla Tørnæs besøger Vietnam den 18.-21. januar og drøfter bl.a. One UN samt deltager i en regional klimakonference.
- 2009:** Beskæftigelsesminister Claus Hjort Frederiksen besøger 2.-4. marts Vietnam sammen med lederne fra LO og DA for bl.a. at deltage i et trepartsseminar og drøfte arbejdsmarkedspolitik.
- 2009:** Undervisningsminister Bertel Haarder besøger 13.-16. maj Vietnam for bl.a. at deltage i ASEM's 2. ministermøde om uddannelse.
- 2009:** Premierminister Nguyen Tan Dung besøger 16.-17. september Danmark med en stor erhvervsdelegation. Premierministeren mødes med statsministeren, udenrigsministeren, udviklingsministeren, undervisningsministeren, miljøministeren, H.M. Dronningen, FT's formand samt flere danske virksomheder og deltager i erhvervskonference i DI.

**2009:** Statsbesøg den 1.-9. november i Vietnam af H.M.Dronningen, H.K.H. Prinsgemalen, H.K.H. Kronprinsen og H.K.H. Kronprinsessen ledsaget af kulturminister Carina Christensen og miljøminister Troels Lund Poulsen. Den kongelige familie mødtes bl.a. med Præsident Nguyen Minh Triet, Premierminister Nguyen Tan Dung og Generalsekretær Nong Duc Manh. Samtidig deltog en stor erhvervsdelegation med 68 danske virksomheder og en kulturdelegation.

**2010:** Ambassadør John Nielsen afløser Peter Lysholt Hansen.

**2011:** Den danske undervisningsminister Troels Lund Poulsen besøger Vietnam den 30. juni 2011 for at diskutere samarbejdsmuligheder imellem Danmark og Vietnam på uddannelsesområdet.

**2011:** H.K.H. Kronprinsen, ledsaget af handels- og investeringsminister Pia Olsen Dyhr, besøger Vietnam den 27. november til den 2. december for at fejre 40-året for etablering af diplomatiske relationer mellem Danmark og Vietnam. Samtidig deltog en erhvervsdelegation med 40 virksomheder og en uddannelsesdelegation med 11 institutioner. Kronprinsen mødtes bl.a. med Præsident Troung Tan Sang, Vice-Præsident Nguyen Thi Doan, Premierminister Nguyen Tan Dung og Udenrigsminister Pham Binh Min. Han bevidnede i denne forbindelse handels- og investeringsministeren og den vietnamesiske udenrigsministers underskrivelse af en fælles erklæring der etablerede et Strategisk Partnerskab mellem Danmark og Vietnam inden for klimaforandringer, miljø, energi og grøn vækst.

**2012:** Statsminister Helle Thorning-Schmidt besøger Vietnam den 7. og 8. november. Formålet med besøget er at støtte op om danske virksomheders muligheder på det hastigt voksende vietnamesiske marked. Statsministeren lancerer under besøget Regeringens Vækstmarkedsstrategi for Vietnam, der skal styrke danske virksomheders eksportmuligheder på det vietnamesiske marked. Statsministeren besøger en dansk virksomhed og mødes med danske erhvervsrepræsentanter. Under besøget i Vietnam mødes statsministeren endvidere med Vietnams præsident, premierminister og partisekretær.

**2013:** Udenrigsminister Villy Søvndal og Handels- og Investeringsminister Pia Olsen Dyhr besøger Vietnam. Under sit besøg diskuterer udenrigsminister Villy Søvndal et styrket bilateralt og regionalt samarbejde på en lang række områder. Vietnam står overfor en omstilling af sin økonomi, hvor der skal mere fokus på grøn vækst. Danmark har relevante erfaringer og en erhvervssektor med nøglekompetencer, der matcher Vietnams behov.

## Vietnam - et overblik

Her kan du læse kort om Vietnams geografi, økonomi, regering, politiske og økonomiske situation og om Danmarks udviklingssamarbejde med Vietnam.

Hovedstad Hanoi: 6,5 millioner indbyggere (2009)

Areal: 331.114 km<sup>2</sup> (Danmark 43.000 km<sup>2</sup>)

Indbyggertal: 86,9 millioner (2010)

Befolkning: Viet (kinh) 86 pct. samt 53 etniske befolkningsgrupper

Sprog: Vietnamesisk (officielt sprog)

Religion: Buddhisme og traditionelle religioner samt i mindre grad katolicisme og protestantisme

BNP pr. capita: USD 1.160 (2010)

Årlig Vækst i BNP: 5.9 % (2011)

Inflation: 18.6 % (2011)

Valuta: Dong

Udenlandsk bistand per capita: 40 USD (2010)

Dansk bistand: 384 mio. kr. (2010)

Statsoverhoved: Præsident Truong Tan Sang

Regering: Består af medlemmer af Det Kommunistiske Parti i Vietnam

Regeringsleder: Premierminister Nguyen Tan Dung

Udenrigsminister: Pham Binh Minh

Parlamentets sammensætning: 458 medlemmer fra Vietnams Fædrelands Front, 42 parti uafhængige medlemmer

Styreform: Kommunistisk ét-partis system

## Indenrigspolitiske situation

På Kommunistpartiets kongres i januar 2011 blev linjerne for den kommende 10-årsplan udstukket. Ved samme lejlighed valgtes Vietnams nye ledere frem til 2015. Den store opmærksomhed var rettet mod valget til de fire vigtigste poster i landet; Generalsekretæren for Kommunistpartiet, Premierministeren, Formanden for Parlamentet og Præsidentembedet. Traditionen tro blev de fire poster fordelt med to til nord og to til syd.

Forud for kongressen udspandt der sig en voldsom intern magtkamp om den økonomisk vigtige og prestigefyldte post som Premierminister. Trung Tan San, nr. 2 i partiet, udfordrede den siddende Premierminister Nguyen Tan Dung. Dette foregik blandt andet ved, at han brugte Dungs involvering i den største virksomhedsskandale i Vietnams historie imod ham. Dungs gode relationer til militæret og sikkerhedsstyrkerne, samt støtter i det private erhvervsliv, bar ham imidlertid igennem krisen.

Dung fremstår i dag i stigende grad som Vietnams "stærke mand" og, er alt andet lige, den mest fremsynede og reformvenlige af gruppen af topledere. Hans valg af vicepremierministre, alle nære allierede, og det nye kabinet peger på, at Dung i højere grad end tidligere har haft frihed til at vælge sit eget "hold". 2/3 af ministrene er nye. De fleste har erfaringer fra tidligere ministerposter eller som viceministre under Dung – og flere er internationalt orienteret. Der signaleres på en gang kontinuitet i forhold til den tidligere politik, men også øget åbenhed over for omverdenen.

Vietnam har igennem de seneste årtier skabt sociale og økonomiske forbedringer for den brede befolkning i et bemærkelsesværdigt omfang. Selv i de mest afsidesliggende dele af landet – hvor fattigdommen fortsat er udbredt – har befolkningen fået del i væksten, bedre jobmuligheder og adgang til uddannelse og sundhed. Derimod har udviklingen indenfor de civile og politiske rettigheder ikke fulgt med. Snarere tværtimod. Det seneste år er journalister, advokater og internetbrugere, som har givet udtryk for ønsker om større politisk frihed og demokrati, blevet fængslet eller sat i husarrest. Flere har fået lange fængselsdomme. Der er blevet slået hårdt ned på fredelige markeringer eller aktiviteter, som har stillet spørgsmålstegn ved ét-partistaten eller regeringens håndtering af sensitive spørgsmål, bl.a. relationen til Kina.

## Økonomisk situation

Vietnams økonomiske fornyelsespolitik, Doi Moi, der blev iværksat i 1986, har været drivkraften bag de imponerende økonomiske resultater. Siden starten af 1990'erne er landets økonomi mange gange blevet fordoblet med årlige vækstrater på 6-8 pct. Vietnam er samtidig et af de lande, der mest effektivt har reduceret den absolutte fattigdom - fra 58 pct. i 1993 til under 10 pct. i dag.

På den økonomiske front kæmper den vietnamesiske regering med en række makroøkonomiske ubalancer. Inflationen nåede i 2011 op på 18 pct., den højeste i Asien og 3-4 gange højere end lande som Thailand, Kina og Indonesien. Det skaber pres på lønningerne og svækker en af Vietnams



store komparative fordele, de lave lønomkostninger. Den stærke fokus på vækst har bidraget til inflationen og har lagt pres på den vietnamesiske Dong. Der er et stigende pres fra såvel udenlandske, som vietnamesiske investorer, men også fra brede befolkningsgrupper, for at få inflationen bragt under kontrol.

Den vietnamesiske økonomis store hovedpine er de statsejede virksomheder. Privatiseringsprocessen kører i tomgang. Virksomhederne er ineffektivt ledet, mange er tabsgivende og nyder samtidig godt af subsidier og en række særrettigheder og privilegier. Dung har gjort det klart, at han ønsker at styrke markedsøkonomien yderligere og har en hård kurs i forhold til de offentlige virksomheder. De skal "på skrump", privatiseres eller lukkes, er det markante budskab.

Regeringen har i løbet af 2011 forsøgt at gå på to ben og balancere hensynet til økonomisk vækst med bekæmpelse af inflationen. Det overordnede politiske hensyn i den økonomiske politik er stadig at skabe 1,6 mio. nye arbejdspladser om året. Det er forudsætningen for den sociale stabilitet, som regeringen vægter højt. Premierminister Dung har de seneste måneder taget tiltag til at stramme bankernes kreditudlåning og forberede privatisering af de offentlige virksomheder. Det er endnu for tidligt at sige hvor vidt dette fører.

Vietnams økonomiske fremtidsudsigter er gode, og landet har et enormt vækstpotentiale. Den økonomiske vækst var på knap 6 pct. i 2011, vækstprognoser peger på en årlig vækst på mellem 6 og 8 pct. de kommende 5 år. Samtidig er Vietnam et land i hastig social forandring. Købekraften vokser og en middelklasse vokser frem, især i byerne. En middelklasse, der i stigende grad efterspørger udenlandske forbrugsvarer, og som i de kommende år vil gøre Vietnam attraktiv som et marked og ikke kun som outsourcing nation. Udenlandske, herunder danske, virksomheder skal ind på det vietnamesiske marked nu for at få andele i denne vækst og placere sig rigtigt i forhold til den fremtidige konkurrence.

## Udenrigspolitiske situation

Premierminister Dung er stærk fortalende for at Vietnam fortsætter at arbejde målrettet på at indtage en mere forpligtende og markant udenrigspolitisk rolle såvel regionalt som internationalt. En partner, der i stigende grad tager sit internationale ansvar alvorligt – om end fortsat en defensiv aktør på menneskerettighedsområdet.

Gennem WTO-optagelsen i 2007, medlemskabet af FN's sikkerhedsråd i 2008-9, det meget aktive ASEAN-formandskab i 2010 og nu ønsket om (ASEAN-støttet) medlemskab i FN's Menneskerettighedsråd fra 2013-16 viser, at Vietnam er blevet og opfatter sig som en vigtig regional aktør. Samtidig giver det også nye muligheder for at stille den vietnamesiske regering til ansvar på menneskerettighedsområdet. Hej Michelle,

Det internationale engagement er også kommet til udtryk gennem indgåelse af forskellige partnerskabsaftaler med Rusland, USA, Japan, Indien, Tyskland, EU mv. Ikke mindst har kurtiseringen af USA og indgåelsen af en række økonomiske, politiske og militære aftaler, besøg af flådefartøjer og drøftelser om atomkraft vakt opsigt.

Grundlæggende er Vietnams udenrigspolitik styret af ønsket om at afbalancere forholdet til Kina. Vietnam satser i stigende grad på balance i relationerne til omverdenen samtidig med, at de indenrigspolitiske mål om høj økonomisk vækst og social stabilitet fastholdes.

Vietnam ønsker, ligesom bl.a. Indonesien, at styrke ASEAN som primær drivkraft for udviklingen af den regionale arkitektur og tydeliggøre regionens udenrigspolitiske relevans ved at styrke eksterne samarbejder som ASEAN+1 (Kina), ASEAN+3 (Kina, Japan, Sydkorea), East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) og forsvarsministersamarbejdet ADMM+.

**Kina** er Vietnams største samhandelspartner, og de økonomiske bånd er blevet stadig udbygget de senere år. Der er tætte bånd mellem de to kommunistpartier, men der er samtidig en række uoverensstemmelser, bl.a. i forhold til territorialstridighederne i det Sydkinesiske Hav.

**EU** er Vietnams næststørste eksportmarked efter USA, og EU-landene udgør samlet den største investeringspartner i Vietnam. Vietnam er generelt interesseret i at udvide samarbejdet med EU som et led i en mere balanceret udenrigspolitisk kontakthorisont, men har samtidig heller ikke lagt skjul på, at relationerne til USA og Rusland har større prioritet. I oktober 2010 underskrev Vietnams premierminister Dung og EU Kommissionsformand Barroso en Partnerskabs- og Samarbejdsaftale (PCA) mellem EU og Vietnam. PCA'en udgør den overordnede ramme for det bilaterale forhold mellem EU og Vietnam, men er endnu ikke tiltrådt af alle medlemslande. Drøftelser om en fremtidig fri-handelsaftale (FTA) mellem EU og Vietnam finder sted.

## Udviklingssamarbejde med Danmark

Siden Vietnam blev partnerland for dansk udviklingsbistand i 1994, har Vietnam været en af de største aftagere af dansk udviklingsbistand. Størsteparten af bistanden er blevet anvendt til fattigdomsorienterede indsatser inden for fiskeri, vand, sanitet, landbrug, miljø samt til god regeringsførelse, herunder til økonomiske, administrative og juridiske reformer samt anti-korruptionsindsatser.

Udviklingsbistanden til Vietnam vil frem mod 2015 være fokuseret på:

1. Grøn vækst og imødegåelse af klimaforandringer og sikring af social ansvarlig og grøn vækst: Støtte til Vietnams nationale programmer for klimaforandringer og energieffektivitet, støtte til forskning inden for erhvervsøkonomi og klima, til eksportorienteret og social ansvarlig vækst i små og mellemstore virksomheder i de fattigste provinser.
2. Indfrielse af 2015-Målene: Støtte til nationalt fattigdomsbekæmpelsesprogram inden for vand og sanitet samt fokus på de fattigste provinser og befolkningsgrupper.
3. God regeringsførelse: Kapacitetsopbygning og reform af den offentlige sektor, den offentlige økonomiforvaltning, retssektoeren samt Nationalforsamlingen. Herudover fokus på at styrke civilsamfundet og bekæmpelse af korruption.
4. Kultursamarbejde: Kulturprogrammet sigter på at styrke vietnamesernes adgang til og deltagelse i forskelligartede kultur- og kunststudier og dermed at bidrage til at fremme demokrati og menneskerettigheder i Vietnam.

Det forventes, at der efter 2015 fortsat vil være fokus på grøn vækst og klima, erhvervsinstrumenter, kultur- og uddannelsessamarbejde samt menneskerettigheder. Dette vil i stigende grad ske i samspil med udenrigspolitiske og handelspolitiske tiltag.

**Vietnam** officially the **Socialist Republic of Vietnam**, is the easternmost country on the Indochina Peninsula in Southeast Asia. With an estimated 90.3 million inhabitants as of 2012, it is the world's 13th-most-populous country, and the eighth-most-populous Asian country. The name Vietnam translates as "Southern Viet" (synonymous with the much more ancient term Nam Viet), and was first officially adopted in 1802 by Emperor Gia Long and again in 1945 with the founding of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam under Ho Chi Minh. The country is bordered by China to the north, Laos to the northwest, Cambodia to the southwest, and the South China Sea to the east. Its capital city has been Hanoi since the reunification of North and South Vietnam in 1976.

The Vietnamese became independent from Imperial China in AD 938, following the resounding Vietnamese victory in the Battle of Bạch Đằng River. Successive Vietnamese royal dynasties flourished as the nation expanded geographically and politically into Southeast Asia, until the Indochina Peninsula was colonized by the French in the mid-19th century. Following a Japanese occupation in the 1940s, the Vietnamese fought French rule in the First Indochina War, eventually expelling the French in 1954. Thereafter, Vietnam was divided politically into two rival states, North and South Vietnam. Conflict between the two sides intensified, in what is known as the Vietnam War, with the North and the Vietcong fighting South Vietnam heavily backed by the US. The war ended with a North Vietnamese victory in 1975.

Vietnam was then unified under a Communist government but remained impoverished and politically isolated. In 1986, the government initiated a series of economic and political reforms which began Vietnam's path towards integration into the world economy. By 2000, it had established diplomatic relations with most nations. Since 2000, Vietnam's economic growth rate has been among the highest in the world, and in 2011 it had the highest Global Growth Generators Index among 11 major economies. Its successful economic reforms resulted in its joining the World Trade Organization in 2007. However, the country still experiences high levels of income inequality, disparities in access to healthcare, and a lack of gender equality.

**Prehistory:** Archaeological excavations have revealed the existence of humans in what is now Vietnam as early as the Paleolithic age. *Homo erectus* fossils dating to around 500,000 BC have been found in caves in Lạng Sơn and Nghệ An provinces in northern Vietnam. The oldest *Homo sapiens* fossils from mainland Southeast Asia are of Middle Pleistocene provenance, and include isolated teeth fragments from Tham Om and Hang Hum. Teeth attributed to *Homo sapiens* from the Late Pleistocene have also been found at Dong Can, and from the Early Holocene at Mai Da Dieu, Lang Gao and Lang Cuom.

**Bronze Age:** By about 1000 BC, the development of wet-rice cultivation and bronze casting in the Ma River and Red River floodplains led to the flourishing of the Đông Sơn culture, notable for its elaborate bronze drums. At this time, the early Vietnamese kingdoms of Văn Lang and Âu Lạc appeared, and the culture's influence spread to other parts of Southeast Asia, including Maritime Southeast Asia, throughout the first millennium BC.

**Dynastic Vietnam:** The legendary Hồng Bàng Dynasty of the Hùng kings is considered the first Vietnamese state, known in Vietnamese as Văn Lang. In 257 BC, the last Hùng king was defeated by Thục Phán, who consolidated the Lạc Việt and Âu Việt tribes to form the Âu Lạc, proclaiming himself An Dương Vương. In 207 BC, a Chinese general named Zhao Tuo defeated An Dương Vương and consolidated Âu Lạc into Nanyue. However, Nanyue was itself incorporated into the empire of the Chinese Han Dynasty in 111 BC after the Han–Nanyue War.

For the next thousand years, Vietnam remained mostly under Chinese rule. Early independence movements, such as those of the Trưng Sisters and Lady Triệu, were only temporarily successful, though the region gained a longer period of independence as Vạn Xuân under the Anterior Lý Dynasty between AD 544 and 602. By the early 10th century, Vietnam had gained autonomy, but not true independence, under the Khúc family.

In AD 938, the Vietnamese lord Ngô Quyền defeated the Chinese forces of the Southern Han state at Bạch Đằng River and regained full independence for Vietnam after a millennium of Chinese domination. Renamed as Đại Việt (*Great Viet*), the nation enjoyed a golden era under the Lý and Trần dynasties. During the rule of the Trần Dynasty, Đại Việt repelled three Mongol invasions. Meanwhile, Buddhism flourished and became the state religion.

Following the 1406–7 Ming–Hồ War which overthrew the Hồ Dynasty, Vietnamese independence was briefly interrupted by the Chinese Ming Dynasty, but was restored by Lê Lợi, the founder of the Lê Dynasty. The Vietnamese dynasties reached their zenith in the Lê Dynasty of the 15th century, especially during the reign of Emperor Lê Thánh Tông (1460–1497). Between the 11th and 18th centuries, Vietnam expanded southward in a process known as *nam tiến* ("southward expansion"), eventually conquering the kingdom of Champa and part of the Khmer Empire.

From the 16th century onwards, civil strife and frequent political infighting engulfed much of Vietnam. First, the Chinese-supported Mạc dynasty challenged the Lê dynasty's power. After the Mạc dynasty was defeated, the Lê dynasty was nominally reinstalled, but actual power was divided between the northern Trịnh lords and the southern Nguyễn lords, who engaged in a civil war for more than four decades before a truce was called in the 1670s. During this time, the Nguyễn expanded southern Vietnam into the Mekong Delta, annexing the Central Highlands and the Khmer lands in the Mekong Delta.

The division of the country ended a century later when the Tây Sơn brothers established a new dynasty. However, their rule did not last long, and they were defeated by the remnants of the Nguyễn lords, led by Nguyễn Ánh and aided by the French. Nguyễn Ánh unified Vietnam, and established the Nguyễn Dynasty, ruling under the name Gia Long.

**1887–1940: French Vietnam:** Vietnam's independence was gradually eroded by France – aided by large Catholic militias – in a series of military conquests between 1859 and 1885. In 1887, the entire country formally became part of French Indochina. The French administration imposed significant political and cultural changes on Vietnamese society. A Western-style system of modern

education was developed, and Roman Catholicism was propagated widely. Most French settlers in Indochina were concentrated in Cochinchina, basing themselves around Saigon.

Developing a plantation economy to promote the export of tobacco, indigo, tea and coffee, the French largely ignored increasing calls for Vietnamese self-government and civil rights. A nationalist political movement soon emerged, with leaders such as Phan Bội Châu, Phan Chu Trinh, Phan Đình Phùng, Emperor Hàm Nghi and Ho Chi Minh fighting or calling for independence. However, the royalist Cần Vương movement was defeated in the 1890s after a decade of resistance, and the 1930 Yên Bái mutiny of the Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng was suppressed easily. The French maintained control of their colonies until World War II, when the war in the Pacific led to the Japanese invasion of French Indochina in 1941. The Japanese Empire exploited Vietnam's natural resources to support its military campaigns, leading to the Vietnamese Famine of 1945, which caused up to two million deaths.

**1945–1954: First Indochina War:** In 1941, the Viet Minh – a communist and nationalist liberation movement – emerged under the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary Ho Chi Minh, who sought independence for Vietnam from France and the end of the Japanese occupation. Following the military defeat of Japan and the fall of its puppet Empire of Vietnam in August 1945, the Viet Minh occupied Hanoi and proclaimed a provisional government, which asserted national independence on 2 September. In the same year, the Provisional French Republic sent the French Far East Expeditionary Corps to restore colonial rule, and the Viet Minh began a guerrilla campaign against the French in late 1946. The resulting First Indochina War lasted until July 1954.

The defeat of French and Vietnamese loyalists in the 1954 Battle of Dien Bien Phu allowed Ho Chi Minh to negotiate a ceasefire from a favorable position at the subsequent Geneva Conference. The colonial administration was ended and French Indochina was dissolved under the Geneva Accords of 1954, which separated the loyalist forces from the communists at the 17th parallel north with the Vietnamese Demilitarized Zone.<sup>[N 2]</sup> Two states formed after the partition – Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the north and Emperor Bảo Đại's State of Vietnam in the south. A 300-day period of free movement was permitted, during which almost a million northerners, mainly Catholics, moved south, fearing persecution by the communists.

The partition of Vietnam was not intended to be permanent by the Geneva Accords, which stipulated that Vietnam would be reunited after elections in 1956. However, in 1955, the State of Vietnam's Prime Minister, Ngo Dinh Diem, toppled Bảo Đại in a fraudulent referendum organised by his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu, and proclaimed himself president of the Republic of Vietnam.

**1954–1975: Vietnam War:** In 1963, Buddhist discontent with Diem's regime erupted into mass demonstrations, leading to a violent government crackdown. This led to the collapse of Diem's relationship with the United States, and ultimately to the 1963 coup in which Diem and Nhu were assassinated. The Diem era was followed by more than a dozen successive military governments, before the pairing of Air Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky and General Nguyễn Văn Thiệu took control in mid-1965. Thieu gradually outmaneuvered Ky and cemented his grip on power in fraudulent elections in 1967 and 1971. Under this political instability, the communists began to gain ground.

To support South Vietnam's struggle against the communist insurgency, the United States began increasing its contribution of military advisers, using the 1964 Tonkin Gulf incident as a pretext for such intervention. US forces became involved in ground combat operations in 1965, and at their peak they numbered more than 500,000. The US also engaged in a sustained aerial bombing campaign. Meanwhile, China and the Soviet Union provided North Vietnam with significant material aid and 15,000 combat advisers. Communist forces supplying the Vietcong carried supplies along the Ho Chi Minh trail, which passed through Laos.

The communists attacked South Vietnamese targets during the 1968 Tet Offensive. Although the campaign failed militarily, it shocked the American establishment, and turned US public opinion against the war. Facing an increasing casualty count, rising domestic opposition to the war, and growing international condemnation, the US began withdrawing from ground combat roles in the early 1970s. This process also entailed an unsuccessful effort to strengthen and stabilize South Vietnam.

Following the Paris Peace Accords of 27 January 1973, all American combat troops were withdrawn by 29 March 1973. In December 1974, North Vietnam captured the province of Phước Long and started a full-scale offensive, culminating in the Fall of Saigon on 30 April 1975. South Vietnam was briefly ruled by a provisional government while under military occupation by North Vietnam. On 2 July 1976, North and South Vietnam were merged to form the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The war left Vietnam devastated, with the total death toll standing at between 800,000 and 3.1 million.

**1976–present: reunification and reforms:** In the aftermath of the war, under Lê Duẩn's administration, the government embarked on a mass campaign of collectivization of farms and factories. This caused economic chaos and resulted in triple-digit inflation, while national reconstruction efforts progressed slowly. At least one million South Vietnamese were sent to reeducation camps, with an estimated 165,000 prisoners dying. Between 100,000 and 200,000<sup>[77]</sup> South Vietnamese were executed; another 50,000 died performing hard labor in "New Economic Zones". In the late 1970s and early 1980s, millions of people fled the country in crudely built boats, creating an international humanitarian crisis; hundreds of thousands died at sea.

In 1978, the Vietnamese military invaded Cambodia to remove from power the Khmer Rouge, who had been attacking Vietnamese border villages. Vietnam was victorious, installing a government in Cambodia which ruled until 1989. This action worsened relations with the Chinese, who launched a brief incursion into northern Vietnam in 1979. This conflict caused Vietnam to rely even more heavily on Soviet economic and military aid.

At the Sixth National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam in December 1986, reformist politicians replaced the "old guard" government with new leadership. The reformers were led by 71-year-old Nguyen Van Linh, who became the party's new general

secretary. Linh and the reformers implemented a series of free-market reforms – known as *Đổi Mới* ("Renovation") – which carefully managed the transition from a planned economy to a "socialist-oriented market economy".

Though the authority of the state remained unchallenged under *Đổi Mới*, the government encouraged private ownership of farms and factories, economic deregulation and foreign investment, while maintaining control over strategic industries. The Vietnamese economy subsequently achieved strong growth in agricultural and industrial production, construction, exports and foreign investment. However, these reforms have also caused a rise in income inequality and gender disparities.

## Government and politics

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam, along with China, Cuba, and Laos, is one of the world's four remaining single-party socialist states officially espousing communism. Its current state constitution, which replaced the 1975 constitution in April 1992, asserts the central role of the Communist Party of Vietnam in all organs of government, politics and society. The General Secretary of the Communist Party performs numerous key administrative and executive functions, controlling the party's national organization and state appointments, as well as setting policy. Only political organizations affiliated with or endorsed by the Communist Party are permitted to contest elections in Vietnam. These include the Vietnamese Fatherland Front and worker and trade unionist parties. Although the state remains officially committed to socialism as its defining creed, its economic policies have grown increasingly capitalist, with *The Economist* characterizing its leadership as "ardently capitalist communists".

The President of Vietnam is the titular head of state and the nominal commander-in-chief of the military, serving as the Chairman of the Council of Supreme Defense and Security. The Prime Minister of Vietnam is the head of government, presiding over a council of ministers composed of three deputy prime ministers and the heads of 26 ministries and commissions.

The National Assembly of Vietnam is the unicameral legislature of the state, composed of 498 members. Headed by a Chairman, it is superior to both the executive and judicial branches, with all government ministers being appointed from members of the National Assembly. The Supreme People's Court of Vietnam, headed by a Chief Justice, is the country's highest court of appeal, though it is also answerable to the National Assembly. Beneath the Supreme People's Court stand the provincial municipal courts and numerous local courts. Military courts possess special jurisdiction in matters of national security.

## Military

The Vietnam People's Armed Forces consists of the Vietnam People's Army, the Vietnam People's Public Security and the Vietnam Civil Defense Force. The Vietnam People's Army (VPA) is the official name for the active military services of Vietnam, and is subdivided into the Vietnam People's Ground Forces, the Vietnam People's Navy, the Vietnam People's Air Force, the Vietnam Border Defense Force and the Vietnam Marine Police. The VPA has an active manpower of around 450,000, but its total strength, including paramilitary forces, may be as high as 5,000,000. In 2011, Vietnam's military expenditure totalled approximately US\$2.48 billion, equivalent to around 2.5% of its 2010 GDP.

**International relations:** Throughout its history, Vietnam's key foreign relationship has been with its largest neighbour and one-time imperial master, China. Vietnam's sovereign principles and insistence on cultural independence have been laid down in numerous documents over the centuries, such as the 11th-century patriotic poem *Nam quốc sơn hà* and the 1428 proclamation of independence *Bình Ngô đại cáo*. Though China and Vietnam are now formally at peace, significant territorial tensions remain between the two countries.

Currently, the formal mission statement of Vietnamese foreign policy is to: "Implement consistently the foreign policy line of independence, self-reliance, peace, cooperation and development; the foreign policy of openness and diversification and multi-lateralization of international relations. Proactively and actively engage in international economic integration while expanding international cooperation in other fields." Vietnam furthermore declares itself to be "a friend and reliable partner of all countries in the international community, actively taking part in international and regional cooperation processes."

By December 2007, Vietnam had established diplomatic relations with 172 countries, including the United States, which normalized relations in 1995. Vietnam holds membership of 63 international organizations, including the United Nations, ASEAN, NAM, Francophonie and WTO. It is furthermore a member of around 650 non-government organizations.

## Geography

Vietnam is located on the eastern Indochina Peninsula between the latitudes 8° and 24°N, and the longitudes 102° and 110°E. It covers a total area of approximately 331,210 km<sup>2</sup> making it almost the size of Germany. The combined length of the country's land boundaries is 4,639 km and its coastline is 3,444 km 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%.

The northern part of the country consists mostly of highlands and the Red River Delta. Phan Xi Păng, located in Lào Cai Province, is the highest mountain in Vietnam, standing 3,143 m high. Southern Vietnam is divided into coastal lowlands, the mountains of the Annamite Range, and extensive forests. Comprising five relatively flat plateaus of basalt soil, the highlands account for 16% of the country's arable land and 22% of its total forested land. The soil in much of southern Vietnam is relatively poor in nutrients.

The Red River Delta, a flat, roughly triangular region covering 15,000 km<sup>2</sup> is smaller but more intensely developed and more densely populated than the Mekong River Delta. Once an inlet of the Gulf of Tonkin, it has been filled in over the millennia by riverine alluvial deposits. The delta, covering about 40,000 km<sup>2</sup> is a low-level plain no more than 3 meters above sea level at any point. It is criss-crossed by a maze of rivers and canals, which carry so much sediment that the delta advances 60 to 80 meters (196.9 to 262.5 ft) into the sea every year.

**Climate:** Because of differences in latitude and the marked variety in topographical relief, the climate tends to vary considerably from place to place. During the winter or dry season, extending roughly from November to April, the monsoon winds usually blow from the northeast along the Chinese coast and across the Gulf of Tonkin, picking up considerable moisture. Consequently, the winter season in most parts of the country is dry only by comparison with the rainy or summer season. The average annual temperature is generally higher in the plains than in the mountains, and higher in the south than in the north. Temperatures vary less in the southern plains around Ho Chi Minh City and the Mekong Delta, ranging between 21 and 28 °C over the course of the year. Seasonal variations in the mountains and plateaus and in the north are much more dramatic, with temperatures varying from 5 °C in December and January to 37 °C in July and August.

**Ecology and biodiversity:** Vietnam has two World Natural Heritage Sites – Hạ Long Bay and Phong Nha-Kẻ Bàng National Park – and six biosphere reserves, including Càn Giỏi Mangrove Forest, Cát Tiên, Cát Bà, Kiên Giang, the Red River Delta, and Western Nghệ An.

Vietnam lies in the Indomalaya ecozone. According to the 2005 National Environmental Present Condition Report. Vietnam is one of twenty-five countries considered to possess a uniquely high level of biodiversity. It is ranked 16th worldwide in biological diversity, being home to approximately 16% of the world's species. 15,986 species of flora have been identified in the country, of which 10% are endemic, while Vietnam's fauna include 307 nematode species, 200 oligochaeta, 145 acarina, 113 springtails, 7,750 insects, 260 reptiles, 120 amphibians, 840 birds and 310 mammals, of which 100 birds and 78 mammals are endemic.

Vietnam is furthermore home to 1,438 species of freshwater microalgae, constituting 9.6% of all microalgae species, as well as 794 aquatic invertebrates and 2,458 species of sea fish. In recent years, 13 genera, 222 species, and 30 taxa of flora have been newly discovered in Vietnam. Six new mammal species, including the saola, giant muntjac and Tonkin snub-nosed monkey have also been discovered, along with one new bird species, the endangered Edwards's Pheasant. In the late 1980s, a small population of Javan rhinoceros was found in Cát Tiên National Park. However, the last individual of the species in Vietnam was reportedly shot in 2010.

In agricultural genetic diversity, Vietnam is one of the world's twelve original cultivar centers. The Vietnam National Cultivar Gene Bank preserves 12,300 cultivars of 115 species. The Vietnamese government spent US\$49.07 million on the preservation of biodiversity in 2004 alone, and has established 126 conservation areas, including 28 national parks.

**Economy:** In 2012, Vietnam's nominal GDP reached US\$138 billion, with a nominal GDP per capita of \$1,527, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). According to a December 2005 forecast by Goldman Sachs, the Vietnamese economy will become the world's 17th-largest by 2025, with an estimated nominal GDP of \$436 billion and a nominal GDP per capita of \$4,357. According to a 2008 forecast by PricewaterhouseCoopers, Vietnam may be the fastest-growing of the world's emerging economies by 2025, with a potential growth rate of almost 10% per annum in real dollar terms. In 2012, HSBC predicted that Vietnam's total GDP would surpass those of Norway, Singapore and Portugal by 2050.

Vietnam has been, for much of its history, a predominantly agricultural civilization based on wet rice cultivation. There is also an industry for Bauxite mining in Vietnam, an important material for the production of aluminum. However, the Vietnam War destroyed much of the country's agrarian economy, leading the post-war government to implement a planned economy to revitalise agriculture and industrialise the nation. The collectivization of farms, factories and economic capital was implemented, and millions of people were put to work in government programs. For a decade following the Vietnam War, Vietnam's economy was plagued with inefficiency and corruption in state programs, poor quality and underproduction, and restrictions on economic activity. It also suffered from the post-war trade embargo instituted by the United States and most of Europe. These problems were compounded by the erosion of the Soviet bloc, which included Vietnam's main trading partners, in the late 1980s.

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 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 m<sup>3</sup>/d). In 2010, Vietnam was ranked as the 8th largest crude petroleum producers in the Asia and Pacific region. Like its Chinese neighbours, Vietnam continues to make use of centrally planned economic five-year plans.

Deep poverty, defined as the percentage of the population living on less than \$1 per day, has declined significantly in Vietnam, and the relative poverty rate is now less than that of China, India, and the Philippines. This decline in the poverty rate can be attributed to equitable economic policies aimed at improving living standards and preventing the rise of inequality; these policies have included egalitarian land distribution during the initial stages of the *Đổi Mới* program, investment in poorer remote areas, and subsidising of education and healthcare. According to the IMF, the unemployment rate in Vietnam stood at 4.46% in 2012.

**Trade:** Since the early 2000s, Vietnam has applied sequenced trade liberalisation, a two-track approach opening some sectors of the economy to international markets while protecting others. In July 2006, Vietnam updated its intellectual property legislation to comply with TRIPS, and it became a member of the WTO on 11 January 2007. Vietnam is now one of Asia's most open economies: two-way trade was valued at around 160% of GDP in 2006, more than twice the contemporary ratio for China and over four times the ratio for India. Vietnam's chief trading partners include China, Japan, Australia, the ASEAN countries, the United States and Western Europe.

Vietnam's Customs office reported in July 2013 that the total value of international merchandise trade for the first half of 2013 was US\$124 billion, which was 15.7% higher than the same period in 2012. Mobile phones and their parts were both imported and exported in large numbers, while in the natural resources market, crude oil was a top-ranking export and high levels of iron and steel were imported during this period. The U.S. was the country that purchased the highest amount of Vietnam's exports, while Chinese goods were the most popular Vietnamese import.

As a result of several land reform measures, Vietnam has become a major exporter of agricultural products. It is now the world's largest producer of cashew nuts, with a one-third global share; the largest producer of black pepper, accounting for one-third of the world's market; and the second-largest rice exporter in the world, after Thailand. Vietnam has the highest proportion of land use for permanent crops – 6.93% – of any nation in the Greater Mekong Subregion. Other primary exports include coffee, tea, rubber, and fishery products. However, agriculture's share of Vietnam's GDP has fallen in recent decades, declining from 42% in 1989 to 20% in 2006, as production in other sectors of the economy has risen.

**Science and technology:** Vietnamese scholars developed many academic fields during the dynastic era, most notably social sciences and the humanities. The country boasts a millennium-deep legacy of analytical histories, such as the *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* of Ngô Sĩ Liên. Vietnamese monks led by the abdicated Emperor Trần Nhân Tông developed the Trúc Lâm Zen branch of philosophy in the 13th century. Arithmetics and geometry have been widely taught in Vietnam since the 15th century, using the textbook *Đại thành toán pháp* by Lương Thế Vinh as a basis. Lương Thế Vinh introduced Vietnam to the notion of zero, while Mạc Hiến Tích used the term *số ẩn* (en: "unknown/secret/hidden number") to refer to negative numbers. Vietnamese scholars furthermore produced numerous encyclopedias, such as Lê Quý Đôn's *Văn đài loại ngữ*.

In recent times, Vietnamese scientists have made many significant contributions in various fields of study, most notably in mathematics. Hoàng Tụy pioneered the applied mathematics field of global optimization in the 20th century, while Ngô Bảo Châu won the 2010 Fields Medal for his proof of fundamental lemma in the theory of automorphic forms. Vietnam is currently working to develop an indigenous space program, and plans to construct the US\$600 million Vietnam Space Center by 2018. Vietnam has also made significant advances in the development of robots, such as the TOPIO humanoid model. In 2010, Vietnam's total state spending on science and technology equalled around 0.45% of its GDP.

**Transport:** Much of Vietnam's modern transport network was originally developed under French rule to facilitate the transportation of raw materials, and was reconstructed and extensively modernized following the Vietnam War.

Vietnam operates 21 major civil airports, including three international gateways: Noi Bai in Hanoi, Da Nang International Airport in Da Nang, and Tan Son Nhat in Ho Chi Minh City. Tan Son Nhat is the nation's largest airport, handling 75% of international passenger traffic. According to a state-approved plan, Vietnam will have 10 international airports by 2015 – besides the aforementioned three, these include Lien Khuong International Airport, Phu Bai International Airport, Cam Ranh International Airport, Phu Quoc International Airport, Cat Bi International Airport, Cần Thơ International Airport and Long Thanh International Airport. The planned Long Thanh International Airport will have an annual service capacity of 100 million passengers once it becomes fully operational in 2020.

Vietnam Airlines, the state-owned national airline, maintains a fleet of 69 passenger aircraft, and aims to operate 150 by 2020. Several private airlines are also in operation in Vietnam, including Air Mekong, Jetstar Pacific Airlines, VASCO and VietJet Air.

Vietnam's road system includes national roads administered at the central level; provincial roads managed at the provincial level; district roads managed at the district level; urban roads managed by cities and towns; and commune roads managed at the commune level. Bicycles, motor scooters and motorcycles remain the most popular forms of road transport in Vietnam's urban areas, although the number of privately owned automobiles is also on the rise, especially in the larger cities. Public buses operated by private companies are the main mode of long-distance travel for much of the population. Road safety is a serious issue in Vietnam – on average, 30 people are killed in traffic accidents every day. Traffic congestion is a growing problem in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, as the cities' roads struggle to cope with the boom in automobile use.

Vietnam's primary cross-country rail service is the Reunification Express, which runs from Ho Chi Minh City to Hanoi, covering a distance of nearly 2,000 kilometres. From Hanoi, railway lines branch out to the northeast, north and west; the eastbound line runs from Hanoi to Hạ Long Bay, the northbound line from Hanoi to Thái Nguyên, and the northeast line from Hanoi to Lào Cai.

In 2009, Vietnam and Japan signed a deal to build a high-speed railway using Japanese technology; numerous Vietnamese engineers were later sent to Japan to receive training in the operation and maintenance of high-speed trains. The railway will be a 1,630-km-long express route, serving a total of 26 stations, including Hanoi and the Thu Thiem terminus in Ho Chi Minh City. Using Japan's *Shinkansen* technology, the line will support trains travelling at a maximum speed of 360 kilometres per hour. The high-speed lines linking Hanoi to Vinh, Nha Trang and Ho Chi Minh City will be laid by 2015. From 2015 to 2020, construction will begin on the routes between Vinh and Nha Trang and between Hanoi and the northern provinces of Lào Cai and Lạng Sơn.

As a coastal country, Vietnam has many major sea ports, including Cam Ranh, Da Nang, Hai Phong, Ho Chi Minh City, Hong Gai, Qui Nhon, Vũng Tàu and Nha Trang. Further inland, the country's extensive network of rivers play a key role in rural transportation, with over 17,700 kilometres of navigable waterways carrying ferries, barges and water taxis.

In addition, the Mekong Delta and Red River Delta are vital to Vietnam's social and economic welfare – most of the country's population lives along or near these river deltas, and the major cities of Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi are situated near the Mekong and Red River deltas, respectively. Further out in the South China Sea, Vietnam currently controls the majority of the disputed Spratly Islands, which are the source of longstanding disagreements with China and other nearby nations.

**Demographics:** The census of 1 April 2009 recorded the population of Vietnam as standing at approximately 85.8 million. The population had grown significantly from the 1979 census, which showed the total population of reunified Vietnam to be 52.7 million. In 2012, the country's population was estimated at approximately 90.3 million.

**Ethnicity:** According to the 2009 census, the dominant Viet or Kinh ethnic group constituted nearly 73.6 million people, or 85.8% of the population. The Kinh population is concentrated mainly in the alluvial deltas and coastal plains of the country. A largely homogeneous social and ethnic group, the Kinh possess significant political and economic influence over the country. However, Vietnam is also home to 54 ethnic minority groups, including the Hmong, Dao, Tay, Thai, and Nùng. Many ethnic minorities – such as the Muong, who are closely related to the Kinh – dwell in the highlands, which cover two-thirds of Vietnam's territory. Before the Vietnam War, the population of the Central Highlands was almost exclusively Degar (including over 40 tribal groups); however, Ngo Dinh Diem's South Vietnamese government enacted a program of resettling Kinh in indigenous areas. The Hoa (ethnic Chinese) and Khmer Krom people are mainly lowlanders. As Sino-Vietnamese relations soured in 1978 and 1979, some 450,000 Hoa left Vietnam.

**Languages:** The official national language of Vietnam is Vietnamese (*Tiếng Việt*), a tonal Mon–Khmer language which is spoken by the majority of the population. In its early history, Vietnamese writing used Chinese characters. In the 13th century, the Vietnamese developed their own set of characters, referred to as *Chữ nôm*. The folk epic *Truyện Kiều* ("The Tale of Kieu", originally known as *Đoan trường tân thanh*) by Nguyễn Du was written in *Chữ nôm*. *Quốc ngữ*, the romanized Vietnamese alphabet used for spoken Vietnamese, was developed in the 17th century by the Jesuit Alexandre de Rhodes and several other Catholic missionaries. *Quốc ngữ* became widely popular and brought literacy to the Vietnamese masses during the French colonial period.

Vietnam's minority groups speak a variety of languages, including Tày, Mường, Cham, Khmer, Chinese, Nùng, and H'Mông. The Montagnard peoples of the Central Highlands also speak a number of distinct languages. A number of sign languages have developed in the cities. The French language, a legacy of colonial rule, is spoken by some educated Vietnamese as a second language, especially by the older generation; Vietnam remains a full member of the Francophonie, and education has revived some interest in the language. Russian – and to a much lesser extent German, Czech and Polish – are known among some Vietnamese whose families had ties with the Soviet bloc during the Cold War. In recent years, as Vietnam's contacts with Western nations have increased, English has become more popular as a second language; the study of English is now obligatory in most schools, replacing French, though the latter is used at times in higher education. Chinese, Japanese, and Korean have also grown in popularity as Vietnam's links with other East Asian nations have strengthened.

**Religion:** For much of Vietnamese history, Mahayana Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism have been the dominant religions, strongly influencing the national culture. About 85% of Vietnamese identify with Buddhism, though not all practice on a regular basis. According to the General Statistics Office of Vietnam's report for 1 April 2009, 6.8 million (or 7.9% of the total population) are practicing Buddhists, 5.7 million (6.6%) are Catholics, 1.4 million (1.7%) are adherents of Hòa Hảo, 0.8 million (0.9%) practise Cao Đài, and 0.7 million (0.9%) are Protestants. In total, 15,651,467 Vietnamese (18.2%) are formally registered in a religion. According to the 2009 census, while over 10 million people have taken refuge in the Three Jewels of Buddhism, the vast majority of Vietnamese people practice ancestor worship in some form. According to a 2007 report, 81% of Vietnamese people do not believe in God.

About 8% of the population are Christians, totalling around six million Roman Catholics and fewer than one million Protestants, according to the census of 2007. Christianity was first introduced to Vietnam by Portuguese and Dutch traders in the 16th and 17th centuries, and was further propagated by French missionaries in the 19th and 20th centuries, and to a lesser extent, by American Protestant missionaries during the Vietnam War, largely among the Montagnards of South Vietnam. The largest Protestant churches are the Evangelical Church of Vietnam and the Montagnard Evangelical Church. Two-thirds of Vietnam's Protestants are reportedly members of ethnic minorities

The Vietnamese government is widely seen as suspicious of Roman Catholicism. This mistrust originated during the 19th century, when some Catholics collaborated with the French colonists in conquering and ruling the country and in helping French attempts to install Catholic emperors, such as in the Lê Văn Khôi revolt of 1833. Furthermore, the Catholic Church's strongly anti-communist stance has made it an enemy of the Vietnamese state. The Vatican Church is officially banned, and only government-controlled Catholic organisations are permitted. However, the Vatican has attempted to negotiate the opening of diplomatic relations with Vietnam in recent years.

Several other minority faiths exist in Vietnam. About 3% of the population are adherents of Cao Dai, a syncretic modern religion whose followers are largely concentrated in Tây Ninh Province. Sunni and Cham Bani Islam is primarily practiced by the ethnic Cham minority, though there are also a few ethnic Vietnamese adherents in the southwest. In total, there are approximately 70,000 Muslims in Vietnam, while around 50,000 Hindus and a small number of Baha'is are also in evidence.

The Vietnamese government rejects allegations that it does not allow religious freedom. The state's official position on religion is that all citizens are free to their belief, and that all religions are equal before the law. Nevertheless, only government-approved religious

organisations are allowed; for example, the South Vietnam-founded Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam is banned in favour of a communist-approved body.

**Education:** Vietnam has an extensive state-controlled network of schools, colleges and universities, and a growing number of privately run and partially privatised institutions. General education in Vietnam is divided into five categories: kindergarten, elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and universities. A large number of public schools have been constructed across the country to raise the national literacy rate, which stood at 90.3% in 2008.

A large number of Vietnam's most acclaimed universities are based in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Facing serious crises, Vietnam's education system is under a holistic program of reform launched by the government. Education is not free; therefore, some poor families may have trouble paying tuition for their children without some form of public or private assistance. Regardless, school enrollment is among the highest in the world, and the number of colleges and universities increased dramatically in the 2000s, from 178 in 2000 to 299 in 2005.

**Health:** In 2009, Vietnam's national life expectancy stood at 76 years for women and 72 for men, and the infant mortality rate was 12 per 1,000 live births. By 2009, 85% of the population had access to improved water sources. However, malnutrition is still common in the rural provinces. In 2001, government spending on health care corresponded to just 0.9% of Vietnam's gross domestic product (GDP), with state subsidies covering only about 20% of health care expenses.

In 1954, North Vietnam established a public health system that reached down to the hamlet level. After the national reunification in 1975, a nationwide health service was established. In the late 1980s, the quality of healthcare declined to some degree as a result of budgetary constraints, a shift of responsibility to the provinces, and the introduction of charges. Inadequate funding has also contributed to a shortage of nurses, midwives, and hospital beds; in 2000, Vietnam had only 250,000 hospital beds, or 14.8 beds per 10,000 people, according to the World Bank.

Since the early 2000s, Vietnam has made significant progress in combating malaria, with the malaria mortality rate falling to about 5% of its 1990s equivalent by 2005, after the country introduced improved antimalarial drugs and treatment. However, tuberculosis cases are on the rise, with 57 deaths per day reported in May 2004. With an intensified vaccination program, better hygiene, and foreign assistance, Vietnam hopes to reduce sharply the number of TB cases and annual new TB infections.

As of September 2005, Vietnam had diagnosed 101,291 HIV cases, of which 16,528 progressed to AIDS, and 9,554 died. However, the actual number of HIV-positive individuals is estimated to be much higher. On average, 40–50 new infections are reported every day in Vietnam. As of 2007, 0.5% of the population is estimated to be infected with HIV, and this figure has remained stable since 2005. In June 2004, the United States announced that Vietnam would be one of 15 nations to receive funding as part of a US\$15 billion global AIDS relief plan.

**Culture:** Vietnam's culture has developed over the centuries from indigenous ancient Dong Son culture with wet rice agriculture as its economic base. Some elements of the national culture have Chinese origins, drawing on elements of Confucianism and Taoism in its traditional political system and philosophy. Vietnamese society is structured around *làng* (ancestral villages); all Vietnamese mark a common ancestral anniversary on the tenth day of the third lunar month. The influences of immigrant peoples – such as the Cantonese, Hakka, Hokkien and Hainan cultures – can also be seen, while the national religion of Buddhism is strongly entwined with popular culture. In recent centuries, the influences of Western cultures, most notably France and the United States, have become evident in Vietnam.

The traditional focuses of Vietnamese culture are humanity (*nhân nghĩa*) and harmony (*hòa*); family and community values are highly regarded. Vietnam reveres a number of key cultural symbols, such as the Vietnamese dragon, which is derived from crocodile and snake imagery; Vietnam's National Father, Lạc Long Quân, is depicted as a holy dragon. The *lạc* – a holy bird representing Vietnam's National Mother, Âu Cơ – is another prominent symbol, while turtle and horse images are also revered.

In the modern era, the cultural life of Vietnam has been deeply influenced by government-controlled media and cultural programs. For many decades, foreign cultural influences – especially those of Western origin – were shunned. However, since the 1990s, Vietnam has seen a greater exposure to Southeast Asian, European and American culture and media.

**Media:** Vietnam's media sector is regulated by the government in accordance with the 2004 Law on Publication. It is generally perceived that Vietnam's media sector is controlled by the government to follow the official Communist Party line, though some newspapers are relatively outspoken. The Voice of Vietnam is the official state-run national radio broadcasting service, broadcasting internationally via shortwave using rented transmitters in other countries, and providing broadcasts from its website. Vietnam Television is the national television broadcasting company.

Since 1997, Vietnam has extensively regulated public Internet access, using both legal and technical means. The resulting lockdown is widely referred to as the "Bamboo Firewall". The collaborative project OpenNet Initiative classifies Vietnam's level of online political censorship to be "pervasive", while Reporters without Borders considers Vietnam to be one of 15 global "internet enemies". Though the government of Vietnam claims to safeguard the country against obscene or sexually explicit content through its blocking efforts, many politically and religiously sensitive websites are also banned.

**Music:** Traditional Vietnamese music varies between the country's northern and southern regions. Northern classical music is Vietnam's oldest musical form, and is traditionally more formal. The origins of Vietnamese classical music can be traced to the Mongol invasions of the 13th century, when the Vietnamese captured a Chinese opera troupe.



**Literature:** Vietnamese literature has a centuries-deep history. The country has a rich tradition of folk literature, based around the typical 6–to-8-verse poetic form named *ca dao*, which usually focuses on village ancestors and heroes. Written literature has been found dating back to the 10th-century Ngô Dynasty, with notable ancient authors including Nguyễn Trãi, Trần Hưng Đạo, Nguyễn Du and Nguyễn Đình Chiểu. Some literary genres play an important role in theatrical performance, such as *hát nói* in *ca trù*. Some poetic unions have also been formed in Vietnam, such as the Tao Đàn. Vietnamese literature has in recent times been influenced by Western styles, with the first literary transformation movement – Thơ Mới – emerging in 1932.

**Festivals:** Vietnam has a plethora of festivals based on the lunar calendar, the most important being the Tết New Year celebration. Traditional Vietnamese weddings remain widely popular, and are often celebrated by expatriate Vietnamese in Western countries.

**Tourism:** Vietnam has become a major tourist destination since the 1990s, assisted by significant state and private investment, particularly in coastal regions. About 3.77 million international tourists visited Vietnam in 2009 alone.

Popular tourist destinations include the former imperial capital of Huế, the World Heritage Sites of Phong Nha-Kẻ Bàng National Park, Hội An and Mỹ Sơn, coastal regions such as Nha Trang, the caves of Hạ Long Bay and the Marble Mountains. Numerous tourist projects are under construction, such as the Binh Dương tourist complex, which possesses the largest artificial sea in Southeast Asia.<sup>[175]</sup>

On 14 February 2011, Joe Jackson, the father of American pop star Michael Jackson, attended a ground breaking ceremony for what will be Southeast Asia's largest entertainment complex, a five-star hotel and amusement park called Happyland. The US\$2 billion project, which has been designed to accommodate 14 million tourists annually, is located in southern Long An Province, near Ho Chi Minh City. It is expected that the complex will be completed in 2014.

**Clothing:** The *áo dài*, a formal girl's dress, is worn for special occasions such as weddings and religious festivals. White *áo dài* is the required uniform for girls in many high schools across Vietnam. *Áo dài* was once worn by both Other examples of traditional Vietnamese clothing include the *áo tứ thân*, a four-piece woman's dress; the *áo ngũ*, a form of the *thân* in 5-piece form, mostly worn in the north of the country; the *yếm*, a woman's undergarment; the *áo bà ba*, rural working "pyjamas" for men and women;<sup>[178]</sup> the *áo gấm*, a formal brocade tunic for government receptions; and the *áo the*, a variant of the *áo gấm* worn by grooms at weddings. Traditional headwear includes the standard conical *nón lá* and the "lampshade-like" *nón quai thao*.

**Sport:** The Vovinam and Bình Định martial arts are widespread in Vietnam, while soccer is the country's most popular team sport. Other Western sports, such as badminton, tennis, volleyball, ping-pong and chess, are also widely popular. Vietnam has participated in the Summer Olympic Games since 1952.

Vietnam first competed in the Olympic Games in 1952 as the State of Vietnam. After the Partition of Vietnam in 1954, only South Vietnam competed in the Games, sending athletes to the 1956 and 1972 Olympics. Since the reunification of Vietnam in 1976, they have competed as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, attending every Olympics from 1988 onwards. The present Vietnam Olympic Committee was formed in 1976 and recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1979. Vietnam has never competed in the Winter Olympics, but will begin in 2014.

**Cuisine:** Vietnamese cuisine traditionally features a combination of five fundamental taste "elements" (Vietnamese: *ngũ vị*): spicy (metal), sour (wood), bitter (fire), salty (water) and sweet (earth). Common ingredients include fish sauce, shrimp paste, soy sauce, rice, fresh herbs, fruits and vegetables. Vietnamese recipes use lemongrass, ginger, mint, Vietnamese mint, long coriander, Saigon cinnamon, bird's eye chili, lime and basil leaves. Traditional Vietnamese cooking is known for its fresh ingredients, minimal use of oil, and reliance on herbs and vegetables, and is considered one of the healthiest cuisines worldwide.

In northern Vietnam, local foods are often less spicy than southern dishes, as the colder northern climate limits the production and availability of spices. Black pepper is used in place of chilis to produce spicy flavors. The use of meats such as pork, beef, and chicken were relatively limited in the past, and as a result freshwater fish, crustaceans – particularly crabs – and mollusks became widely used. Fish sauce, soy sauce, prawn sauce, and limes are among the main flavoring ingredients. Many signature Vietnamese dishes, such as *bún riêu* and *bánh cuốn*, originated in the north and were carried to central and southern Vietnam by migrants.

## Vietnam - From Wikitravel

Vietnam's history is one of war, colonisation and rebellion. Occupied by China no fewer than four times, the Vietnamese managed to fight off the invaders just as often. At various points during these 1,000 years of imperial dynasties, Vietnam was ravaged and divided by civil wars and repeatedly attacked by the Songs, Mongol, Yuans, Chams, Mings, Dutch, Qings, French, and the Americans and the victories were mostly belonged to Vietnamese. Even during the periods in history when Vietnam was independent, it was mostly a tributary state to China until the French colonisation. Vietnam's last emperors were the **Nguyễn Dynasty**, who ruled from their capital at Hue from 1802 to 1945, although France exploited the succession crisis after the fall of Tự Đức to *de facto* colonise Vietnam after 1884. Both the Chinese occupation and French colonisation have left a lasting impact on Vietnamese culture, with Confucianism forming the basis of Vietnamese social etiquette, and the French leaving a lasting imprint on Vietnamese cuisine.

After a brief Japanese occupation in World War II, the Communist **Viet Minh** under the leadership of **Hồ Chí Minh** continued the insurgency against the French, with the last Emperor Bao Dai abdicating in 1945 and a proclamation of independence following soon after. The majority of French had left by 1945, but in 1946 they returned to continue the fight until their decisive defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. The Geneva Conference partitioned the country into two at 17th parallel, with a Communist-led North and **Ngô Đình Diem** declaring himself President of the Republic of Vietnam in the South.

US economic and military aid to South Vietnam grew through the 1960s in an attempt to bolster the Southern Vietnam government, escalating into the dispatch of 500,000 American troops in 1966 and what became known as the **Vietnam War** - although the Vietnamese refer to it as the **American War**. What was supposed to be a quick and decisive action soon degenerated into a quagmire and US armed forces were only withdrawn following a cease-fire agreement in 1973. Two years later, on April 30, 1975, a North Vietnamese tank drove into the South's Presidential Palace in Ho Chi Minh City and the war ended. An estimated 3 million Vietnamese and over 55 thousand Americans were killed.

The American Vietnamese war was only one of many that the Vietnamese have fought, but it was the most brutal in its history. Over two thirds of the current population was born after 1975. American tourists will receive a particularly friendly welcome in Vietnam, as many young Vietnamese aspire to American culture.

## Culture

Due to its long history as a tributary state of China, as well as several periods of Chinese occupations, Vietnamese culture is heavily influenced by that of Southern China, with Confucianism forming the basis of Vietnamese society. The Vietnamese language also contains many loan words from Chinese, though the two languages are unrelated. Buddhism remains the single largest religion in Vietnam, though like in China but unlike in the rest of northern South east Asia, the dominant school of Buddhism in Vietnam is the Mahayana School.

Nevertheless, Vietnamese culture remains distinct from Chinese culture as it has also absorbed cultural elements from neighbouring Hindu civilizations such as the Champa and the Khmer empires. The French colonization has also left a lasting impact on Vietnamese society, with baguettes and coffee remaining popular among locals.

## Climate

Vietnam is large enough to have several distinct climate zones.

- The North has four distinct seasons, with a comparatively chilly winter (temperatures can dip below 15°C/59°F in Hanoi), a hot and wet summer and pleasant spring (March-April) and autumn (October-December) seasons. However, in the Highlands both extremes are amplified, with occasional snow in the winter and temperatures hitting 40°C (104°F) in the summer.
- In the Central regions the Hai Van pass separates two different weather patterns of the North starting in Langco (which is hotter in summer and cooler in winter) from the milder conditions South starting in Danang. North East Monsoon conditions September - February with often strong winds, large sea swells and rain make this a miserable and difficult time to travel through Central Vietnam. Normally summers are hot and dry.
- The South has three somewhat distinct seasons: hot and dry from March to May/June; rainy from June/July to November; and cool and dry from December to February. April is the hottest month, with mid-day temperatures of 33°C (91°F) or more most days. During the rainy season, downpours can happen every afternoon, and occasional street flooding occurs. Temperatures range from stifling hot before a rainstorm to pleasantly cool afterwards. Mosquitoes are most numerous in the rainy season. December to February is the most pleasant time to visit, with cool evenings down to around 20° (68°F).

## Holidays

By far the largest holiday of the year is **Tết**, celebration of the New Year (as marked by the lunar calendar), which takes place between late January and March on the Western calendar. In the period leading up to Tết, the country is abuzz with preparations. Men on motorbikes rush around delivering potted tangerine trees and flowering bushes, the traditional household decorations. People get a little bit stressed out and the elbows get sharper, especially in big cities, where the usual hectic level of traffic becomes almost homicidal. Then a few days before Tết the pace begins to slow down, as thousands of city residents depart for their ancestral

home towns in the provinces. Finally on the first day of the new year an abrupt transformation occurs: the streets become quiet, almost deserted. Nearly all shops and restaurants close for three days, (the exception being a few that cater especially to foreign visitors; and hotels operate as usual.)

In the major cities, streets are decorated with lights and public festivities are organized which attract many thousands of residents. But for Vietnamese, Tết is mostly a private, family celebration. On the eve of the new year, families gather together and exchange good wishes (from more junior to more senior) and gifts of "lucky money" (from more senior to more junior). In the first three days of the year, the daytime hours are devoted to visiting -- houses of relatives on the first day, closest friends and important colleagues on the second day, and everyone else on the third day. Many people also visit pagodas. The evening hours are spent drinking and gambling (men) or chatting, playing, singing karaoke, and enjoying traditional snacks and candy (women and children.)

Visiting Vietnam during Tết has good points and bad points. On the minus side: modes of transport are jammed just before the holiday as many Vietnamese travel to their home towns; hotels fill up, especially in smaller towns; and your choice of shopping and dining is severely limited in the first days of the new year (with a few places closed up to two weeks). In Saigon, most shops are closed for a whole week after new years day. Restaurants may charge a higher than normal price, e.g. adding a 20% "happy new year" fee. Beware that crowded places are ideal for pickpockets. On the plus side, you can observe the preparations and enjoy the public festivities; pagodas are especially active; no admission is charged to those museums and historical sites that stay open; and the foreigner-oriented travel industry of backpacker buses and resort hotels chugs along as usual. Visitors also stand a chance of being invited to join the festivities, especially if you have some local connections or manage to make some Vietnamese friends during your stay. When visiting during Tết, it's wise to get settled somewhere at least two days before the new year, and don't try to move again until a couple of days after.

### Get in

Visitors from the following countries do not require a visa and can stay for the following number of days.

- 15 days: Denmark, Finland, Japan, Norway, South Korea, Sweden, Russia
- 21 days: Philippines
- 30 days: Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand

All other nationalities will require a **visa** in advance to visit Vietnam.

### Visa on arrival

The term visa on arrival is a bit of a misnomer in the case of Vietnam as a letter of approval has to be obtained before arrival. This is handled by a growing number of on-line agencies for a charge of US\$9-21 (in 2012), visa price is \$15 from 2012. Most agencies accept payment by credit card, some accept payment by Western Union or Paypal. You also have to pay stamp fee at the airport when arrival.

Accordingly, the new fees applied from the date 1st Jan 2013, being increased from \$15 to \$20 due to type of visa. Following the policy, the detail visa fees are as following: - One month – single entry costs \$45/visa (\$20 increasing) - One month – multiple entry costs \$65 for per visa (\$15 increasing) - Three months – single entry costs the same with one month single entry - Three months – multiple entry costs \$95 for per visa. - Six months – multiple entry costs \$135 for per visa.

After landing at one of the three international airports (Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Danang), the traveller goes to the "Visa upon arrival Counter" and shows the letter, fills in an additional arrival form (can be pre-filled before departure) and receives an official stamp (sticker) in his or her passport. As of July 2013 a stamping fee in cash, of US\$45 or US\$65 for a single or multiple entry visa respectively, is payable at the time - only U.S. dollars or VND are accepted (no other currency or credit card) and the notes must be in as-new condition or they will be refused. Two passport photos are also required (often 4X6 cm).

**Although more expensive than buses, trains are undoubtedly the most comfortable way to travel overland in Vietnam.**

There is one major train line in Vietnam, the 1723-kilometre trunk between Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, on which the **Reunification Express** runs. HCMC to Hanoi is more than 30 hours, but overnight hops between major destinations are usually possible, if not entirely convenient. It's a good way to see the countryside and meet upper-middle class locals, but unless you are travelling in a sleeper car it is no more comfortable than buses.

Air-conditioned soft or hard sleeper berths are available and purchasing as early as possible is a good idea as popular berths and routes are often bought out by tour companies and travel agents well before the departure time (hence being told the train is sold out at a station ticket window or popular tour company office does not mean there are no tickets available anywhere--they've simply been bought by another re-seller). Booking at the train station itself is generally the safest way, just prepare on a piece of paper the destination, date, time, number of passengers and class. However, unsold tickets can often be bought last minute from people hanging around at the station--a train is rarely sold out for real, as the railway company will add cars when demand is high. Commissions on these tickets will drop away as the departure time draws nearer. Tickets can be returned before departure for a 10% fee.

Seat or sleeper type is marked on the ticket in Vietnamese - for example, soft sleeper "**NAM MEM DIEU HOA**" meaning: NAM sleeper MEM soft DIEU HOA a/c. Other types may be marked as "Cứng" (hard) or "Ngồi" (seat). There is a common scam with private travel agents where you will pay them to book a soft-sleeper ticket, they then book you a cheaper hard-sleeper ticket, and you don't know you've been scammed until you board the train and your berths are in the lower class. By then with the train on the verge of departing it is too late to go back to the scamming agent to demand compensation.

AC soft-seat option is not too painful if you are travelling for about 15 hours! Just think about it in the context of a flight from London to Sydney which takes over 20 hours. On the train, you will have the freedom to move about, stand up & stretch, no seat-belt wear, a lot of legroom, etc. Seats are numbered in this carriage and it appears you cannot request a seat based on your preference. The reservation system will assign one for you at the time of buying it!

Don't always believe the pictures of train carriages you see! The TN trains have the oldest and dirtiest cars and are the slowest therefore, are not recommended. The SE trains have slightly better quality cars but they too are old.

Luggage storage is very much restricted to the over-head racks in non-sleeper compartments. These racks would take a large case on wheels but you will have to lift it up there! You will see locals boarding trains with large cases or boxes and these usually end up in the passenger's foot well (i.e. they put their feet on top of the case) or in the corridor. The latter is not a good idea especially on long distance trains since the meal & drinks trolleys go up and down the carriages frequently. In sleepers, your luggage has to be in your room. If you have a lot of luggage, a bus or plane would be a better option.

Each of the SE, TN and SNT coded trains end with a number. If the number is odd it travels from North to South. If it is even, it travels from South to North.

WARNING - Be very careful of your possessions on the overnight bus, people (including bus employees) have been known to look through passengers bag's and take expensive items such as iPods and phones and sell them on for profit. If you are travelling with an iPod **DO NOT FALL ASLEEP WITH IT IN YOUR EAR**, as the chances are it will be nowhere to be found in the morning. Simply get a padlock for your hand luggage and lock everything up in there before you go to sleep.

The *xe ôm* (literally 'hugging vehicle') is a common mode of transport for Vietnamese as well as tourists. They are widely available and reasonably cheap -- about 10,000 dong for a 10 minute trip, which should get you anywhere within the city centre. Walk the city streets, and every couple of minutes a guy will flag your attention and say "You !! MotoBike?" Longer trips to outlying areas can be negotiated for 20,000-25,000 dong. Always agree on the fare before starting your trip. As with most things, a tourist will often be quoted an above-market price initially, and you need to be firm. If quoted anything over 10,000 dong for a short trip, remind the driver that you could take an air-con taxi for 15,000 dong so forget it. Occasionally drivers will demand more than the negotiated price at the end, so it's best to have exact change handy. Then you can pay the agreed amount and walk away, end of discussion.

The 110-cc motorbike is the preferred mode of transport for the Vietnamese masses, and the large cities swarm with them. It's common to see whole families of four cruising along on a single motorbike. In most places where tourists go, you can easily rent your own, with prices ranging from 100,000 to 160,000 dong per day. Before reading on, however, you should be aware that it is illegal for foreigners to ride a motorbike in Vietnam unless they are in possession of a temporary Vietnamese motorcycle licence, which in turn requires you to have a current licence issued by your home country/country of residence or an International Driving Permit.

To convert your licence or International Driving Permit into a temporary Vietnamese licence you must hold a Vietnamese residence permit of at least three months' validity or a three-month tourist visa. In Hanoi you should apply to the Centre for Automotive Training and Mechanism, 83a Ly Thuong Kiet Street; in HCMC to the Office of Transportation, 63 Ly Tu Trong Street, District 1.

You should also be aware that if you ride unlicensed and have an accident in which a third party is injured or killed you could be subject to a term of imprisonment of 10-20 years, as well as paying a large sum in compensation to the victim or the victim's family. Moreover, even if your travel insurance policy covers you for motorcycling (check the small print as many don't), if you are injured when riding illegally the insurance company will not recompense you for medical attention, hospitalisation, evacuation to another country for hospitalisation or repatriation, the cost of which can run into tens of thousands of dollars.

Desk clerks at small hotels often run a side business renting motorbikes to guests, or have a friend or relative who does. Tour booths can usually do the same. In small towns and beach resorts where traffic is light, e.g Pho Quoc, it's a delightful way to get around and see the sights, and much cheaper than taxis if you make several stops or travel any distance. Roads are usually decent, though it's advisable not to ride too fast and always keep an eye on the road for the occasional pothole.

Riding in the big cities, especially Ho Chi Minh City, is a very different matter, and not advisable unless you are an experienced rider with a very cool head. Traffic is intense and chaotic, with a long list of unwritten rules that don't resemble traffic laws anywhere else. "Right of way" is a nearly unknown concept. Riding in HCMC is like finding yourself in the middle of a 3-D video game where anything can come at you from any direction, and you only have one life. Expats who brave the traffic at all typically have an apprenticeship of a few weeks or months riding on the back of others' motorbikes to learn the ways of the traffic, before attempting to ride themselves. Extreme caution is advised for short-term visitors.

Riding long distance in the countryside can also be harrowing depending on the route you take. Major roads between cities tend to be narrow despite being major, and full of tour buses hell-bent on speed, passing slow trucks where maybe they shouldn't have tried,

and leaving not much room at the edge for motorbikes.

Two main categories of motorbike are available to rent: scooters (automatic transmission); and four-speed motorbikes, the gears of which you shift with your left foot. The ubiquitous Honda Super Cub is a common 4-speed bike that has a semi-automatic gearbox ie no clutch so is relatively easy to ride. Other models may be fully manual and therefore you must also operate the clutch using your left hand - this takes a lot of skill and it's all too easy to over-rev and pull a wheelie or stall the engine - if you end up with such a bike then practice releasing the clutch gently before hitting the roads! Dirt bikes are becoming popular for rent in Hanoi, other cities are not yet ready for these beasts. Rental agents tend to steer foreigners toward scooters if available, on the (plausible) assumption that they don't know how to ride motorbikes that require shifting gears. Motorcycles of 175cc and above are only legal to ride if you make a connection with a Vietnamese motorcycle club.

The KUB cafe (Kustom Urban Bike) #12 ngõ 264 Âu Cơ, Tây Hồ, Hà Nội offers a great starting point for your journey by motorbike or a great place to end your trip in Vietnam, It's run by bikers for bikers of all sizes. They give out great advise to help you on your journey by motorbike.

Most places you would want to stop have parking attendants who will issue you a numbered tag and watch over your bike. Sometimes these parking operations are overseen by the establishment you are visiting, and sometimes they are free-lance operations set up in places where a lot of people go. You will usually see rows of bikes lined up parked. Depending on circumstance, you might park the bike yourself, or just put it in neutral and let the staff position it. In all but rare cases you keep the key. Parking is sometimes free at restaurants and cafes (look for "giu xe mien phi"). Elsewhere, fees range from 2,000 to 5,000 dong.

Traffic police in the cities pull over lots of locals (often for reasons that are hard to discern), but conventional wisdom has it that they rarely bother foreigners due to the language barrier. Obeying the traffic laws is nevertheless advisable, especially if you have failed to obtain a Vietnamese licence. Cities like Ho Chi Minh have several one way street, and it is too easy to just steer into them unknowingly as there are limited signs warning you. BE SURE that if you break law, the police who are sneaking just at the right spot, will ask you to pull over and will fine you. They will also threaten to confiscate your bike. The quoted price for the fine may be negotiable, and being apologetic and friendly can get you back on road quickly, with a few dollars less in your pockets.

Helmets have also been required by law since December 2007, so if you don't have one already ask your rental agent to provide you with one.

While slowly being supplanted by motorbikes, **cyclo** pedicabs still roam the streets of Vietnam's cities and towns. They are especially common in scenic smaller, less busy cities like Hue, where it's pleasant to cruise slowly along taking in the sights. Though the ride will be slow, hot and sometimes dangerous, you'll generally need to pay *more* than for a motorbike for the equivalent distance. On the plus side, some drivers (particularly in the South) are very friendly and happy to give you a running commentary on the sights. Cyclo drivers are notoriously mercenary and will always ask for a high price to start with. Sometimes they will also demand more than the agreed price at the end. (Japanese tourists, especially women, are most often targeted with this scam since they are more responsive to the threat that the driver will call the police and make trouble for them if they don't pay as demanded.) A reasonable price is about 20,000 dong for up to 2 km (1.2 mi), and if the driver disagrees, simply walk away. (You won't get far before that driver or another takes your offer.) Prices for a sight-seeing circuit with intermediate stops are more complex to negotiate and more subject to conflict at the end. If you plan to stop somewhere for any length of time, it's best to settle up with the driver, make no promises, and start fresh later. Some drivers start with a very low rate to get you into their cycle and then if required to wait for you or otherwise vary the agreed price, bring out a typed up price list of their "standard rates" which are inflated beyond belief. If even slightly unsure ask the driver show you his list of charges. Then negotiate from that point or walk away. To avoid trouble, it's also best to have exact change for the amount you agreed to pay, so if the driver tries to revise the deal, you can just lay your cash on the seat and leave.

Tour boats can be chartered for around US\$20 for a day's tour; but beware of safety issues if you charter a boat. Make sure the boat is registered for carrying Tourists and has enough life jackets and other safety equipment on board. Or you can book a tour through a tour company; but be aware that in Vietnam most Tour Agents charge whatever markup they want and therefore the tourist is often paying margins of 30-40% and the boat owner and operator (of anything from a van to a boat) are paid very little of the total amount!

Ha Long Bay is a famous destination for 1-3 day boat trips among its scenic limestone islands. Problem is that all the boats seem to visit the same places - and with high prices and poor quality boats and service real value is hard to come by! Many boats have a US\$10 corkage fee, and forbid BYO alcohol, with on board alcohol and seafood about the same price as Europe on some boats! If there is rain, mist or low cloud, you may not see much. Try to pick a clear day.

Dozens of small family-operated boats ply the river in Hue taking visitors to the imperial tombs southwest of the city. This journey is long because the boats are slow, taking about 4 hours or so to make the journey in one direction.

A 90-minute hydrofoil boat operates from Saigon to the seaside resort of Vung Tau for about 120,000 dong each way -- the fastest way to reach the beach from the city.

Simply walking to the nearest intersection and merely watching the driving antics is amazing. Keep watching and you may see TV's and Fridges and other unlikely objects impossibly balanced and secured with string on the back of a motorcycle. Watch how other people and local cross the road.

You will need to observe the traffic etiquette, if you want to cross the road. Some suggest avoid crossing when trucks and lorry's are

close by, as they are less agile than motorbikes.

If your timing coincides with the to/from school hours, this is the best time to observe a glimpse of pushbikes, traditional clothing and ao dai mixing it with 'normal' traffic, even in the heaviest of torrential downpours. Such motivated schoolchildren!

As you travel about, you will find there are clusters of shops all selling like goods - like 20 sewing machine shops together, then 30 hardware shops all together, 200 motorcycle repair shops in the same block. Prices are competitive!

Be wary of watch shops selling original authentic fakes. Other fake watches are available but not as cheap as other surrounding countries. Pirated software is oddly very hard to find and not sold openly. However Movie DVD's of indifferent quality are widely available from US\$1, although not all may have English on them. The local post office will strictly not allow them to be posted abroad.

Vietnam claims Health tourism is on the rise. Hygiene, infection control and proper sterilization is very important, as drug resistant 'bugs' are always a concern, anywhere.

As mentioned in the work section below, many travelers like to spend some time working with the local community as a volunteer. Most of these programs require the volunteer to pay fees which cover meals, accommodation and which also allow the local organisations to fund social programs. These fees can vary from a hundred dollars a week to several thousand so it is a good idea to research thoroughly.

The national currency is the **dong** (*đồng*, VND), which is difficult to find or exchange outside Vietnam; change money on arrival and try to get rid of any leftovers before leaving the country. Continuing inflation and a series of devaluations continues to steadily push down the value of the dong, with US\$1 dollar fetching over 21,000 dong in February 2012. Bills are available in denominations of 500, 1000, 2000, 5000, 10,000, 20,000, 50,000, 100,000, 200,000 and 500,000 dong. In 2003, coins were also introduced in denominations of 200, 500, 1000, 2000 and 5000 dong, although these are rarely seen.

#### **Exchanging dong**

According to Vietnamese laws, foreign currency can be easily changed into dong but not vice versa. Exchanging dong is quite a complicated procedure requiring some time and patience. In order to change dong into another currency one should show one's ticket as a confirmation of leaving Vietnam and one's ID. These documents will be photocopied by the bank employees. Then, one fills out a special form stating the sum, purpose of the exchange and destination country. Not all Vietnamese banks perform exchange of dong, but Vietcombank is one that does.

Prices are widely advertised in **U.S. dollars**, namely because of the unstable currency valuation of the dong, but unlike neighboring Cambodia, for instance, payment is often expected in **dong only**, especially outside major tourist destinations. It is also easier to bargain with dong, especially since dollar prices are already rounded, and also because offering the price in dollars marks you as a "tourist" or "newcomer" - and as a potential target for scams/overcharging. Travel-related establishments (guesthouses, travel agencies, etc.) which quote their price in dollars, on the other side, may try to get from you slightly more if you wish to pay them in dong rather than dollars (e.g. calculating \$1 as 21,000 or even 22,000 while the going rate was 20,800) - in this case it's actually *cheaper* to pay them in dollars. Dollar bills in less than perfect condition may be rejected. US\$2 bills (especially those printed in the 1970's) are considered lucky in Vietnam and are worth more than US\$2. They make a good tip/gift, and many Vietnamese will keep them in their wallet for luck. US\$50 and US\$100 notes get a higher exchange rate than notes of lower denominations.

Most visitors opt to keep the bulk of their cash in U.S. dollars and exchange or withdraw dong as needed. There is often a considerable spread in dong buy/sell rates, and sometimes the same hotel has different rates for different services! In addition to banks and official exchange counters, you can exchange most hard currencies (Sterling, Yen, Swiss Francs, Euro etc.) at gold shops, often at slightly better than official rates. This is technically illegal, but enforcement is minimal. Hotels and travel agencies can also exchange money with differing exchange rates so look for the best rate.

For **credit card** payments, there is usually a 3% surcharge, so cash may be advantageous for large transactions.

**Traveller cheques** of well known companies are widely accepted, but usually a small fee is charged. Fees might also be the only thing that would keep you from getting **cash advances** on Visa- or Mastercard at most banks. Through both ways you can also get hold of U.S. dollars, though there will be even higher fees. There are mentions in some popular travel books about Vietcombank not charging any commission fees to cash AMEX travelers cheques. However, this is not true anymore.

**ATMs** are becoming more and more common and can be found in most bigger cities and every tourist destination. They will accept a selection of credit and bank-cards, including Visa, Mastercard, Maestro or Cirrus and several other systems. Typically withdrawals are limited to 2,000,000 dong per transaction, and will incur a 20,000 dong service fee.

- EXIMBANK allows up to 2,000,000 dong per transaction with no charge. (Jan 2014)
- ANZ Bank allows up to 4,000,000 - 10,000,000 dong per transaction (15,000,000 dong per day) with a 40,000 dong charge.
- Vietcombank allows up to 2,000,000 dong per transaction with a 20,000 dong charge.
- Techcombank allows up to 2,000,000 per transaction with a 30,000 dong charge (Dec 2013).
- BIDV Bank allows up to 3,000,000 dong per transaction with no charge (Jan 2014).
- Agribank allows up to 3,000,000 dong per transaction (25,000,000 dong per day(?)) with a 20,000 dong charge. (Dec 2013)
- SeABank allows up to 2,000,000 dong per transaction with no charge.
- Citi Bank allows up to 8,000,000 dong per transaction.
- Military Bank (MB) up to 5,000,000 dong per transaction with no charge.

There are branches of **money transfer** companies like Western Union, but this is always one of the more expensive ways to get money.

### **Bargaining**

Overcharging has long been an issue in Vietnam tourism. It can happen anywhere on anything from an hotel room, a ride on taxi, coffee, meal, clothing, basic grocery stuff. Your coffee suddenly becomes 100% more expensive and a restaurant may present you an English menu with inflated prices. A friendly local who spent 30 minutes talking with you may also feel like overcharging you on anything.

Vietnamese hold a diverse view on this issue but in general it is more common in Vietnam than other neighbouring countries to see it socially acceptable to overcharge foreigners. They may argue inflated prices are still cheap and they may blame on the cheap cost of living which attracts a lot of backpackers with barebone budgets. According to this school of thought, if tourists complain about it, it's because they're stingy. Rich tourists should not have a problem being overcharged.

The good news is that standard price is much more common than early 90s. You will absolutely spoil your travel if you assume that everyone is cheating you, just try to be smart. In a restaurant, learn some common dish names in Vietnamese, insist that you need to read Vietnamese menu, and compare it. If owners argue that the portion of dishes in the English menu is different, it's definitely a scam and move to other places. Learn some Vietnamese numbers and try to see how much a local pays a vendor. Also try basic bargaining tactics: Think how much it is back home, ask for big discount and walk away, pretending that the price isn't right. Many products tend to be standardized and compare more.

Try to be as clear as possible on the agreed price. You may agree 20,000 dong with a "Xe Om" driver for a specific trip, but at the end he may claim you are due 40,000 dong. Then you pay 20,000 dong, smile and say goodbye, because you have a good memory.

Vietnam is still cheap by most standards: a month's stay can start from US\$250 using basic rooms, local food and open bus transportation.

**Tipping** is not expected in Vietnam, with the exception of bellhops in high end hotels. In any case, the price quoted to you is often many times what locals will pay, so tipping can be considered unnecessary in most circumstances. To avoid paying a tip when a taxi driver, for example, claims they don't have small change, always try to have various denominations available.

With unbelievable abundance of fresh vegetables, herbs, fish and seafood, Vietnam has a lot to offer. It can be mentioned here a range of widely- admired dishes such as noodle served with beef or chicken( pho), spring roll, eel or snail vermicelli, crab fried with tamarind, crab sour soup, rice spaghetti, steamed rolls made of rice-flour, rice pancake folded in half (and filled with a shrimp, meat and soya bean sprouts)., etc.

Food sits at the very centre of Vietnamese culture: every significant holiday on the Vietnamese cultural calendar, all the important milestones in a Vietnamese person's life, and indeed, most of the important day-to-day social events and interactions - food plays a central role in each. Special dishes are prepared and served with great care for every birth, marriage and death, and the anniversaries of ancestors' deaths. More business deals are struck over dinner tables than over boardroom tables, and when friends

get together, they eat together. Preparing food and eating together remains the focus of family life.

Vietnamese cuisine varies slightly from region to region, with many regions having their own specialties. Generally, northern Vietnamese cuisine is known for being bland while southern Vietnamese cuisine is known for being spicy.

At the same time, the Vietnamese are surprisingly modest about their cuisine. (And old proverb/joke says that a fortunate man has a Western (French) house, Japanese wife, and Chinese chef.) High-end restaurants tend to serve "Asian-fusion" cuisine, with elements of Thai, Japanese, and Chinese mixed in. The most authentic Vietnamese food is found at street side "restaurants" (A collection of plastic outdoor furniture placed on the footpath), with most walk-in restaurants being mainly for tourists. Definite regional styles exist -- northern, central, and southern, each with unique dishes. Central style is perhaps the most celebrated, with dishes such as *mì quang* (wheat noodles with herbs, pork, and shrimp), *banh canh cua* (crab soup with thick rice noodles) and *bun bo Hue* (beef soup with herbs and noodles).

Many Vietnamese dishes are flavored with **fish sauce** (*nước mắm*), which smells and tastes like anchovies (quite salty and fishy) straight from the bottle, but blends into food very well. (Try taking home a bottle of fish sauce, and using it instead of salt in almost any savory dish -- you will be pleasantly surprised with the results.) Fish sauce is also mixed with lime juice, sugar, water, and spices to form a tasty dip/condiment called *nước chấm*, served on the table with most meals. Vegetables, herbs and spices, notably **Vietnamese coriander** or cilantro (*rau mùi* or *rau ngò*), mint (*rau răm*) and basil (*rau húng*), accompany almost every dish and help make Vietnamese food much lighter and more aromatic than the cuisine of its neighboring countries, especially China.

Vietnam's national dish is **phở** (pronounced like the *fu*- in *funny*, but with tone), a broth soup with beef or chicken and rice noodles (a form of rice linguini or fettuccine). Phở is normally served with plates of fresh herbs (usually including Asian basil), cut limes, hot chiles and and scalded bean sprouts which you can add in according to your taste, along with chili paste, chili sauce, and sweet soybean sauce. *Phở bò*, the classic form of phở, is made with beef broth that is often simmered for many hours and may include one or more kinds of beef (skirt, flank, tripe, etc.). *Phở gà* is the same idea, but with chicken broth and chicken meat. Phở is the original Vietnamese fast food, which locals grab for a quick meal. Most phở places specialize in phở and can serve you a bowls as fast as you could get a Big Mac. It's available at any time of the day, but locals eat it most often for breakfast. Famous phở restaurants can be found in Hanoi. Generally speaking, the phở served at roadside stalls tends to be cheaper and taste better than those served in fancier restaurants.

Street side eateries in Vietnam typically advertise *phở* and *com*. Though *com* literally means rice, the sign means the restaurant serves a plate of rice accompanied with fish or meat and vegetables. *Com* is used to indicate eating in general...even when rice is not served (ie: An *com chua*?- Have you eaten yet) Though they may look filthy, street side eateries are generally safe so long as you avoid undercooked food.

In rural and regional areas it is usually safest to eat the locally grown types of food as these are usually bought each day from the market. It is not uncommon, that after you have ordered your meal a young child of the family will be seen running out the back towards the nearest market to purchase the items.

Most restaurants/cafes in Vietnam will have a bewildering variety of food available. It is very common for menus to be up to 10-15 pages. These will include all types of Vietnamese food, plus some token western food, possibly some Chinese and maybe a pad thai as well. It is generally best to stick with the specialty of the area as this food will be the freshest and also the best prepared.

Be advised that when dining in a restaurant, it is common practice for the wait staff to place a plastic packet (stamped with the restaurant's name) containing a moist towelette on your table. They are not free; they cost between 2,000 - 4,000 VND. If you open it, you will be charged for it. Also, peanuts or other nuts will be offered to you while you are browsing the menu. Those are not free, either. If you eat any, you will be charged.

Vegetarian food is quite easy to find anywhere in Vietnam due in large part to the Buddhist influence. These restaurants will run from upscale to street stall. Basically any Vietnamese dish with meat can be made vegetarian with the abundance of fake meats. Besides the Buddhist influence of two vegetarian days a month, Cao Dai people eat vegetarian 16 days, and followers of the bizarre Quan Yin method eat vegan daily. Look for any sign that says *Com Chay* or simply remember the phrase *An Chay*.

**Coffee, baguettes, and pastries** were originally introduced by the French colonials, but all three have been localized and remain popular contemporary aspects of Vietnamese cuisine. More on *cà phê* below, but coffee shops that also serve light fare can be found in almost every village and on multiple street corners in the bigger cities. *Bánh mì* are French bread **sandwiches**: freshly baked white bread baguettes filled with grilled meats or liver or pork pâté, plus fresh herbs and vegetables. Most pastry shops serve a variety of sweets and quick foods, and are now owned by Vietnamese.

If you like **seafood**, you may find heaven in Vietnam. The ultimate seafood experience is traveling to a seaside village or beach resort area in the south to try the local seafood restaurants that often serve shrimp, crab, and locally-caught fish. Follow the locals to a good restaurant: the food will still be swimming when you order it, it will be well-prepared, very affordable by Western standards, and often served in friendly surroundings with spectacular views.

All Vietnamese restaurants are controlled by government, and some are fully owned by government. Most restaurants' opening times are 10:00 to 22:00, some opens at 7:00 and some at 6:00 or 8:00. In 24-hour restaurants, there will be two prices, the price is normal from 6:00 to 22:00, and doubled from 22:00 to 6:00. For example, rice (*com*) usually costs 10,000 dong, but if you order after 22:00, the price will be 20,000 dong. This project is made by government to discourage people from eating late. Some dishes are not



served after 22:00.

In restaurants fully owned by government, you will usually get "errored cuisine" such as fried fish with lemon sauce instead of fish sauce, or rice with tea instead of chili, and some dishes are not available for one month long without any announcement.

Note: restaurants often offer you a wet napkin (kong) at the end of a meal to wash you hands. Be aware that using this incurs an extra charge on your bill.

## Drink

Do not drink tap water, it's a game of Russian Roulette. Drink only bottled water. Watch out for ice in drinks. Factory-made ice is generally safe, but anything else can be suspect.

Don't miss out on *bia hoi*, (literally "air beer"), or **draught beer** made daily. It's available throughout Vietnam, mostly from small bars on street corners. Bia hoi bars will give you the opportunity to relax drinking in a typical Vietnamese bar surrounded by the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Every traveler can easily find these bars to experience what the locals are enjoying.

The beer is brewed daily and each bar gets a fresh batch delivered every day in plastic jugs. It's a very light (3% alcohol) refreshing lager at a fraction of the cost of draft or bottled beer in the Western-style bars. Bia hoi is not always made in sanitary conditions and its making is not monitored by any health agency. Though fun for the novelty factor, this beer may produce awful hangovers for some. For those people, sticking with bia chai (bottled beer) might be more advisable.

The most popular beer (draft, bottle or can) among the Southern Vietnamese is **Saigon Do (Red Saigon)**. For the Northern Vietnamese **Bia Hanoi** (Hanoi beer) is the most popular brand, whereas Central Vietnamese prefer **Festival beer** or **Bia Huda**. **333**, pronounced "ba-ba-ba" is a local brand, but it's somewhat bland; for a bit more flavor, look for **Bia Saigon** in the green bottle and a bigger bottle than Bia Saigon Special. Bia Saigon is also available as little stronger export version. **Bière Larue** is also good, and you can find local brands in every larger city.

It's regular practise for beer in Vietnam to be drunk over ice. This means that the cans or bottles need not be chilled. If you are drinking with Vietnamese people it is considered polite to top up their beer/ice before re-filling your own drink. It is also considered necessary to drink when a toast is proposed...mot, hai, ba, do (one, two, three, cheers). Mot tram, mot tram implies you will drink 100%.

## Wine and liquor

Vietnamese "ruou de" or rice alcohol (*ruou* means alcohol) is served in tiny porcelain cups often with candied fruit or pickles. It's commonly served to male guests and visitors. Vietnamese women don't drink much alcohol, well at least in public. It's not recommended for tourists.

Dating back to French colonial times, Vietnam adopted a tradition of viticulture. Dalat is the center of the winelands, and you can get extremely good **red and white wine** for about US\$2-3, however this is very hard to find. Most wine is Australian that is served in restaurants and you will be charged Australian prices as well making wine comparatively quite expensive compared to drinking beer or spirits.

Coconut wine - Rượu dừa - ruou dua : This is special VietNam wine. This wine is made by traditional material and coconut form natural. Copra of coconut can purify Aldhyt in rice wine which cause your headache and tied. You feel free to drink a health to somebody.

Rice spirt and local Vodka is incredibly cheap in Vietnam by western standards. Russian Champagne is also quite available. When at Nha Trang, look for the 'all you can drink' boat trips for around US\$10-15 for an all day trip and party with on board band.

## Soft drinks

**Coconut water** is a favourite in the hot southern part of the country. *nước mía*, *Sieu Sach* or **sugar cane juice**, is served from distinctive metal carts with a crank-powered sugar cane stalk crushers that release the juice. Another thirst-quencher is the fabulous **sinh tố**, a selection of sliced fresh fruit in a big glass, combined with crushed ice, sweetened condensed milk and coconut milk which should cost 20,000 dong at maximum. You can also have it blended in a mixer. You could place any fruit-type after the word **sinh tố** - e.g. **sinh tố bơ** (avocado smoothie) or **sinh tố dứa** (pineapple smoothie). If you prefer to have orange juice, you won't use the word **sinh tố** but **nước** (literally: water) or **nước cam** if you would like to have an orange juice. Juices are usually without condensed milk or coconut milk.

## Coffee

Another popular drink among locals and tourists alike is the **coffee** (*cà phê*). Do be careful when drinking locally prepared coffee as the locals tend to drink it incredibly strong with about 4 teaspoons of sugar per cup. It is usually served black or with sweetened

condensed milk. Definitely an acquired taste. Vietnamese coffee beans are fried, not roasted. If you are picky, bring your own coffee.

Most hotels throughout Vietnam now have very good high-speed Internet access (but Facebook and other social networks are blocked so you might need a VPN to change your IP. The use of computers is generally free, although some hotels levy a small charge.

The more high-end hotels offer a multitude of amenities; such as elaborate buffets with local cuisine, spa treatments, local sightseeing packages, etc.

Hanoi now has some hostels for families called Hanoi Family Hostels. Rooms here are large and with more beds for children.

Homestay accommodation is easily booked through travel agents. However, some tourists are disappointed to learn that the "homestay" they booked is really a commercial hotel or the accommodation is situated in a separate building from the family home.

Responsible hotels, green hotels or claimed to be so hotels are increasing in Vietnam. There is no standard or accreditation scheme but this is a positive sign that Vietnamese people are paying more attention to the impact of tourism on environment. By saying "yes" to responsible accommodation, you can help protect the local nature, environment and community without without sacrificing your enjoyment. Eco-friendly hotels can be found in northern mountainous areas as well as some lodges in Mekong Delta, a Vietnam that many dream about with lush rice paddies, endless waterways and laid back villages.

Vietnam is a relatively safe place for tourists. Touristy areas in Vietnam are really worth more precaution: thieves, liars, crooks, pickpockets and scammers are everywhere, all the time, and target foreigners. Pickpockets and motorbike snatching have found their home especially in Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi and Nha Trang. Thieves on motorbikes are ready to snatch bags, mobile phones, cameras, and jewellery off pedestrians and other motorbike drivers. Avoid dangling your bags along traffic roads. Talking on your mobile phone next to cars on the road and putting your bag on the front basket of a motorbike will tempt a robber. It could happen day or night, in a crowded road with hundreds of drivers. Locals suggest that they won't kill you but they will take all your money. This is true as long as you don't hold your belongings too tight. Reports that a foreign tourist got crushed to death when she tried to drag back what was robbed have been heard.

Many scams are very common in Vietnam, more so than other places. Be careful when going to a shop or restaurant that doesn't have prices written down. Before eating a meal, ask for the price, as it may increase with every bite you take. When you embark on a tourist tour, be independent: know where you are at all times and be aware of alternatives; the tour might suddenly fall apart. Scams are frequent and the schemes might constantly vary. A very common one is when the organizers claim that the bus broke down and the tour operators force people to pay huge amounts for crummy hotels "while the bus is repaired".

Pickpockets are well organized and operate in groups. If you travel by motorbike, be aware that crooks can cause serious security issues. Reports of people claiming that "your motorcycle is on fire" and offering to repair it or passers-by that throw nails at foreigners on motorcycles are frequent. The police are probably the worst crooks of them all. They are known to steal items from people (both locals and tourists) and ask for a steep bribe to get the item in return. Also, don't count on them for any help if you are victim of crime. Also infamously common are thefts on popular beaches. Never leave your bag unattended on beaches. In hotel rooms, including five star ones, reports that belongings are stolen have been heard occasionally. Also, hotel employees are known to try to pick padlocks as soon as they see one.

Avoid fights and arguments with locals. If you're dealing with 5 or more Vietnamese guys, you're screwed. Keep in mind that yelling at people is a 100% insult to Vietnamese, so the reactions of a Vietnamese might be unpredictable to you. As a foreigner, Vietnamese expect you to act a certain way in their country. You should respect the general law of the land. Most of these arguments can be avoided easily by showing general courtesy, and tolerating cultural differences that may seem rude to you. Show special caution when drinking with Vietnamese men.

## **Corruption**

Corruption is a big problem in Vietnam and locals are convinced that the police are not to be trusted. For motorcycle driver, police officer may stop you for any reasons including missing insurance papers or driving license, fine you around US\$20 for each offence (the average traffic fine should only be about US\$5-10). Remember to stand your ground and all officers are required to write all traffic violations in their notebook and give you a receipt and pay to the station (not the officer). If you have a cell phone, threaten to call your embassy and he may back down. You might though just find it easier to pay the fine and get on your way.

Immigration officers are known to take bribes. During the early Doi Moi (the reform in 90s), bribes could be a few US dollars, a few packs of 555 cigarettes. Today although officers still seem to feel okay at taking it, it is absolutely risk-free and acceptable if you don't bribe. The international monitoring group Transparency International has rated Vietnam as one of the most corrupt nations in Asia.

## **Prostitution**

Prostitution is illegal in Vietnam and the age of consent is 18. Vietnam has laws on the books with penalties up to 20-40 years in prison for sexually exploiting women and children, and several other countries have laws that allow them to prosecute their own

citizens who travel abroad to engage in sex with children.

## **Scam**

Most scams in Vietnam are in transportation, hotel prices and two-menus system practiced by some restaurants.

Hotel owners may tell you that the room price is 200,000 dong. However, when checking out, they may insist that the price is US\$20, charging you almost a double. Another trick is to tell customers that a "room" is a few dollars, but following day they'll say that price was for a fan room only and it's another price for an air-con room. These days, legitimate hotel owners seem to be aware of these scams and are usually willing to help by writing down how much the room is per person per day (in US dollars or dong), if it has air con or not. Staff of legitimate hotels also never ask for payment from a guest when they check in. Watch out if they insist that you should pay when you check out but refuse to write down the price on paper.

Some restaurants are known to have two menus, one for local people and another one for foreigners. The only way to deal with it is to learn a few Vietnamese phrases and insist that you should be shown only the Vietnamese menu. If they hesitate to show you the local menu, you better walk away.

Many taxi drivers in Saigon and Hanoi install rigged meters, charging up to 2 to 8 times more. The best way to reduce your chances is by taking a taxi from reputable companies such as Mai Linh (+84 38 38 38 38) and Vinasun in Saigon and Mai Linh and Hanoi Tourist for Hanoi (but note that taking these companies is not a guarantee, and travellers have had problems even with reputable companies). If you don't know what a reasonable fare is, it is generally a bad idea to agree on a price in advance. Spoken for Saigon, the two recommended companies have quite reliable meters. Vinasun taxis usually have notices explaining that the meter value should be multiplied by 1000 to obtain the fare. Some drivers will take advantage of the ambiguity, and tourists' lack of knowledge about what the fare should be, so it is best to have things clearly written out.

Taxis are abundant in Saigon - and you can get a taxi at any time of the day or (night). You can also call a Taxi, and usually people at call center will be able to either converse in English, or will pass on the phone to someone who can. Rule of thumb to detect scammers - If the taxi doesn't have the fare charges written, or drivers name and photo on the dashboard. Immediately ask the taxi to stop and get out. It is a definite scam.

When leaving the airport, the taxi driver may insist that you pay the airport toll. He might not be very forthcoming with the price, and if you give him cash, he will pay the toll and pocket the rest.

Many taxi drivers in Sai Gon and Ha Noi try to overcharge thin faced, just arrived, and gullible travellers. You should consult some guidebooks and travel forums to prepare yourself for those petty scams and to learn more about how to avoid them. The airport toll fees in Saigon is 10,000 Dong (as of July 2012) - this is also quoted along with the fare written on the dashboard of the taxi. You can confidently say "airport toll only 10,000" and refuse to pay anything else such as parking etc. (unless there were more toll roads in between). Usually, the driver will not argue it out. In Saigon, a trip to Backpackers street should not cost more than 250,000 Dong from the airport in any case.

In several other cities of Vietnam, such as Dalat, Hoi An, Nha Trang etc. - DO NOT travel by meter. The airports are as far as 30-40 km from these places and meter will cost you from 500,000 to 650,000 Dong. However, you can either take a bus from the Airport to the city centre, or pre-negotiate rates with taxis from 200,000-300,000 dong. Refer to individual sections for details. Pay attention to sides of taxi - usually a rate for Airport drop is written on the door itself.

Taxi and cyclo drivers may claim that they don't have change when accepting payment for an agreed-upon fare. The best way to handle this is to either carry smaller bills or be ready to stand your ground. Generally the driver is only trying to get an extra dollar or so by rounding the fare up, but to prevent this scam from becoming more popular it is advised to stay calm and firm about the price.

When you meet an over friendly cyclo driver who says, "never mind how much you would pay" or "you can pay whatever you like at the end of the trip". He even tries to show you his book of comments from international tourists. This kind of driver has to be a scammer. If you still want to use his service you should make it clear about the agreed price and don't pay more than that. Just be clear what you are willing to pay; the cyclo drivers are just trying to make a living.

## **Traffic**

The first discovery for many tourists who just arrive in Vietnam is that they need to learn how to cross a road all over again. You may see a tourist standing on the road for 5 minutes without knowing how to cross it. Traffic in Vietnam is a nightmare. Back home, you may never witness the moment of crash, seeing injured victims lying on the road, or hearing the BANG sound. Staying in Vietnam for more than a month, you will have fair chance of experiencing all these. Roads are packed. Some intersections in main cities (Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City) have traffic lights patrolled by police.

To cross the road, don't try to avoid the cars, let them avoid you. Step confidently forward, a little more, and you will see motorcycle drivers to slow down a bit, or go to another way. Make your pace and path predictable and obvious to other drivers. Don't change your speed or direction suddenly. Then move forward until you hit your destination. The best strategy is just to keep walking forward at a comfortable pace. The simplest way, if available, is to follow a local, stand next to them in the opposite side of the traffic (if you

get hit, he will get it first) and he will give you the best chance of crossing a road.

If you are injured, don't expect that local people are willing to help for even calling an ambulance because it is not free. Make sure you tell local clearly that you will pay the ambulance fee. Hospitals will also not accept your admission unless you prove that you can pay the bill. Highways are also risky with an average of 30 deaths a day and some locals will not even venture on them if not in a big vehicle (car or bus). Taking a bicycle or motorcycle on highways is an adventure for risk takers, definitely not for a family with children.

### **Nightlife**

Petty crime in night clubs can happen. Avoid quarrelling with local people because drunken Vietnamese can be violent. Clubs are full of prostitutes looking for their admirers but be aware that they may also steal your wallet and mobile phone, etc. Walking very late by yourself on the streets in the tourist area is often unsafe.

Avoid asking the cab drivers for recommended nightspots. Most cab drivers are paid by KTVs and lounges to bring in foreign tourists. Usually when you walk in they will tell you a set of pricing which seems reasonable; but when you check out the bill will include a number of extravagant charges. Do your homework beforehand and tell the cab drivers where you want to go. Insist on going to where you want to go despite their persuasion. There are a number of reputable pubs and disco around. Try going to those which have a preponderance of foreigners.

### **Wildlife**

Much of Vietnam's ecology has been severely damaged and very little wildlife remains, let alone anything dangerous to humans. Venomous snakes (such as Cobras) may still be common in rural areas but virtually everything else has either gone extinct or exist in such small numbers that the chances of even seeing them are remote. Tigers may exist in very small numbers in remote areas, but this is yet to be proven. Saltwater crocodiles once thrived in southern Vietnam but have been locally extinct for at least 20 years.

### **Stay healthy**

Tropical diseases such as malaria, dengue fever and Japanese encephalitis are endemic in rural Vietnam. Malaria isn't as much a concern in the bigger cities such as Ho Chi Minh and Hanoi, but always remember to take mosquito liquid repellent with you. It may be very useful, especially in the countryside and crowded neighborhoods.

Thanks to much improved hygiene conditions in recent years, cooked food sold by street vendors and in restaurants, including blended ice drinks, are mostly safe. Just use your common sense and follow the tips under the Traveller's diarrhea article and you'll most likely be fine. Do not drink tap water, it's a game of Russian Roulette. Always drink only bottled water.

### **Respect**

Souvenir shops in Vietnam sell lots of T-shirts with the red flag and portraits of "Uncle Ho." Many overseas Vietnamese are highly critical of the government of Vietnam you may want to consider this before wearing communist paraphernalia in their communities back home! A less controversial purchase would be a *nón lá* (straw hat) instead.

It's common to be stared at by locals in some regions, especially in the central and northern side of the country, and in rural areas. Southerners are usually more open.

Asian women travelling with non-Asian men could attract attention, being considered lovers, escorts or prostitutes by some people and may even be harassed or insulted. These attitudes and behaviours have lessened but have not yet disappeared.

The most surprising thing about the topic of the Vietnam War (the American or Reunification War, as it is called in Vietnam) is that the Vietnamese do not bear any animosity against visitors from the countries that participated, and in the South many Vietnamese (especially older Vietnamese involved in the conflict or with relatives in the war) appreciate or at least respect the previous Western military efforts against the North. Two-thirds of the population were born after the war and are quite fond of the west. That said, there are some attractions which present a very anti-American viewpoint on the war's legacy, which may make some feel uncomfortable.

Be sensitive if you must discuss past conflicts. Well over 3 million Vietnamese died, and it is best to avoid any conversations that could be taken as an insult to the sacrifices made by both sides during the wars. Do not assume that all Vietnamese think alike as many Vietnamese in the South are still bitter about having lost against the North. The official government relationship with the PR China has deteriorated significantly recently as the two countries are locked in a territorial dispute over maritime borders, stay neutral and be aware.

### **Traditional costume**

You can see people wearing Vietnamese traditional costume – Aodai (áo dài, "long dress")- which has a strong bond with Vietnamese tradition, history, culture. It is a long silk dress which is split on its side. For centuries, it has been acknowledged that Aodai is the representative of the country and people. Vietnam is somewhat influenced by the Chinese including their way of

dressing due to four thousand years being under Chinese reign. Going to Vietnam, tourists can easily catch sight of Vietnamese wearing Aodai in solemn ceremonies such as the death anniversary of Hung Kings, Quanho Bac Ninh, Huong Temple celebration, new year's Eve and other important festivals. Aodai was originally designed for both men and women, but it is mostly preferred by women due to its slender, elegant design – the design which is definitely suitable to honor Vietnamese women. Aodai is usually worn along with Nonla (nón lá, "leaf hat") or a cloth worn over one's head, known as Khandong (khăn đống, "silk hat"). There are various versions of Aodai such as miniraglan Aodai, turtleneck Aodai, etc. "Miss Aodai" pageant is one of the most popular beauty contests on our traditional costume. It aims to preserve as well as introduce Vietnamese traditional costume to friends around the world. Tourists who come to Vietnam can watch this show at Ho Chi Minh City palace of culture. In addition, if you wish to have your own Aodai, here are some recommended branches that you may want to take a look: Thai Tuan Ao dai, Lien Huong Ao Dai. These branches can provide you with the most authentic Aodai.

## **Contact – Phone - Police 113- Fire Brigade 114 - Hospital 115 - Time 117 - General Information 1080**

Landline numbers in Hanoi and HCMC have a sequence of eight numbers, others have seven.

- Vietnam international code: +84
- Hanoi area code : (04)
- Ho Chi Minh area code : (08)

## **VoIP calls**

Telephone bills are 30% to 40% cheaper if dialed with 171 or 178 services.

- Domestic call : 171 (178) + 0 + Area code + Number.
- International call : 171 (178) + 00 + Country code + Area code + Number.

Since hotels and guesthouses often charge higher for telephone calls, try to find a post office or any reliable public service.

## **Mobile phones**

There are many mobile networks with different codes:

- Vinaphone: 91, 94, 121, 123, 125 (GSM 900)
- Mobifone: 90, 93, 122, 124, 126 (GSM 900/1800)
- Viettel: 98, 97, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169 (GSM 900)
- SFone: 95 (CDMA)
- Vietnamobile: 92 (CDMA)
- EVN Telecom: 96 (CDMA)
- Beeline: 199, 99 (GSM 900)

You can buy a SIM card in every shop selling mobile phones, or showing their network's brands. The standard price is no higher than 75,000 dong, but foreigners are often charged 100,000 dong.

Prepaid account charges vary from 1,700-2,500 dong per minute. Recharge cards are available in denominations of 50,000, 100,000, 200,000 and 500,000 dong.

Roaming onto Vietnam's GSM networks are possible with foreign mobile phones, subject to agreements between operators.

## **Internet**

Internet access is available in all but the most remote towns. Internet cafes are available in most tourist spots and rates are fairly cheap, ranging from 2,000-10,000 dong per hour. Connection speeds are high, especially in the big cities.

Many hotels and restaurants provide free Wi-Fi or terminals for their guests. If you bring your own phone and/or laptop, several providers offer mobile internet services (EDGE/3G) services as well.

Internet censorship is applied to small number of internet services. In the past, Facebook and Skype have been blocked but as of Feb 2013 both are available. A quick Google search for the relevant programs should help you bypass any banned sites quite easily. Other sites such as Gmail, YouTube, and Wikipedia seem to be unaffected. If at any time web censorship is a problem, we recommend you use the free software created by the Tor Project at [13]

## Planning a Celebration? Sequence of the Tet Celebration

Do it right. Here's a step-by-step sequence of the Tet Celebration

**Preparation.** During the week before Tet, some families visit the graves of parents and grandparents. Fresh earth is placed on top, weeds removed from around it and incense is burnt to invoke the souls of the dead from the other world to return to visit the family home.

The Kitchen God (Ong Tao or Mandarin Tao) is also called the Hearth God, the Stove God or the Household God. This god who was privy to the family's most private business and intimate secrets for the ending year, returns to Heaven to make his report to the Jade Emperor. This report includes the year's activities of the household in which he has lived. On the 23rd day of the 12th month, a farewell and thank you dinner is given to the Kitchen God by the household. The Kitchen God will need a week for his mission to Heaven.

Folklore has made the spirit of the hearth into a picturesque character, a buffoon who is the butt of crude jokes. Although he is a messenger of the Jade Emperor in Heaven, he is depicted as so poor as to be unable to afford much clothing. He wears an important mandarin hat but goes about with bare legs because he has scorched his pants in the hearth fire. Another version tells that he was in such a rush to get back to Heaven that he forgot his pants and ascended in only his underwear. Efforts must be made to put him in a proper mood to secure a favorable report to the Jade Emperor of the family's activities. Offerings are made to him. These gifts certainly aim at influencing the outcome of the report. But no one considers such gifts to be crass bribery. Such pleasantries merely sweeten the god's way, as perhaps cookies placed by the fireplace will please Santa Claus, who might be tired from delivering so many gifts on Christmas night.

The paper carps, horses and clothing (hats, robes and boots) will be burned by the family and thus transformed into a spiritual essence usable by Ong Tao in the world beyond. Like Santa Claus, the Kitchen God is loved and respected. Both have the capacity to bring fortune and happiness into the home depending on the previous year's behavior. Although beliefs about the Kitchen God have changed over the years, he remains an important figure in the rich texture of Vietnamese New Year. The Kitchen God travels on the back of a brightly colored and powerful paper horse or sometimes a grand bird with great wings, such as a crane. Or he might ride on a carp with golden scales. Paper images of these vehicles are purchased at Tet or a living specimen of fish is bought and later set free. The day of his departure is marked by the calls of fishmongers from the countryside carrying baskets of fish hanging from their shoulder poles and calling "Fish for sale, fine mounts for the Household Gods to make their ride!" Live fish held in tanks of water and plastic bags are released into ponds, lakes, rivers and streams to impress the god with the kindness of the household. In Hanoi, the Sword Lake is a favorite spot for releasing Ong Tao's fish-vehicle. In some cases, three fish are released to account for the possibility that one must please all three Hearth Gods.

Most frequently we hear of only the Kitchen God, but many legends support the trinity of Kitchen Gods. Ong Tao represents the blending of all three.

In the old days, and still in some countryside homes, cooking occurs over clay tripods. Three stones were all that was needed to hold up the pot over the fire. Few people spend time thinking about the nature of the Kitchen Gods or the specific meaning of the items that are associated with them. The three Hearth Gods are represented at Tet by three hats and shops sell sets of three miniature paper hats: two men's hats and one woman's. These are burned as offerings to Ong Tao. The God will also need a new pair of boots to wear as he travels to Heaven. Two favorite gifts for the triad of household deities are gold and wine.

In the central part of Vietnam, cooking tripods or blocks that make up the family hearth, even if they are still usable, are ritually discarded when the God leaves. One week later, new blocks will greet his return or the arrival of his replacement assigned by the Jade Emperor.

After the Kitchen God has left, preparations for the New Year festivities begin in earnest. The week before New Year's Eve is a period of Tat Nien. Tat Nien (literally meaning the end or 'to extinguish the year') is the celebration of the last session of a period, such as the last class of school, the last bus home, the last day in the office, even the last bath, all with parties and great ceremony. There is a festive holiday atmosphere before New Year's Eve with dragon dances.

Some families set up a Tet tree in the week before New Year's Eve. The Tet tree called cay neu, is a bamboo pole stripped of most of its leaves except for a bunch at the very top. The Tet tree has Taoist origins and holds talismanic objects that clang in the breeze to attract good spirits and repel evil ones. On the very top, they frequently place a paper symbol of yin and yang, the two principal forces of the universe. Sometimes a colorful paper carp flag will fly from the top. The carp (or sometimes a horse) is the vehicle on which the Hearth God travels to make his report. This tree is more common in the countryside now than in the city. It is ceremonially removed after the seventh day of Tet.

Sweeping and scrubbing is done in advance as tradition discourages cleaning during the holiday itself. During this time, shops and restaurants close while the cleaning spree proceeds in earnest. On hands and knees, the floors will be scrubbed; bronze will be polished to a brand new finish. Closets will be ransacked for old clothes to be tossed out. Shoppers swarm the streets at temporary Tet stalls that have sprung up, lit with tiny gaily-flashing lights. Everything needed for the celebration from food to decorations is at hand and in abundance at these Tet markets.

Two items required for the proper enjoyment of Tet are flowering branches and the kumquat bush. For the sale of these and other flowers and plants, a lively flower market is held in the center of the ancient quarter of Hanoi on Hang Luoc Street. A massive flower market was organized on Nguyen Hue Street in Ho Chi Minh City and attracts crowds who walk up and down the street admiring the flowers, meeting old friends and making new ones. However, this was moved out of the center in 1996. Throughout the country on bicycles of roving vendors, flowers create great splashes of color. In the south, the bright golden yellow branches of the mai apricot are seen everywhere. In the north, the soft rose-colored dao peach flowers decorate homes and offices. A truck driver will adorn his truck with a dao branch to cheer him on a long-distance run.

Miniature kumquat bushes about two or three feet tall are carefully selected and prominently displayed. To carefully choose a kumquat bush, the buyer must pay attention to the symmetrical shape, to the leaves and to the color and shape of the fruit. The bushes have been precisely pruned to display ripe deep orange fruits with smooth clear thin skin shining like little suns or gold coins on the first day. Other fruits must still be green to ripen later. This represents the wish that wealth will come to you now and in the future. The leaves must be thick and dark green with some light green sprouts. The fruits represent the grandparents, the flowers represent parents, the buds represent children and the light green leaves represent grandchildren. The tree thus symbolizes many generations. Guests will caress the light green leaves about to sprout and compliment the discerning host who chose so carefully. The Sino-Viet pronunciation of the word for orange sounds like the word for wealth and the tangerines signify good luck.

Crowds of shoppers at the markets become thicker and more frantic each night, holding up traffic as they jostle each other to reach the counters with the best buys. Prices are a bit higher, but then thriftiness is not considered a virtue at Tet. Everyone is wishing each other Chuc Mung Nam Moi! One must purchase the sugared fruits, banh chung and the colorful decorations before the afternoon of Tet.

While shoppers roam the streets, banh chung patties wrapped in leaves are steaming in giant vats. The outside has taken on a lovely light green tinge after being boiled inside a wrapper of leaves. Banh chung in the north is a square patty measuring seven inches and two inches thick, filled with shreds of fatty pork surrounded by a dense mixture of sticky rice and mashed ground green beans. In the south, a similar dish is cylindrical. It is given as a gift at this time of year and has a similar long life and social significance as the western Christmas fruitcake. These are frequently called sticky rice cakes, but are unlike sweet cakes in the western sense. There is however, a sweet version made without meat but with sugar added called banh ngot (sweet rice patty).

Suddenly, as if by command of some magic wand, the spree of activity, the light, the noise, all vanishes. By early evening, markets and shops are abandoned. Shops, stalls and restaurants are locked leaving a notice hung on the door announcing the date of reopening. Special dishes must be completed that are expected to serve the family and its guests for the first three days of the new year. People desert the outer world and disappear on the requisite trip to their home villages and inside their homes for intimate family celebrations.

\* \* \*

**Giao Thua.** As midnight approaches, all eyes maintain a close look on clocks and watches. The Giao Thua ritual occurs at that most sacred moment in time. At midnight on the last day of the year, every Vietnamese family whispers similar fervent prayers. Bells ring and drums beat in temples. The old year gives over its mandate to the New Year. The words Giao Thua (Giao means to give and Thua means to receive) mean a passing on or a receiving and handing down of life, and the recognition of that gift by the present generation. It marks the magical transition time from one year to another. Those who practice Buddhism will pray in the pagoda.

In the Gia Tien (family ancestor) ritual or calling of the ancestors, invitations are extended to the deceased relatives to visit for a few days in the world of the living family. They are lured home and kept happy until they leave. The head of the household lights incense and folds hands at heart level in the position of prayer. The prayer may proceed as follows: "In the year of&. And the date of&. Make these offerings and invite all of our ancestors to join in eating Tet with us."

The past generations are invited to share the family's joys and concerns to enjoy a meal with the living, to catch up on the family news and to lavish riches and honors on their descendants.

"I pray to the Heavenly King, the Jade Emperor, to his assistants and to the Earth God and the guardian spirit and to any other spirits present. On behalf of the &family, we offer you incense, gold and silver, fruit and flowers, alcohol and fixings for the betel quid. We are all here to make these offerings so that the next year will be free of disasters and harmful occurrences and that the family will prosper. Please bless us all, young and old, with happiness, prosperity and long life. (Here he might mention some events of the past year such as the birth of a child, someone's new employment or the successful entrance of a child into a good school). Please forgive us any transgressions we may have unknowingly committed against you or others."

Bowing motions, called Le, are performed at least three times and the ceremony ends when all have prostrated themselves (or in more modern families, folded hands and prayed) before the altar. After the "money for the dead" and other paper gifts are burnt in the courtyard, the family watches the ashes dance away on warm currents of air, a sign that the dead have received their gifts. The spiritual presence of the ancestors will be palpable during the days of Tet.

In recent times, a new tradition has evolved to celebrate the important evening of the new year. Those who are not at home praying at this momentous time may be socializing with friends. In the cities, there will be community fireworks displays that will draw the young from their homes into the square or park. Although firecrackers are now illegal in Vietnam, some kind of loud noises will be made. It can be the banging of cans, the use of electronic popping firecrackers or human voices whooping it up. People will break off branches and twigs that contain newly sprouted leaves to bring a sense of freshness and vitality into their home. This follows a Buddhist tradition of bringing fresh new leaves and "fortune bearing buds" into the home from the pagoda.

\* \* \*

**First Morning or Head Day** is reserved for the nuclear family, that is, the husband's household. Immediate family members get together and celebrate with the husband's parents. A younger brother, if the parents are not alive, will visit his older sibling. Faraway sons and daughters journey to be with their parents on this day. Children anticipate a ritual called Mung Tuoi, or the well wishing on the achievement of one more year to one's life. With both arms folded in front of their chest in respect, they thank their grandparents for their birth and upbringing.



Reciprocally, the grandparents will impart words of advice or wisdom to their grandchildren, encouraging them to study seriously, to live in harmony with others. The promises made by the children are similar to New Year's resolutions made during the western New Year. Adults will make silent promises to themselves to improve their lives, habits and relationships in the coming year. The children accept small gifts, usually crisp bills. Ideally, part of the gifts will be saved for future "investment," and part spent for Tet amusements. The words on the little red envelope in which the bill may be tucked read: Respectful wishes for the New Year. When there was a king ruling Vietnam, the mandarins of the royal court formally wished the King and Queen, "Happiness as vast as the southern sea; longevity as lasting as the southern mountains." Each trade and professional guild in Vietnam has a founder or guardian spirit and on this or one of the next several days, the craft workers will make offerings to their guild ancestor.

The family displays the offerings of food on the altar table for the first meal for the ancestors since they have returned to the world of the living. The head of the family, dressed in fresh clothes, steps respectfully in front of the family altar and presents the offerings of food, liquor, cigarettes, betel fixings, flowers and paper gold and silver. He lights three sticks of incense, kneels, joins hands in front of his chest, bows his head and prays. The names of the deceased of the family up to the fifth generation are whispered as they are invited to participate in the feast prepared for them.

After the ceremony, the entire family sits down to enjoy the meal typically consisting of steamed chicken, bamboo shoot soup, banh chung and fresh fruits. They reminisce with their ancestors.

The Vietnamese do not say "celebrate" when speaking of Tet; the words "to eat" are used as in the expression, "Will you eat Tet with your family?" or "Where will you eat Tet this year?" It does not refer to the filling of one's stomach, although in the old days, when hunger was a constant problem, Tet time was a time of plenty during which one could eat one's full. "To eat" here means more to be nourished by, or to partake in the mutual communion with others, a spiritual eating or being nourished.

There is a Vietnamese saying related to ancestor worship: "Trees have roots; water has a source; when drinking from the spring, one must remember the source." Thanks are offered to those ancestors who labored long ago to dig irrigation channels and remove mountains for this generation to have an easier life. The present is only one link in the cycle of coming back to the past as one looks to the future.

**The second day** of Tet is for visiting the wife's family and close friends. Some shops have opened and a few lottery stands are busy selling chances to people who feel lucky. Everyone is out on the street parading around in their new clothes.

**On the third day** of Tet, the circle of connections becomes larger and is extended to the broader community outside the family by visits to teachers, bosses or a helpful physician. The Vietnamese visit teachers and physicians although long out of school and long cured of their illness. This may be the time to have one's fortune told to see what the coming year will bring. These days in Vietnam, there are fortunetellers using computer software. People are also especially interested in the significance of their first dream of the new year.

The evening of the third day marks the departure of the ancestors by burning votive objects such as gold and silver, for them to take with them on their journey back to Heaven.

Now the connections to the world beyond the family can take place. The non-family member who will be the first visitor is carefully chosen. The "first footer" is an auspicious guest who is considered to be good luck for the family. The first non-family visitor to the house brings in the year's luck. This figure's karma will charm the household for the entire year and determine the luck of the family. It is customary to invite a respected person to visit at that time, so that this turn of luck is not left to fate. This person, whose aura is believed capable of promoting the fortune of the household in the following year, is usually someone healthy, successful and prosperous. Some Vietnamese lock their doors to all chance visitors until after the visit of the chosen "first footer."

**On the fourth day**, banks and shops reopen. Transactions, although slower, will be conducted more cheerfully than usual. Offices open and work resumes. Careful attention is paid to the resumption of activities. The first outing is the first time in the New Year that a family leaves their home. A propitious time is chosen in advance for this outing and one sometimes asks the advice of fortunetellers.

Formerly, scholars initiated their new brushes and paper with a small ceremony with the wearing of new clothes. This also requires an auspicious hour. The theme of the proverb or poem is considered carefully and newly purchased high-grade paper was used. Today's students are less formal in their initiation rites, but most enjoy a new pen and a fresh notebook for the New Year. Everyone determines to do what he or she can to help fate along to make the next year most successful.

In the countryside, there are rituals to enliven the land out of its winter's rest. The Rites of Dong Tho activate the soil to bring it alive from its sacred rest. When there was a king in Vietnam, he symbolically initiated the harrowing of the first furrow of the planting season in a royal rite.

A hundred years ago, on Hang Buom Street, a ceremony was performed right after Tet called the Beating of the Spring Ox. This ceremony initiated the breaking open of the agricultural land and chased away the winter cold. A ceramic image of the ox was beaten with sticks until it broke into pieces. Everyone scramble to grab and take home a piece of the sacred ox.

**On the fifteenth day** of Tet (called Ram Thang Gieng), the first full moon, there are ceremonies in Buddhist temples. This is considered the most auspicious day of the Buddhist year. "Paying homage to Buddha all year long is not as effective as praying on the 15th day of the first lunar month." The devout flock into pagodas, their eyes stinging with the blue haze of incense. After prayers, shared blessed offerings from the temple keeper are stuffed into bags carried with them for that purpose. Over the years, this Buddhist sacred day has transformed into a holiday of other cults.

It is also called Tet Trang Nguyen or the feast of the first laureate. There is a legend associated with its beginnings: the emperor once staged a banquet on the full moon to which the most prominent scholars of the kingdom were invited. They drank exquisite liquor and each man composed a formal poem on a theme chosen by the emperor. On that day, many families celebrate Tet all over again by eating banh chung.

This is also called the Little New Year or full moon New Year and celebrated by farmers following an indigenous practice of welcoming Spring at the first full moon. Later, it became infused with Buddhist meanings.

The Vietnamese traditionally celebrated Tet from the fifteenth day of the twelfth month to the fifteenth day of the first month.

Det vietnamesiske nytår, TET, fastlægges som det kinesiske nytår efter månekalenderen, hvilket betyder at Nytårsdag flytter sig hvert år, og ikke som i vores kalender er den samme dato år efter år.

I Vietnam bruges månekalenderen stort set kun i forbindelse med fester, festivaler, vigtige dødsdage og religiøse begivenheder. I Danmark benyttes månekalenderen til f.eks. at fastlægge påske, pinse og Kr. Himmelfartsdag.

Aftenen før nytårsdag kan i Vietnam direkte sammenlignes med både juleaften og nytårsaften i Danmark. Og ugen op til det vietnamesiske nytår er lige så hektisk som vi i Danmark oplever det i ugen op til juleaften, og de mellemliggende dage mellem jul og nytår.

De første nytårsdage er ganske stille og rolige, da TET ligesom vores jul er en familiefest. Selve nytårsaften er til gengæld fuld af fyrværkeri, men heldigvis oplever man ikke længere at have kæmpestore kanonslag flyvende omkring ørerne eller mellem benene, for det er der sat en stopper for. Nu er det fuldstændig forbudt for private at håndtere fyrværkeri, og 100 % overladt til hæren at løse den opgave.

Som turist vil man opleve at banker og mange forretninger samt restauranter holder lukket. Det betyder naturligvis ikke at man må gå sulten i seng, for der bliver sørget godt for turisterne. I dagene op til nytår vil gaderne være præget af de mange forberedelser der er påkrævet for at det hele vil forløbe som traditionerne foreskriver.

Det vil bugne af blomster for enhver familie og enhver butik skal have et blomstrende ferskentræ eller et kumquat træ med de små appelsiner stående, næsten som vores juletræ. Hjemmet skal gøres funklende rent, forfaderalteret skal friskes op og alt hvad der kan skinne skal pudses. Nytårsaften promenerer man på gaderne og ser byens fyrværkeri, nytårsdag er i familiens og de næres tegn men i dagene derefter går man på besøg hos venner og naboer.

I de sidste få år har traditionerne, i takt med stigende velstand, forandret sig hen imod at nytårsdagene fejres med ferieophold og restaurantbesøg. De større byer vil have områder med store udsøgte blomsterdekorationer. I Saigon er hovedgaden foran rådhuset spærret af for trafik og viet til en kæmpe blomsterudstilling som byens borgere nyder i nytårsdagene.

Hermed datoer for første nytårsdag i det vietnamesiske nytår fra 2013 til 2015  
(nytårsfestivitassen varer en uge efter første nytårsdag)

<b>Rotte</b>	1936	1948	1960	1972	1984	1996	2008
<b>Okse</b>	1937	1949	1961	1973	1985	1997	2009
<b>Tiger</b>	1938	1950	1962	1974	1986	1998	2010
<b>Kanin</b>	1939	1951	1963	1975	1987	1999	2011
<b>Drage</b>	1940	1952	1964	1976	1988	2000	2012
<b>Slange</b>	1941	1953	1965	1977	1989	2001	2013
<b>Hest</b>	1942	1954	1966	1978	1990	2002	2014
<b>Får</b>	1943	1955	1967	1979	1991	2003	2015
<b>Abe</b>	1944	1956	1968	1980	1992	2004	2016
<b>Hane</b>	1945	1957	1969	1981	1993	2005	2017
<b>Hund</b>	1946	1958	1970	1982	1994	2006	2018
<b>Gris</b>	1947	1959	1971	1983	1995	2007	2019

## Mekong

**Mekong** is a trans-boundary river in Southeast Asia. It is the world's 12th-longest river and the 7th-longest in Asia. Its estimated length is 4,350 km (2,703 mi). From the Tibetan Plateau this river runs through China's Yunnan province, Burma (Myanmar), Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. In 1995, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam established the Mekong River Commission to assist in the management and coordinated use of the Mekong's resources. In 1996 China and Burma (Myanmar) became "dialogue partners" of the MRC and the six countries now work together within a cooperative framework.

The extreme seasonal variations in flow and the presence of rapids and waterfalls in this river have made navigation difficult. The river is a major trading route linking China's southwestern province of Yunnan to Laos, Burma (Myanmar) and Thailand to the south, an important trade route between western China and Southeast Asia.

In English the river is called "the Mekong River", derived from "Mae Nam Khong", a term of both Thai and Lao origin. In the Lao-Thai toponymy, all great rivers are considered "mother rivers" signalled by the prefix "mae", meaning "mother", and "nam" for water.

The Mekong Delta in Viet Nam is farmed intensively and has little natural vegetation left. Forest cover is less than 10%. In the Central Highlands of Vietnam, forest cover was reduced from over 95% in the 1950s to around 50% in the mid 1990s. Agricultural expansion and population pressure are the major reasons for land use and landscape change. Both drought and flood are common hazards in the Delta, which many people believe is the most sensitive to upstream hydrological change.

The Mekong is already heavily dammed, with many more dams planned and under construction.

The Mekong basin is one of the richest areas of biodiversity in the world. Only the Amazon boasts a higher level of biodiversity. Biota estimates for the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) include 20,000 plant species, 430 mammals, 1,200 birds, 800 reptiles and amphibians and an estimated 850 fish species. In 2009, 145 new species were described from the Mekong Region, comprising 29 fish species previously unknown to science, 2 new bird species, 10 reptiles, 5 mammals, 96 plants and 6 new amphibians. The Mekong Region contains 16 WWF Global 200 ecoregions, the greatest concentration of ecoregions in mainland Asia.

No other river is home to so many species of very large fish. The biggest include the giant river carp (*Probarbus jullieni*), which can grow up to 1.5 metres and weigh 70 kilograms, the Mekong Freshwater Stingray (*Himantura chaophraya*), which can have a wingspan of up to 4.3 metres, the giant pangasius (*Pangasius sanitwongsei*), Siamese giant carp (*Catlocarpio siamensis*) and the endemic Mekong giant catfish (*Pangasianodon gigas*), all three of which can grow up to about 3 metres in length and weigh 300 kilograms. All of these are in serious decline, because of dams, flood control and overfishing.

One species of freshwater dolphin, the Irrawaddy Dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*), was once common in the whole of the Lower Mekong but is now very rare, with only 85 individuals remaining. Among other wetland mammals that have been living in and around the river are the smooth-coated otter (*Lutra perspicillata*) and fishing cat (*Felis viverrina*).

The endangered Siamese crocodile (*Crocodylus siamensis*) occurs in small isolated pockets within the northern Cambodian and Laotian portions of the Mekong River. The Saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) once ranged from the Mekong Delta up the river into Tonle Sap and beyond but is now extinct in the river, along with being extinct in all of Vietnam and possibly even Cambodia.

The commercially valuable fish species in the Mekong are generally divided between 'black fish', which inhabit low oxygen, slow moving, shallow waters, and 'white fish', which inhabit well oxygenated, fast moving, deeper waters. People living within the Mekong river system generate many other sources of food and income from what are often termed 'other aquatic animals' (OAAs) such as freshwater crabs, shrimp, snakes, turtles, and frogs.

OAA's account for about 20 percent of the total Mekong catch. When fisheries are discussed, catches are typically divided between the wild capture fishery (i.e. fish and other aquatic animals caught in their natural habitat), and aquaculture (fish reared under controlled conditions). Wild capture fisheries play the most important role in supporting livelihoods. Wild capture fisheries are largely open access fisheries, which poor rural people can access for food and income.

Broadly, there are three types of fish habitats in the Mekong: i) the river, comprising all the main tributaries, rivers in the major flood zone and the Tonle Sap, which altogether yield about 30 percent of wild catch landings; ii) rainfed wetlands outside the river-floodplain zone, comprising mainly rice paddy in formerly forested areas and usually inundated to about 50 cm and yielding about 66 percent of wild catch landings; and iii) large water bodies outside the flood zone, including canals and reservoirs yielding about 4 percent of wild catch landings

The Mekong Basin has one of the world's largest and most productive inland fisheries. An estimated 2 million tonnes of fish are landed a year, in addition to almost 500,000 tonnes of other aquatic animals. Aquaculture yields about 2 million tonnes of fish a year.

Hence, the Lower Mekong Basin yields about 4.5 million tonnes of fish and aquatic products annually. The total economic value of the fishery is between USD 3.9 to USD 7 billion a year. Wild capture fisheries alone have been valued at USD 2 billion a year. This value increases considerably when the multiplier effect is included, but estimates vary widely.

An estimated 2.56 million tonnes of inland fish and other aquatic animals are consumed in the lower Mekong every year. Aquatic resources make up between 47 percent and 80 percent of animal protein in rural diets for people who live in the Lower Mekong

Basin. Fish are the cheapest source of animal protein in the region and any decline in the fishery is likely to significantly impact nutrition, especially among the poor. The size of this impact has not been established.

It is estimated that 40 million rural people, more than two-thirds of the rural population in the Lower Mekong Basin, are engaged in the wild capture fishery. Fisheries contribute significantly to a diversified livelihood strategy for many people, particularly the poor, who are highly dependent on the river and its resources for their livelihoods.

They provide a principal form of income for a large number of people and act as a safety net and coping strategy in times of poor agricultural harvests or other difficulties. In Lao PDR alone, 71 percent of rural households (2.9 million people) rely on fisheries for either subsistence or additional cash income. Around the Tonle Sap Lake in Cambodia, more than 1.2 million people live in fishing communes and depend almost entirely on fishing for their livelihoods.

For thousands of years the Mekong River has been an important conduit for people and goods between the many towns situated along its banks. Traditional forms of trade in small boats linking communities continue today, however the river is also becoming an important link in international trade routes, connecting the six Mekong countries to each other, and also to the rest of the world.<sup>[3]</sup> The Mekong is still a wild river and navigation conditions vary greatly along its length. Broadly, navigation of the river is divided between upper and lower Mekong, with the 'upper' part of the river defined as the stretch north of the Khone Falls in southern Laos; and the 'lower' part as the stretch below these falls.

Narrower and more turbulent sections of water in the upstream parts of the Mekong River, coupled with large annual water level variations continue to present a challenge to navigation. The seasonal variations in water level directly affect trade in this section of the river. Volumes of trade being shipped decrease by more than 50 per cent, primarily due to the reduced draughts available during the low water season (June–January). Despite these difficulties, the Mekong River is already an important link in the transit chain between Kunming and Bangkok with about 300,000 tonnes of goods shipped via this route each year. The volume of this trade is expected to increase by 8–11 per cent per year. Port infrastructure is being expanded to accommodate the expected growth in traffic, with new facilities planned for Chiang Saen port.

In Laos, 50 and 100 DWT vessels are primarily operated for regional trade, the main types of cargo carried are timber, agricultural products and construction materials. Thailand imports a wide variety of products from China, including vegetables, fruit, agricultural products and fertilisers. The main exports from Thailand are dried longan, fish oil, rubber products and consumables. Nearly all the ships carrying cargo to and from Chiang Saen Port are 300 DWT Chinese flag vessels.

Waterborne trade in the lower Mekong countries of Vietnam and Cambodia has grown significantly, with trends in container traffic at Phnom Penh port and general cargo through Can Tho port both showing steady increases until 2009 when a decrease in cargo volumes can be attributed to the global financial crisis and a subsequent decline in demand for the export of garments to the US. In 2009, Mekong trade received a significant boost with the opening of a new deep-water port at Cai Mep in Vietnam. This new port has generated a renewed focus on the Mekong River as a trade route. The Cai Mep container terminals can accommodate vessels with a draught of 15.2 m, equivalent to the largest container ships in the world. These mother vessels sail directly to Europe or the United States, which means that goods can be shipped internationally to and from Phnom Penh with only a single trans-shipment at Cai Mep.

The difficulty of navigating the river has meant that it has divided, rather than united, the people who live near it. The earliest known settlements date to 2100 BC, with Ban Chiang being an excellent example of that early Iron Age culture. The earliest recorded civilization was the 1st century Indianised-Khmer culture of Funan, in the Mekong Delta. Excavations at Oc Eo, near modern An Giang, have found coins from as far away as the Roman Empire. This was succeeded by the Khmer culture Chenla state by around the 5th century. The Khmer empire of Angkor was the last great Indianized state in the region. From around the time of the fall of the Khmer empire, the Mekong was the frontline between the emergent states of Siam and Tonkin (North Vietnam), with Laos and Cambodia, then situated on the coast, torn between their influence.

The first European to encounter the Mekong was the Portuguese Antonio de Faria in 1540; a European map of 1563 depicts the river, although even by then little was known of the river upstream of the delta. European interest was sporadic: the Spaniards and Portuguese mounted some missionary and trade expeditions, while the Dutch Gerrit van Wuysthoff led an expedition up the river as far as Vientiane in 1641–42.

The French invaded the region in the mid-19th century, capturing Saigon in 1861, and establishing a protectorate over Cambodia in 1863. The first systematic exploration began with the French Mekong Expedition led by Ernest Doudard de Lagrée and Francis Garnier, which ascended the river from its mouth to Yunnan between 1866 to 1868. Their chief finding was that the Mekong had too many falls and rapids to ever be useful for navigation. The river's source was located by Pyotr Kuzmich Kozlov in 1900.

From 1893, the French extended their control of the river into Laos, establishing French Indochina by the first decade of the 20th century. This lasted until the First and Second Indochina Wars expelled French from its former colony and defeated American supported governments.

During the wars in Indochina in the 1970s, a significant amount of explosives (sometimes, entire barges loaded with military ordnance) sank in the Cambodian section of the Mekong (as well as in the country's other waterways). Besides being a danger for fishermen, unexploded ordnance also creates problems for bridge and irrigation systems construction. As of 2013, Cambodian volunteers are being trained, with the support of the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement within the US State Department Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, to conduct underwater explosive removal.

## **Mekong River Commission**

Through the Mekong River Commission Denmark supports the work for sustainable development, utilisation, management and conservation of the water and related resources of the Mekong River Basin

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) was established in 1995 by an agreement between the governments of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam with the purpose of jointly managing their shared water resources and developing the economic potential of the river.

The MRC is a unique, treaty-based inter-governmental cooperation whose importance is not only limited to the use of natural resources, but also to the political stability in a traditionally turbulent region.

Denmark is currently one of the largest donor to the Mekong River Commission.

Around 65 million people live in the lower Mekong Basin, which is shared by between Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. A large part of the population earns their income from small scale agriculture and fisheries and is completely dependent on the river to sustain their livelihoods.

The large economic growth in the region has lead to partly uncontrolled and unsustainable use of the Basin's natural resources. MRC is the only institution to which the member countries have committed to cooperate on the sustainable utilisation of the Mekong River. This makes MRC crucial to the millions of poor people who make their living from the Mekong Basin's natural resources.

Denmark supports the following MRC programmes:

The Fisheries Programme with DKK 25 million (approximately USD 4.5 Million.) for the period of 2011-2015;

The Environment Programme with DKK 10 million (approximately USD 1.8 Million) in the 2011-2015 period.

The Climate Change and Adaption Initiative with DKK 5 million (approximately USD 0.9 Million) in the period 2011-2015.

The Basin Development Programme (BDP 3) with DKK 25 million (approximately USD 4.5 Million) for the period of 2011-2015.

## Om religioner i Vietnam:

**Religion:** Tam Giao = **Triple Religion**. Mahayana Buddhismen via Kina og Theravada Buddhismen via Thailand og Cambodja. Theravada skulle være ældre og mere original, men **Mahayana** (Det store hjul) er mere videreudviklet og er mest fremherskende i Vietnam. Den største sekt er Zen. **Taoismen** baserer sig på Laotsees filosofi. Han levede 6 år. F. Kr. Tankegangen baserer sig på enkelhed og at finde tilbage til det oprindelige – Tao – essensen. Am & Duong (Yin & Yang) er vigtige elementer, og drager og dæmoner bruges til udsmykning og indgår i legender. **Konfuzianisme** er mere en filosofi for konstruktion af samfundskultur. **Forfædre dyrkelse** er meget vigtig – forfædrenes ånder kommer tilbage og beskytter efterkommerne, alt i alle hjem og specielle helligdage. **Caodaiisme** er en syntese-religion. **Kristendom** er også udbredt i Vietnam -10 %. Protestantisme blev hovedsagelig udbredt blandt de etniske folk i bjergområder, og de blev forfulgt af Diems katolske regime og de efterfølgende kommunister. **Buddhisme er en ikke-teistisk religion** eller filosofi som er baseret på læren fra **Siddharta Gautama**, som antages at have levet mellem ca. 563 f.Kr. og ca. 483 f.Kr. i Indien. Buddhismen spredte sig gradvis fra Indien til Mellemøsten, Centralasien, Sydøstasien, og de nordøstlige asiatiske lande Tibet, Mongoliet, Kina, Korea, Japan og Taiwan. Buddhismen er en af de store verdensreligioner, med tilhængere over hele verden. I asiatiske lande hvor buddhisme er en majoritet, er der nogen som praktiserer buddhisme sammen med shamanisme, animisme, taoisme, konfucianisme, shintoisme og andre traditionelle religioner/filosofier. Beregninger af antallet af buddhister varierer derfor betydeligt, afhængigt af hvordan buddhistisk efterlevelse er defineret. Det almindeligste overslag for antal buddhister i verden er på mellem 360 - 550 millioner tilhængere, men hvis man inkluderer Kinas voksende buddhistiske befolkning kan antallet være til mellem 1.2 og 1.6 milliarder. **Målet med buddhistisk praksis er at nå frem til en tilstand af stabil og varig sindsligevægt, klarhed, vilkårløs medfølelse og ubetinget glæde.** I buddhistisk tænkning anses dette ikke som noget man henter udenfor sig selv, men er det som er til stede helt af sig selv når man har fjernet årsagerne til lidelse i ens eget sind. Metoden går derfor ud på at **frigøre sig fra årsagerne til lidelsen**, de såkaldte "sindgifte" (indbildninger og forudindtaget, og indgroede vanemønstre af grådighed, had, arrogance og misundelse), ved at man i stedet for at tænke, tale og handle ud fra disse, «vågner op» og forholder sig til virkeligheden som den er, og **til slut opnår nirvana.**

Buddhismen omfatter en model af menneskesindet som søger at kortlægge de mekanismer, som gør at vi tænker, føler og handler som vi gør. Buddhistisk praksis går i stor grad ud på at genkende og forstå sig selv i henhold til denne model, så ens tanker og handlinger kommer over i et frugtbart, konstruktivt og etisk gavnligt spor. Det er muligt at betragte visse dele af buddhistisk praksis som en form for kognitiv terapi.

Buddhismens etik bygger på principperne om **respekt for alt liv, samt en mådeholden livsførelse**. Den mentale praksis fokuserer på etisk-moralsk selvdisciplin (sila), meditativ koncentration (samadhi), uforbeholden kærlighed (mettā) og visdom (prajñā). Buddhismen har gennem århundrederne udviklet sig i en **mangfoldighed af retninger eller skoler**. Nogle opfatter den hovedsagelig som en filosofi eller som en livsanskuelse. Andre tillægger buddhismen en klar religiøs betydning. En række steder har den optaget lokale skikke og folketro, uden at den af den grund har mistet eller fjernet sig fra det som er kernen og essensen i læren (Buddhadharma). Buddhismen forholder sig almindeligvis ikke til overnaturlige skabninger (som Gud eller guder) - heraf omtalen af den som ikke-teistisk - og omfatter som udgangspunkt ikke en metafysisk virkelighed, men i nogle grene af buddhismen bruger man gudeagtige skikkelser i symbolsk øjemed.

Grundlægende for alle former af buddhisme er en etisk baggrund som finder udtryk i **den ottetfoldige vej** (atthangika-magga) som er den sidste af **de fire ædle sandheder** (ariya-sacca). Desuden er **troen på reinkarnation og karma** en fast del i den buddhistiske anskuelse. Verden, eller livet her på jorden, er for buddhister ikke bare sjovt, og den buddhistiske praksis drejer sig ikke om at have det bare sjovere, eller at tage det så let så muligt. Tværtimod går Buddhismen ud fra en erkendelse af sandheden, at døden, sygdommen og alderen eksisterer for alt levende. Det drejer sig om at blive bevidst om chancen vi har som mennesker og at være ansvarlig for vores handlinger. Karmaen er ikke skæbne, karmaen er indsigt i at vores handlinger skaber glæde eller også lidelse og at den skaber noget ud over vores nuværende liv: karmaen er årsagen for alt hvad der ville ske for os i fremtiden, og alt hvad der sker med os lige nu. Buddhismen er ikke ateistisk, fordi der findes også guder i den buddhistiske mytologi, men også guderne er ansvarlig for deres handlinger, skaber deres egen karma, bliver født og dør, og ingen gud kan tilintetgøre vores egen karma (som 24

det er jo lidt i kristendommen med forestillingen at en præst kan give os absolutionen). Men guderne lever bare i deres himmel og føler ingen smerte, og ser derfor ingen mening ind i at befri sig fra eksistensen.

Hvorledes den Buddhistiske praksis udføres afhænger også af gren og individ, og er altid påvirkede af den kulturelle omgivelse. Buddhismen har i sit historiske forløb tilpasset sig mere end andre religioner til de forskellige ritualer og kulturelle forhold. Zen Buddhisme er ikke den Buddhisme vi finder på Sri Lanka, eller i Ladakh. Det kan siges at den oprindelige form af Buddhisme Theravada er fokuseret mere på en intern psykologisk praksis, nedskrevet i Pali Kanonen, på det første koncil efter Buddhas Nirvana. Her finder vi de oprindelige tekster af Buddhismen.

Buddhismen blev grundlagt af Siddharta Gautama og han tilhørte til krigerkassen, khattiyas, den vise af shakyas, shakya-muni, som den japanske traditionen mest kalder ham - Buddha Shakyamuni 563 f.Kr. - 485 f.Kr.).

**Hinayana (det lille fartøj) og Mahayana (det store fartøj)** er gamle begreber, men kan kalde Mahayana også Bodhisattva-yana (fartøjet af Bodhisattvaen). Ifølge af Damien Keown kan man sammenligne en Bodhisattva med Jesus Kristus fordi medlidenhed har fået en central rolle i Mahayanaen. Det drejer sig ikke mere om at bare når Nirvanaen, alt levende, som vi er ens med, skal opnå befrielsen. Shismaen mellem de to hovedretninger opstod omkring 100 f.Kr. til 100 e.Kr. Nogen deler også mellem den sydlige og nordlige form af buddhisme. I løbet af århundreder har Siddharta fået en guddommelig status som er ikke oprindelige i læren (dharmaen).

Ifølge Tibetansk Buddhistisk mytologi, er Buddha den fjerde ud af de 1.000 buddhaer, som indleder en periode med buddhisme, mens der er liv i dette univers.

Buddhismen begyndte med **Siddharta Gautamas lære**. Han levede i Indien for omkring 2.500 år siden. Gautama var søn af en konge. Han voksede op i et stort og rigt palads. Da Gautama skulle fødes, forudsagde en vismand, at Gautama enten ville blive en stor hersker eller en stor hellig mand. Det ville afhænge af hvilket liv han kom til at leve. Da Gautamas far havde besluttet, at han skulle efterfølge ham som konge, isolerede han ham fra omverdenen og gjorde alt for at gøre ham lykkelig. Gautama giftede sig med sin kusine, og de fik en søn, Rahula.

Selv om Gautama levede et liv i luksus, følte han sig fanget og ulykkelig. En dag kørte han trods sin fars ønske en tur i karet uden for paladsets område. Først så han en gammel mand, så en syg mand med mange smerter og så en død mand. Gautama blev chokeret over al denne lidelse. Han spurgte sin kusk, hvad det betød, og **fik at vide at alderdom, sygdom og død rammer alle mennesker. Til sidst så han en asket, der var klædt i enkelt tøj. Han virkede glad og tilfreds.** Gautama besluttede, at han ville være ligesom ham og søge efter forklaringen på al den ulykke, han så i verden.

Om aftenen efter køreturen forlod Gautama paladset. Han klædte sig i munkeklæder, og **i seks år levede han i skovene** sammen med fem hellige læremestre. Det var et meget hårdt liv. Gautama sultede sig, indtil han var så tynd som et skelet. Legenden siger, at han levede af ét riskorn om dagen. Han fandt imidlertid ikke de svar, han søgte efter.

I sin fortvivelse forlod Gautama skovene og sine rejsevenner og begav sig til byen Bodhi Gaya. **Mens han sad under et stort bodhitræ, blev han oplyst. Han tilbragte de næste 49 dage og 49 nætter med at meditere. Han opdagede at mennesker led, fordi de ikke var tilfredse med det, de havde. De ønskede altid mere.** Han så også en vej ud af denne elendighed. Fra da af blev Gautama kendt som Buddhaen, ”den fuldt oplyste.”

I de følgende 45 år rejste Buddha rundt i Indien sammen med sine tilhængere. Han levede som munk og fortalte mennesker, hvordan de kunne blive lykkelige. Han døde 80 år gammel i byen Kushinagara. Buddha døde liggende på siden i en afslappet stilling. Det betød, at hans arbejde som Buddha var veludført, og at han nu for sidste gang kunne indtræde i nirvana. Legenden fortæller, at jordskælv rystede jorden både da han opnåede oplysning, og da han døde.

Buddha vidste af erfaring, at glæde hverken kommer af stor rigdom eller af stor lidelse. Han lærte folk at følge den **Ottefoldige vej mellem de to yderpunkter. Ved at følge denne vej kunne mennesker overvinde grådighed og begær og den elendighed**, som fulgte med, og lære at leve et mere omsorgsfuldt liv i deres søgen efter at nå oplysning. Buddha lærte dem også, at det var op til den enkelte at virkeliggøre sandheden for sig selv. Hans lære var kun ment som en rettesnor, som kunne være til hjælp.



## Vietnams Historie:

- \* fund fra **stenalderkulturer** fra 10.000 f. Kr.
- \* **Funan** i Sydvietnam 1. – 6 årh. e. Kr. Hovedby Oc-Eo i Mekong viser kontakt med egne helt til Middelhavet
- \* **Champa** i Danang-området til Nha Trang, 2. – 15. årh., hinduistisk, manglede land og udviklede pirater, byggede i tegl, hinduistiske skulpturer
- \* **1000 års kinesisk dominans** i 2. – 10. årh., berømte oprører f. eks **Trung-søstrene**, der begik selvmord efter fejlslagent oprør i år 43 e. Kr. Kineserne introducerede Konfuzianisme Taoisme og Mahayana Buddhisme. Også vandingsanlæg.
- \* Efter Tang-dynastiets kollaps kom der et vellykket **vietnamesisk oprør i 938 e. Kr.** Ly-dynastiet lykkedes at konsolidere magten i 11. – 13. årh. Temple of Literature åbner i 1076.
- \* **Mongolerne** under Kublai Khan invaderede Vietnam med 500.000 mand, men helten Tran Hung Dao slog dem i 1288 ved Bach Dang River. Han lokkede den kinesiske flåde ind over områder med spidse bambusstave under vandet, og disse harpunerede de kinesiske skibe ved lavvande. I Halong Bay siges at være en grotte, hvor disse bambusstave blev opbevaret.
- \* Kineserne invaderer igen, men i **1418 leder Le Loi et oprør mod kineserne**, og udråber sig selv til kejser.
- \* i 1516 ankommer de første **portugisiske sømænd**, og jesuitermunken Alexandre de Rhodes udarbejder en latinsk version af det vietnamesiske sprog.
- \* i det 17. og 18. årh. fandtes **forskellige kongedømmer** i nord og syd, og i **1765 udbrød Tay Son oprøret** i midten. I 1802 tog **Nguyen Anh** magten og blev som **Gia Long** kejser for hele Vietnam med kejserby i Hué. Hans søn **Minh Mang** var fjendtlig mod vestlig indflydelse. De efterfølgende kejsere ekspanderede ind i Laos og Cambodja.
- \* **Frankrigs militære aktiviteter i Vietnam startede i 1847 med et angreb på Danang. Man tog den reelle magt efter kejser Tu Duc's død i 1883, og gjorde Vietnam til et protektorat.** Man udsugede landet, men opbyggede også en infrastruktur. Livet i gummiplantagerne var slavelignende. Frankrig gav sig selv monopol på produktion og salg af alkohol, og hver landsby skulle tvangsmæssig aftage et vist årligt kvantum. Fra 1902 til 1906 steg alkoholpriserne til det 5-dobbelte. Frankrig bidrog til at øge forbruget af opium, som de også havde monopol på at raffinere, og i perioder dækkede salg af opium 40 % af de franske udgifter til kolonien – franskmændene fortyndede opium for at øge afsætningen. En af begrundelser for at bygge den nord-sydgående jernbane var behovet for at transportere råopium og salt fra Kina. Frankrigs endelige nederlag fandt sted ved Dien Bien Phu i 1954. General Giap og premiereminister Pham Van Dong var aktive på vietnamesisk side.
- \* En antikolonialistisk vietnamesisk bevægelse opstår, hvori kommunisterne er mest markante.
- \* **Ho Chi Minh:** "Bringer of Light", 50 alias, 1890 – 1969, skolegang i Hué, kok på skib til Frankrig, arbejdede som havemand, snerydder, tjener, fotoretoucher, blev politisk aktiv. Lærte mange sprog, var med til at grundlægge det franske kommunistparti i 1920. Blev kaldt til Moskva af Internationale i 1923, og blev sendt til Sydkina. Fængslet i Hong Kong. Kom til Vietnam i 1941 for første gang i over 30 år. Stod i spidsen for guerilla krig. Levede asketisk, var aldrig gift (men der er rygter om forhold og børn), lignede Colonel Sanders fra Kentucky Fried Chicken, har et stort mausoleum, omgives med stor respekt i Vietnam.
- \* Under 2. verdenskrig var Vietnam **okkuperet af Japan**, men den franske Vichy-administration passede daglige forretninger. Viet Minh bevægelsen modarbejdede både japanere og franskmænd for at opnå et selvstændigt Vietnam, som Ho Chi Minh udråbte 2. september 1945 i Hanoi. Under krigen fik Viet Minh hjælp og materiel støtte fra CIA (OSS).
- \* På **Potsdam-konferencen** var besluttet, at det japanerne i den nordlige del af Vietnam skulle overgive sig til kineserne, men dem i den sydlige del skulle overgive sig til englænderne. Men kaos rådede overalt. Franskmændene ville "hjælpe" med at genskabe ro, og de ville i virkeligheden genvinde magten over Vietnam. I 1954 tabte de dog ved slaget om Dien Bien Phu.
- \* **Geneve-aftalen** delte landet ved 17. breddegrad, og masseflugt på tværs af grænsen var en realitet. En folkeafstemning i 1956 blev ikke til noget. Krigstilstand udviklede sig fra 1959, og amerikanerne kom med i krigen efter Tonkin Bugt episoden i 1964. I 1968 angreb nordvietnameserne Khe Sanh basen og fulgte efter med Tet-offensiven. Amerikanerne bombede heftigt, men trak sig ud i 1973. I 1975 vandt Nordvietnam krigen. Genforeningen resulterede i resocialiseringskampagner, forfølgelser, antikapitalistkampagner og flygtningekatastrofer.
- \* Vietnam **invaderer Cambodja i 1978** som svar på gentagne angreb fra Pol Pot styrker. Kina svarede med et angreb i nord i 1979. Vietnam trak sig ud af Cambodja i 1989.
- \* Efterhånden **åbnede Vietnam sig til omverdenen**, Sverige var en af de første stater, der anerkendte Vietnam. Der kom tigerøkonomi og Doi Moi. Bill Clinton besøgte Hanoi i 2000 som amerikansk præsident.

## Vietnam

**Geografi & Klima, Miljø:** ecoturisme

**Flora & Fauna:** over 275 arter af pattedyr og 800 fugle, nye dyrearter findes undertiden, mange er i risiko for udryddelse, der er 13 nationalparker, der gættes på over 12.000 forskellige plantearter af hvilke 7000 er identificerede og 2300 er nyttige for mennesker.

**Kultur, Kunst, Musik, Litteratur, Teater, Sport, Kunsthåndværk**

**Samfund, Økonomi, Sociale og Politiske forhold:** 2-børn-pr-familie-politik, feng shui, etparti kapitalist diktatur med survival of the fittest, 2 millioner medlemmer i kommunistpartiet, prostitution, doi moi, hårdtarbejdende kvinder, hvid hud værdsættes, over 50 etniske minoritetsfolk i bjergområderne, (Hmong, Dao, etc.). Årets vigtigste festival er Tet: nytår, familien samles, husets guder rapporterer om årets forløb til Jadekejseren, forfædre æres, der gøres rent og laves traditionel mad, dekorerer med ferskentræer e. lign., vigtigt er at årets første gæst er lykkebringende (rig mand).

**Halong Bay:** (Where the dragon descends into the sea), legende om skabelsesmåde, byen har været udskibningshavn for kul, nu turisme, prostitution, 3000 sandstensøer, grotter og strande, legende om havuhyre, på øen Cat Ba var der hospital i grotte under American War, vi skal ind i 2 grotter.

**Hanoi:** området beboet siden stenalderen, Kejser Ly Thai To (Le Loi) flyttede hovedstaden hertil i 1010 e. Kr., Gia Long flyttede hovedstaden til Hué i 1802, Kejser Tu Duc kaldte byen Hanoi /Byen ved flodens bøjning) i 1831. Hanoi var hovedstad i Fransk Indokina fra 1902 til 1935. Hanoi blev hovedstad 2. september 1945. Byen blev bombet under Vietnam-krigen. **Den gamle by** har "tunnel-huse" af skattetekniske årsager, og gaderne var ordnet efter 36 håndværkerlaug. Der er et visningshus i Memorial House.

**Hoan Kiem Lake** (Lake of the Restored Sword) indeholder kæmpeskildpadder, og legenden fortæller at en af disse bragte Le Loïs magiske sværd tilbage til guderne. Ngoc Son Templet ligger på øen, og er viet til en lærd, en general og La To, lægernes skytsengel. Den lille ø Thap Rua (Skildpaddetårnet) i søen har øverst en rød stjerne. **Ho Chi Minhs Mausoleum** vogtes med ildhu; i nærheden voksede Prins Henrik op. **Ho Chi Minhs styltehus** brugte han fra 1958 til 1969. I nærheden ligger Ho Chi Minh Museum og **One Pillar Pagoda** er oprindeligt over 1000 år gammel og rejst i anledning af, at en kejser fik en søn. Modellen er en lotusblomst, der stiger op af en sø af sorg. Franskmændene sprængte den forrige model i 1954. Nær ved ligger **Dien Huu Pagoden**. **Tempel of Literature** blev grundlagt i 1070, og blev efter kongfutziansk model brugt til at uddanne mandariner frem til 1778. Mellem 1442 og 1778 er der registreret 116 eksaminer, men kun 82 steler er rejst. Midtergangen var reserveret kejseren. Museum of Ethnology ligger vest for **West Lake (Ho Tay)**, der efter legenderne er skabt, da Dragekongen druknede en 9-halet ræv, eller af en Gylden Tyrekalv, der kom løbende fra Kina, fordi den hørte lyden fra en kæmpe bronzeklokke. **Fine Arts Museum** ligger i det tidligere franske informations-ministerium. **Women's Museum** findes. **Army Museum** ligger i Citadellet. **Hoa Lo Prison Museum** havde John McCain og Pete Peterson som krigsfanger.

**Hue:** lå centralt i Champa-riget; navnet henfører til fred/harmoni. Nord for Hué ligger DMZ med tunneller og miner – siden 1975 er 5000 mennesker blevet dræbt eller lemlæstet. Khe Sanh Combat Base blev angrebet i 1967 og forladt kort efter. 290.000 mennesker bor i Hué, der traditionelt har været center for kultur, politik, uddannelse og religion. **Citadellet** blev oprindeligt opført i 1687, senere konstrueret under Gia Long i 1804, plyndret af franskmændene i 1885 og ødelagt under Tet-offensiven i 1968. Terror under Viet Congs 3½ uge lange okkupation. Citadellet har 10 km perimenter, 30 meter bred og 4 meter dyb voldgrav, 2 meter tykke mure. Nu er der agerjord indenfor murene, men en vis genopbygning foregår. UNESCO World Heritage. Vietnams højeste **flagstang** og **9 hellige kanoner**, der aldrig har været affyret. Hver vejer 10 tons. De repræsenterer de 4 årstider og de 5 elementer. Hovedindgangen er **Ngo Mon Gate** (Noontime Gate), og på toppen er **Ngu Phung** (Belvedere of the Five Phoenixes), hvor kejseren viste sig frem ved højtidelige lejligheder. Kejser Bao Dai endte Nguyen Dynastiet her i 1945, da han abdicerede til en delegation sendt af Ho Chi Minh. **Thai Hoa Palace** (Palace of Supreme Harmony) kan ses, og **Halls of the Mandarins** samt **9 Dynastic Urns**. I **Forbidden Purple City** kan ses **Emperor's Reading Room**, fundamentet til Royal Theatre og **Dien Tho Residence**, der var dronningemoderens audienshal. Her er fotoudstilling og kejserlige klæder.

**Thien Mu Pagoda** er 21 meter høj og opført i 1844. Men oprindeligt var der en fra 1601. Hver af etagerne er dedikeret til en Buddha, der har vist sig i menneskeskikkelse. Thien Mu var en fe, der spåede at en pagode skulle opføres. Klokken er fra 1710 og vejer 2052 kg og kan høres 10 km væk. Templet var et center for politisk kamp under Vietnamkrigen.

**Kongelige Mausoleer: Tu Duc** var kejser 1848 – 1883. Mausoleet blev opført 1864 – 1967, og de enorme ressourcer, det krævede, resulterede i et oprørsforsøg, der blev slået ned. Kejseren havde 104 koner, utallige konkubiner, men ingen børn! Måske blev han steril efter smallpox. Der er landingsplads for både, pavillon for digtlæsning, ø for jagter, Hoa Khiem Temple for tilbedelse af kejseren, troner, gravsted for en dronning og adoptivsøn, stele på 20 tons, som det tog 4 år at transportere 500 km til stedet, men man ved ikke, hvor kejserens legeme er begravet. **Khai Dinh** regerede 1916 – 1925, og hans mausoleum blev opført 1920 – 1931. Her er der europæisk indflydelse og det er bygget i beton. Her er der steler, haller, trapper, og kejserens begravelsessted.

**Hoi An: Lang Co Beach** er malerisk og **Hai Van Passet** ligger i 1172 meters højde med et gammelt fransk fort. Der er en nybygget tunnel. I **Danang** er der **China Beach** og **Museum for Cham Sculpture**. Hoi An er et levende et levende museum, og var et stort handelscentrum i 17. – 19. århundrede. Der er over 800 strukturer af historisk værdi. Ødelagt under Tay Son oprøret i 1770'erne men genopbygget og undgik ødelæggelser under American War. Flere købmandsgårde, pagoder og Den Japansk Overdækkede Bro med statuer af aber og hunde. Mange skræddere og souvenirbutikker.

**Saigon:** 3 eller 7 millioner, 1/3 lever illegalt uden mulighed for at eje ejendom eller forretning/fabrik; delt ind i 16 bydistrikter, men strækker sig langt om mod grænsen til Cambodja. Mange lommetyve og prostituerede. **Reunification Palace** bygget i 1966 på stedet, hvor der tidligere var residens for den franske generalguvernør. Den **Amerikanske Ambassade**. **War Remnant Museum** med propaganda mod krigen. **Notre Dame Katedralen**, Hovedpostkontoret og **Cholon** med **Thien Hau Pagoda** - Templet for Havets Gudinde - og **Binh Tay Market**. Hotel Intercontinental og Hotel Rex. **Cu Chi Tunnellerne** og **Cao Day i Tay Ninh**.  
**Mekong:** "de 9 drager", 5000 km lang og reguleres af Mekong River Commission, hvor Danmark er største bidragsyder. Vandmængder op til 38.000 m<sup>3</sup>/sekund. Floden deler sig i 2 hovedgrene ved Phnom Penh og senere i mange grene. Svært at vedligeholde veje i området, styltehuse og årlige oversvømmelser. Produktion af ris var lav pga. kollektivisering under kommunismen, men efter Doi Moi udviklede Vietnam sig til verdens 2.største riseksportør. Der kan høstes 3 gange årligt. Mekong Deltaet har tidligere tilhørt Khmer-riget. **My Tho** er en fattig by, hvor bådudflugter er monopoliseret af den lokale folkekomité. Vinh Trang Pagoden er idyllisk. **Con Phung ø**, Fønixøen, hvor "manden med kokosnødderne" levede. **Can Tho** er hovedbyen i Mekongdeltaet med 330.000 indbyggere. **Cai Rang** er det største flydende marked i Mekongdeltaet, og det skal ses tidligt om morgenen.

**Thien Cung Cave** is situated on the south-west side the bay, 4 km from the wharf outside of Halong City. The way to Thien Cung is a perilous one, covered on both sides by thick forest. After entering a narrow gate, the grotto's 130-meter-long girth opens up. Getting in we are astonished by the very animated and splendid beauty which is made from stalactite. On the east wall of the grotto, there is a grandiose and imposing picture with characters of heroic tales.

**Sammenligning: Vietnam Norge****Areal:** 329.560 km<sup>2</sup> 324.179 km<sup>2</sup> (uden Svalbard)**Befolkning:** 86 millioner 4,8 millioner**Landgrænse:** 4639 km 2544 km**Kystlinje:** 3444 km 3419 (kun fastlandet)**Niveauforskjel:** 0 – 3142 meter 0 – 2469 meter**Klima:** varmt, tropisk, monsun koldt, tempereret**Årlig nedbør:** 1200 – 3000 mm 2252 mm (Bergen) – 764 mm (Oslo)**GDP (2010):** 3.100 \$ per. person 54.600 \$ per person (nr.7 i verden)**Folk:** 56 minoritetsgrupper 2 minoritetsgrupper (samer, finner)**Levealder:** 70 (mænd) resp. 75 år (kvinder) 77 resp. 83 år**Infant Mortality:** 20,9 pr. 1000 levendefødte 3,52 pr. 1000 levendefødte**HIV:** 0,4 % 0,1 %**Fedme:** 0,5 % 10 %**Analfabeter:** 6 % 0 %**Historie:** 1000 år, konflikter med naboer 1000 år, konflikter med naboer**Religion:** ingen statsreligion protestantisk**Hovederhverv:** landbrug, fiskeri, industri industri, service, landbrug**Råstoffer:** kul, olie olie, gas, mineraler**Økonomisk vækst:** 8 % 0,4 %**Miljøproblemer:** +++ ---**Korruption:** +++ ---**Styreform:** socialistisk markedsøkonomi demokrati**Norske Ambassade: Chancery** Opening hours: 08.30-12.00 & 13.00 – 16.30 Monday – Friday Address: Royal Norwegian Embassy, 10th Floor, Block B, Vincom City Towers, 191 Ba Trieu Street, Hanoi, Tel: +84 4 3974 8900 Fax: +84 4 3974 3301 E-mail: emb.hanoi@mfa.no; Hvis du trenger assistanse utenfor ambassadens kontortid, ring ambassadens telefonnummer og du vil få muligheten til å bli satt over til UDs operative senter for videre assistanse**Visa Section:** Visitor's hours: 09.00 - 11.30 Monday – Thursday. Tel. enquiries: 13.30 - 14.30 Monday – Thursday. Consular Unit, Royal Norwegian Embassy, 10th Floor, Block B, Vincom City Towers, 191 Ba Trieu Street, Hanoi, Vietnam. Tel: +84 4 3974 8900 Fax: +84 4 3974 3301 E-mail: visum.hanoi@mfa.no

The Royal Norwegian Consulate is located in Ho Chi Minh City. Honorary Consul: Mr. Arild Haugan. Address: Royal Norwegian Consulate, Somerset Chancellor Court, 5th Floor, 21-23 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai Street, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City. Tel: +84 8 3822 1696 Fax: +84 8 3827 2696 Email: norcons@hcm.fpt.vn Opening hours: 08.30-11.30 &amp; 13.30-16.30 30

**Phan Đình Phùng** (1847 – January 21, 1896) was a Vietnamese revolutionary who led rebel armies against French colonial forces in Vietnam. He was the most prominent of the Confucian court scholars involved in anti-French military campaigns in the 19th century and was cited after his death by 20th-century nationalists as a national hero. He was renowned for his uncompromising will and principles—on one occasion, he refused to surrender even after the French had desecrated his ancestral tombs and had arrested and threatened to kill his family.

Born into a family of mandarins from Hà Tĩnh Province, Phan continued his ancestors' traditions by placing first in the metropolitan imperial examinations in 1877. Phan quickly rose through the ranks under Emperor Tự Đức of the Nguyễn Dynasty, gaining a reputation for his integrity and uncompromising stance against corruption. Phan was appointed as the Imperial Censor, a position that allowed him to criticise his fellow mandarins and even the emperor. As the head of the censorate, Phan's investigations led to the removal of many incompetent or corrupt mandarins.

Upon Tự Đức's death, Phan almost lost his life during a power struggle in the imperial court. The regent Tôn Thất Thuyết disregarded Tự Đức's will of succession, and three emperors were deposed and killed in just over a year. Phan protested against Thuyet's activities, was stripped of his honours and briefly jailed, before being exiled to his home province. At the time, France had just conquered Vietnam and made it a part of French Indochina. Along with Thuyet, Phan organised rebel armies as part of the Can Vương movement, which sought to expel the French and install the boy Emperor Hàm Nghi at the head of an independent Vietnam. This campaign continued for three years until 1888, when the French captured Hàm Nghi and exiled him to Algeria.

Phan and his military assistant Cao Thang continued their guerrilla campaign, building a network of spies, bases and small weapons factories. However, Cao Thang was killed in the process in late 1893. The decade-long campaign eventually wore Phan down, and he died from dysentery as the French surrounded his forces. Both North and South Vietnam had prominent thoroughfares in their capital cities (Hanoi and Saigon, respectively) named in Phan's honour. I Hanoi hed gaden tidligere Boulevard cargo, og Prins Henrik voksede op I en okkergult hus, der nu tilhører kulturministeriet og huser arbejdet med etniske minoriteter.

**Ho Chi Minh**, egl. *Nguyen Tat Thanh*, 19.5.1890-2.9.1969, vietnamesisk revolutionær leder, præsident i Vietnam fra 1945 (fra 1954 i Nordvietnam).

Ho Chi Minh blev født i en nationalistisk mandarinfamilie i det centrale Vietnam (Fransk Indokina). I 1911 forlod han landet; under et ophold i Paris 1917-23 kom hans glødende nationalisme og antikolonialisme for alvor til udtryk; han tog navnet *Nguyen Ai Quoc* 'Patrioten Nguyen' og meldte sig i 1920 ind i det franske kommunistparti (navnet Ho Chi Minh, 'Den som oplyser', tog han først i begyndelsen af 1940'erne). Efter Paris tog Ho Chi Minh ophold først i Moskva og senere i Guangzhou, hvor han i 1924 dannede Vietnams Revolutionære Ungdomsforbund. Forbundet var en forløber for Indokinas Kommunistiske Parti, som blev grundlagt i Hongkong i 1930.

Efter et oprør i Vietnam 1930-31 med kommunistisk deltagelse dømtes Ho Chi Minh af franskmændene til døden som revolutionær, men det lykkedes ham at flygte fra fængslet i Hongkong til Moskva, inden de britiske myndigheder nåede at udlevere ham. I 1938 tog han til Kina, hvor han bl.a. besøgte Mao Zedong. Efter den japanske besættelse af Vietnam stod han i 1941 bag oprettelsen af uafhængighedsbevægelsen Viet Minh, og da Japan kapitulerede i august 1945, gennemførtes Augustrevolutionen under Viet Minhs ledelse. Ho Chi Minh kunne den 2. september på Ba Dinh-pladsen i Hanoi udråbe Den Demokratiske Republik Vietnam og valgtes året efter til præsident.

Efter krigen mod den franske kolonimagt (1946-54) blev Vietnam ved Genèvekonferencen delt, og fra 1954 til sin død var Ho Chi Minh således præsident for Nordvietnam. 1956-60 var han desuden generalsekretær for kommunistpartiet i Nordvietnam.

Ho Chi Minh hævdede at opbygge et egalitært socialistisk samfund, men reelt var styret autoritært, repressivt og brutalt over for afvigende grupper. Han førte med succes en vanskelig balancepolitik mellem de to socialistiske stormagter, Kina og Sovjetunionen.

Ho Chi Minh, ofte kaldt "Onkel Ho", var den samlende figur i Vietnam, og i landets officielle ideologi blev hans tanker i 1992 føjet til det marxistisk-leninistiske idégrundlag.

Ho Chi Minh var en af 1900-t.s mest betydende revolutionære ledere i Asien, selvom nationalismen formodentlig var en stærkere drivkraft i hans virke end kommunismen. Under Vietnamkrigen blev Ho Chi Minh i Vesten et symbol på frihed og selvstændighed for den tredje verden, og råbet "Ho Ho Ho Chi Minh" hørtes ved de fleste af 1960'ernes antiamerikanske demonstrationer

**Citat af Prins Henrik:** Prins Henrik arbejdede en periode i sine unge dage som rejseleder for engelske og amerikanske turister på besøg i Frankrig. I sin selvbiografi **SKÆBNE FORPLIGTER** skriver han om sine erfaringer: "At være rejseleder er ikke nogen ferie! Man skal være et enmandsorkester og en effektiv organisator: fordele hotelværelser, overvinde og klare uforudsete begivenheder, forklare, opmuntre, få folk til at le, ile til et hospital i forbindelse med en nødsituation... Det er en krævende opgave, midt imellem at være hyrde og cicerone. Man skal være tusindkunstner: mægle mellem et par der er blevet uvenner, rådgive i køb af parfume, balancegænger på usikre rutiner, sjælesørger for enlige damer, promotor for salg af lokale produkter. Da jeg var student, modtog jeg taknemmeligt de drikkepenge som tilfaldt mig ved rejsens afslutning".

Citat: "Mens jeg var i Indien befandt jeg mig vel ved at følge disse få og enkle forskrifter, som en gammel militærlæge anordnede mig. For hjertebanken, et stort glas cognac; for søvnløshed tre eller fire glas portvin efter middagen. For mavepine en flaske meget tør champagne til hvert måltid. Og når man ingenting fejler: whisky og soda".

## Quiz om Vietnam

1. Hvad er nuoc cham?
2. Hvornår endte American War?
3. Hvad er BNP pr. person i Vietnam?
4. Hvornår var Hué kejserby?
5. Hvor mange kalkstensøer er der i Halong Bay?
6. Hvad var Champa?
7. Hvad hed den amerikanske pilot, der var fængslet i Hanoi og senere blev ambassadør?
8. Hvad er buddhismes 4 ædle sandheder?
9. Hvad hedder den idylliske sø i Hanois Old Town?
10. Hvornår var franskmændene i Vietnam?
11. Hvor mange underjordiske km tunnel fandtes der i området ved Cu Chi?
12. Hvad er Cao Dai?
13. Hvor mange gange kan man høste ris årligt i Vietnam?
14. Hvor mange mennesker bor i Vietnam?
15. Hvor lang er Mekong floden?
16. Er der malaria i Vietnam?
17. Hvad er buddhismes trosbekendelse?
18. Hvad er Cholon?
19. Hvornår er det regntid i Vietnam?
20. Hvor mange fuglearter findes i Vietnam?
21. Hvad er pho?
22. Hvad er Hoi An kendt for?
23. Nævn en film fra Vietnam?
24. Hvor mange koner – og børn - havde kejser Tu Duc

US soldiers in the American War used to say that there are 100 types of snakes in Vietnam— 99 were poisonous, and the last one could crush you to death. The real numbers are more like 140 species, around 30 of which are poisonous, including the famous King Cobra. The danger for tourists is low, but nearly 30,000 Vietnamese rice farmers get bitten every year, mostly by stepping on hidden snakes. If you're walking through national parks or rice paddies, make sure to wear long pants and appropriate shoes; if you see a snake, maintain a respectful distance. If it has a triangular head (as many poisonous snakes do), simply leave the area. Snake bites, even poisonous ones, aren't usually life-threatening if treated quickly and properly. Don't bother snakes, and they shouldn't bother you.

### **Pangasius-fileten: Et produktionseventyr fra Vietnam**

Pangasius står der på posen med den frosne fisk i supermarkedets frysedisk. Den er billig og købes både af hard-core fiskespisere og nytilkomne fiskespisere med behov for et billigt produkt. Spørgsmålet er imidlertid: hvor kommer den fra? Er det et godt og sundt produkt og hvorledes bliver den produceret?

Pangasius produceres i Sydøstasien, nærmere bestemt i Mekong-deltaet i det sydlige Vietnam. Et vandrigt område, hvor den mere end 4000 km lange Mekong-flod løber ud i det syd-kinesiske hav. Floden afvander ikke mindre end 800.000 kvadratkilometer i Kina, Laos, Cambodia, Burma, Thailand og Vietnam.

Fra en nærmest ubetydelig produktion i 1999 er opdrættet steget til mere end 1.3 millioner tons alene i 2008. Den vietnamesiske regering har tilmed planlagt at øge produktionen til to millioner tons i indværende år, så der bliver sandsynligvis også mulighed for at lægge fisken på panden i de kommende år. Danske fiskere og fiskeopdrættere er overordentligt bekymrede over den enorme produktion, som udsætter vore egne fisk for meget hård konkurrence.

Pangasius-fisken kaldes også for **hajmalle**, idet den har en strømlinet form, der for en overfladisk betragtning kan minde om en haj. Der er dog slet ikke tale om hajer, men derimod benfisk, som bærer det videnskabelig navn 'Pangasianodon hypophthalmus' (se billede). Hajmallen har den fordel, at den kan klare sig i relativt iltfattige damme, da den kan opsnappe atmosfærisk luft i vandoverfladen. Luften kan så opbevares i en særlig luftlomme i gællehulen og forbruges når fisken er neddykket i selv en iltfattig dam.

Vandtemperaturen i dammene ligger på 20-30 grader celsius, og mallen vokser hurtigt ved den temperatur. Der er to produktionscykler per år, da man kan producere fisk med en vægt på 1 kg (slagtevægt) på blot seks måneder. Den fodres hovedsagligt med tørfoder, der dog ikke er lige så rig på de sundhedsfremmende omega-3 fedtsyrer, som den man finder i den naturlige føde vore vilde havfisk indtager. Pangasius-mallen er derfor **noget fattigere på de marine olier** end vore lokale vildfisk.

Det angives ofte, at opdrættet af flodmallen foregår under bæredygtige forhold, hvilket man dog kan diskutere. Bæredygtighedsbegrebet er jo åbent for fortolkning, men det er sandt, at energiforbruget ved Pangasius-opdrættet er relativt beskedent.

Således bruges der ikke energi til iltning af vandet i dammene, da fisken jo selv sørger for at snappe den nødvendige ilt i vandoverfladen. Derimod er **vandrensningen** efter produktionen særdeles beskedent, for ikke at sige fraværende, hvilket normalt ikke forbindes med bæredygtighed.

**Energiforbruget** ved produktionen er lavt også på grund af en begrænset brug af vandpumper. Vandet i dammene renses for eksempel ikke i mekaniske og biologiske filtre, som er en naturlig men energikrævende del af moderne fiskeopdræt blandt andet i Danmark, hvor udledningen af kvælstof, fosfat og organisk stof til miljøet er stærkt reduceret.

På nuværende tidspunkt indpumpes frisk vand fra floden en gang i døgnet, og samtidig udledes en tilsvarende mængde forurenede vand til omgivelserne. Andre typer af produktioner omfatter opdræt af fiskene i netbure i floden.

Der findes både snyltere på gællerne (de såkaldte monogene parasitter) og i fiskens tarm (de såkaldte ikter eller trematoder), og disse kan nok nedsætte fiskens vækst. Men de har næppe stor betydning for kvaliteten og kan ikke smitte mennesker.

Til gengæld ved man nu, at der i huden, i finnerne og tilmed i fileten kan optræde nogle mikroskopiske fladorme (flere arter af ikter), som kan smitte fugle og pattedyr, herunder mennesker, hvis fisken spises helt frisk og ubehandlet.

Det vides, at der på restauranter i Vietnam serveres flere fiskeretter med rå fisk. Hvis man i restaurations-køkkenet ikke husker at behandle fiskeproduktet med frost, kan man riskere at de ellers meget eksotiske fiskeretter kan give en tarminfektion.

De mikroskopiske snyltere bærer navne såsom *Haplorchis*, *Centrocestus* og *Procerovum*. De indgår i et kompliceret samspil med fugle eller pattedyr (grise, rotter, mennesker, katte og hunde, der fungerer som hovedværter), snegle (første mellemvært) i dammene og så flodmallen (anden mellemvært). Hvis et menneske spiser en rå filet med levende orm, kan det som nævnt give anledning til en tarminfektion. Ormene fjernes dog delvist ved fjernelse af skind og finner og desuden dræbes eventuelle resterende orme af indfrysningen på fabrikkerne. **Produktet i supermarkedets frysedisk er derfor helt ufarligt.**

Priser på foder til fiskene har været stigende i de senere år, og så længe priserne på det færdige fiskeprodukt er så lave som det er tilfældet i dag, levnes der ikke meget overskud til de vietnamesiske dambrugere, hvis økonomi er mere end anstrengt.

Hvis dambrugerne i Mekong-deltaet tilmed først får pålagt at rense vandet fra dammene, inden det udledes til det omgivende miljø, vil virksomhedens økonomi blive belastet i en sådan grad, at erhvervets overlevelse nødvendigvis må baseres på højere priser for fisken.



**Pho** (udtales phoå), en slags nudelsuppe, er uden konkurrence en af de mest populære retter Vietnam. De fleste finder den meget lækker og vil længes efter den, hvis de er væk fra hjemlandet. En kendt forfatter Nguyen Tuan (1910-1987) siger sådan om pho: "Pho er en ret med masseappel: arbejdere, bønder, soldater, intellektuelle, folk i byen og på landet, alle kan lide den..." "... Den kan spises og bliver spist på alle tider af døgnet, om morgenen, midt på dagen, om aftenen og endda sent på natten. Sammen med venner kan man nyde en skål pho som man kunne nyde en kop the. Jeg tror ikke nogen vil sige nej tak, hvis en ven byder ham på en skål pho. Således er det muligt, endda for fattig mennesker at være gæstfrie over for venner, fordi de kun skal spendere meget lidt."

Pho kan købes overalt i Hanoi, fra er omvandrede sælger, fra en bod på gaden, i en restaurant... Den serveres i forskellige varianter: med kylling eller okse kød, med langtidskogt eller halvkogt kød med magert eller fedt oksekød, med stegt eller sauteret kød... Men hvordan den end serveres, er de to vigtigste elementer i en skål pho er nudlerne og grundsuppen. I disse to ingredienser ligger den smag og duft, som får kunderne til foretrække en bestemt sælger, som selvfølgelig hemmeligholder den måde hvorpå suppen fremstilles.

De bedste nudler til at lave pho laves sædvanligvis af moc tuyen ris og de skal være spændstige og ikke klæbrige. Til grundsuppen varmes okseben i timevis over en sagte ild. Suppen skal simre, men må aldrig koge. Hvis den laves rigtigt vil den ikke kun smage og dufte godt men også være klar og fri for fedtpartikler. Ud over nudlernes og grundsuppens gode kvalitet vil en gourmet kræve de rette krydderier (f.eks. rød peber og citronsaft), den uomgængelige betingelse for en god skål Pho. Oversat fra Vietnam Pictoral nr. 10/1991, og bragt i Vietnam-bladet nr. 3/1992.



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**Vietnam-ruller** hedder Cha gio i det sydlige Vietnam, men bliver kaldt Nem i det nordlige Vietnam, Det er en ret som typisk bliver serveret i hjemmet til speciel lejligheder såsom Tet (nytår), bryllup og festmåltider. Derved bliver det betragtet som nationalret. Regn med god tid til at tilberede Cha gio, da der er mange forskellige tilbehør og processer som kræver omhyggelighed.

Cha gio kan tilberedes en dag i forvejen, dækkes til med plasticfolie og køles ned i køleskabet. Tilbehøret laves samme dag, mens rullerne steges. Cha gio kan faktisk også steges en uge i forvejen, fryses ned, og når de skal bruges. varmes i ovnen i 200 grader i 10- 15 min. Men friske Cha gio er bedst, eller tilberedt højst en dag i forvejen, så smager de bedst. Det vil være hyggeligt hvis du har nogen at dele arbejdsopgaverne med og det giver gode muligheder for hyggesnak.

For der findes ikke én gylden opskrift om Cha gio. Hvis man læser i vietnamesiske kogebøger, både udenlandske og vietnamesiske, finder man lige så mange forskellige opskrifter. Men her er en vietnamesisk moders opskrift, med ingredienser man kan få i København. Det vigtigste i Cha gio er fyldet, hvis hovedingredienser er hakket flæsk, glasnudler, hakket rå låg, tørrede svampe, æg, salt og peber. Resten kan varieres efter hvor man er i verden.

#### Fyld

- 500 g hakket flæsk
- 60 g glasnudler sættes i blød i varmt vand i 15-20 min., klippes korte
- 2 spsk. tørrede skyøre svampe sættes i blød i varmt vand i 30 min., nip hårde dele af, vaskes, afdryppes, hakkes fint
- 1 finthakket stort løg
- 2 æg
- 1/2 tsk. peber
- 2 spsk. Fiskesauce (nuoc mam), også erstatter salt
- 4-5 store gulerødder, rives fint
- 50 g bønnespirer
- 100 g hakket dybfrosne rejer
- 100 g dåse krabbekød, afdryppet
- 4 hakkede skalotteløg
- 4 hakkede fed hvidløg

**Tilbehør: Nuoc cham og salat - Nuoc cham laves af fiskesauce (nuoc mam). Der skal bruges:**

- 1 knust fed hvidløg
- 4 tsk. sukker
- 1/4 frisk lime presset (evt. citronsaft)
- 1/2 dl fiskesauce (nuoc mam)
- 0,4 dl kogt vand (mere, hvis nødvendigt)

Bland alle ingredienser i en skål. Rør sukkeret ud. Hvis smagen er for saltet, så kom en spiseskefuld kogt vand i ad gangen i blandingen og smag indtil nuoc cham har et blødt smag af sursød og saltet. Man kan komme lidt af meget fint revne gulerødder i nuoc cham til pynt.

#### **Tilbehør: salat**

Ca.. 200 g risnudler (bun), bønnespirer, agurk, salatblade, friske basilikum, koriander (helst frisk, importeret fra Asien). Kog risnudlerne, lad dem dryppe af i et dørslag. Vask salatblade og grønsager, lad dem dryppe af. Skær agurker i ca. 5 cm lange tynde både.

#### **Vietnamesisk rispapir**

I pakke rispapir (banh trang) eller kinesiske pandekager til forårsruller. 2-3 viskestykker vrides godt i varmt vand til dækning af blødgjort rispapir.

Bland 2 spsk. eddike. 1 tsk. sukker i en suppeskål 3/4 fyldt med varmt vand, til at blødgøre rispapiret.

Dyp rispapir i vandskålen med blandingen af sukker og eddike, dyp 2-3 stykker mere. Læg dem spredt på et opvredet viskestykke for at suge vandoverskud. pas på de ikke klistrer sammen. Dæk dem med et andet viskestykke for at undgå udtørring.

#### **Tilberedning af ruller**

Bland alt fyld i en skål og rør det godt sammen. Fyldet kan enten ruller i blødgjort rispapir (banh trang) eller kinesiske pandekager til forårsruller, som følgende:

Fold pandekagerne, ca. 1/5, og kom nok fyld på. Fold venstre- og højreside over hinanden. Rul den op. Luk rullen med en blanding af kartoffelmel og vand. Det er den bedste måde at undgå at rullen springer under stegning.

#### **Stegning**

Frituresteg rullerne i mellemvarm olie til de bliver gyldne. Lad dem dryppe af for overskudsolie på køkkenrulle. Server dem varme. Man kan enten spise dem med fingre ved at pakke en rulle i et salatblad med lidt af de andre grønsager, lidt kogte risnudler og dyppe i nuoc cham. Eller man kan klippe rullerne i stykker på ca. 2-3 cm i en skål med kogte risnudler, grønsager og nuoc cham og spise med pinde.

#### **Nuoc mam - husk lige fiskesovsen!**

Hvis man skal bestille et ægte vietnamesisk måltid, må man lære at sige de to vietnamesiske ord Nuoc mam, hvis tjeneren skulle glemme fiskesovsen. Lige meget om man spiser flot eller enkelt, dyrt eller billigt, er et måltid kun vietnamesisk, hvis der er nuoc mam til. Nuoc mam er en saltet og gæret fiskesovs, der serveres som tilbehør til de fleste vietnamesiske retter. Den kan også bruges som grundingrediens til mange slags dressing.

Det tager lang tid at fremstille nuoc mam. Fisken skal først saltet kraftigt ved, at fiskene lægges lagvis med salt. Derpå står den og gærer i syv-otte måneder i en lukket, men ikke lufttæt beholder. Efter gæringen er fisken helt opløst til en flydende masse. Producenten uddrager en ekstrakt af den flydende masse, og dette er nuoc mam. Det første udtræk er det bedste; det er næsten farveløst.

Det er den traditionelle måde at fremstille fiskesovs på. Med den nye teknologi er gæringsperioden i dag afkortet til ca. 30 dage. Nuoc mam har stadig af god kvalitet, men mange mener, at den ikke så god en smag som den traditionelt fremstillede.

At blande nuoc mam er en kunst i sig selv, fordi enhver ret skal have sin egen blanding med forskellige mængder vand, sukker, hvidløg, peber, chili med mere. I mange tilfælde er nuoc mam, den vigtigste ingrediens til et måltid. Som en kendt talemåde siger: "Jeg betaler mere for nuoc mam end for resten af retten".

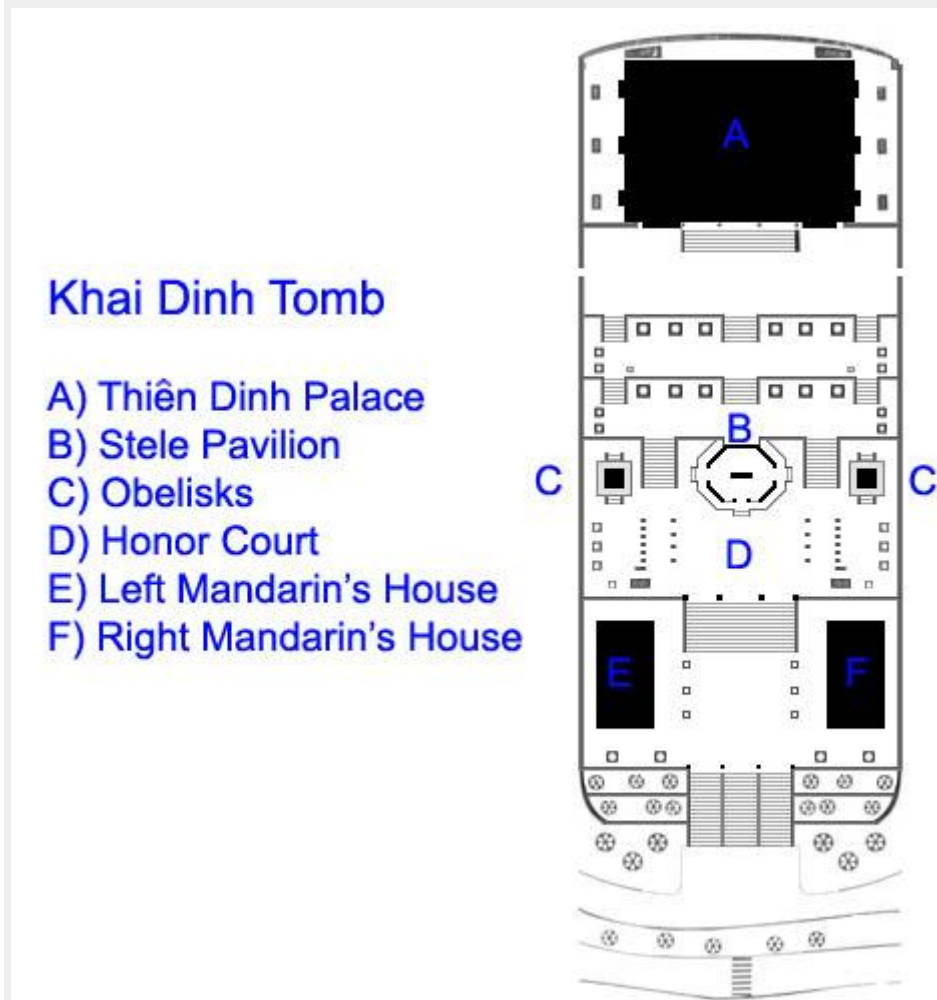
Ved siden af nuoc mam, er mam også en populær dressing i Vietnam. Mam er en tynd creme af saltet fisk eller saltede rejer. Den er obligatorisk tilbehør til adskillige retter, især til kogt eller dampet kød serveret med en blandet salat.

Mam og nuoc mam fremstilles i de fleste af Vietnams kystområder. De bedste laves i Haiphong i nord og i distrikterne langs sydkysten. Blandt de mange Varemærker er Phu Quoc det mest kendte. Fiskesovs af mærket Phu Quoc kan man få i kineserbutikker over hele verden, især i lande med en større vietnamesisk befolkningsgruppe. Men pas på, Phu Quoc kan også være rent blikfang, et navn lånt fra øen med samme navn ud for Vietnams sydkyst. Kunderne er blevet så fortryllet af dette navn, at de slet ikke vil prøve andre mærker.

### Khai Dinh Tomb (built 1920-31)

This is the final resting place of Khai Dinh, Emperor of Vietnam from 1916-1925. The tomb represents a fusion of traditional Vietnamese style and modern influence. Begun in 1920 and completed in 1931, the tomb is almost entirely made of concrete and includes many European architectural details, likely inspired by the Emperor's visit to France in 1922 where he viewed the Marseilles Colonial Exhibition.

Khai Dinh was an extremely unpopular ruler during his lifetime, mostly due to his close collaboration with the French. To finance the tomb, he requested permission of the French advisors to raise taxes on the peasantry, which they allowed. Although he died prematurely at age 40 of tuberculosis, his son and successor, Bao Dai, completed the tomb several years later. Bao Dai would prove to be the final ruler of the Nguyen dynasty and lived until 1997. Thus, the tomb of Khai Dinh became the last grand imperial tomb in Vietnam.



### Tu Duc Tomb (built 1864-67)

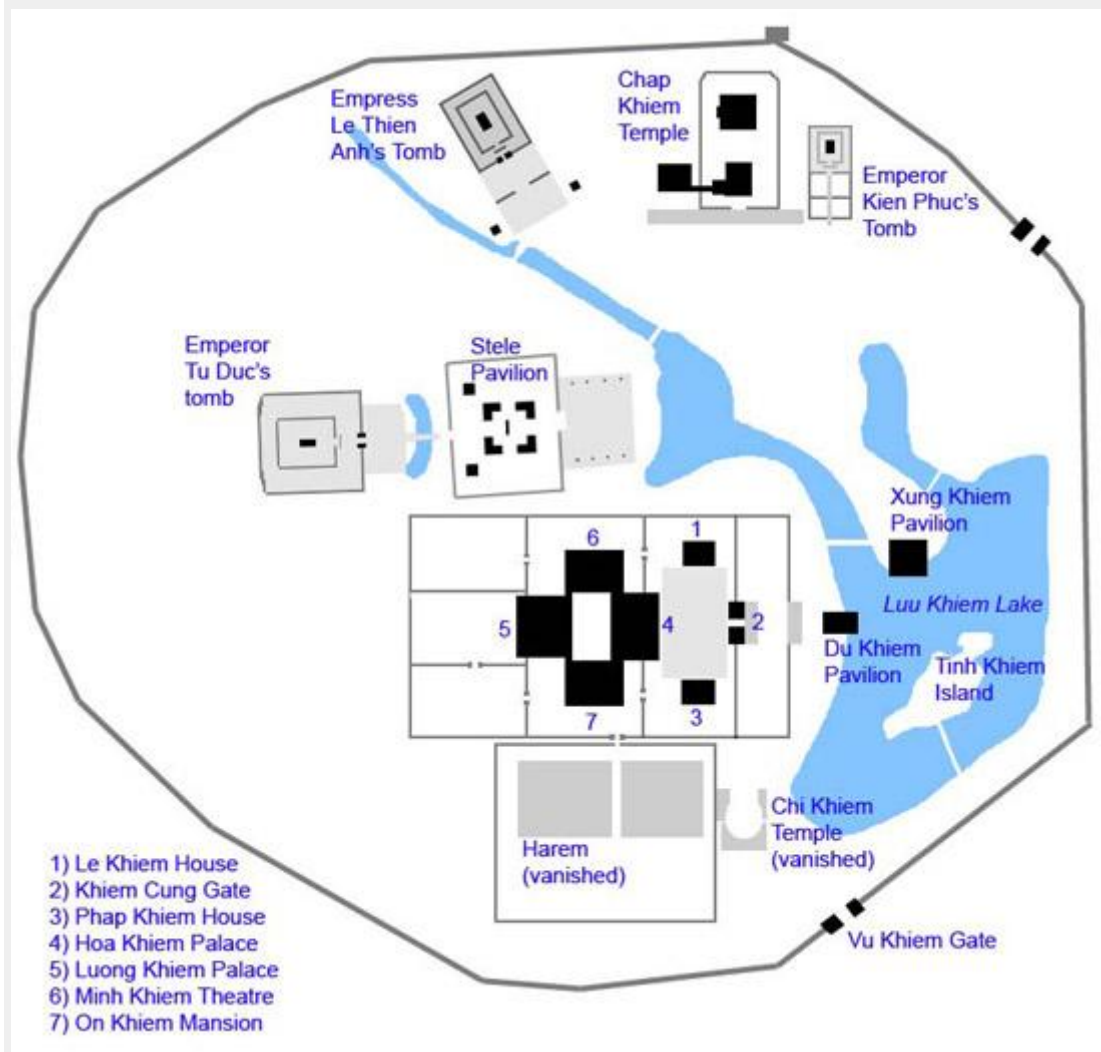
Emperor Tu Duc enjoyed the longest reign of any monarch of the Nguyen dynasty, ruling from 1848-83. Although he had over a hundred wives and concubines, he was unable to father a son (possibly he became sterile after contracting smallpox). Thus, it fell to him to write his own epitaph on the deeds of his reign. He felt this was a bad omen, but the epitaph can still be found inscribed on the stele in the pavilion just to the east of the Emperor's tomb. This stele is the largest of its type in Vietnam, and had to be brought here from a quarry over 500 kilometers away--a trip that took four years.

Tu Duc began planning his tomb long before his death in 1883. The major portions of the tomb complex were completed from 1864-67, along with future temple buildings that served as a palatial retreat for Tu Duc and his many wives during his lifetime. Construction of the tomb demanded so much corvée labor and extra taxation that there was an abortive coup against Tu Duc in 1866. This was put down, and for the remainder of his life, Tu Duc continued to use the tomb's palace buildings as his place of residence.

Amenities for the living are unmatched at any other tomb in Vietnam. Here, the Emperor could boat on the lake and hunt small game on the tiny island in the lake's middle. He could recline at Xung Khiem Pavilion and recite or compose poetry in the company of his concubines. After trips on the lake, the boats would moor at Du Khiem Pavilion, from which the Emperor and his entourage could walk directly west into the palace area of the tomb.

After the Emperor's death in 1883 his adopted son Kien Phuc took over as the Nguyen Emperor. Perhaps because he only ruled seven months before dying, a separate tomb was not established for him. Instead, he was laid to rest in a small corner on the grounds of Tu Duc's tomb. Between the tombs of Tu Duc and his son is the tomb of Empress Le Thien Anh, Tu Duc's primary wife.

Interestingly, despite the grandeur of the site and the amount of time Tu Duc spent here, he was actually buried in a different, secret location somewhere in Hue. To keep the secret safe the 200 laborers who buried the king were all beheaded after they returned from the secret route. To this day, the real tomb of Tu Duc remains hidden for future generations to discover.



Tu Duc (1829-1883), according to Pham Cao Duong (*Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War: A Political, Social, and Military History*, page 706) was *independent* Vietnam's last emperor, 1847-1883. Some would perhaps regard him as the emperor who lost Vietnam to French domination. Tu Duc served as the fourth of the thirteen Nguyen Dynasty emperors and is certainly one of the most interesting.

Tu Duc's rule began as the French expressed their interests in Indochina in increasingly aggressive forms. In 1847, for example, the French navy attacked Da Nang. Our printed course materials, to be read later, relate fully the story of the beginning of French colonialism.

It was Emperor Tu Duc who faced those challenges, and he and his political aides signed several treaties with the French. Gradually Vietnam lost entire provinces, and in 1884, the year following Tu Duc's death, Vietnam became a French protectorate.

Were this loss of sovereignty under French colonialism the entire record of Emperor Tu Duc, he would not be remembered by Vietnamese today as kindly as he is. He showed interest in modernizing Vietnam, and he took a personal interest in Vietnam's education and culture. Among his own writings, he produced poetry, philosophical texts, and history. In addition, he often invited Vietnamese scholars to interact with him at the site of his mausoleum complex.

That was a massive building project which he undertook long before his death. Built on the Perfume River between 1864 and 1867, the complex contains gardens, pavilions, and a temple used earlier as a palace. He visited there for recreation (fishing especially), for meditation, and to write, as well as to meet with other writers and intellectuals.

Tu Duc lived longer than the other Nguyen emperors. During his lifetime he had 104 wives and many more concubines, but he fathered no children. He was often ill, and he was likely sterile due to smallpox early in his life.

In keeping with Chinese and Vietnamese traditions, there is a Stele House on the Tu Duc Mausoleum site. Within this pavilion, open on all four sides, is a 20-ton stele containing Tu Duc's 4,000-character eulogy. Written in Chinese characters, it is actually an autobiography of the emperor.

**Bảo Đại** (lit. "keeper of greatness", 22 October 1913 – 30 July 1997), born Nguyễn Phúc Vĩnh Thụy, was the 13th and final emperor of the Nguyễn dynasty, which was the last dynasty of Vietnam. From 1926 to 1945, he was king of Annam. During this period, Annam was a protectorate within French Indochina, covering the central two-thirds of the present-day Vietnam. Bảo Đại ascended the throne in 1932. The Japanese ousted the Vichy-French administration in March 1945 and then ruled through Bảo Đại. At this time, he renamed his country "Vietnam". He abdicated in August 1945 when Japan surrendered. He was the chief of state of the State of Vietnam (South Vietnam) from 1949 until 1955. Bảo Đại was criticized for being too closely associated with France and spending much of his time outside of Vietnam. Prime Minister Ngô Đình Diệm ousted him in a fraudulent referendum vote in 1955.

Bảo Đại was born Prince Nguyễn Phúc Vĩnh Thụy in the Palace of Doan-Trang-Vien, part of the compound of the Purple Forbidden City in Huế, the capital of Vietnam. He later was given the name Nguyễn Vĩnh Thụy. His father was King Khải Định of Annam. His mother was the king's second wife, Tu Cung, who was renamed *Doan Huy* upon her 1913 marriage. She held various titles over the years that indicated her advancing rank as a favored consort until she eventually became Empress Dowager in 1933, with style of Her Imperial Majesty added in 2001. Vietnam had been ruled from Huế by the Nguyễn Dynasty since 1802. The French government, which took control of the region in the late 19th century, split Vietnam into three areas: the protectorates of Annam and Tonkin and the colony of Cochinchina. The Nguyễn Dynasty was given nominal rule of Annam.

At the age of nine, Prince Nguyễn Phúc Vĩnh Thụy was sent to France to be educated at the Lycée Condorcet and, later, the Paris Institute of Political Studies. In 1926 he was made the emperor after his father's death and took the name *Bảo Đại* ("Protector of Grandeur" or "Keeper of Greatness"). He did not ascend to the throne given his age and returned to France to continue his studies.

On 20 March 1934, aged 20, at the imperial city of Huế, Bảo Đại married Marie-Thérèse Nguyễn Hữu Thị Lan (died 15 September 1963, Chabrignac, France), a commoner from a wealthy Vietnamese Roman Catholic family. She was renamed as Nam Phương (*The South*). The couple had five children: Crown Prince Bảo Long (4 January 1936 – 28 July 2007), Princess Phương Mai (born 1 August 1937), Princess Phương Liên (born 3 November 1938), Princess Phương Dung (born 5 February 1942), and Prince Bảo Thắng (born 9 December 1943). She was granted the title of Empress in 1945.

Bảo Đại had four other wives, three of whom he wed during his marriage to Nam Phương:

- Phu Ảnh, a cousin, whom he married c. 1935, and by whom he had one daughter, Princess Claire Phương Tào
- Hoang, a Chinese woman, whom he married in 1946
- Bùi Mộng Điệp, whom he married in 1955 and by whom he had two children, Princess Phương Minh (born 1949) and Prince Bảo An (born 1953)
- Monique Baudot, a French citizen whom he married in 1972, and who was styled "Imperial Princess" and renamed Monique Vĩnh Thụy.

One of his concubines was a dancer from Hanoi, Lý Lệ Hà

In 1940, during the second World War, coinciding with their ally Germany's invasion of France, the Japanese invaded French Indochina. While they did not eject the French colonial administration, the occupation authorities directed policy from behind the scenes in a parallel of Vichy France.

The Japanese promised not to interfere with the court at Huế, but in 1945, after ousting the French, coerced Bảo Đại into declaring Vietnamese independence from France as a member of Japan's "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere"; the country then became the Empire of Vietnam. The Japanese had a Vietnamese pretender, Prince Cường Để, waiting to take power in case the new emperor's "elimination" was required. Japan surrendered to the Allies in August 1945, and the Vietminh under the leadership of Hồ Chí Minh aimed to take power in a free Vietnam. Due to his recent Japanese associations, Hồ was able to persuade Bảo Đại to abdicate on 25 August 1945, handing power over to the Việt Minh — an event which greatly enhanced Hồ's legitimacy in the eyes of the Vietnamese people. Bảo Đại was appointed "supreme advisor" to Hồ's Democratic Republic of Vietnam in Hanoi, which asserted its independence on 2 September 1945, but was ousted by the French in November 1946.

As Vietnam descended into armed conflict — rival factions clashed with each other and also with the remaining French — Bảo Đại left Vietnam after a year in his "advisory" role, living in both Hong Kong and China. The French persuaded him to return in 1949 to serve as "head of state" (*quốc trưởng*), not as "emperor" (Hoàng Đế). He soon returned to France, however, and showed little interest in the affairs of his own country when his own personal interests were not directly involved.

The communist victory in China in 1949 led to a revival of the fortunes of the Việt Minh. The United States extended diplomatic recognition to Bảo Đại's government in March 1950, soon after communist nations recognized Hồ's government. The outbreak of the Korean War in June led to U.S. military aid and active support of the French war effort in Indochina, now seen as anti-communist rather than colonialist.

But the war between the French colonial forces and the Việt Minh continued, ending in 1954 shortly after a major victory for the Việt Minh at Điện Biên Phủ. The 1954 peace deal between the French and the Việt Minh, known as the Geneva Accords, involved a partition of the country into northern and southern zones. Bảo Đại moved to Paris, but remained "Head of State" of South Vietnam, appointing Ngô Đình Diệm as his prime minister.

In 1955, Diệm called for a referendum to remove Bảo Đại and establish a republic with Diệm as president. The campaign leading up to the referendum was punctuated by personal attacks against the former emperor. His supporters had no way to refute them, as campaigning for Bảo Đại was forbidden. The October 13 referendum was widely reckoned as fraudulent, showing an implausible 98% in favor of a republic. As it turned out, the number of votes for the republic exceeded the total number of registered voters by some 380,000—an obvious sign of fraud.

In 1972, Bảo Đại issued a public statement from exile, appealing to the Vietnamese people for national reconciliation, stating, "The time has come to put an end to the fratricidal war and to recover at last peace and accord". At times, Bảo Đại maintained residence in southern France, and in particular, in Monaco, where he sailed often on his private yacht, one of the largest in Monte Carlo harbor. He still reportedly held great influence among local political figures in the Quảng Trị and Thừa Thiên provinces of Huế. The Communist government of North Vietnam sent representatives to France hoping that Bảo Đại would become a member of a coalition government which might reunite Vietnam, in the hope of attracting his supporters in the regions wherein he still held influence.

As a result of these meetings, Bảo Đại publicly spoke out against the presence of American troops on the territory of South Vietnam, and he also criticized President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu's regime in South Vietnam. He called for all political factions to create a free, neutral, peace-loving government which would resolve the tense situation that had taken form in the country. In 1982, Bảo Đại, his wife Monique, and other members of the former imperial family of Vietnam visited the United States. His agenda was to oversee and bless Buddhist and Caodaiist religious ceremonies, in the Californian and Texan Vietnamese-American communities.

Throughout Bao Dai's life in both Vietnam and in France, he remained unpopular amongst the Vietnamese populace as he was considered a political puppet for the French colonialist regime, for lacking any form of political power, for his cooperation with the French and for his pro-French ideals.

Bảo Đại died in a military hospital in Paris, France, on 30 July 1997. He was interred in the Cimetière de Passy. After his death, his eldest son, Crown Prince Bảo Long, inherited the position of head of the Nguyễn Dynasty. Emperor Bảo Đại was portrayed by actor Huỳnh Anh Tuấn in the 2004 Vietnamese miniseries *Ngọn nến Hoàng cung* (*A Candle in the Imperial Palace*).

## Quotes

- In 1945 when the Japanese colonel in charge of the Hue garrison told Bảo Đại that he had (in line with the orders of the Allied commander) taken measures ensuring the security of the Imperial Palace and those within it against a possible Việt Minh coup, Bảo Đại dismissed the protection declaring "I do not wish a foreign army to spill the blood of my people."
- He explained his abdication in 1945 saying "I would prefer to be a citizen of an independent country rather than Emperor of an enslaved one."
- When, after World War II, France attempted to counter Hồ Chí Minh's popularity and gain the support of the U.S. by creating a puppet government with him, he said "What they call a Bảo Đại solution turns out to be just a French solution."
- In a rare public statement from France in 1972, Bảo Đại appealed to the people of Vietnam for national reconciliation, saying "The time has come to put an end to the fratricidal war and to recover at last peace and accord."

## Ris (*Oryza sativa*) er en kornsart, der tilhører græs-familien.

Ris er verdens ældste afgrøde. Arkæologiske fund viser, at ris har været dyrket og spist gennem næsten 7.000 år. De første skriftlige optegnelser om ris kan dateres tilbage til et risplantningsdekret udstedt af en kinesisk kejser omkring år 2800 f.Kr.

Ris synes at stamme fra regioner i det sydlige Kina og Thailand, men som spise spredte risen sig hurtigt og blev snart en del af kosten i Centralasien, Indonesien, Japan, Indien, Persien, Middelhavsområdet og Sydamerika. I dag dyrkes ris på samtlige kontinenter på nær Antarktis.

Risen nåede Amerika ved et uheld. Et skib fra Madagaskar kom ud af kurs og søgte ly i Charleston, en havneby i South Carolina. Kaptajnen forærede en lille portion ris til en lokal planteavler, og det skulle hurtigt vise sig, at South Carolinas flade, rige jord var ideel for risdyrkning. I 1726 udgik 4.500 tons ris fra Charlestons havn til eksport. 50 år senere var det en af det amerikanske landbrugs helt store succeser. Der findes omkring 12.000 forskellige typer ris.

For over halvdelen af Jordens befolkning er ris en hovednæringskilde. I nogle asiatiske lande udgør ris 80 % af den samlede fødeindtagelse. Den dyrkes i stort set alle tropiske og subtropiske egne. 91 % af produktionen går til menneskeføde, 4 % bruges som dyrefoder, 3 % til industrielle formål og 2 % gemmes til udsæd.

Markedsprisen på ris er steget voldsomt siden 2006, alene fra juni 2007 til april 2008 med 75 %. Årsagerne hertil er mangfoldige: Misvækst som følge af tørke eller oversvømmelser, stigende forbrug, toldbeskyttelse og vækst i anvendelsen af landbrugsarealer til afgrøder til bioenergi.

### Risproducerende lande

De største risproducerende lande					
	Land	Mængde (i 1000 tons)	Rang	Land	Mængde (i 1000 tons)
1	Kina	181.900	11	USA	10.126
2	Indien	130.513	12	Pakistan	7.351
3	Indonesien	53.985	13	Korea	6.435
4	Bangladesh	40.054	14	Egypten	6.200
5	Vietnam	36.341	15	Cambodia	4.200
6	Thailand	27.000	16	Nepal	4.100
7	Myanmar	24.500	17	Nigeria	3.542
8	Filippinerne	14.615	18	Iran	3.500
9	Brasilien	13.141	19	Sri Lanka	3.126
10	Japan	11.342		Verden	618.440

Der findes næsten 80.000 risvarianter på verdensplan. I Danmark kender vi relativt få varianter, som er kort beskrevet nedenfor:

Ved afskalning/polering af rårisen, den brune ris, fremkommer den hvide ris. Som det blev konstateret af Casimir Funk, grundlæggeren af begrebet vitaminer, i 1912, reduceres risens tiamin-indhold (B1-vitamin) herved drastisk med beriberi som følgesygdom hos folk, hvor hvide ris udgør en substantiel del af basiskosten. Brune ris er desuden rigere på kostfibre end hvide ris.

Langkornede ris som basmati og jasmin er mere end tre gange længere end de brede ristyper. Når de koges, forbliver risene lette og luftige. Mediumkornede ris som arborio og javonica er 2-3 gange længere end brede. Når de koges, bliver de mere bløde end langkornede og med en lettere tendens til at klistre. Kortkornede ris (som røde ris) er mindre end 2 gange så lange som brede og bliver bløde og grødede, når de koges. Langkornede ris anbefales til opskrifter, hvor man ønsker lette og løse ris. Medium og korte anbefales til ris-kroketter, risotto og lignende retter.

Basmati, thai jasmin, texmati, vild pecan med flere er, som navnene antyder, aromatiske rissorter med en fin duft. Ris med et tyndt lag sort klid frem for det mere almindelige lysebrune lag. Under kliddet er en hvid kerne. Varianterne inkluderer baliensiske ris, kinesisk- og thai black rice. Ris, der er forkogt og dehydreret for at nedsætte den endelige forberedelsestid. Varianter som arborio, carnaroli, vialone og nano. Disse ris er medium- eller kortkornede og bruges til eksempelvis risotto.

Ris, der er dampbehandlet under tryk, så kliddets næring opløses og optages i kernen. Dermed nedsættes kogetiden, og parboiled ris har et højere indhold af næringsstoffer end hvide ris. Konsistensen er forholdsvis fast, og parboiled ris kan ikke optage sovs lige så godt som fx basmatiris. Bhunanesiske, himalaya og thai ris med rødt klidlag frem for det normale lysebrune.

Gryn, der endnu er i celluloseskallen. Før risene kan koges, må skallen fjernes, da skallen ikke kan fordøjes af mennesker. Råris er næringsrige og indeholder meget kalium. Mest kendte spanske ris er valencia-ris, der bruges til paella og andre spanske retter. I mangel på valencia kan man bruge højkornet ris. Selvom det ligner ris, er det kornet fra en slags vandgræs – på latin *Zizania aquatica*. En gensplejset variant med forstadiet til vitamin A er blevet udviklet.

**Rice production in Vietnam** in the Mekong and Red River deltas is important to the food supply in the country and national economy. Vietnam is one of world's richest agricultural regions and is the second-largest (after Thailand) exporter worldwide and the world's seventh-largest consumer of rice. The Mekong Delta is the heart of the rice producing region of the country where water, boats, houses and markets coexist to produce a generous harvest of rice. Vietnam's land area of 33 million ha has three ecosystems that dictate rice culture. These are the southern delta (with its Mekong Delta dominating rice coverage), the northern delta (the tropical monsoon area with cold winters) and the highlands of the north (with upland rice varieties). The most prominent irrigated rice system is the Mekong Delta. Rice is a staple of the national diet and is seen as a "gift from God".

The Mekong River and its tributaries are crucial to rice production in Vietnam. A total of 12 provinces constitute the Mekong Delta, popularly known as the "Rice Bowl" of Vietnam, which contain some 17 million people and 80% of them are engaged in rice cultivation. The delta produced bountiful harvest of about 20 million tons in 2008, about a half of the country's total production. The rice bowl has assured food security to its population whose 75% of daily calories are met by rice, which is also the staple diet of nearly 50% of world's population of 6.7-billion people.

Within the delta system dominated by rice, now the farming system also includes activities related to aquaculture, rearing of animals, cash crops and fruit trees. Under aquaculture fresh and saline water shrimp are raised within the paddy rice fields. As a further environmental zoning of the delta, mangrove forests are also developed.

Rice is called 'white gold' in Vietnam and has a link to the Sanskrit name 'Dhanya' (meaning: "the sustainer of the human race"), the name given to Rice in India. In Vietnam, there is a folklore that is narrated on rice. According to the folk legend, in ancient times, rice was not produced but was summoned by fervent prayers by people. Rice would appear from the heaven in the form of a large ball in every house. On one occasion, a lady was sweeping the floor of her house as ordered by her husband to welcome the rice ball. The large rice ball landed in the house when the lady was still sweeping and it hit the broom and then broke into many pieces. Since then people of Vietnam had to work hard with their hands to grow rice.

Rice growing in Mekong Delta has an ancient history traced to the Khmer regime of the 18th century. It was taken over by the Vietnamese. However, the Cambodians still consider this area as "KamPuchea Krom or Lower Cambodia" not able to forget that they owned this area in the past. Cambodia even attacked Vietnam in 1978 to take control of the Mekong Delta. However, they were decisively defeated. This delta was the last part of the present day Vietnam that was annexed from Cambodia.

Its present status under the Vietnamese is, however, as a very large swathe of green carpet of rice paddy. This development is attributed to the French who colonized Vietnam in the middle of the 19th century with the basic objective of exporting rice grown in the delta to meet its large costs of colonisation. They developed a maze of canal system in the delta to grow three rice crops in a year.

During the World War II when the Japanese occupied Vietnam and exploited the rich delta by exporting rice to their country, it denied nearly several million Vietnamese of their basic staple. While Vietnam was occupied by Japan, the Allies, especially the United States, often bombed roads, making the transport of rice from the south to the north extremely hard. Both France and Japan forcibly hoarded food from farmers to feed their troops, while the French administration was broken and unable to supply and distribute the food. The inadequate food supply caused the famine in Vietnam; starting with 1943, peaking in March–May 1945 and continuing till the end of Pacific war there was unprecedented starvation. Two million Vietnamese people were reported to have died of starvation which was attributed to the Japanese rule which was further compounded by unprecedented floods. In March 1945, Japan took over and established the puppet Empire of Vietnam headed by Trần Trọng Kim. While this government tried to alleviate the suffering, they were unable to do so because Japan still stuck to its policy of hoarding food.

Rice production stalled in both parts of the divided Vietnam in the 1960s with Vietnam War inflicting great disruptions in acreage. South Vietnam in particular became an importer by 1965 but output did rise in the 1970s.

At the end of the Vietnamese war in 1975, the country faced acute hardships, as under the Communist regime, cooperative farming through communes was established. Communist Party members of the national party, who were at a low rung, were entrusted managerial responsibility for the development of the Mekong delta in South Vietnam. The government also supplied to the farmers seed, fertilizer and other essentials. As this helped the poor farmers, it was popularly called "the iron rice bowl" – this allegory was meant to convey that "no one would get rich by this system, there was a promise that every person would be cared for by the government...a system where no one would fall through the cracks" Thus, all rice growing fields of the delta became the state



property; even a ration of 80 kilograms (180 lb) was forced on the people wanting to buy and carry rice from the delta, which was strictly monitored at police check posts. This condition was further aggravated by devastating floods and insect infestation of large fields.

Realising the folly of State Control, the Government of Vietnam, in 1986, allowed the farmers "to grow and sell their rice". Sure enough there was an incentive to the farmers to grow rice in the delta and Vietnam became one of the leading exporters of Rice. Since then many Legal Constructs have been enacted in Vietnam as a part of Wetland Development, of which the most significant is the Land Law (1994) that gave rights to the farmers, which resulted in an accelerated growth of the Mekong Delta and increase in income to the people. Consequently the delta is intensely populated. The inhabitants of the delta are mostly constituted by the ethnic Vietnamese with Chinese, Khmers and Chams forming the minority groups. The government gave a lease of 50 years to the farmers to own the land and farmers were also allowed to sub-tenet their land to others. This helped in transferring the lands from the cooperatives to the individual families, and this act of the government has "created a land market."

During 2008, the Vietnam Food Association, had set a target of record production of 36.5 million tonnes of rice. However, during 2010 rice industry is under serious threat due to a heat wave of above 35 °C (95 °F) for at least three consecutive months as of March, 2010 indicating a likely drop in rice production.

The Mekong Delta, also categorized as a wetland, has now attracted large investments from both government and private sectors to develop and maintain not only the canal system but also expand the ambit of agricultural development to include aquaculture in conjunction with wetland rice. The delta also "nourishes the cultivation of sugar cane, fruit and coconut."

Rice production in the Mekong delta has seen phenomenal increase in recent years, though in some years drought conditions have impeded this growth. This increase is attributed to planting of modern early maturing rice varieties, better management, appropriate Legal Constructs by the Government. Forty two IRRI researched varieties of rice were released for adoption in the Mekong Delta and according to IRRI sources these varieties cover 60% of the irrigated rice-growing area in the delta. Area brought under Rice paddy, which was at 4.744 million ha in 1961 increased to 7.305 million ha in 2007. Correspondingly, Rice production in Vietnam which was 8.997 million tonnes in 1961 and 10.29 millions tonnes in 1975, gradually increased the next over two decades to 35.567 million tonnes in 2007 – an almost fourfold increase in a period of 46 years from 1961 to 2007.

### **International cooperation**

The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), which is headquartered in the Philippines, has played a very significant role in enhancing the knowledge base of rice farming in Vietnam. Their research efforts have been continually aimed at growing rice faster with higher yields. This has boosted the confidence level of the Vietnamese scientists who hope that their country would one day be the rice producer to feed the world. The IRRI has trained and worked with Vietnamese scientists since 1970. The scientists trained by IRRI now hold key positions in rice research institutions and universities and government organizations; some of the key institutions involved in rice research specific to Vietnam under the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry, Vietnam are: The Cuu Long Delta Rice Research Institute, Institute for Food Crop Research, Institute for Soils and Fertilizers, Institute for Science and Technology, Vietnam Agricultural Sciences and Technology Institute, Southern Institute for Food Crops, Vietnam Agricultural Sciences and Technology Institute and the University of Agriculture and Forestry. In May 1994, the contribution of the IRRI to Rice development in Vietnam was recognized by the President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam with a Friendship Order of the Vietnam Government with the citation, "in recognition of the Institute's "very efficient contribution".

Apart from introducing several rice varieties of IRR in Vietnam, other assistance provided by the Institute relate to the involvement in the irrigated rice ecosystem to increase their production and income through several measures such as; creating a communication among farmers through a network of pest management on concepts such as "no early insecticide spray" policy as a standard practice in rice production, integrated nutrient management measures, improved water management and financial support from the Australian Government, strengthening the Cuu Long Delta Rice Research Institute with UNDP assistance, and also several research projects undertaken jointly by the IRRI with institutions in Vietnam on hybrid rice, insect infestation, potassium deficiencies in soils affecting yields and rice based farm research.

Research studies have indicated that reclamation of coastal wetlands for growing rice in the tidal zones need to be taken up carefully after assessing the suitability of the soil conditions for levels of salinity and sulfate acids.

Modern mechanized farming methods and new strains of rice are becoming popular. There are more than 1600 varieties grown in the Mekong Delta; one unique variety is the floating rice whose fairly long stems float in the flooded fields of the delta.

As rice farming becomes more mechanized, traditional wooden farm tools as well as older strains of rice are also preserved. Among the 1,600-plus varieties of rice grown in the delta, a unique variety is the "floating" rice — its several-foot-long stems keep it above rising floodwaters. However, old rice varieties have their special place. According to an expert of Vietnamese rice growing region:

Old rice varieties still have strong characteristic...They can grow in acid sulfate and saline soil and submerged areas. They are tasty and have a popular flavour that should be preserved for cross breeding.

Rice is the staple diet of Vietnam. It is often said that all their three meals in a day consists of "rice and something else." If rice is not eaten then anything else eaten is not a meal but a snack. Vietnamese cuisine was influenced by several centuries of foreign rule, starting with the Chinese for over 1000 years from 111 BC followed by the Mongol invasions of Vietnam in the 10th century AD, when the Vietnamese national dish the *phở* (rice noodle soup) was concocted. This was followed by the Cambodian influence when

Indian dishes made inroads into their cuisine and they learnt to blend spices with their dishes. Then the French brought their culinary specialties (particularly, salads and sautéing). In a dining table, in Vietnamese houses, rice is the main dish that is placed at the centre with other dishes arranged around it. The breakfast usually starts with a noodle soup, a rice gruel- the national dish *pho* – or it could be a "rice cake wrapped in a banana leaf", lunch is normally with rice vermicelli with something else (grilled meat or sea food) and dinner is also generally a repeat of the lunch dishes with rice as the central dish.

There are many types of rice in Vietnam. However the most popular varieties are the usual white rice (eaten during every meal), jasmine rice (moist rice commonly used by the upper class), sweet or sticky rice known as *xôi* or glutinous rice (steamed rice sweetened and mixed with condiments eaten for breakfast or as a dessert dish) and broken rice (converted to *Com Tam* by steaming (common in restaurants); each has its own uniqueness.

### **2010 drought**

According to the United Nations Development Programme in Vietnam and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (Vietnam) the industry is under serious threat in 2010 due to a heat wave of above 35 °C for at least three consecutive months as of March, 2010. This weather phenomenon is attributed to the El Nino effect. The Yunnan region in China which forms the upper region of the river basin has also experienced drought conditions and the reservoirs do not have storages to release even though they are used for non consumptive use of generating hydropower. River levels are extremely low and at least 100,000 hectares of land is under threat, with as high as 500,000–800,000 hectares of rice producing areas expected, if the drought continues.

Vietnam's rice exports in January and February fell 24.9% in 2010 to an estimated 781,000 tonnes and revenues also dropped 6.8% to \$437 million. Rice exports in the first quarter are forecast to fall by between 33–41% to 1.15–1.2 million tonnes. The situation is grim and as Mekong Region Commission, a regional inter-government agency, states "that countries of the region are not as familiar with drought management as with flood preparedness."

**Tết** (or Vietnamese New Year, is the most important celebration of Vietnamese culture. The word is a shortened form of **Tết Nguyên Đán**, which is Sino-Vietnamese for "Feast of the First Morning of the First Day". It celebrates the arrival of spring based on the Chinese calendar, a lunisolar calendar, which usually has the date falling between the months of January or February.

Tết is celebrated on the same day as Chinese New Year, though exceptions arise due to the one-hour time difference between Hanoi and Beijing resulting in the alternate calculation of the new moon. It takes place from the first day of the first month of the Vietnamese calendar (around late January or early February) until at least the third day. Many Vietnamese prepare for Tết by cooking special holiday foods and cleaning the house. There are a lot of customs practiced during Tết, such as visiting a person's house on the first day of the new year (*xông nhà*), ancestral worshipping, wishing New Year's greetings, giving lucky money to children and elderly people, and opening a shop.

Tết is also an occasion for pilgrims and family reunions. During Tết, Vietnamese visit their relatives and temples, forgetting about the troubles of the past year and hoping for a better upcoming year. They consider Tết to be the first day of spring and the festival is often called *Hội xuân* (spring festival).

Vietnamese people usually return to their families during Tết. Some return to worship at the family altar or visit the graves of their ancestors in their homeland. They also clean the grave of their family as a sign of respect. Although Tết is a national holiday among all Vietnamese, each region and religion has its own customs.

Tết in the three Vietnamese regions can be divided into three periods, known as *Tất Niên* (penultimate New Year's Eve), *Giao Thừa* (New Year's Eve), and *Tân Niên* (the New Year), representing the preparation before Tết, the eve of Tết, and the days of and following Tết, respectively. All of these customs are to celebrate Tết in Vietnam.

This period begins one or two weeks before the actual celebration. The general atmosphere leading up to Tết is in the bustle of shopping, decorating the home, cooking traditional Tết food and waiting for relatives to return home. People try to pay off their debts in advance so that they can be debt-free on Tết. Parents buy new clothes for their children so that the children can wear them when Tết arrives. In the days leading up to Tết, the streets and markets are full of people. As the shops will be closed during Tết, people try to stock up on supplies as much as possible.

Vietnamese families usually have a family altar, to show respect to their ancestors. During Tết the altar is thoroughly cleaned and new offerings are placed there. This includes a tray of five different fruits on the altar called "Mâm Ngũ Quả" (literally, five fruits type). Traditionally, the three kitchen guardians for each house (*Ông Táo*) (Kitchen God), who report to the Jade Emperor about the events in that house over the past year, return to heaven on the 23rd day of the twelfth month by lunar calendar. Their departure is marked by a modest ceremony where the family offers sacrifices for them to use on their journey.

In the days leading up to Tết, each family cooks special holiday foods such as *bánh chưng* and *bánh dầy*. Preparations for these foods are quite extensive. Family members often take turns to keep watch on the fire overnight, telling each other stories about Tết of past years.

The first day of Tết is reserved for the nuclear family. Children receive a red envelope containing money from their elders. This tradition is called *mừng tuổi* (happy new age) in the north and *li xi* in the south. Usually, children wear their new clothes and give their elders the traditional Tết greetings before receiving the money. Since the Vietnamese believe that the first visitor a family receives in the year determines their fortune for the entire year, people never enter any house on the first day without being invited first. The act of being the first person to enter a house on Tết is called *xông đất*, *xông nhà* or *đạp đất*, which is one of the most important rituals during Tết. According to Vietnamese tradition, if good things come to the family on the first day of the lunar New Year, the entire following year will also be full of blessings. Usually, a person of good temper, morality and success will be the lucky sign for the host family and be invited first into the house. However, just to be safe, the owner of the house will leave the house a few minutes before midnight and come back just as the clock strikes midnight to prevent anyone else entering the house first who might potentially bring any unfortunate events in the new year to the household.

Sweeping during Tết is taboo or *xui* (unlucky), since it symbolizes sweeping the luck away; that is why they clean before the new year. It is also taboo for anyone who experienced a recent loss of a family member to visit anyone else during Tết.

During subsequent days, people visit relatives and friends. Traditionally but not strictly, the second day of Tết is usually reserved for friends, while the third day is for teachers, who command respect in Vietnam. Local Buddhist temples are popular spots as people like to give donations and to get their fortunes told during Tết. Children are free to spend their new money on toys or on gambling games such as *bầu cua cá cọp*, which can be found in the streets. Prosperous families can pay for dragon dancers to perform at their house. There are also public performances for everyone to watch.



## Traditional Celebrations

These celebrations can last from a day up to the entire week, and the New Year is filled with people in the streets trying to make as much noise as possible using firecrackers, drums, bells, gongs, and anything they can think of to ward off evil spirits. This parade will also include different masks, and dancers hidden under the guise of what is known as the Mua Lan or Lion Dancing. The Lan is an animal between a lion and a dragon, and is the symbol of strength in the Vietnamese culture that is used to scare away evil spirits. After the parade, families and friends will come together to have a feast of traditional Vietnamese dishes, and share the happiness and joy of the New Year with one another. This is also the time where the elders will hand out red envelopes with money to the children for good luck in exchange for Tết greetings (below).

Traditionally, each family displays *cây nêu*, an artificial New Year Tree consisting of a bamboo pole 5 to 6 m long. The top end is usually decorated with many objects, depending on the locality,

including good luck charms, origami fish, cactus branches, etc.

At Tết every house is usually decorated by *hoa mai* – *Ochna integerrima* (in the central and southern parts of Vietnam) or *hoa đào* – *peach flower* (in the northern part of Vietnam) or *hoa ban* (in mountain areas). In the north, some people (especially the elite in the past) also decorate their house with a *Prunus mume* tree (also called *mai* in Vietnamese, but referring to a totally different species from *Ochna integerrima*). In the north or central, the kumquat tree is a popular decoration for the living room during Tết. Its many fruits symbolize the fertility and fruitfulness that the family hopes for in the coming year.

Vietnamese people also decorate their homes with bonsai and flower plants such as chrysanthemum (*hoa cúc*), marigold (*vạn thọ*) symbolizing longevity, celosia (*mào gà*) in Southern Vietnam and paperwhite flower (*thủy tiên*), *hoa bươm* in Northern Vietnam. In the past, there was a tradition that old people tried to make their paperwhite flowers blossom right the watch-night time. They also hung up Dong Ho Paintings and *thu pháp* (calligraphy pictures).

The traditional greetings are "*Chúc Mừng Năm Mới*" (Happy New Year) and "*Cung Chúc Tân Xuân*" (gracious wishes of the new spring). People also wish each other prosperity and luck. Common wishes for Tết include:

- *Sống lâu trăm tuổi* (Long life of 100 years): used by children for elders. Traditionally, everyone is one year older on Tết, so children would wish their grandparents health and longevity in exchange for *mừng tuổi* or *lì xì* (利是).
- *An khang thịnh vượng* (安康興旺, Security, good health, and prosperity)
- *Vạn sự như ý* (萬事如意, May myriad things go according to your will)
- *Sức khỏe dồi dào* (Plenty of health)
- *Cung hỉ phát tài*, from the Cantonese *Kung hei fat choy* (恭喜發財, Congratulations and be prosperous)
- *Tiền vô như nước* (May money flow in like water): used informally

In Vietnamese language, to celebrate Tết is to *ăn Tết*, literally meaning "eat Tết", showing the importance of food in its celebration. Some of the food is also eaten year-round, while other dishes are only eaten during Tết. Also, some of the food is vegetarian since it is believed to be good luck to eat vegetarian on Tết. Some traditional food on Tết are:

- *Bánh chưng* and *bánh dầy*: essentially tightly packed sticky rice with meat or bean fillings wrapped in Dong (Phrynium placentarium) leaves. When these leaves are unavailable banana leaves can be used as a substitute. *Bánh chưng* (rectangular to represent Earth) and *bánh dầy* (circular to represent Sky) are symbolically connected with Tết and are essential in any Tết celebration. Preparation is time-consuming, and can take days to cook. The story of their origins and their connection with Tết is often recounted to children while cooking them overnight.
- *Bánh Tết*: Popular in Southern Vietnam where *Banh Chung* is less used
- *Hạt Dưa*: roasted watermelon seeds, also eaten during Tết.
- *Dưa Hành*: pickled onion and pickled cabbage.
- *Củ Kiệu*: pickled small leeks.
- *Mứt*: These dried candied fruits are rarely eaten at any time besides Tết.
- *Cầu Dừa Đủ Xoài* - In southern Vietnam, popular fruits used for offerings at the family altar in fruit arranging art are the custard-apple/sugar-apple/soursop (*mãng cầu*), coconut (*dừa*), papaya (*đu đủ*), and mango (*xoài*), since they sound like "*cầu vừa đủ xài*" (*[We] pray for enough [money/resources/funds/goods/etc.] to use*) in the southern dialect of Vietnamese.



- *Thịt Kho Nước Dừa* Meaning "Meat Stewed in Coconut Juice", it is a traditional dish of pork belly and medium boiled eggs stewed in a broth-like sauce made overnight of young coconut juice and nuoc mam. It is often eaten with pickled bean sprouts and chives, and white rice.

## Games and entertainment

People enjoy traditional games during Tết, including: bầu cua, cờ tướng, ném còn, chọi trâu, đá gà and marshmallow toss. They also participate in some competitions presenting their knowledge, strength and aestheticism, such as the bird competition and ngâm thơ competition.

Firework display has also become an irreplaceable part of a Tết celebration in Vietnam. During the New Year's Eve, firework displays at major cities like Hà Nội, Ho Chi Minh City, Da Nang, are broadcast through multiple national and local TV channels, accompanied by New Year wishes of the current president.

*Gặp nhau cuối năm*, Year-end gathering, is a national favorite comedy show broadcast until the last 30 minutes before the New Year's Eve. The Europop song *Happy New Year* by Swedish band ABBA is usually played during the festival nowadays.

Det vietnamesiske nytår, tet, falder næsten altid sammen med det kinesiske, og mange vietnamesere og kinesere rejser hjem på familiebesøg. Så køb billet i god tid, hvis du vil rejse i den periode. For hvis der ikke allerede er udsolgt, er flybilletter som regel dyrere end nødvendigt.

**Det vietnamesiske nytår** kaldes tet og ligger i slutningen af januar eller begyndelsen af februar. Den nøjagtige dato bestemmes ud fra månekalenderen og flytter derfor hvert år.

De første nytårsdage er fredelige og stille, for tet er ligesom vores jul en familiefest. Nytårsaften er der til gengæld fyrværkeri. Men der flyver ikke længere kæmpestore kanonslag om øerne og mellem benene på en, for privat fyrværkeri er heldigvis blevet forbudt i Vietnam. Nu er det hæren der står for opgaven. Og de gør det godt! Første nytårsdag er årets mest stille dag og helliget den nærmeste familie.

For turister er de mest interessante begivenheder de mange farverige landsbyfestivaler, der afholdes i tiden efter det vietnamesiske nytår, tet. Især i området omkring Hanoi og Den Røde Flods delta.

Er du i Vietnam under tet, skal du være opmærksom på, at banker og de fleste forretninger og restauranter er lukket en eller flere af nytårsdagene.

The Vietnamese are known to be polite, hospitable and sensitive. They have a casual and friendly manner. They view friendship as being very important throughout ones life. They are always open to visits from friends. Drop in visits are welcome. The Vietnamese are very close to their family.

When they offer you gift, the Vietnamese will usually speak lightly about it. Even though it is an expensive gift, they may pretend it is of no great monetary value, since boasting is often criticized. With 4000 years of civilization, the Vietnamese are proud people who like to recite to a myth that they are descendants of an angel and a dragon.

If you happen to be in their homes at meal time, the Vietnamese will probably invite you to sit down and share whatever food is available. They may not hesitate to offer you the best portions as a sincere gesture of hospitality and close friendship. Let them know that you enjoy their food is one way in successfully building a better relationship with them. When they invite you to their homes for a meal, celebration, or special occasion, some gifts -- usually food, fruits, chocolate or liquors (especially American and French liquors are favorite) -- should be offered to the host's family. Although the Vietnamese may be happy to accept your offer, he usually refuse the first time or even the second time, for fear that he might be regarded as greedy if he accepts your offer the first time. He may claim that he already has or does not need it. It is recommended that you have the patience to repeat the offer once more. Patience is one of the keys in successfully dealing with the Vietnamese.

On the other hand, having a few drinks in a social gathering is widely acceptable. Like many other parts of the world, Vietnam does not sanction heavy drinking. Alcoholism is often kept hidden since it is viewed as a social disgrace to the family. Alcohol drinking is now increasing among men and drunkenness in public does occasionally happen. However, the Vietnamese, at present, do not view this as a social problem because alcohol consumption level per capita in Vietnam is still one of the lowest in the world -- average about 5 liters per person. The majority of Vietnamese women never drink and it is not unusual if they decline when alcoholic beverages are offered to them. Drinking problem are rare among women. While smoking is considered the norm among men, even young men; very few women smoke. Vietnamese Women's smoking in public is seen as tackiness and those smoking women are often regarded as "liberal".

Influenced by Buddhist theology and Confucian philosophy, Vietnamese believed that fate in marriage, as well as wealth and position, were preordained, though choice could play some role in activating a positive or negative fate. Traditionally, children lived with their parents until marriage, then the couple moved to the husband fathers house. The extended family arranged marriage, but individuals were consulted on the choice of their mate. The typical engagement lasted six month with little contact between the bride and groom prior to the marriage. Traditionally the marriage was at on of the couples house. Men usually marry between 20 and 30, and women between 18 and 25. Vietnamese Women kept their maiden names legally but used their husbands name formally. To address people formally, use Mr. or Ms. or a title plus the first name. There are several titles of

respect in Vietnamese, but they aren't used in English. "Thua" (meaning please) is added in front of the first name to show respect. Women do not shake hands with each other or with men. Physical contact between grown-up relatives or friends (both males and females), or between the same or opposite sexes, is not a common sight. Many Vietnamese may greet by bowing slightly to each other, they may join hands. Usually, higher ranking people are greeted first (the family head).

Vietnamese culture is concerned more with status (obtained with age and education) than with wealth. Breaking a promise can be a serious violation of social expectation for the Vietnamese. It is very difficult to re-establish a lost confidence. When inviting a friend on an outing, the bill is paid for by the person offering the invitation. Vietnamese may not take appointment times literally, and will often arrive late so as not to appear overly enthusiastic.

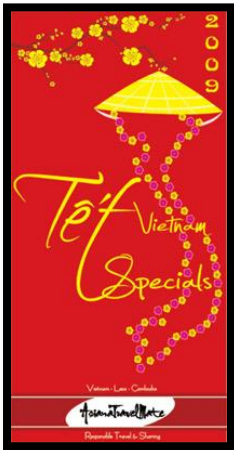
Speaking in a loud tone with excessive gestures is considered rude, especially when done by Vietnamese women. Summoning a person with a hand or finger in the upright position is reserved only for animals or inferior people. Between two equal people it is a provocation. To summon a person, the entire hand with the fingers facing down is the only appropriate hand signal.

The elderly grandparents and parents are taken care of until they die. Only a few urban people, influenced by Western customs, celebrate birthdays, since that occasion is not a Vietnamese custom. Nor do Vietnamese send Christmas cards. Wedding and funeral ceremonies are important events and are usually performed with solemn and traditional rituals.

Modesty and humility are emphasized in the culture of the Vietnamese and deeply ingrained into their natural behavior. Therefore, bragging is often criticized and avoided. When being praised for something, a Vietnamese often declines to accept praise by humbly claiming that he does not warrant such esteem. The Vietnamese do not customarily demonstrate their knowledge, skills, or possessions without being asked to do so.

Traditionally, Vietnamese people list their family name first, then their middle name, with their first (given) name listed as last. Family members use different given names (first names aren't passed down), and the name reflects some meaning. Most names can be used for either gender. To avoid confrontation or disrespect, many will not vocalize disagreement. Instead of relaying negative communication, people may not answer a question. It is disrespectful to touch another person's head. Only an elder can touch the head of a child. When getting a praise, people usually smile instead of saying "thank you". A smile is like a silent "thank you". Most Vietnamese people are very modest and deflect praise. Insults to Vietnamese elders or ancestors are very serious and often lead to severed social ties.

# Tet-Festival Party hos Karin og Martin 1. Februar 2014



Tet er den største fest i Kina, Vietnam og andre lande i den kulturkreds – som vores Jul og Nytår. Datoen fastlægges efter månekalenderen – man skifter i år fra Dragens år til Hestens år (der er 12 cykliske dyretegn). Kun få i Vietnam fejrer fødselsdag – alle bliver 1 år ældre ved Tet.

Festen varer flere uger: i ugen op til Tet gør man hele huset rent, køber nyt tøj til børnene, ofrer til forfædrene og ordner deres gravsteder, ofrer til "køkkenguden", som skal rapportere årets hændelser til Jadeguden, planlægger rejse hjem til forældrehjemmet, betaler gammel gæld, køber ind til helligdagene, forbereder festmåltiderne, pynter op med blomster og frugter – kumquat er populært og en 5-6 meter bambus pyntet med lucky charms er et nytårstræ. Traditionerne veksler fra egn til egn.

Første dag i Tet er helliget den nære familie – børnene får røde konvolutter med penge – de ældre æres og respekteres – der ofres på familiealteret – man besøger måske templet – alle dekorationsforemål har ofte association til penge, rigdom, lykke, god fremtid. Det er meget vigtigt, at familiens første gæst symboliserer rigdom, lykke, succes, da det vil smitte af på familien det kommende år. Man spiller traditionelle spil. Der gøres ikke rent under Tet (man risikerer at feje lykken ud af huset).

Følgende dage udvides familiefesten succesivt til venner og omgangskreds – der vil være parader og fyrværkerishows. Under Tet er gaderne i begyndelsen tomme, alt er lukket, alle er rejst hjem på familiebesøg – senere bliver det livligt. Der er traditioner forbundet med maden til Tet. Man udveksler nytårshilsner.



**Sống lâu trăm tuổi** (Long life of 100 years): used by children for elders. Traditionally, everyone is one year older on Tết, so children would wish their grandparents health and longevity in exchange for *mừng tuổi* or *lì xì* (利是).

**An khang thịnh vượng** (安康興旺, Security, good health, and prosperity)

**Vạn sự như ý** (萬事如意, May myriad things go according to your will)

**Sức khỏe dồi dào** (Plenty of health)

**Cung hi phát tài**, from the Cantonese *Kung hei fat choy* (恭喜發財, Congratulations and be prosperous)

**Tiền vô như nước** (May money flow in like water): used informally



## Tet Festival Menu

Welcome Drinks & Snacks

Dimsum – Vietnamese Spring Rolls

Tiger Prawns – Cucumber Salad

Jasmine Rice – Portebello Mushroom with Vietnamese filling

Beef Satay – Salmon Snack

Fish in Bananaleaves (Pinutas)

Excotic Tropical Fruits

Vietnamese Coffee and Sweets



## Kopi Luwak

**Kopi luwak** or **civet coffee**, refers to the beans of coffee berries once they have been eaten and excreted by the Asian palm civet (*Paradoxurus hermaphroditus*). The name is also used for marketing brewed coffee made from the beans.

Producers of the coffee beans argue that the process may improve coffee through two mechanisms, selection and digestion. Selection occurs if the civets choose to eat coffee berries containing better beans. Digestive mechanisms may improve the flavor profile of the coffee beans that have been eaten. The civet eats the berries for the beans' fleshy pulp, then in the digestive tract, fermentation occurs. The civet's proteolytic enzymes seep into the beans, making shorter peptides and more free amino acids. Passing through a civet's intestines the beans are then defecated with other fecal matter and collected.

The traditional method of collecting feces from wild civets has given way to intensive farming methods in which civets in battery cage systems are force fed the coffee beans. This method of production has raised ethical concerns about the treatment of civets due to "horrific conditions" including isolation, poor diet, small cages and a high mortality rate. A 2013 BBC investigation of intensive civet farming in Sumatra found conditions of animal cruelty. Intensive farming is also criticised by traditional farmers because the civets do not select what they eat, so the beans are of poor quality compared to beans collected from the wild. According to an officer from the TRAFFIC conservation programme, the trade in civets to make kopi luwak may constitute a significant threat to wild civet populations.

Although kopi luwak is a form of processing rather than a variety of coffee, it has been called the most expensive coffee in the world with retail prices reaching €550 / US\$700 per kilogramme. *Weasel coffee* is a loose English translation of its Vietnamese name *cà phê Chồn*, where popular, chemically simulated versions are also produced.

Vietnam has two farms with 300 wild civets in Dak Lak, while in Mindanao island of the Philippines, has two farms with 200 (in Davao City) and 100 (in Cagayan de Oro City) wild civets. But the archipelago of Indonesia where the famous *kopi luwak* was first discovered and produced is leading in supplying the world market for almost three centuries, where many small-scale civet farms are proliferating in the countryside.

In 1995, an Ig Nobel Prize was awarded to John Martinez of J. Martinez & Company in Atlanta, Georgia, for "Luak Coffee, the world's most expensive coffee, which is made from coffee beans ingested and excreted by the luak (aka, the palm civet), a bobcat-like animal native to Indonesia."

Kopi Luwak is also mentioned in *The Bucket List* (2008) as Carter Chambers (Morgan Freeman) reveals with great amusement of how the Kopi Luwak — enjoyed by Edward Cole (Jack Nicholson) — was produced; eaten and defecated by a jungle cat. Cole reacted in surprise "You're shitting me!" and Carter replied in jest "No, the cats beat me to it!".

**Coffee production** has been a major source of income for Vietnam since the early 20th century. First introduced by the French in 1857, the Vietnamese coffee industry developed through the plantation system, becoming a major economic force in the country. After an interruption during and immediately following the Vietnam War, production rose once again after Đổi mới economic reforms, reaching 900,000 tons per year in 2000. In 2009, Reuters reported Vietnamese coffee exports at "an estimated 1.13 million tonnes" for the previous year, stating that coffee was second only to rice in value of agricultural products exported from Vietnam.

The country's 2013/2014 coffee crop is expected to be a bumper harvest of around 17 million to 29.5 million 60-kg bags. Such a large production will add to a global oversupply of beans and will pressure coffee prices which have lost about 10 percent since October 2012. The country's coffee industry has taken a hit; of the 127 local coffee export firms that operated in 2012, 56 have ceased trading or shifted to other businesses after having taken out loans they can't repay. A few firms, such as Vietnam's top coffee exporter the Intimex Group, will benefit from the 2013 harvest. Intimex accounts for a quarter of the country's coffee exports and made \$1.2 billion in revenue in 2012.