

Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC for short), still known as Saigon to its seven million or so inhabitants, is Vietnam center of commerce and the country's biggest city by far, though not its administrative capital an honor that rests with Hanoi. As a result of the sweeping economic changes wrought by Doi Moi in 1986, this effervescent city, perched on the west bank of the Saigon River, has changed its image from that of a war – torn city to one of a thriving metropolis, challenging Singapore, Bangkok and the other traditional Southeast Asian powerhouses.

All the accoutrements of economic success – fine restaurant, flash hotels, glitzy bars and clubs, and shops selling imported luxury goods – are here, adding a glossy veneer to the city's hotch – potch landscape of French stones of empire, venerable pagodas and austere, Soviet – style housing blocks. Sadly, however, Ho Chi Minh City is still full of people for whom economic progress has not yet translated into food, housing and jobs. Street children range through tourist enclaves hawking books, postcards, lottery tickets and cigarette lighters; limbless mendicants haul themselves about on crude trolleys; and watchful pickpockets prowl crowded streets on the lookout for unguarded wallets. Though the number of beggars is gradually declining, tourists must quickly come to accept them as a hassle that goes with the territory. In addition, the arrival, en masse of wealthy Westerners has lured many women into prostitution, for which the go – go bars of became famous during the American War.

If Hanoi is a city of romance and mellow charms, then Ho Chi Minh City is its antithesis, a fury of sights and sounds, and the crucible in which Vietnam's rallying fortunes are boiling. Few corners of the city afford respite from the cacophony of construction work casting up new office blocks and hotels with logic – defying speed. An increasing number of cars and minibuses jostle with an organic mass of state-of-the-art SUVs, Hondas and cyclo, choking the tree-lined streets and boulevards. Amid this melee, the local people go about their daily life: smartly dressed school kids wander past street side baguette- sellers, women shoppers ride Hondas clad in gangster-style bandanas and shoulder- length floes to protect their skin from the sun and dust, while teenagers in designer jeans chirrup into mobile phones. Much of the fun of being in Ho Chi Minh City derives from the simple pleasure of absorbing its flurry of activity – something best done from the seat of o cyclo or a roadside café. To blink is to miss some new and singular sight, be it a motorbike stacked high with piglets bound for the market, or a boy on a bicycle rapping out a staccato tattoo on pieces of bamboo to advertise noodles for sale.

It's one of Ho Chi Minh City's many charms that once you've exhausted, or been exhausted by, all it has to offer, paddy fields, beaches and wide- open countryside are not far away. The most popular trip out of the city is to the Cu Chi tunnel, where villagers dug themselves out of the ranger of American shelling. The tunnels are often twinned with a tour around the fanciful Great Temple of the indigenous Cao Dai religion at Tay Ninh. A brief taster of the Mekong Delta at My Tho or a dip in the South China Sea at Ho Coc is also eminently possible in a long day's excursion.

The best time to visit tropical city and stay at [hotels in Ho Chi Minh City](#) is in the dry season, which runs from December through to April. During the wet season, May to November, there are frequent tropical storms, though these won't disrupt your travels too much. Average temperatures, year-round, hover between 26 and 29oC; March, April and May are the hottest months

### **What to Do?**

Hochiminh City has many attractions such as the Opera House, Ben Thanh Market, the Notre Dame Cathedral, the Reunification Palace, the China Town, Cu Chi Tunnels, Museums, Theatres, cultural houses and shopping centers, etc... Recently, tourist areas including Thanh Da, Binh Quoi Village, Dam Sen Park, Saigon Water Park, Suoi Tien, Ky Hoa also draw the interest of visitors. In addition, Ho chi minh City is a good starting point to [apply Vietnam visa on arrival](#) online and for excursions to the Mekong Delta or beaches like Phuquoc Island, Muine Beach, Vung Tau and Long Hai.

### **When to go?**

Generally, the climate in Ho chi minh City is hot and humid with an annual average temperature of 27°C. There are two distinctive seasons: the rainy season (May to November) and the dry one (December to April). The hottest month is April and coolest is December. It is a smart ideal to visit Vietnam and Hochiminh City in winter for the best weather, avoiding the monsoon (May to October). But be prepared for humid conditions throughout the year, especially in the south. The best month is January. and if you have time let visit Hochiminh City, a week before Tet or Lunar New Year, the biggest festival for Vietnamese People. It is the best to see how Vietnamese people prepares and celebrates New Year.

**Travel Tips**

Vietnam has its fair share of pickpockets, especially in large cities like Ho chi minh City and Hanoi. Thus, always keep an eye on your valuables or better to leave them at hotel before going out. Sometimes while traveling, a desperate beggar or street vendor suddenly grabs your arm, then follow you to ask for money or sell their stuffs.