



## 10 CULTURE TIPS

1. Watch a traditional water puppet performance.
2. Savor a bowl of pho ga (chicken noodle soup) or pho bo (beef noodle soup) at a street side noodle stall. To complete the breakfast, enjoy a strong Vietnamese coffee with condensed milk.
3. Order tailor-made clothes from the local tailor shop (our recommendation of local tailors are listed under "Shopping").
4. Enjoy a cyclo ride through the Old Quarter of Hanoi, around Hue's Imperial Citadel, through Hoi An's Ancient Town, in Nha Trang, Phan Thiet or through the French Quarter of old Saigon.
5. Sleep out on the deck aboard a wooden [junk in Halong Bay](#).
6. Rejuvenate during a relaxing two-hour traditional Vietnamese massage.
7. Experience a home stay in the ethnic minority villages in the north or in the Mekong Delta's riverside orchards.
8. Witness the full moon festivities in the ancient town of Hoi An.
9. Take a scenic boat along Hue's Perfume River, admiring the grandeur of the Royal Mausoleums.
10. Test your bargaining skills and set out for shopping at Saigon's Ben Thanh market.

## 10 DO NOT

1. Avoid drinking tap water and ice cubes if you have a sensitive stomach.
2. When visiting a temple or pagoda, wear long trousers and dress respectfully.
3. Leave your valuables in the hotel safe deposit box before heading out into town, especially on a night out or when going to the beach.
4. When crossing the road, walk steadily and slowly in the same direction, always looking to the left and right. Do not run or make sudden movements.
5. Always ask permission first before taking photographs of people, especially in minority areas and border control zones.
6. Try not to lose face in public - hold your temper and put on the biggest smile you have.
7. Do not offer money to begging children or minority people. Donate or, even better, volunteer at a local charity instead. When travelling in remote areas, it is okay to offer small gifts, such as pens, paper, soap and other useful utensils.
8. Sample local food, but patronize only those food stalls which are busy with locals.
9. Try not to compare Vietnam to other Asian countries. Vietnam has its own identity, culture and history. The Vietnamese are extremely proud of their heritage.
10. Do not go naked or topless on beaches or in the water. Culturally, this is incredibly inappropriate and offensive.

## GENERAL ADVICE

- Try to avoid travelling during Tet (Lunar New Year) as this is a family-oriented holiday where businesses and shops close for almost a week.
- You should [obtain Vietnam evisa](#) or [Vietnam visa on arrival](#) online, it is more convenient and cheaper.

## Hanoi

Staying in Hanoi's Old Town is recommended, but hotels are narrow and usually only have one window (either the front or back of the room). Front windows have a view, but can be noisy whereas the back windows often are within the hotel but quieter. Many elevators are narrow so expect waiting. Smaller hotels have restaurants on top floors (elevator stops one floor below) so it involves walking up, but there are great views from the top. An inescapable fact of the city is the constant noise, mainly of motorcycles. A good tip is to escape into a café for some quiet relief at intervals to recharge your batteries. The Vietnamese are early risers and so traffic noise starts early around 5.00 am onwards and you may be woken up by the crackle of a loudspeaker as the Voice of Vietnam starts up with music and rhetoric. For light sleepers, ear plugs are useful to bring! For non-smokers request rooms on non-smoking floors where available.

## Crossing the Road

Crossing the street is an art and the trick is to walk steadily and slowly across the road in the same direction and the motorcycles and bicycles will weave around you. Do not run or make sudden movements.

## Transportation

When hiring a motorcycle or jet ski there is no insurance coverage and the hirer is personally liable for any damages or accidents. When exploring on your own, it is not advisable to take a motorbike taxi as these are often involved in accidents.

The country has been hurtled in a relatively short time from an underdeveloped country into its present dynamic state and so a flexible approach, humor and patience will ensure a more enjoyable holiday.