



*Guidebook*

*To*

*Vietnam*



Fulbright Program in Vietnam

Public Affairs Section  
The United States Embassy  
Hanoi-Vietnam

# Guidebook to Vietnam

## Table of Contents

### Introduction

#### Message from the Fulbright Program in Vietnam

### Chapter One: Pre-departure

<b>I.</b>	<b>Pre-departure Procedures</b>	
	A. Passport.....	1
	B. International Health Certificate.....	1
	C. Visa.....	2
	D. Book Allowance.....	3
<b>II.</b>	<b>Shipping Goods and Baggage to Vietnam</b>	
	A. Shipping Goods to Vietnam.....	3
	B. Customs and Duties.....	5
	C. Shipping Back to the United States.....	6
<b>III.</b>	<b>Arrival in Vietnam</b>	
	A. Entry Procedure.....	7
	B. International Airports.....	7
	C. Airport Information.....	7
	D. Temporary Accommodation.....	8

### Chapter Two: Living in Vietnam

<b>I.</b>	<b>Climate and Geography.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>Housing</b>	
	A. Finding Appropriate Housing.....	11
	B. Types of Housing and Average Rents.....	11
	C. What to Consider When Renting.....	12
	D. Rental Contract.....	13
	E. Furnishing Your Apartment/House.....	13
<b>III.</b>	<b>Immigration Procedures after Establishing Residence in Vietnam</b>	
	A. Alien Registration.....	14
	B. Registration at the U.S. Embassy/Consulate.....	14
	C. Temporary Exits and Re-entry Permit.....	14
	D. Extension of Period of Stay.....	14
<b>IV.</b>	<b>Clothing, Food and Shopping</b>	
	A. Clothing.....	14
	B. Food.....	15
	C. Shopping.....	16
<b>V.</b>	<b>Money and Banking</b>	
	A. Currency.....	17
	B. Financial Practices.....	17
	C. Banking.....	17

<b>VI.</b>	<b>Public Services and Utilities</b>	
	A. Utilities.....	18
	B. Telephone and International Calls.....	18
	C. Internet Provider and Access.....	19
	D. Garbage Collection.....	19
	E. Postal and Other Delivery Services.....	19
<b>VII.</b>	<b>Medical Care and Services</b>	
	A. Medical Facilities.....	20
	B. Medical Insurance.....	20
<b>VIII.</b>	<b>Lost Documents/Credit Cards</b>	
	A. Lost Documents.....	21
	B. Lost Credit Cards/Traveler’s Checks.....	21
<b>IX.</b>	<b>Information for Families with Children</b>	
	A. Preschool .....	21
	B. Elementary, Middle and High Schools.....	22
	C. Post-secondary Education.....	23
	D. Full-time and Part-time Employment.....	24
<b>X.</b>	<b>Recreation and Cultural Activities</b>	
	A. Sources of Information for Cultural Activities.....	24
	B. Libraries and Printed News.....	24
	C. Radio and Television.....	24
	D. Sports.....	25
	E. Touring and Outdoor Activities.....	26
	F. Photography.....	27
	G. Entertainment.....	27

### Chapter Three: Academic Matters

<b>I.</b>	<b>Education in Vietnam</b>	
	A. Vietnamese Education System.....	29
	B. Higher Education System.....	29
<b>II.</b>	<b>Conducting Research in Vietnam</b>	
	A. Before Arrival.....	31
	B. Upon Arrival.....	31
	C. Prior to Departure.....	32
	D. Upon Return to the U.S. ....	32
<b>III.</b>	<b>Books, Libraries and Computers</b>	
	A. Books.....	32
	B. Libraries.....	31
	C. Computers.....	32
	D. Electronic Communication.....	33
	E. American Center (AC).....	33

### Chapter Four: Vietnamese Society and Social Customs

<b>I.</b>	<b>Vietnamese Society and Social Customs</b>	
	A. Use of Names.....	36
	B. Status of Women.....	36
	C. Dating and Courting.....	36
	D. Sense of Privacy.....	36
	E. Physical Contact.....	36

F. Entertaining Friends.....	37
G. Gift Giving.....	37
H. Tipping.....	37
I. Crime, Safety, and Drugs in Vietnam.....	37
J. Alcohol and Smoking.....	37
K. National Holidays.....	38

**Appendix A: The Fulbright Program in Vietnam**

**Appendix B: Health Information and Guidelines**

**Appendix C: Instructions for Applying for a Visa to Vietnam**

**Appendix D: Crime, Safety and Security Briefing**

**Appendix E: Comments and Recommendations from Past Grantees**

Useful Contact Information

Map of Vietnam

Vietnam Airlines Domestic Flights



# INTRODUCTION

This guidebook aims to provide U.S. Fulbright scholars and students with a general introduction to Vietnam and practical information on living, researching, and working in Vietnam. It focuses mainly on the larger metropolitan areas and less on smaller regions in Vietnam, due to a lack of information at this time. For more detailed travel information, scholars and students should buy a Vietnam travel guidebook available at many bookstores in the U.S. Please refer to Appendix A for an introduction and general information on the Fulbright Program in Vietnam. The Fulbright Program in Vietnam continues to update and add to the guidebook as information becomes available. We welcome your input and suggestions, as you know best what is useful to you.

Vietnam is a country textured by mountains and hills, meeting the borders of China, Laos and Cambodia with a land area comparable to Italy or Japan. Its eastern coastline cradles the Gulf of Tonkin in the north to meet the South China Sea with a subtle southeasterly curvature, and juts out to face the Gulf of Thailand in the south. The Red River Delta of the north and the Mekong Delta of the south are notable cultivation areas with rich soil and tried and tested ancient agricultural practices. With its variation in altitudes and latitudes, Vietnam's climate includes monsoon seasons, surprisingly frosty temperatures dry and hot weather, and steamy and drippy humidity. Vietnam's main cities are Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon), Hue, and Danang.

According to World Bank's 2010 data, Vietnam has a population of over 88 million, of which roughly 85% is ethnic-Vietnamese, followed by 3% ethnic Chinese who live mostly in the Cho Lon District of Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC). The remaining 12% is composed of over 50 ethno-linguistic minority groups such as the Khmer, Cham, and Muong.

The lifestyles of the Vietnamese people vary widely: from the agrarian outlook of rural villagers to the pop-culture savvy of urban youth. However, a recently arrived visitor would note that some behavior is typical throughout. For instance, privacy is not as strict of a concept as in many other societies and curious stares and immediate entry through unlocked doors is not uncommon. Due to Buddhist influence, shoes are often removed before entry into homes, temples, and some places of business, and as in many Asian countries, "saving-face" is an essential ingredient in daily interaction. Although common delays in business can be frustrating, a pleasant demeanor invites a more encouraging response, and showing anger or demanding service can hinder rather than accelerate results.

Vietnam's history is recognizable to most as one of constant efforts to stave off colonialism in search of security for a distinct identity. The country has struggled with a feudal past and most notably Chinese, French and American influences, which to this day can be witnessed in the unique composition of the nation's culture. These relationships can be detected through the architecture, where it is common to see turn-of-the-century French style villas neighboring pagodas and imposing gray block buildings, typical of Communist architecture. Its mixture of religious influences can be construed as a result of these associations as well. By far, Mahayana Buddhism is the predominant tradition, and ancestor worship is a common practice in many households. Theravada Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Catholicism, Islam and Cao Daim, an indigenous fusion of western and eastern religious philosophies, are also practiced.

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) controlled by the Vietnamese Communist Party, led Vietnam into major economic and political reforms in the mid-80s under the banner of *Doi Moi* (renovation). Vietnam continues to adopt and implement reform measures in trade policy, private sector development, banking, public expenditure management, and law. These reforms, combined with a series of trade agreements with other countries such as the Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) with the U.S., are expected to lead to significant economic development and growth.

# MESSAGE FROM THE FULBRIGHT PROGRAM IN VIETNAM

Greetings from Vietnam! We are looking forward to welcoming you as you begin your Fulbright grant. In addition to providing you with the information in this guidebook, we would also like to inform you of a variety of opportunities available to Fulbright grantees while you are in Vietnam.

## **IN-COUNTRY ORIENTATION**

All grantees will be requested to attend a mandatory in-country orientation. Orientations are organized twice per year. Fall orientation is usually held between August 15 and September 1, and spring orientation is held between January 15 and February 1. We expect grantees to arrange their travel plans in order to attend this orientation. The Fulbright program will provide in-country transportation for a grantee from the city where they are based to the orientation site, as well as accommodation, as necessary.

## **ENRICHMENT SEMINARS**

The Fulbright Program organizes two enrichment seminars per year. All grantees are invited to attend and travel and accommodation costs are provided by the program. During the seminar, both U.S. scholars and students make presentations about their work to their fellow grantees. Enrichment seminars are often combined with an "Open Forum," hosted by a Vietnamese University. During the forum, U.S. Fulbrighters meet with Vietnamese faculty and students to share their experiences about life and study in the U.S. and Vietnam. In the past, the Fulbright program has often held enrichment seminars in a provincial area, which provides grantees with an opportunity to see a part of Vietnam that they might not otherwise visit.

## **U.S. EMBASSY SPEAKER PROGRAM**

Through the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy (Hanoi) and Consulate (HCMC), Fulbright students and scholars are invited to speak on topics of interest to various audiences in Vietnam. The activities will be upon your offer and request. If you are interested in participating in PAS programs as a speaker, please contact the Fulbright Program in Vietnam.

## **IN-COUNTRY OCCASIONAL LECTURING PROGRAM (*Scholars only*)**

This program is designed to respond to the growing needs of local institutions for the expertise of U.S. scholars. Prior to your arrival in Vietnam, the Fulbright Program will contact you for biographical data and information regarding your areas of expertise. The program will send this information to universities and think tanks throughout Vietnam who may be interested in inviting you to lecture or conduct a workshop at their institution. Trips range from between 2 to 5 days. The trip is jointly sponsored by the Fulbright program, which provides transportation, and the host, which provides lodging. This program offers scholars a unique opportunity to work with a variety of institutions and travel to different areas of Vietnam.

## **REGIONAL OCCASIONAL LECTURING PROGRAM (*Scholars only*)**

The State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) disseminates information about Fulbright scholars to Embassies and Fulbright Commissions in 16 Asian-Pacific countries. If an institution would like to invite a U.S. scholar in Vietnam to participate in a program, they can contact the Fulbright office in Hanoi to make the request. Programs can range from 3 days to 2 weeks. Additionally, U.S. scholars can obtain an invitation directly from a host institution and request funding through the Fulbright Program in Vietnam. In both cases, if the request is approved, ECA will provide transportation and the host institution will provide lodging.

*Funding for both the in-country and regional lecturing programs is available on a first-come, first-served basis.*

As you can see, we have many programs to enhance your Fulbright experience in Vietnam. As we are inspired by the Program's ultimate goal of mutual understanding between the U.S. and Vietnam, we rely on you as cultural Ambassadors to Vietnam to bring the two peoples closer to each other. Through you, Vietnam will learn more about the U.S. and its cultures. Also through you, your friends and colleagues in the U.S. will come to know more about Vietnam. We look forward to facilitating the important role that you are playing while in Vietnam as Fulbright grantees.

Best wishes,  
Fulbright team



## CHAPTER I

## PRE-DEPARTURE



## I. PRE-DEPARTURE PROCEDURES

In order to enter Vietnam you must:

- Possess a valid passport;
- Have a valid visa on the passport;
- Intend to stay for a period compatible with the “period of stay” set by the Ministry of Security;
- Not fall under any of the items of exclusion provided under Vietnamese immigration regulations.

### A. Passport

U.S citizens need a passport to depart or enter the United States and to enter most foreign countries. If (1) this is your first passport, (2) your most recent previous passport was issued more than 12 years ago, or (3) you were under age 18 when you received the previous passport, you must apply in person for your passport with a completed form DSP-11 (passport application form) at one of the passport agencies in your area or one of the federal or state courts or U.S. post offices authorized to accept passport applications. Contact the nearest passport agency for the addresses of the passport acceptance facilities in your area.

If you have had a previous passport and wish to renew it, you may be eligible to apply by mail by obtaining Form DSP-82 (application for Passport by Mail form) from one of the offices accepting applications or from your travel agent, and complete the information requested on the reverse side of the form. You are eligible for “passport by mail” if (1) you already have a passport and that passport is your most recent passport, (2) your most recent passport was issued within the past 12 years, (3) you were over 18 years old at the time your most recent passport was issued. For more information and to download forms, visit [http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/get\\_4855.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/get_4855.html)

#### Documentation required:

1. Passport application form (DSP-11, or DSP-82)
2. Your most recent passport, if applicable. Your new passport will be issued in the same name as your most recent passport UNLESS you send with the application an original or certified court order or marriage certificate showing a change in name. These documents will be returned to you with your new passport.
3. Proof of U.S. citizenship. Your previous U.S. passport, or a certified copy of your birth certificate issued by the state, or county or your birthplace.
4. Proof of identity. Your previous U.S. passport, a certificate of naturalization or citizenship, a valid driver's license, government or military ID, or corporate ID.
5. Two identical 2” x 2” photographs, full-face exposure with plain and light (white or off white) background, taken within 6 months of the date of application.
6. Passport fee. \$110 for a new and a renewal passport. \$85 for adding pages to passport.. These fees do not include a \$25 execution fee. Submit a separate check or money order with each application payable to Passport Services.

*For more and most updated information regarding required documents and fees, please visit [http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport\\_1738.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html)*

### B. International Health Certificate

When you receive your passport an International Health Certificate will be included or you can obtain one at any U.S Public Health Service office in your area. Your physician should record on this certificate any inoculations you have had.

No shots are required for entering Vietnam unless you are coming from a country that has had an outbreak of cholera, smallpox, or yellow fever. Refer to Appendix B for more information on vaccinations.

### C. Visa

All Fulbright grantees **must** obtain **proper** visas sponsored by their host institutions before coming to Vietnam. The Fulbright staff will ask your host to apply for the entry visa on your behalf.

During the placement process, the Fulbright staff will ask you to send in your visa application and a copy of your passport to the Fulbright Program in Vietnam. Visa applications are available on the websites of the Vietnamese Diplomatic Missions in:

- Washington D.C at [www.vietnamembassy.us/consular\\_services/visa\\_info/](http://www.vietnamembassy.us/consular_services/visa_info/)
- San Francisco at [www.vietnamconsulate-sf.org/service/file/vietnamvisa.htm](http://www.vietnamconsulate-sf.org/service/file/vietnamvisa.htm)
- New York at [www.vietnam-un.org/en/vietnam.php?id=15&cid=14](http://www.vietnam-un.org/en/vietnam.php?id=15&cid=14))
- Houston at <http://vietnamconsulateinhouston.org/en/consular-services/visa-information>

You can scan your visa application and your passport, save them as a JPEG (.jpg) or bitmap (.bmp) or acrobat (.pdf) file and send them via email to the Fulbright Program in Vietnam.

The Fulbright Program in Vietnam acts as a liaison between you and your host institution during the visa process. Your host institution, not the Fulbright Program, will be responsible for arranging visa approval for you from the Vietnamese Ministry of Security. You should not send your visa application to the Vietnamese Embassy/Consulate in the U.S. without first obtaining visa approval from us.

It is not common that several grantees be given a visa that does not cover the whole grant period. Please remember that the grantee needs to contact their host well in advance to have their visa extended before it expires. A grantee's visa extension **must** be done by their hosts and in no circumstances should the grantee have it done by any other agencies. Failing to do so may jeopardize sponsorship by their host and their status as a Fulbright grantee.

The amount of time it takes for the host to obtain the visa approval code varies from institution to institution. You should submit your visa application to the Fulbright program in Vietnam at least **three months** prior to your departure from the U.S. to avoid last-minute complications.

It is important to remember that ultimately the visa approval process is in the hands of your host and the immigration authorities. In some cases, past grantees did not receive their visa approval until a few days before they planned to depart from the U.S. The Fulbright program staff understands that it is difficult to make travel arrangements without visa approval, and does its best to move the process along.

#### **Stages of the Visa Process:**

1. Grantee sends a copy of their passport (main page only) and a completed visa application to the Fulbright Program in Vietnam and indicates at which location they prefer to pick up the visa (Vietnamese Embassy in Washington, D.C. or Consulate in San Francisco, New York, Houston). Note that once your application process is underway, you will not be able to change this location. Changing the pick-up location later may require you to begin the entire process from the beginning. The Fulbright Office forwards the passport copy and visa application to the host institution.
2. The host institution obtains approval from Vietnam's Ministry of Security.
3. The Ministry of Security issues the visa approval code to the host, and notifies the visa office (the Vietnamese Embassy in Washington, D.C. or Consulate in San Francisco, New York, Houston) which the grantee has designated as their preferred location for visa processing.
4. The host institution informs the Fulbright Office in Vietnam of the visa approval code, and the Fulbright Office relays the information to the grantee.
5. Grantee sends another completed visa application, with visa approved code and applicable fees, to the Vietnamese Embassy or Consulate in the U.S. (More information on States 5 & 6 are below)
6. Visa is issued within approximately 5 working days (expedited service available at extra cost).

#### **State 5 & 6: After you are provided with visa approval code**

You can send your visa application documents to the Vietnamese Embassy or Consulate in the U.S. only after you have received a visa code via e-mail from the Fulbright Office in Vietnam. You are responsible for the visa fee, which varies depending on the type of visa awarded (single entry, multiple entry, six months, or one year). The visa should cover the entire grant period; your host sponsorship

ends when the grant ends. If the grantees plan an extended stay after the grant end date, they are responsible for their own visa extension. There is no guarantee that an extension will be issued.

To obtain your visa, take or send by registered mail the following documents to either the Vietnamese Embassy in Washington, D.C. or Vietnamese Consulate in San Francisco, New York, Houston:

1. **Original Passport:** It is required that the passport be valid until at least one month prior to the date of exit from Vietnam and/or six months prior to departure to meet most airline requirements.
2. **Application Form:** The form must be completed, signed and attached with one original photo (2x2 inches). You may write the *Visa Approval/Reference Number* on the top of the form.
3. **Visa Fees:** Visa fees must be in the form of Money Order, or Cashier's Check, or Certified Check payable to "The Embassy of Vietnam". Fee for stamping visa can be checked with Vietnamese Embassy or Consulate.
4. **A Prepaid Return Envelope**, if you request the visa is returned by mail.

It is not necessary to go to the Vietnamese Embassy or Consulate in person to pick up the visa. You may mail your documents and passport, along with the check for the visa fee, to the Embassy/Consulate and request them to return the passport to you by registered mail.

#### **HOW TO FILL OUT THE VISA APPLICATION:**

**FOR SCHOLARS:** On the application, indicate that the purpose of the visit to Vietnam is "Fulbright Lectureship" (#9) and that the name and address of your contact is the "Fulbright Program in Vietnam, U.S. Embassy in Hanoi, Rose Garden Tower, 170 Ngoc Khanh, Hanoi" (#10).

We ask that you always send a copy to Hilary Watts ([HWatts@iie.org](mailto:HWatts@iie.org)) and Richard Emerson ([REmerson@iie.org](mailto:REmerson@iie.org)) who are responsible for U.S. scholar program at CIES of your communications with Vietnam regarding your Fulbright so that CIES or the State Department can assist if necessary. Some questions are best answered by CIES, others by the State Department or the Embassy.

**FOR STUDENTS:** On the application, indicate that the purpose of the visit to Vietnam is "Fulbright Study/Research" (#9) and that the name and address of your contact is the "Fulbright Program in Vietnam, U.S. Embassy in Hanoi, Rose Garden Tower, 170 Ngoc Khanh, Hanoi" (#10).

We ask that you always send a copy to Jonathan E. Akeley ([JAkeley@iie.org](mailto:JAkeley@iie.org)) who is responsible for U.S. student program at IIE of your communications with Vietnam regarding your Fulbright so that IIE or the State Department can assist if necessary. Some questions are best answered by IIE, others by the State Department or the Embassy.

Please feel free to contact Ms. Do Thu Huong, program assistant at (84-4) 3850-5000, Ext. 6225 or e-mail at [dohx@state.gov](mailto:dohx@state.gov) with any questions regarding visas. (Please see further information from the Vietnamese Embassy in Appendix C)

#### **D. Book Allowance (For Scholar Grantees only):**

A book allowance of \$1,000 per semester is included in your grant. This allowance is meant for you to buy the books and teaching materials that you will use to teach your classes while on your Fulbright grant and that you will donate to your host upon conclusion of your term. You are expected to discuss with your host what you will purchase before doing so, because it could be that case that either several of the proposed books are already available at your host institution or can be purchased in Vietnam. Regarding your donation, please send the Fulbright Office in Vietnam a complete list of all of the donated items and their cost in U.S. dollars at least two weeks before you complete your grant.

## **II. SHIPPING GOODS AND BAGGAGE TO AND FROM VIETNAM**

## **A. Shipping Goods to Vietnam**

### **1. What to bring**

First, decide what you will need to bring with you to Vietnam and how you will ship it. Remember that almost everything you will need, i.e. furniture and appliances, clothes, everyday goods and medicines are available in Vietnam, although the size, design, and fit may sometimes not be of the standards you are used to.

The following are some hints that may help you decide what to bring:

- Electrical appliances: electricity for home use in Vietnam is 220 volts, although converters are widely available.
- Clothes: see Chapter 2, IV-A.
- Shoes: It is difficult to find shoes beyond size 9 (27 cm) for men or 7 (24.5cm) for women. See Chapter 2, IV-A
- Personal computers: see Chapter 3, IV-C

### **Pets**

Pets can be brought into Vietnam. All animals must have a certificate of health issued by a veterinarian, including certification of inoculation against rabies dated between one to six months before the pet's arrival at post. Currently, no quarantine is required. Pets are usually brought in as excess baggage at the traveler's expense, rather than as cargo to avoid long airport delays and expensive handling charges. You should notify your partner institution prior to arrival to obtain an import permit. If you bring pets through Hong Kong, the People's Republic of China or Singapore, you must have authorization to do so from the governments of those countries.

If you will be living in a detached house, there are no restrictions on the size of pets. Service apartments, however, will only allow small pets – a small dog, cat or bird. Competent veterinary services are available in Hanoi and HCMC. A limited variety of dogs, cats and birds are available in the local marketplace at very reasonable prices. Hanoi even has a bona fide pet store. Most mini-marts in Hanoi and HCMC stock basic supplies for cats and dogs (e.g. dry mix and canned food, small treats, flea collars). Supplies are much more limited outside the two major cities. Nevertheless, we suggest you include an ample supply of grooming aids and treats for your animals in your airfreight.

### **2. Shipping Your Baggage to Vietnam**

Choose a method (via air, sea, cargo, or postal) that suits you best. Since much depends on the quantity, size, weight and content of what you will send, contact the applicable party directly for details on the cost and regulations.

#### **a. Accompanying Baggage (Airline Baggage Allowance)**

If you plan to travel light and bring all baggage with you, be sure to check the travel agent or the airline you use for detailed regulations (size, number of pieces, weight, excess charges) on the airline baggage allowance. You may have to pay some excess weight charges, but the amount of time you can save this way might make it a worthwhile method, although the excess baggage charge can be very high depending on the airline. Upon arrival, you simply go through customs and take everything with you.

#### **b. Unaccompanied Baggage by Air (Air Freight)**

If the airport were more accessible, this would be one way to ship your excess baggage. However, we advise against using airfreight, because airfreight goods arrive at a building that is a 20-minute walk from the passenger terminal at Tan Son Nhat airport and about 20 minutes from the passenger terminal (at Noi Bai airport). You would have to arrange to cart everything

back to the passenger terminal for customs clearance. If you decide to return to the airport on another day, it is an expensive and time consuming (all day) procedure.

**c. Unaccompanied Baggage via Post Office**

This is the most economical way to ship your books and other goods that are not needed immediately. Check with your local post office about “bulk mail” or “snail mail” at book rates and mail your belongings about two months in advance of the time you will need them. Contact your partner institution and ask if you can use their address to send your goods.

**d. Shipping Books and Professional Materials by U.S. Pouch (For scholar grantees only)**

Fulbright scholars are authorized to make a one-time shipment of educational materials to the American Embassy or Consulate in Vietnam. The shipment cannot exceed four boxes, none of which may weigh more than 40 pounds. These materials cannot be sent back to the U.S. by pouch. Scholars can take the shipment to any U.S. postal facility. The **Fulbright grantee’s name** must appear in the return address and the packages must be addressed to:

(Pouch routing to Hanoi)

Public Affairs Officer  
Attn: Fulbright Program  
Department of State  
4550 Hanoi PL  
Washington, D.C. 20521-4550

(Pouch routing to HCMC)

Public Affairs Officer  
Attn: Fulbright Program  
Department of State  
7160 Ho Chi Minh City PL  
Washington, D.C. 20521-7160

**General Guidelines for U.S. Pouch**

1. The U.S. Postal Service will not ship registered or insured mail to zip code 20521.
2. The Department does not accept responsibility for lost or damaged mail.
3. To reduce the risk of pilferage, the contents must be packed to withstand rough handling and storage.
4. All mail must have sufficient postage affixed to it.
5. Prohibited materials include: aerosols, alcoholic beverages, ammunition, animals, endangered species products, any items for resale, bulk supplies, controlled or illegal substances to be used without a prescription, corrosives, currency (cash), explosives, firearms, flammable type films, glass containers, incendiary materials such as road flares, cigarette lighters, self starting charcoal, liquids other than medically related, magnetic materials such as powerful magnets that can damage computer software, narcotics, personal professional books and materials intended to be used for a private business, plants, poisons, and radioactive substances.

**PLEASE NOTE:** It happened once a few years ago, that two grantees lost their boxes of teaching and research materials when they used the Embassy/Consulate Pouch. However, other grantees received their materials via pouch with no problem. Be advised that the Embassy/Consulate pouch does not have a tracking system and use this mailing option at your discretion. Note also that the Embassy/Consulate cannot provide financial compensation for lost/damaged mail.

**B. Customs and Duties**

**1. Prohibited / Restricted Items**

- Firearms, swords, narcotics, and counterfeit products.
- Articles that infringe upon patent rights.

## 2. Declaration

For travelers arriving by air, no written declaration may be required for accompanying personal baggage and effects that are cleared through customs at the time and at the port of arrival. If all requirements are met, you should not encounter any trouble at customs. You are required to make a written declaration of the belongings which are sent as unaccompanied baggage. Customs declaration forms are available at the customs counter.

## 3. Unaccompanied Baggage

A written declaration is required if you have unaccompanied baggage— articles arriving in Vietnam by any other means of transportation. Although customs officers do all they can to assure you receive a Declaration of Unaccompanied Baggage form, it is your responsibility to see that you obtain it on the airplane when you arrive. You must fill out the form in duplicate, one of which will be returned to you with the seal of certification by a customs officer at the time and at the port of entry. Be sure to keep the copy returned to you. This declaration is necessary to obtain duty/tax exemption status. Furthermore, these articles must arrive within six months of your arrival in Vietnam. The seal of certification will be required to be shown at the time of customs clearance. If you do not complete the unaccompanied baggage form you will need to pay any duty or tax on your packages that are being sent at a later date. The duty and tax can be very high.

Improper handling of unaccompanied baggage has been the cause of many a headache. **EVERYTHING** that is not actually with you must be declared.

If your baggage is sent by mail, you are still required to list this unaccompanied baggage on your declaration and you should identify the parcel by placing the words “Unaccompanied Baggage” on the parcel. You need to know how many boxes (packages) are arriving, so numbering them (ex: 1 of 6) is strongly recommended.

## 4. Customs Exemption/Free of Duty

- Personal effects and portable professional equipment for your own use are free of duty, if considered appropriate and not for sale.
- Alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, perfume and others – allowances will be made (for adults only) within certain limits, e.g. 2 bottles of liquor, 2 ounces of perfume, 200 cigarettes, or 50 cigars, up to 250g of tobacco.
- Used household effects – new, unused appliances are subject to duty while used ones are not. For example, if your stereo equipment arrives in the factory crate in the original packing and instructions for operation are neatly enclosed, you might very well be charged duty. Be sure to repack an appliance before it is shipped.

## 5. Plants, Animals (Pets), Live and Raw Products

These items must be presented to the Animal or Plant Quarantine officer respectively for quarantine inspection prior to customs examination. The quarantine prohibitions and restrictions vary, explicitly and rigidly enforced that it would be advisable for anyone considering bringing them to inquire directly to the proper quarantine office.

## 6. Currency

There is no restriction on the amount of currency that can be imported into the country, but all currency over \$5,000 must be declared. However, in certain circumstances there may be income tax considerations. United States currency, letters of credit, travelers' checks and other fiscal items drawn in United States dollars (USD) are allowed.

Foreign currency may be readily exchanged for Vietnamese dong at many authorized foreign exchange banks and at authorized moneychangers, such as travel agencies hotels, and gold shops. Banks and travel agencies sometimes request to see your passports for identification purposes.

### **C. Shipping Back to the United States**

Although you will be referring to this handbook prior to your arrival in Vietnam or shortly afterwards, return shipment is discussed below because methods for shipping goods from Vietnam to the U.S. are different. Perhaps, this information will enable better planning for your entire stay.

Before you begin packing, you should be sure to obtain a copy of the U.S. Department of the Treasury publication "KNOW BEFORE YOU GO: Customs Hints for Returning Residents" from the consular section of the U.S. Embassy or Consulate, since customs regulations for Vietnam and the U.S. are NOT the same.

- Airline baggage allowance: Check with the travel agent/airline for details.
- Unaccompanied baggage: Again, a written declaration is required for customs clearance of unaccompanied baggage to be shipped back to the United States.

## **III. ARRIVAL IN VIETNAM**

### **A. Entry Procedure**

Upon arrival in Vietnam, the immigration officer endorses permission of entry or landing permit by stamping the passport and designating the legal period of stay and legal status of residence. The residence status you will be given depends on your proposed activity in Vietnam. How long you may remain in Vietnam depends on the status of residence. Although the status of residence and length of stay are suggested in the visa issued by the Vietnamese Embassy or Consulate, the Ministry of Security authority has the final say at the point of entry.

### **B. International Airports**

There are two major international airports in Vietnam: Noi Bai International Airport in Hanoi and Tan Son Nhat International Airport in HCMC. In addition, Danang International Airport is used for certain international flights, mainly for flights from Bangkok. If your destination is in the south, you will most likely connect through HCMC; likewise if your destination is in the north you will connect through Hanoi. There are direct flights from both HCMC and Hanoi to many destinations in Vietnam including Haiphong, Quang Binh, Vinh, Hue, Danang, Nha Trang, Quy Nhon, Can Tho and Da Lat.

### **C. Airport Information**

Since arrival procedures usually follow the same pattern at each of the international airports, the following explains procedures at Noi Bai (Hanoi) airport:

#### **Noi Bai Airport:**

#### **1. Immigration**

After landing, proceed to immigration. At the counter, submit your passport. Since you will be required to provide an address in Vietnam, be sure you have the address of a colleague, friend, hotel or school at which you can be reached. If you have no other address, please use the Fulbright Program in Vietnam address or the HCMC U.S. Consulate address.

#### **2. Baggage Claim**

After passing through immigration, pick up a free baggage cart before proceeding to the appropriate baggage carousel. The cart may be used until you reach the airport's outer gates.

### 3. Customs

Customs procedures in Vietnam are quick and simple. No arrival and departure forms are required for visitors to enter and exit the country. Visitors are required to fill the custom form when having:

- Luggage exceeds duty free concessions
- Luggage sent before or after the trip
- Professional equipment temporarily imported and re-exported or vice versa
- Addictive medicines
- Other medicines exceed USD 30 in value
- Foreign currency exceeds USD 5,000 (five thousand U.S. dollars) or its equivalence other foreign currency, or over VND 15,000,000 (fifteen million Vietnam Dong) in cash.

For further information regarding customs procedures, customs exemption, free of duty, please visit the Vietnam Customs website at [www.customs.gov.vn/English/Default.aspx](http://www.customs.gov.vn/English/Default.aspx).

### 4. Money Exchange

Unless you have acquired an amount of Vietnamese dong in advance, you may want to exchange foreign currency into Vietnamese dong before you leave the airport. You will need to change a sufficient amount for transportation into Hanoi (around \$50 or less). Once you arrive in the city, there are many places you can exchange money. Ask at the hotel reception if you do not know where to go.

### 5. Delivery Services / Shipment of Baggage within Vietnam

Vietnam Airlines accepts domestic shipments of baggage that arrive at the international arrival and departure gates in Hanoi and HCMC. You will have to carry your baggage to the domestic arrival and departure gate to have it processed at the Vietnam Airlines freighting counter. The service charges by the kilogram and is very reasonably priced.

In addition, Vietnam Post and Telecommunications Corporation (VNPT), which is the state postal and telecommunications monopoly, runs two domestic delivery services, CPN and EMS, that are quite fast and reliable within major cities. However, you must bring your baggage to the nearest post office in town. CPN and EMS will deliver small and medium-sized packages within major cities in 24 hours. Large packages and rural deliveries take between 2-5 days. Both services operate out of the post offices in most cities and towns. EMS offers delivery notification within 24 hours of arrival.

### 6. Transportation to and from the City

#### Noi Bai Airport (Hanoi)

There are many ways to get from the airport into the city. In Hanoi, there are two airport taxi stands and they charge a standard rate of VND 350,000 (\$18) per trip to anywhere in central Hanoi. Besides, you can take either Vietnam Airlines buses, which charges 35,000 VND per person (about \$2) for one way, or the City Bus- offered at the lowest cost: 5000 VND per trip. However, those buses will take you to some fixed stops, which is why you may have to take a taxi to your place inside the city. The trip from the airport to downtown Hanoi will take 40-50 minutes, depending on traffic.

#### Tan Son Nhat Airport (HCMC)

In HCMC, there are also taxi stands at Tan Son Nhat airport, costing about 150,000 VND (\$8) per trip into town. So the most popular and easiest way to go from the airport to downtown HCMC is by taking one of the many taxis lined up outside of the international arrival gate. Always ask the driver to use the meter because it is almost always cheaper than the fare the driver will try to negotiate with you. Tips are not required or expected for taxi services.

### **Phu Bai Airport (Hue)**

The airport is located 15km southeast of the city. Cost for metered taxis is around 150,000 (\$7) into the city.

### **Da Nang Airport**

The airport is located about 4km outside of the city. Cost for taxis is around VND 100,000 (\$5).

## **D. Temporary Accommodation**

Most newly-arrived Fulbright grantees to Vietnam will have to stay temporarily at a guesthouse or hotel until they are able to move into permanent accommodation, such as university housing, a private apartment or house, or long-term residence hotel.

If you will be staying with a friend, be sure to have that person send you a map to their house (even if you have plans to meet at the airport) with notations in Vietnamese and English to show to the taxi driver or a passerby. Unlike in the United States, it is difficult and sometimes impossible to locate apartment buildings and houses with only a street address! It is also not unusual for friends to miss each other at the airport or downtown city air terminals.

### **1. Hotels**

Accommodations are ample in all the major cities, but to avoid looking for a hotel upon arrival, making a reservation in advance through a travel agent in the U.S., your host institution or a Vietnamese colleague or a friend, is suggested. Be certain to provide your date and time of arrival, flight number and airport/city from which you will be arriving. Western-style hotels abound throughout the more frequented parts of Vietnam and are classified by price and reputation. Although there is no commonly used system, the following categories are a rough guide to the kinds of hotel accommodations available:

- Deluxe – four- to five-star hotels; standard rooms for \$50 and above.
- Standard – two and three-star hotels; single rooms between \$25 and \$50.
- Mini-hotels – standard family-run hotels usually used by Vietnamese for business trips and backpackers (rooms and bathrooms are very small but usually clean and efficient); standard rooms from \$10-\$25.

**Note:** Some hotels charge an additional 10% tax plus 5% service charge; check with the hotel when you arrive. Tipping is not necessary for baggage assistance.

### **2. Other Lodgings**

Government/university guesthouses - If you are traveling to rural areas at the invitation of a local institution or organization, it is likely you will be lodged in a government or university guesthouse. The amenities are basic as these guesthouses are designed for Vietnamese patrons. It is a good idea to bring along your own bed sheets and pillowcases when staying at these guesthouses. Government guesthouses in major cities tend to be more luxurious than their provincial counterparts.

### **3. Eating Out During Your First Few Days in Vietnam**

It is a good idea to eat at established restaurants and hotels during your first few days in Vietnam to let your stomach gradually adjust to the local food. Almost all larger hotels have restaurants or cafes that are open from 6:00 to 23:00. In Hanoi and other smaller cities and towns, restaurants close much earlier than in HCMC, where you can find eateries open all night. Be warned that hotel food can be expensive. Depending on where you stay, the cost of meals can vary between VND 40,000-100,000 (about \$2 to \$5). Most Vietnamese prefer to eat stall food in the mornings and usually choose noodle soup, rice congee/porridge or a hot sandwich. If you plan to eat at a street stall or Vietnamese restaurant, be aware of the sanitary conditions in which the food is being prepared (See Appendix B). A Vietnamese-style set lunch, including rice, soup, a main dish and vegetables,

ranges from VND 40,000-100,000 (\$2 to \$5). A bowl of noodles (Vietnamese- or Chinese-style) is relatively inexpensive, ranging from VND 30,000-50,000. Dinner prices are generally higher. Tipping is not necessary at most eating establishments.

# CHAPTER II



# LIVING IN VIETNAM



## **I. CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY**

Vietnam's northern terrain is mostly mountainous or hilly, with some highland areas covered by a thick green blanket of jungle (about half of the total land area). The Red River Delta and coastal plains in the lowland part of the North are heavily populated and intensively cultivated (almost entirely by rice fields). Although much of this Delta region is seasonally flooded, a complex system of dikes and levees helps to prevent serious flood damage.

The southern part of Vietnam, dominated by the estuary of the Mekong River system, is low, flat and frequently marshy. The rich soil in the Mekong Delta is the most fertile in the country. Areas immediately north and east of Ho Chi Minh City in the Mekong Delta are much more varied, with low-lying tropical rain forest, upland forest, and the rugged Annamite Mountain chain.

Vietnam is largely a tropical monsoon country. In the north, a hot rainy season prevails from May to September. The average temperature in Hanoi is about 86°F during this period with very high humidity. Due to the lack of proper drainage, flooding caused by heavy rainfall and/or typhoons can create conditions hazardous to one's health and property. Flooded streets slow down traffic and can lead to accidents. Houses and furnishings can suffer as a result of leaky roofs and other sources of water damage. Food supplies are also affected. During the cooler, dry season in the north from December to March, the average temperature is 68°F, with an overnight minimum around 40-42°F. Due to the lack of heating in most shops and offices during the dry season, it will feel considerably colder.

In the south, Ho Chi Minh City and the Mekong Delta experience a year-round tropical climate with daily temperatures normally exceeding 88°F. The rainy season in Danang and Hue in the central region lasts from October to March.

## **II. HOUSING**

### **A. Finding Appropriate Housing**

#### **1. Affiliation/ Institution**

You should contact your host institution for assistance in finding housing for you and your family. If you are not living in a major city, you may want to ask your host institution to provide you with housing on site or private housing close to the institution. University guesthouses tend to be basic because they are designed for Vietnamese patrons. If you are traveling with your family, a university guesthouse may not be appropriate because of the lack of privacy and amenities.

#### **2. Housing Agent**

Housing agents, or real estate brokers, operate in Hanoi and HCMC and a few other cities. The service is usually free of charge as the agent collects a commission from the leasing landlord. The names and contact information of housing agents are available in English-language tourist guides, the English-language magazines Vietnam Economic Times and The Guide (See *Useful Contact Information* in the Appendix).

#### **3. Other Sources of Housing information**

Your Vietnamese colleagues or other foreigners living near your area are good sources of housing information. They may inform you of the best ways to go about looking for appropriate housing.

### **B. Types of Housing and Average Rents**

Housing in HCMC and Hanoi is fairly easy to find and there are numerous housing options. In more remote areas and smaller cities, you may be limited in your choices. Depending on where you live, rents can be as low as \$150 and as high as \$3000 per month. At the lower end, you will get only the basic amenities such as hot water, ceiling fan and refrigerator. At the higher end, you should expect to receive many of the amenities of a western-style home, including unit air-conditioning in every room, cable

television and VCR, washing machine and garden area. A comfortable house or apartment with 2-3 bedrooms is obtainable between \$600 and \$800. Keep in mind that rent, like many other things in Vietnam, is negotiable; depending on the housing market and the disposition of the landlord, you may be able to include a maid or utilities and water in the price of rent.

### **1. Apartments**

Service and private apartments are abundant in the major cities. If you are living by yourself, a one-bedroom or two-bedroom apartment might be the most practical choice, particularly because most apartments are on one floor, whereas houses are typically 3 or more stories. At the higher end of the apartment market are service apartments, which are almost always part of a hotel. These apartment complexes usually come with a wide array of amenities, such as a gym, swimming pool, tennis courts, restaurant(s) and shops.

### **2. Villas**

One legacy of the French occupation of Vietnam is the charming colonial architecture the French left behind, particularly the spacious villas. From the outside, these houses look quite impressive and beautiful. However, unless they have been upgraded with modern amenities, villas can be lacking in a few areas, and may have small kitchens, a lack of standard appliances, not enough electrical outlets, etc.

### **3. Houses**

Not as charming as a villa, the typical Vietnamese house is narrow and tall. This is particularly true in Hanoi, where space fronting onto roads used to be heavily taxed, thus necessitating the construction of narrow houses that go up many stories.

### **4. Residence Hotels**

Practically all hotels or guesthouses in Vietnam will take long-term residents. Prices should be considerably cheaper than the daily going rate; the longer you stay, the lower the negotiated price should be. The cost should include daily room cleaning, water, utilities and cable (if applicable). If there is a kitchen in the guesthouse, you may also be able to get home-style cooked meals for a small price. The one caveat about living in a small hotel or guesthouse is that they lock up at nighttime-this means that they not only lock the front doors but also pull the metal folding gate over the front. If you stay out late, you will have to wake up the staff to be let in.

## **C. What to Consider When Renting**

### **1. Location**

As is normally the case elsewhere, rents are more expensive the closer to the center of town you get and the more conveniences there are in the area. In Hanoi, affordable houses on West Lake are plentiful and less noisy; however, they are usually hard to get to and can be as far as 30 minutes from the city center.

### **2. Rent, Deposit and Agent's Fee**

Compared to most other cities in the world, rent in HCMC, Hue, Hanoi and other cities is relatively cheap.

The real estate market in Vietnam works in such a way that the landlord, *not you*, pays the real estate agent, or broker, for finding a tenant. Therefore, if a broker tells you that you have to pay him for his or her services, beware. Furthermore, instead of a month's security deposit, the landlord will usually ask that you pay a few months' rent (usually three) in advance, and to pay your rent in three-month installments after that.

### **3. Maintenance Fee**

Landlords are responsible for the maintenance of the house so long as disrepair is not due to the tenant(s) abuse or misuse. However, some landlords can take a long time to respond to requests for repairs. Be persistent.

### **4. Furnishings**

Some apartments and houses come fully furnished with all the necessities: bed, couch, television and even cookware. Others come half furnished and some completely empty. If you find the perfect space and want it to be furnished, you may be able to negotiate this with the landlord. Be aware, however, that unless you specify exactly what kind of furnishings you want, the landlord will probably purchase furniture that will not suit your tastes.

### **5. Direction of the Housing Unit/ Sunshine**

Due to the high level of humidity in Vietnam, living spaces that do not have sufficient sunlight can get quite damp, musty and moldy, especially during the rainy season. Also, depending on what direction your house/apartment faces, you may have to put up with a considerable amount of noise or dust from the streets.

### **6. Noise Level**

Given the amount of traffic and noise in Vietnam, keep in mind that being in the center of the city might mean more noise pollution. An ideal solution would be to find housing near the center of town, but down an alleyway or off the main road.

## **D. Rental Contract**

### **1. Signing the Contract**

Before the deal is complete, you will have to sign a contract with the landlord. Bear in mind that the contract can be just as much for your protection as theirs. The contract can include, but is not limited to, information such as the size of the living space, the price, the payment method, the length of the rent term (though this part is often not heeded by tenants, without retribution), amenities and any other additional services (e.g. weekly maid service, parking, etc.).

### **2. Rent Payment Arrangements**

For the first payment, landlords prefer that the tenant pay a few months (usually three) in advance. Once the initial payment is made, the payment schedule---whether it is every month or every three months---is up for negotiation. Also note that while most landlords would prefer to be paid in dollars, under Vietnamese law, it is technically illegal to use anything but Vietnamese dong for such transactions.

## **E. Furnishing Your Apartment / House**

You can get almost anything for your house/apartment in Vietnam inexpensively. Many people simply have their furniture made. The craftsmanship on wooden furniture is excellent and can be customized. High-quality electronics and appliances such as washing machines, air conditioners, stereos, televisions, etc. are all available in Vietnam.

### **III. IMMIGRATION PROCEDURES AFTER ESTABLISHING RESIDENCE IN VIETNAM**

#### **A. Alien Registration**

After establishing residence, you will have to register at the local police station. Typically, your landlord or host institution will do this for you; if not, you are responsible for making sure it gets done. The police will need a copy of your passport, and visa to register you. Note that while HCMC and Hanoi officials may be more lax in imposing this process, if you are in the central region of Vietnam it is essential to have yourself registered in a timely manner.

In addition and according to the law, foreigners who stay overnight at private residences rather than their registered residences are required to register the temporary residence with the local authority.

The law states that: "Foreigners staying overnight at private houses of citizens shall directly or through the householder, make a declaration of temporary residence with the police authority of a ward or commune in charge of the locality of temporary residence. The police authority of the ward or commune shall be responsible for forwarding the declaration of temporary residence of the foreigner to the immigration office under the police authority of a province or city under central authority".

To avoid any trouble, please make sure to get all the necessary procedures done when you stay overnight at your friends' places or invite your friends to stay overnight at your residence.

For your safety, please inform the Fulbright Program in Vietnam your address in Vietnam and temporary address where you stay on the weekend/holiday so that we know where you are in case of an emergency.

#### **B. Registration at the U.S Embassy/ Consulate**

When in Vietnam, you must register yourself with the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi or the Consulate in HCMC for your own protection. By registering, you provide information on where you are living or staying in Vietnam and your permanent contact information in the U.S. in case of emergency. You can register at the consular services section of the Embassy/Consulate or register online at: [http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration\\_4789.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration_4789.html)

#### **C. Temporary Exits / Re-Entry Permit**

You should receive a multiple-entry visa, which will allow you to leave Vietnam and re-enter. Please be noted that under FSB policy, Fulbrighters are allowed a maximum of 2 weeks of leave time out of country during their grants. If grantees leave their host countries for more time, then their stipend amounts will be adjusted accordingly.

#### **D. Extension of Period of Stay**

If you are going to stay longer than the indicated period on your visa, you need to discuss this with your host and ask for assistance to apply for a visa extension.

### **IV. CLOTHING, FOOD AND SHOPPING**

#### **A. Clothing**

##### **1. Clothes to Bring**

In general, Vietnamese people dress more conservatively than Americans, particularly on special occasions, when they dress very formally. If it is absolutely necessary to wear a very formal dress, you can rent one at a bridal or special occasion shop if you are not very tall or large. College students, both men and women, dress in a more "American style", i.e. T-shirts, jeans and sneakers. Dresses suitable for both work and cocktail parties are especially useful to pack, as you will often

have to go from daytime to evening engagements without having time to return home. Well-matched pieces of comfortable clothing that can be worn interchangeably or worn in layers for warmth are very practical. Loose, lightweight clothing in natural fabrics that can be easily washed is suitable for the high temperatures and humidity of summer.

The heavy coats and parkas used in the coldest regions of the U.S. are not necessary in Vietnam. Still, foreigners who live in the northern areas of Vietnam usually speak of winter as being quite cold. Warm waterproof jackets, wool socks and sweaters, long underwear and flannel nightclothes are essential. Plan to bring enough of each to allow for long drying times for heavy articles. Wool slacks and suits for women are recommended for winter wear. Long-sleeved suits and dresses that will allow long underwear and sweaters to be worn underneath are more practical than close-fitting garments. Be prepared for your home in Vietnam to be much chillier than your home in the States.

Wearing warm clothes is recommended if you will teach or conduct research in classrooms or libraries, which are usually unheated or inadequately heated. Long underwear is sold in great variety for men, women and children, but extra large sizes are not readily available. If you wear a larger size, or if you are particular about clothing, you should bring more than one set from the U.S.

Children's sweaters, pants, skirts, jackets, scarves, mittens, shoes, socks are all available in Vietnam and can be purchased after arrival.

High-quality rain gear is also essential for adults and children in Vietnam. Rather than bringing several coats, a waterproof jacket with a zip-out wool lining may prove most useful.

## **2. Buying and Making Clothes in Vietnam**

There is a great variety of clothing (style, color, size) available at most department and specialty stores. Remember to always try on clothes before buying, because sizes usually vary. Many Americans find that sleeve lengths for blouses, sweaters and jackets are too short.

You can also have your clothes tailored in Vietnam inexpensively. Many shops specialize in making men's suit and other clothes. There is no shortage of fabrics, from silk to cotton, in Vietnam, but always bargain hard and check the quality carefully. Better yet, ask a Vietnamese friend to come with you when buying fabric or arranging for tailoring.

## **3. Footwear**

Your feet will require special attention in Vietnam. Finding the right size shoes is a common problem for foreigners, *so you should bring enough to last a year*. Shoe sizes in Vietnam usually follow the European system; the largest women's size commonly available is a size 36 (size 7 U.S.) and size 41 (size 9 U.S.) for men, though with a little persistence you can usually find larger size in limited styles. In tourist areas, women may be able to find dressy sandals in larger sizes or have them made to fit. Since you will probably be walking a lot, you will need comfortable walking shoes. For Hanoi's winter, you may need shoes that are loose enough to allow you to wear thick socks comfortably. You should also consider bringing soft-soled fur-lined slippers for wearing in the home, as most houses are built with marble floors.

## **4. Coping with humidity**

It is wise to place moisture absorbing material or low-wattage electric bulbs in closets during the humid season. Silica gel is recommended and readily available. If you stay in Vietnam beyond winter, all winter clothes to be stored should be laundered or dry-cleaned and packed with moth crystals. If you are not careful, your favorite wool jacket or sweater may become moth-eaten, or your silk dress may be badly spotted and spoiled by mildew. In choosing clothes to bring to Vietnam, select materials that dry easily. Shoes should also be kept clean, aired often and stored in a dry place. You might also consider buying a dehumidifier to use in the room where your clothes are stored.

## **B. Food**

You must be careful when consuming fresh meat and dairy products in Vietnam, as the Vietnamese have no adequate inspection system (See Appendix B). For dairy products, it is advisable to purchase well-known brand names. For meat, however, foreigners often do consume meat and seafood purchased at the local open-air markets without any health problems. You are advised to buy those products at some familiar and guaranteed sellers, especially those recommended by your Vietnamese friends. Imported seafood and meat, primarily from Australia and New Zealand, are always available fresh or frozen - at a much higher price, of course. Long-life UHT milk (whole, low fat and skim) from New Zealand and Vietnam (Vinamilk, Dutch Lady), powdered milk, and butter are readily available in all of the supermarkets.

Most other basic foodstuffs are available in supermarkets and delicatessens, and larger stores also carry imported sodas, liquor, food items and small kitchen appliances. The limited selection of western fruits and vegetables varies from season to season. Principal items that should be brought with you or sent from abroad include traditional holiday foods, ethnic foods, dietary products, baby foods, special snack foods, sport drinks, and treats for children and pets. Personal care products are generally available (with the exception of quality feminine hygiene products), but U.S. products or their equivalents are sometimes scarce and sell at twice the average U.S price. Seldom will you find a wide selection of products available at one location. Thus, from time to time, you will need to shop around before you find a certain item on your grocery list

### **1. Weights and Measures**

The metric system of measurement is used in Vietnam, and all cooked and uncooked food items in the market are sold by the gram/kilogram or liter/milliliter. All recipes follow the same system of measurement.

### **2. Cooking**

Most cooking is done on small gas stoves with one or two burners and/or a grill, which are placed on a low counter, though more modern houses will have electric, or gas ranges with an oven. If you do have the use of an oven, it will most likely be much smaller than those used in the U.S. Therefore, you will no doubt find yourself frying, boiling, stewing and grilling on a stove rather than roasting and baking in an oven. Microwaves are very popular, however, and some come equipped with grill and oven functions. Prices and quality vary, so make sure you know what you want before buying.

### **3. Eating out**

There are a wide variety of restaurants in Vietnam in terms of price, style and cuisine. In addition to Japanese, Thai, Chinese, Korean, Indian, French, Italian and American-style restaurants, the cuisine of many other countries can be found in big cities in Vietnam, with the exception of Kosher foods and good Mexican and Greek eateries. Eating out is increasingly popular and there are a number of books on the topic in both Vietnamese and English.

## **C. Shopping**

If you do not speak Vietnamese, shopping will take time in the beginning. Some people recommend one or two initial shopping expeditions in the company of Vietnamese friends, who can assist in the selection of stores and offer advice on prices and the quality of items.

### **1. Department Stores**

Department stores in Vietnam stock a wide variety of goods, including clothes, electrical appliances, furniture, cosmetics, household items and food items.

### **2. Supermarkets**

Supermarkets are increasing in number and becoming popular among the Vietnamese. You can often find items at lower prices than at department stores or small stores. U.S. and other foreign brand foods and specialties may be obtained at the various western style supermarkets throughout the city.

### **3. Local Markets**

Shopping at the local markets for food can be a cultural experience in itself. Fresh produces, seafood, meat, and poultry are sold at the markets from morning to night. You can easily find various kinds of fresh products at very good prices here. However they are usually crowded and dirty. Don't be surprised if you see chickens being killed and other dead animal products out in the open.

## V. MONEY AND BANKING

### A. Currency

The Dong (VND) is the monetary unit used in Vietnam. Paper notes bear the portrait of Ho Chi Minh, with the smallest note being 200 VND and the largest 500,000 VND. The rate of exchange fluctuates. As of April 2013, the exchange rate is at 20,900 VND to 1 USD.

Vietnamese currency comes in the following denominations:

Denominations	Value					
<i>Paper notes</i>	500,000	200,000	100,000	50,000	20,000	10,000
	5,000	2,000	1,000	500	200	
<i>Coins</i>	5,000	2,000	1,000	500	200	

Be careful not to confuse the 20,000 note with the 5,000 note, which are both blue. New polyurethane notes have been issued for all notes from 10,000-500,000.

### B. Financial Practices

Banking and financial customs in Vietnam are quite different from those in the United States. "Cash and carry" is the prevalent method of conducting personal transactions, although major credit cards are accepted at all larger hotels, most high-end restaurants and many shops catering to foreigners. Sometimes a fee of 1 to 3% will be added to the total bill for credit card transactions.

Dong checks are negotiable only at the banks on which they are drawn or through the bank at which you have an account. Checks drawn on U.S. accounts are not accepted for regular shopping.

Credit is often extended in Vietnam, but payment, particularly from foreigners, is usually expected either upon delivery or at the time of ordering.

### C. Banking

#### 1. Bank Account

Setting up a personal bank account with an overseas bank can be more costly than what you are accustomed to at home. For example, ANZ (Australia) is one of the few foreign banks that will allow an individual to set up a personal account. However, for this convenience you must maintain a high minimum balance and suffer a penalty if you fall below it or if you close your account within a year. Another option is to set up a local account with Vietcombank or VID Public Bank. Money can be deposited and withdrawn from these accounts in both VND and USD.

#### 2. Cash Card/ATM Machine

ATMs have become popular in larger cities in Vietnam. Hanoi and HCMC have ATMs from ANZ, HSBC, and Citibank. Vietcombank is also developing a wide ATM network which accepts foreign cards. These machines are marked with the GlobalAccess, Cirrus, Interlink, Plus, Star, Accel, Exchange or Explore logo. Payment is made in dong and the service charge is automatically deducted from the total. Note that your bank may charge additional fees for ATM withdrawals.

If your ATM card is also a debit card and has a Visa or Master Card logo on it, you can withdraw money from your U.S. bank account at most credit card cash-advance counters at banks in Vietnam, though you will have to pay a service charge.

#### 3. Automatic Payment of Utilities, Rent, etc.

There is no such thing as automatic payment of bills through a checking account. Usually, bill collectors for the electricity, water and the telephone companies will come to your house or your landlord's house in the early evening to collect payment. If you miss their visit, you will have to stop by the applicable office during working hours to pay.

## **VI. PUBLIC SERVICES AND UTILITIES**

### **A. Utilities**

#### **1. Electricity**

Electricity in Vietnam is 220v/50-cycle alternating current (with two round-pin electrical plugs). Voltage regulators are recommended for most appliances, especially computers, as electrical power in Vietnam is unstable and prone to fluctuations, which can damage sensitive electronic equipment. If you use many electrical appliances, especially heaters or air-conditioners, the electric company in your area should be consulted about possibly stepping up the circuit breaker.

#### **2. Gas**

Most kitchens in Vietnam have gas ranges. These ranges are connected to a gas canister, which can be replenished when empty through a local distributor at low cost.

#### **3. Water**

There are a few types of water sources available, depending on where you live in Vietnam. In Hanoi and the Northern provinces, many houses get their water from wells. Most houses come with electric pumps that transfer the water from the well, located below the house, to a reservoir tank above the house. In many cases these pumps turn on automatically when the reservoir is depleted. Sometimes you may have to turn on the pumps yourself when there is no water in your house. In many parts of southern Vietnam, water is piped just as it is in the States and there is no need for an electric pump in your house. Water is relatively inexpensive compared to the cost of electricity.

### **B. Telephone and International Calls**

Local and international telephone service is available and reliable, although calls to the U.S. are expensive. International Direct Dial service is excellent. To dial outside of Vietnam you simply dial 0, country code, and the number (for example, to call the U.S., dial 001+212-555-5555). There are a few international long-distance companies that charge a lower rate for international and domestic long-distance calls. One of them is the "178" access line. You simply dial 178 first, then 0, country code, and the number. If you do not have access to international calling at your home, you can go to the post office to make international calls.

#### **1. Telephone Installation**

Almost without exception, your lodging in Vietnam will have a phone already installed, although it may not be a private line if you live in a hotel. If you want to have an additional telephone line installed in your apartment, you must contact the post office. Your landlord can usually arrange the installation for you.

#### **2. Mobile Phones**

Like the rest of Asia, mobile phones are ubiquitous in Vietnam. Mobile phones are a convenient and relatively inexpensive option if you do not have a private telephone line. There are many models of phones in different price ranges and the phones can be bought at many retail outlets throughout the major cities. You can choose a "pay-as-you-go" plan by purchasing pre-paid cards in amounts from VND 50,000 up to 500,000. Mobifone, Vinaphone, and Viettel are some popular providers of mobile phone service and offer monthly payment plans which charge around VND 300,000 (about \$15) per

month for a basic subscription and about VND 1,800 per minute of local airtime. There is no charge to receive incoming calls or receive text messages between phones.

### **3. Collect Calls in Vietnam**

Foreigners are not allowed to make international collect calls, the reason being that the telephone company earns less on a collect call than for a call paid for in Vietnam. However, Vietnamese nationals are allowed to make collect calls because many of them cannot afford to pay for an international call.

## **C. Internet Provider and Internet Access**

The easiest way to set up an email account in Vietnam is to sign up with FPT (www.fpt.vn), or Vietnam Net (VNN) - the State-owned ISP, with offices in all major cities in Vietnam. Rates vary and special deals are plentiful.

Once you have signed up with an ISP, you can access your FPT email via a program such as Outlook and you can also surf the web and access your web-based email. If you do not have a personal computer, you can access web-based email at any Internet cafe for VND 4000 –10,000/h, depending on the quality and speed of the service. Internet cafes are very popular and can be found almost anywhere there are tourists. If you have a computer but not a modem, you can purchase a 56K modem for about \$50 at any computer dealer.

If you want to use the Internet, be aware that despite the availability of 56-100K connections, download times due to heavy user traffic can be very slow. Many free website-hosting sites, such as Geocities, are fire walled in Vietnam, along with sites deemed to have inappropriate content. Live chatting, web-camera and instant messaging services are extremely popular in Vietnam. Many foreigners keep in touch with their loved ones back home via Skype or Yahoo web chatting.

3G internet is also available in Vietnam with reasonable service fees. Mobifone, Vinaphone and Viettel are service providers for 3G services. 3G USB data cards and Prepaid sim cards are available at post offices and internet service providers around the country.

## **D. Garbage Collection**

### **1. Garbage Collection Systems in Vietnam**

Garbage is collected at least once a day in most cities, usually in the late afternoon. You can leave your garbage either in front of your house or at a designated spot in your neighborhood. Consult with your neighbors for the proper garbage disposal procedure in your neighborhood. There is no requirement to separate your trash in Vietnam.

### **2. Recycling**

Household recycling is not a common practice in Vietnam. However, because plastic and aluminum bottles can be turned in for money, you will find people digging through your trash in search of them. There are also peddlers who come through neighborhoods during the day to buy them from you---a small water bottle commands approximately VND 100 and the larger 1.5 liter bottle about VND 500.

## **E. Postal and Other Delivery Services**

### **1. Postal Services**

Domestic postal rates are quite cheap. International postal rates are about twice as high as those in the U.S.; a typical airmail letter sent to the States will take about 10-15 business days to arrive and cost about VND 20,000 (\$1) to send. It also takes about 10 days for mail sent from the States to arrive in Vietnam.

You can ship packages from Vietnam to the U.S., though it is relatively expensive and can take two to four weeks to arrive. If you are mailing presents to the States, plan accordingly and do not send expensive items.

If someone mails you a parcel from the States, a claim form will be sent to your home address and you must go the post office with your passport to pick it up and pay tax if applicable. You can also receive international faxes at the post office; check with your local post office for the number. Additionally, you can rent a mailbox for about \$10 a month at your city's main postal branch, which is useful if you do not have a stable address in Vietnam. Post offices are usually open until 8 pm, even on weekends and holidays, though they close for an hour or two around lunchtime.

## **2. Courier and Express Services**

Private couriers can deliver both international and domestic parcels and documents. For international service, the charge is approximately \$35-\$60 for the first 500g and about \$17-20 for every 500g thereafter. The domestic service charges are approximately \$20 for the first 500g and \$5 for each additional 500g. International express services with offices in Vietnam include DHL Worldwide Express, Federal Express, United Parcel Service, and TNT Express Worldwide.

You can also try the Vietnamese-run EMS (Express Mail Service) and SGP (Saigon Post), both of which offer domestic and international express mail services. Airmail services to the western hemisphere can take anywhere from 10 days (that's only if the package passes the customs check for subversive materials) to more than a month. A typical airmail letter sent express to the States via EMS takes 4-5 days to arrive and costs about \$10. For domestic services, both companies guarantee next-day delivery.

## **VII. MEDICAL CARE AND SERVICES**

### **A. Medical Facilities**

Minor medical emergencies and common illnesses can be treated in Vietnam at local clinics and international hospitals, with standards comparable to the U.S., but for operations or serious illnesses it is advised to seek care in Bangkok, Hong Kong, or Singapore.

There are several medical facilities in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City which have a number of qualified foreign doctors on staff who speak English. While each can treat routine illnesses and stabilize trauma, they are not full-service medical facilities. Dentists are also available in Hanoi and HCMC and the level of general dental care is acceptable (See *Useful Contact Information* for Medical Facility Listings).

In Hue, Da Nang, and Nha Trang, there is a general hospital that can treat minor ailments; however, you need to go HCMC or Hanoi if you need to be examined by a foreign doctor.

### **B. Medical Insurance**

Even if you have medical insurance in the States, it may not be valid in Vietnam. Buying basic travel insurance - either before you leave or after you arrive - is an absolute must. Most travel policies provide coverage only for emergencies, not for routine or outpatient care, and will typically reimburse you only *after* you have paid, so make sure you keep all receipts and records. With that in mind, a good policy should include emergency evacuation coverage in the event that you need to be flown to a neighboring country for treatment; it should also provide for repatriation of remains.

As a Fulbright grantee, you are provided with medical insurance. Doctors and hospitals in Vietnam expect immediate cash payment for health services. Make sure you read the policy and reimbursement procedure sent to you either from IIE or CIES. Any questions you may have should be directed to the insurance provider.

## VIII. LOST DOCUMENTS/CREDIT CARDS

### A. Lost Documents

Losing your documents and credit cards while abroad can be a nightmare. You should keep copies of your passport ID page, visa, customs declaration, and all other important documents, in a secure place. In the event that you lose your passport you should immediately report to the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi and the U.S. Consulate in HCMC and file a report at the nearest police station, obtain a certified copy of their report, and report it again to the nearest Immigration and Migration office (There should be one in all major cities). In Hanoi, this office is located 79 Tran Hung Dao Street, telephone: (04) 3825-3076. You should also report the loss of your passport to your Vietnamese host, which will have to apply for a replacement visa on your behalf.

### B. Lost Credit Cards and Traveler's Checks

You should report any credit card or traveler's check missing to your credit card/traveler's check companies immediately. Below is a list of numbers for contacting credit card and traveler's check companies that are common in the States.

#### Credit Card and Travel's Check Companies:

Citibank Master/Visa: 1-800-347-4934

American Express: (336) 393-1111; traveler's checks (contact Amex Australia) 61-282-239-171

Discover: 1-800-347-2683

Master Card International: 1-636-722-7111

Visa International: 1-800-VISA-911

## IX. INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

### A. Pre-schools

#### 1. Kindergarten

##### HA NOI

##### **Morning Star International Kindergarten (MSIK)/ Van Phuc Kindergarten**

Van Phuc 4, Van Bao, Hanoi

Ba Dinh District, Hanoi

Tel: (84-4) 3726-1587

Email: [Morningstar@hn.vnn.vn](mailto:Morningstar@hn.vnn.vn)

##### **Kinderworld International Kindergarten (4 locations in Ha Noi)**

Address: Level 3, Hanoi Towers, 49 Hai Ba Trung, Hanoi

Tel: (044) 3934-7243

Email: [admin\\_kwht@kinderworldvietnam.com](mailto:admin_kwht@kinderworldvietnam.com)

Homepage: [www.kinderworldvietnam.com](http://www.kinderworldvietnam.com)

##### **Rainbow School**

223 Au Co, Hanoi

Tel: (844) 3718-1390

Email: [rainbow-school@hn.vnn.vn](mailto:rainbow-school@hn.vnn.vn)

Homepage: [www.rainbowpreschool.edu.vn](http://www.rainbowpreschool.edu.vn)

##### HO CHI MINH CITY

**Kinderworld International Kindergarten**

Address: Unit G, Block 8, The Manor HCMC, 91 Nguyen Huu Canh,  
Binh Thanh District, HCMC  
Tel: 848-3514-3036/3514-3037  
Email: [enquiry-themanor@kinderworldvietnam.com](mailto:enquiry-themanor@kinderworldvietnam.com)

**Fosco International School (Preschool-Grade 4)**

40 Ba Huyen Thanh Quan, District 3, HCMC  
Tel: 848-3930-5930  
Email: [fosco\\_school@hcm.fpt.vn](mailto:fosco_school@hcm.fpt.vn)  
Homepage: <http://www.fosco.edu.vn>

**Dynotots**

3 Lotus Street, APSC Compound, 36 Thao Dien, An Phu, District 2, HCMC  
Tel: +84 8 3512 4369  
Email: [dynotots@hcm.fpt.vn](mailto:dynotots@hcm.fpt.vn)  
Homepage: <http://www.dynotots.com/>

**2. Babysitters**

For \$100-120 per month, you can hire a nanny who will take care of your children and help with some light cooking and general housecleaning.

**B. Elementary, Middle and High Schools**

1. International Schools: Each of the below schools has its own preschool program.

**HA NOI****United Nations International School**

Address: [Lac](#) Long Quan, Tay Ho District, Hanoi  
Tel: 84-4-3758-1551  
Email: [info@unishanoi.org](mailto:info@unishanoi.org)  
Homepage : [www.unishanoi.org](http://www.unishanoi.org)

**Lycee Francais Alexandre Yersin**

Address: 12 Nui Truc, Hanoi  
Tel.: (84-4) 3843-6779  
Email: [secretariat.lfay@laposte.net](mailto:secretariat.lfay@laposte.net)  
Homepage: [www.lyceefrancaishanoi.net](http://www.lyceefrancaishanoi.net)

**Hanoi International School**

Address: 48 Lieu Giai Street, Hanoi  
Tel.: (84-4) 3832-7379  
Email: [mainoffice@hisvietnam.com](mailto:mainoffice@hisvietnam.com)  
Homepage: [www.hisvietnam.com](http://www.hisvietnam.com)

**Uniworld Integrated School**

Block 2D, Van Phuc Diplomatic Compound, 46 Van Bao, Ba Dinh District, Hanoi  
Tel: 844-3726-1601  
Email: [enquiry-vanphuc@univworldvietnam.com](mailto:enquiry-vanphuc@univworldvietnam.com)  
Homepage: [www.uniworldvietnam.com](http://www.uniworldvietnam.com)

## HO CHI MINH CITY

### **Saigon South International School**

Saigon South Parkway, Tam Phu Ward, District 7, HCMC  
Tel: (84 8) 4130 0901  
Email: [ssischool@hcm.vnn.vn](mailto:ssischool@hcm.vnn.vn)  
Homepage: [www.ssischool.org](http://www.ssischool.org)

### **International School Ho Chi Minh City**

649 Vo Truong Toan St., An Phu, District 2, HCMC  
Tel: (84 8) 3898 9100  
Email: [enroll-ishcmc@hcm.vnn.vn](mailto:enroll-ishcmc@hcm.vnn.vn)  
Homepage: [www-ishcmc.com](http://www-ishcmc.com)

### **The British International School**

An Phu Primary School : 225 Nguyen Van Huong, An Phu, District 2, HCMC  
Tel: (84 8) 3744 4551  
An Phu Secondary School: 246 Nguyen Van Huong, An Phu, District 2, HCMC  
Tel: (84 8) 3744 2335  
Email: [anphu@bisvietnam.com](mailto:anphu@bisvietnam.com)  
Homepage: [www.bisvietnam.com](http://www.bisvietnam.com)

## DA NANG

### **Uniworld Integrated School**

Address: 139 Le Loi, Hai Chau District, Danang City  
Tel: 84-511-384-0495  
Email: [enquiry-danang@uniworldvietnam.com](mailto:enquiry-danang@uniworldvietnam.com)  
Homepage: [www.uniworldvietnam.com](http://www.uniworldvietnam.com)

## **C. Post-secondary Educational Opportunities**

### **Study of Vietnamese Language and Culture**

For formal study of Vietnamese language and culture, you can enroll in classes at the local university. In Hanoi, the Vietnamese Language Center within the Polytechnic University (Dai Hoc Bach Khoa) is a popular choice, as it is the Vietnamese Language Center at 1 Pham Ngu Lao (Tel: 04-3826-2468). In Saigon, two options include: University of Social Sciences and Humanities (12 Dinh Tien Hoang, District 1, [vietnamhoc@hcm.vnn.vn](mailto:vietnamhoc@hcm.vnn.vn)) and the HCMC University of Education (280 An Duong Vuong, District 5, [ciecer@hcm.vnn.vn](mailto:ciecer@hcm.vnn.vn)).

Fees for language lessons run about \$8/hour for individual tutoring and less for larger classes. If formal classes are not what you are looking for, then asking around will surely produce the names of a few individuals who would be more than willing to tutor you for about \$5/hour. Moreover, since so many Vietnamese are looking to improve their English skills, free instruction can be had provided you are willing to do an even exchange of Vietnamese-English lessons.

There are a variety of websites devoted to Vietnamese language, including:  
<http://www.public.asu.edu/~ickpl/vnonline/index.htm>

Culture courses on topics such as History, Lacquer Painting, Martial Arts and the like can be found at the universities as well, though you should make sure that any courses involving lectures are conducted by someone who speaks fluent English.

## **D. Full-time and Part-time Employment**

If you are looking for part-time employment, your best bet is a full or part-time teaching position with an international school, language institute, NGO, international organization or major hotel. Several spouses in the expatriate community teach English at home, conduct ballet and aerobic classes, or work as part-time or substitute teachers at the schools. Speaking Vietnamese is, of course, an advantage, but it is not a must for becoming gainfully employed.

## **X. TRANSPORTATION**

Most foreigners in Vietnam rent or buy a used motorbike to get around town. Rental rates are US\$50-100 per month depending on the model of the bike. If you are staying long term, it might be a good idea to buy a used bike, as motorbikes do not depreciate very much. Drivers for cars are also available for hire, but it can be expensive. A valid U.S. driver's license is required to obtain a local driver's permit (Note: International driver's licenses are not valid in Vietnam).

Driving in Vietnam is stressful and requires a great deal of care and vigilance to avoid accidents. Most people do not obey standard rules of the road. Traffic moves on the right, but operators sometimes do not stay on their own side of the road. There are very few traffic lights or stop signs. In principle, the bigger you are, the more right-of-way you have. Another basic rule of thumb for driving in Vietnam: Those behind need to watch out for those in front or alongside. If you plan on operating a motorcycle or riding a bicycle, bring a sturdy helmet or buy one here when you arrive. Department of Transportation-approved helmets provide excellent protection; however, some people find that the limitation of peripheral vision from a full face helmet is not always a good tradeoff in Vietnam given the need to watch for lane instruction from all directions. You may find an open-faced helmet or even a bicycle helmet more appropriate. (See Appendix D for safety and traffic information).

Taxis are plentiful and the taxi drivers usually understand enough English to take you where you want to go. Cities still have cyclos or pedicabs you can use for short distances and/or more scenic rides. There are also motorbike taxi (xe ôm) rides available for the more adventuresome travelers.

## **XI. RECREATION AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES**

### **A. Source of Information for Cultural Activities**

Besides periodicals, message boards at expatriate hangouts in town should offer some information on activities around town.

Some publications to check for updated news on activities are *Vietnam News*, *Vietnam Economic Times*, *The Guide*, *Vietnam Investment Review* and *Timeout Magazine*.

### **B. Libraries and Printed News Sources**

Americans are advised to bring reading materials from home because English language books and magazines are scarce; however, more and more English language reading matter is available in Vietnam these days, but costs two to three times more than they do in the U.S.

The local print and broadcast media are run by the Communist Party and Government of Vietnam. Reporting of local developments is therefore heavily controlled and coverage of international events is limited. Internet journalism has taken off in Vietnam in the past few years, however, and many Vietnamese newspapers offer English-language news online. Sites include:

Vietnam News: <http://vietnamnews.vnnet.vn/>

Vietnamnet: <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/>

Nhan Dan (The People): <http://www.nhandan.com.vn/english/>

### **C. Radio and Television**

The Vietnamese Government operates two radio stations that broadcast classical music, traditional Vietnamese music, the news in Vietnamese, and American pop music for a few hours per day.

There are three national Vietnamese television channels and a variety of provincial channels. With the significant increase in the expatriate population over the past several years, satellite access is now common in detached houses and in serviced apartments, bringing a myriad of international television channels to Vietnam, including – but not limited to – CNN, CNBC, MTV, HBO, Cinemax, and Hong Kong's Star World and Star Sports (which show selected British, Australian, Indonesian, Indian and Malaysian programming). In Hanoi and HCMC, you can obtain satellite service from Vietnam TV for an initial installation fee of \$100.00 and a monthly fee of about \$5.00, but have your Vietnamese friends help you choose a reliable vendor.

Locally purchased televisions and VCRs use the NTSC and PAL systems. Both PAL system and multi-system televisions and DVD players are available in Vietnam at reasonable prices.

#### **D. Sports**

**Tennis.** There are plenty of tennis courts in Hanoi and HCMC, but the demand still exceeds the supply unless you are able to play during the week in the daytime. Most courts are in good condition and adequately maintained. Court surfaces are either hard or carpeted. There are, unfortunately, no indoor tennis facilities. Bring a supply of shoes and socks, tennis balls, strings, grips, etc. Tennis equipment and clothes are locally available, but there is not much of a selection and what is acceptable is more expensive than in the U.S. Court fees run from \$3 to \$5 during the day, with evening rates (5:00 – 10:00p.m) twice that. If you provide the string, you can get your racquet re-strung for about \$1. Most Vietnamese tennis coaches charge about \$10/hour. All service apartments, major hotels, and some of the diplomatic missions have tennis courts.

All major hotels and service apartments in HCMC have either hard or carpeted tennis courts, all of which are in high demand. Sports center and service apartment court fees range from \$3 (before 5 pm) to \$5 (after 5 pm). Hotels charge about \$6 and \$12, respectively.

**Golf.** About 35km west of Hanoi (a one-hour drive on Highway 11) is Kings Island – a scenic 18-hole golf course. The golf club is situated at the base of Ba Vi National Park and is surrounded by historic temples and pagodas, natural caves, waterfalls, hiking trails, hot springs and ethnic minority villages. Facilities include a swimming pool, tennis courts, a fully-stocked pro shop with golf club and shoe rentals and a clubhouse that serves both Asian and Western food. Special package day tours allow non-members to play for \$55 during the week and \$80 on the weekend.

There are four excellent golf clubs in HCMC area. Saigon South (9 holes) is close to the city, while Dong Nai (18 holes) is approximately a 1-1/2 hour drive away. The other two – Song Be (18 holes) and Thu Duc (36 holes) are approximately a 45-minute drive. All three golf facilities have a clubhouse with a restaurant. Weekend green fees are \$85, with weekday specials starting at \$45. Caddies are available at all three clubs.

**Swimming.** Most of the larger hotels and service apartments have swimming pools, which you can use for a day fee of \$5-15. The schools do not. Avid swimmers usually join a health club with swimming privileges included. There are also some nice outdoors public swimming pools in Hanoi that are quite inexpensive (\$1/person), including the new 50-meter Tay Ho, Thang Loi swimming pool near West Lake.

With year-round temperatures in the mid-80s, swimming and/or lounging around the pool in HCMC can be a great stress reliever. If you do not like crowds and noise, however, avoid going to public pools at dusk - the most popular time.

**Bowling.** There are three large bowling centers in Hanoi. In Hanoi, one is located in a hotel just across from the U.S. Embassy (24 lanes) and another within walking distance. A game costs \$3, and bowling shoe rental is \$1.

There are also several bowling centers scattered around HCMC. Fees are the same as in Hanoi.

**Jogging and Biking.** Unfortunately, the hazardous traffic conditions in Hanoi and HCMC prohibit all but the foolhardy from jogging and biking safely along the streets. Joggers and bikers are relegated to the safe interior facilities of health centers or to traveling some distance outside the cities. Biking to and in the countryside to some small, peaceful and quiet villages, rice fields, etc. at the weekends are of great pleasure. Public parks are also an option for joggers.

**Volley Ball.** JTF-FA sponsors a volleyball match at “The Ranch” every weekend. The American Club in Hanoi also has an outdoor volleyball court, which can be scheduled for use.

**Health Clubs.** Virtually every hotel and apartment complex has an exercise room with state-of-the-art equipment, showers, lockers, saunas and whirlpools. Annual fees range from \$500-1200. Daily rates are often available, and discount rates are available for off-peak membership.

## **E. Touring and Outdoor Activities**

Several scenic and historic sites, including national parks and pagodas, can be taken in via a day trip from Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City. Although road conditions and traffic flow are steadily improving, travel can be a bit uncomfortable and stressful due to poor roads and constant construction. There are also several craft villages within a one-hour drive from Hanoi where you can witness papermaking, snake-farming, noodle-making, ceramic-making and silk weaving. Other popular attractions are the nearby factories for making costume jewelry, ceramics, lacquer ware and crystal. Popular destinations from HCMC include the beach town of Vung Tau or one of the many bustling towns along the Mekong River.

**Ha Long Bay.** A five-hour drive from Hanoi, Ha Long Bay - one of the World Heritage approved by UNESCO - is considered by many to be one of the most scenic areas in Asia. The bay is dotted with hundreds of steep rock formations riddled with caves and grottoes. Cat Ba, one of the largest islands in Ha Long Bay, is home to one of Vietnam’s national parks and includes a seven-acre freshwater lake in the center of the island.

**Sapa.** Built originally as a French hill station, Sapa now is one of Vietnam’s major tourist attractions in the northern part of the country. By road (and some of it very bumpy), Sapa is a 12-14-hour scenic drive from Hanoi. For those travelers who prefer a more comfortable, faster ride up north, the overnight train from Hanoi to Sapa and back is perfectly safe and hassle-free. On the weekend, you can mingle with the colorfully dressed hill tribe people who trek into Sapa to peddle their homemade garments and textiles. Using Sapa as a base, you can also hike to several minority tribe villages, while taking in the panoramic view of Vietnam’s Hoang Lien Mountains.

**Hue.** The former capital of Vietnam prior to WWII, Hue, also a World Heritage, is surrounded by a large number of historic royal landmarks. Hue is a 2-hour plane ride from HCMC and is probably the largest city in Vietnam with the least amount of street traffic. Visitors to Hue can safely explore the inner city on foot. Bicycles can be used to tour the Perfume River, the Forbidden City and the Citadel. Bikes and or motor scooters can be rented from hotels for short trips to the numerous tombs and pagodas.

**Hoi An.** A 45-minute ride from Danang and 120-minute ride by train from Hue, Hoi An was once a prosperous trading town frequented by the Japanese, Portuguese, Dutch, French, and Chinese. The town is now a quaint, charming tourist attraction. For architecture buffs, there are a number of well-preserved historic sites in Hoi An over 200 years old, including private homes, chapels, temples, pagodas, bridges and tombs. Hoi An also offers a multitude of galleries and craft shops, sidewalk cafes, a large outdoor market, and tailors who can produce quality dresses, trousers and shirts quickly and at very reasonable prices.

**Dalat.** On the highland of Vietnam and approximately six hours by road or one hour by plane from HCMC, Dalat enjoys year-round spring weather and offers something for everyone. There is an 18-hole golf course, botanical gardens, ancient palaces and pagodas and a large central market full of fresh vegetables, fruits and flowers. After a hearty meal, you can walk along small paths behind waterfalls or in the streets of the French Quarter up on the hill.

**Nha Trang.** This sleepy little resort town has beautiful sandy white beaches with turquoise water, small islands and coral reefs to explore, and the best fresh fruit milkshakes and ice cream in Vietnam. You can navigate around town by foot, cyclo, bicycle or motor scooter without a hassle. Nha Trang is a one-hour plane ride from HCMC.

## **F. Photography**

Vietnam is a photographer's paradise. Camera shops are everywhere. Film can be developed inexpensively in a couple of hours. Digital photography is now popular as well, and photo stores are well-equipped to print your digital photos or burn them onto a CD.

## **G. Entertainment**

**Restaurants.** There are enough western restaurants in town to titillate the gourmet's taste buds, ranging from traditional French cuisine to nouveau California fare. There are also some very good Asian restaurants serving top-notch Vietnamese, Japanese, Korean, and Chinese food. For fast-food lovers, Hanoi offers several restaurants and delis serving pizzas, hamburgers, hot dogs and sandwiches.

HCMC has a larger variety of restaurants than Hanoi, including fast food chains (KFC and Jollibee), Tex-Mex, European, Indian and Asian (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai) cuisine. There are also numerous nightclubs (some with live jazz ensembles), discos, and, of course, karaoke bars. Several of the numerous video rental stores in the city stock movies in English. HCMC also has three large water parks and an 18-hole miniature golf course near the airport.

**American Club.** The American Community Association (ACA) supervises the operation of the American Club in Hanoi (19 Hai Ba Trung Street). Patrons and their guests can enjoy an informal meal in the air-conditioned restaurant/bar area or outdoors in the bamboo pavilion. Also on the premises are areas set up for a variety of sports, including darts, billiards, badminton, basketball and sandlot volleyball. Next to the pavilion is a newly constructed playground for younger children. Membership is open to the expatriate community (\$60/year for individuals and \$100 for families).



## CHAPTER III

# ACADEMIC MATTERS



## **I. EDUCATION IN VIETNAM**

Although the quality of education has improved significantly here, Vietnam's reputation as a highly educated country exceeds the reality. Vietnam's population is probably better educated than other countries at similar levels of economic development. However, for the most part, the academic curriculum in this country still focuses on rote memory and "the one correct answer." Since economic reforms officially began in 1986, literacy levels have fallen because families, particularly in the rural areas, are pulling their children out of the classroom to earn money. Schools operate on double and sometimes triple shifts, resulting in very little actual classroom time for many students. Educational facilities are frequently inadequate. Families often cannot afford the fees for keeping children in school beyond the very basic levels. The Vietnamese primary and secondary education system consists of five years of elementary schooling, four years of junior high and three years of senior high school.

The National University has many branches, the most prestigious of which is located in Hanoi. Vietnam is striving to improve its comparatively low level of technological knowledge, particularly in the field of computer science.

### **A. The Vietnamese Education System**

The influence of other countries on the Vietnamese educational system cannot be discounted. At its earliest stages, Vietnamese education was based on Confucianism from China and later influenced by Western countries. From the French, the Vietnamese adopted the system of a centralized national education authority and a strong emphasis on state-run normal schools.

#### **The Ministry of Education and Training**

The Vietnamese educational system is highly centralized compared to the U.S. system. The Ministry of Education and Training establishes the basic guidelines and policies of all schools from kindergarten to graduate school (including national, municipal and private institutions), covering budgetary, standards for establishing a school, personnel, admissions, curriculum textbooks and other matters. City/town boards of education (members appointed by the head, e.g. the mayor) carry out and supervise education through the secondary level with the advice and guidance of the Ministry of Education and Training.

### **B. Higher Education System**

#### **Administration**

Since 1997, the philosophy of the higher education system has shifted from a more centralized stance to relative autonomy on the part of institutions (in particular those of a more multidisciplinary nature such as Ho Chi Minh and Hanoi National Universities). The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) directly manages approximately 3/4 of the 400 H.E. institutions. The role of the MOET includes allocation of the budget, decision-making regarding personnel and functions, direction of academic aspects, management of admission regulations, and the granting of degrees. In single-discipline and specialized training institutions, various other ministries (particularly those pertaining to health, culture and art) take an active role in management. Where junior colleges are concerned, provincial authorities take part in governance.

#### **Faculty Governance**

Rectors are designated by the minister and are supported by vice-rectors and sections of the institution, which may include academic, finance, science management, etc. Institutions are divided into areas of discipline, with smaller divisions among more specific training specialties. Rectors have consultation bodies consisting of deans and prestigious heads. Within each department, deans consult with heads of specialties and accomplished professors.

## **Faculty Members**

According to data from 2005, there were over 48,000 teachers employed by H.E. institutions, with approximately 13 percent holding doctoral degrees and 42 percent being women.

## **Other Programs**

Although "open admission" modes exist, universities have special assessment methods for student selection to encourage consistency among the value of degrees between institutions. "In-service" training programs also exist, and these largely serve to enhance the depth of knowledge of those currently working in a profession. Normally, this type of program is followed over a condensed period of time, either at schools or in the workplace, and there is less focus on learning professional skills.

## **International Programs**

In conjunction with open door policy that began in 1986, reform processes in Vietnam have extended to the H.E. system. International agencies play a crucial role in facilitating communication between Vietnam and other nations seeking to improve their higher education networks and to exchange experiences. In addition, many different modes of collaboration have been instituted, such as student and staff exchange programs.

## **Library Facilities**

Major universities have large lending libraries and more specialized books can be found in professors' offices, making it practical to establish contact and develop rapport with instructors in order to locate those materials. Public libraries do exist as well, and they have some holdings of books in English.

## **Academic Calendar**

The academic year is usually divided into two semesters, the first normally running from the middle of September to the middle of January, and the second lasting from the middle of February to the end of June. Some institutions organize an additional summer session.

## **Admissions**

In order to enter an undergraduate program at a Vietnamese university, all applicants must have completed 12 years of primary and secondary education or the equivalent. Vietnamese applicants to universities are required to sit for the University Entrance Examination. In addition, applicants must be in good health (with clear stipulations) and be under the age of 32 (with the exception of women, those who have served in the army, and those from ethnic minority groups).

## **Degree Requirements**

### **Bachelor's Degree**

Most universities require a 4- or 4,5- year- period for a student to complete his/her Bachelor's Degree. For those studying in the medical and dental sciences, the time required could be up to 6 years.

### **Master's Degree**

This program requires 40 credits of professional specialty, or 1.5-2 years of study. Although the curricula for these programs are gradually developing, a student can expect to spend half of that time in intensive study of a single field or combination of fields. Post-graduate studies emphasizing professional preparation may be in the form of courses and/or lecture of a research program. Prior to receiving the Master's Degree, students must successfully defend their Master's thesis.

## Doctorate

Students admitted into doctoral programs come from one of two groups: graduates with excellent records who sit for the “minimum” exam, consisting of political subjects, foreign language and some subjects related to a given specialty; and students who have earned a Master’s Degree. Doctoral programs can require from two to four (and possibly more) years of study and research leading to the presentation of a dissertation.

## Grading

In the credit system widely used at H.E. institutions, an average score evaluates achievements at the end of term. Graduate thesis can be considered to contain the equivalent number of credits as a major subject. The maximum score in each subject is a 10 and the minimum passing score is a 5.

## II. CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN VIETNAM

As a graduate student, senior scholar or professional, conducting research in Vietnam will no doubt be quite different from what you are accustomed to in the U.S. Beyond encounters with language and cultural and organizational differences, you should also be prepared for a wide range of research styles. The one constant factor for all is that *it takes much more time in Vietnam* to arrange interviews, which usually require introduction through a third person.

Below are some concrete suggestions to facilitate your research. Remember, however, that the same professional courtesies that you extend to your colleagues, advisors and informants in the U.S. and other countries also apply in Vietnam.

### A. Before Arrival:

1. Write a letter of introduction to your Vietnamese adviser/colleague, including your travel schedule and stating that you will contact him/her as soon as you have settled down. You can also arrange for a representative from your host institution to pick you up at the airport.
2. It is a good idea to enclose your curriculum vitae (CV) and an abstract of your research proposal in Vietnamese. If you cannot do it, find someone to translate them for you. Bring several copies. This is essential once you are in Vietnam as it paves the way for you to meet various individuals for interviews or for consultation on your project, and will save you valuable time in Vietnam. Please remember that although your adviser/colleague may be proficient in English, he or she may wish to call upon others to assist you and not everyone will have sufficient English language proficiency or time to quickly review your CV and abstract. A Vietnamese CV and research abstract will ensure that they will read it rather than putting it aside to read, “when they have the time.”
3. Select and bring a gift for your adviser/colleague as a token of your appreciation. Items such as a book, paperweight or desk calendar from your university bookstore are appreciated. If possible, select other items that you can give to other people you met during the course of your stay in Vietnam. If you do not bring extra items or run out of gifts, there are a variety of gifts, which can be purchased after your arrival, e.g. a box of sweets. The gesture of appreciation is the important thing.
4. At any time before or during your grant time in Vietnam, if your host mentions, whether formally or informally, a fee that applies to your research, you will need to discuss it with them in details. Before you agree to pay the fee, you will need to know in advance what the fee involves. If there is a detail that is unclear or irrelevant to you, you will need to bring it up for discussion until an agreement is reached. You are recommended to keep the agreement in writing for future reference. Several past grantees have been asked to pay for one or all of the followings: institutional fee, office space, office equipment, consultations or translation/interpretation, field trip expenses and costs, etc. at the end of the grant because the host says they have mentioned it over the phone or in one of the emails to the grantee. The Fulbright staff can provide assistance in your discussion before the agreement, should you need help. As a general rule, placement that is arranged by the Fulbright office involves no such fees. If you agree to pay any of such fees, it is your responsibility, not of the Fulbright Office, to arrange the payment before you leave your host.

## **B. Upon Arrival:**

1. Have your bilingual (English/Vietnamese) calling/business cards printed immediately. The average cost for bilingual cards in Vietnam is VND 50,000 for each 100. If you have confirmed your affiliation and residence and if you are in a city in the U.S. where printing of bilingual cards can be done fairly easily, prepare them in advance. The essential information to include on the card are:
  - Your full name,
  - Status in Vietnam with the name of your sponsor, e.g. "Fulbright Research Scholar",
  - U.S. affiliation, with or without address,
  - Vietnam affiliation with address and telephone number, and
  - Address and telephone number of your residence, if you wish.
2. Upon arrival, contact your advisor and make an appointment to meet at a mutually convenient time and place. Vietnamese professors usually do not have secretaries, so you may find them difficult to contact by telephone, in which case a letter or postcard will suffice. Follow up with a phone call when you are settled in.
3. Dress conservatively (jacket and tie are standard in Vietnam for men, jacket/skirt or dress for women) when you visit your adviser/colleague or anyone else, particularly for the first time. Dress standards are generally more formal than in the U.S. Your personal style may tend toward jeans and t-shirts, but you will make a better impression if you dress conservatively when meeting Vietnamese for interviews.
4. When meeting with your adviser/colleague, establish clearly what kind of assistance you need and whether he/she is prepared to offer it. If you do not wish to be confined by one adviser, you should clearly state during your initial meeting that you also hope to consult with others. If you wish to participate in your adviser's seminar, be sure you know what the ground rules are for participation, i.e. whether you are expected to attend regularly, make a presentation, be "one of the students", or whether you will be permitted to be an auditor and attend only occasionally.
5. Arranging interviews. Even if your adviser/colleague or another person arranges an interview for you, you should follow up by mailing in advance of the meeting date: (a) a letter of introduction provided by your sponsoring organization, (b) your CV in Vietnamese, (c) your research abstract in Vietnamese and (d) the questions/topics you wish to ask. This will not only help establish your credibility but also facilitate the interview. If you are a graduate student, please be aware that most Vietnamese (academicians, government officials, businessmen, etc.) are not familiar with graduate students conducting independent research.

## **C. Prior to Departure**

Visit, telephone or write your adviser/colleague and others who have assisted you with your research to thank them for their help. Besides your adviser/colleague, if there are persons with whom you have made contact and wish to maintain communication in the future, it is customary to print and mail postcards to extend your gratitude and to provide your U.S. mailing address.

## **D. Upon Return to the U.S**

A thank you letter to your closest adviser/colleague is highly recommended. Sending greeting cards at the year-end to them will help assure the maintenance of professional ties, which often last a lifetime.

# **III. BOOK, LIBRARIES AND COMPUTERS**

## **A. Books**

Shipping books to and from Vietnam is expensive and it is suggested that you try to limit the amount of books you bring with you. There are a number of bookstores in Vietnam, including those that stock some English language books. Most popular American magazines and newspapers are available for a price, and there are also a number of English newspapers and magazines published in Vietnam that provide general news coverage. Vietnamese are avid readers and bookstores carry a wide variety of publications. Browsing and reading in bookstores is not frowned upon in Vietnam if you do not do it too obviously.

## **B. Libraries**

Although major universities do have large lending libraries, many books on specific fields will be found in individual professors' offices. It is important to meet the key professors in your field of research and develop enough personal rapport to locate these materials.

Public libraries are used by many Vietnamese. Some of them have holdings of English books, including encyclopedias, periodicals and paperbacks. Their availability may be limited to certain groups. Please contact them directly for more information.

## **C. Computers**

Since most American researchers now rely heavily on the computer for writing, organizing data, and storing information, you need to be familiar with conditions in Vietnam before shipping or purchasing a computer. Note that the most computers used in Vietnam are IBM-compatible, thus if you use Macintosh, you may have some difficulty finding parts and getting repairs made.

### **1. Basic Conditions**

Vietnamese and older American computers are designed to operate on different voltages: in Vietnam 220V, in the U.S. 120V. Transformers can be purchased in Vietnam, though recently U.S. made computers are most likely to be equipped with internal transformers.

### **2. Bringing Your Computer to Vietnam**

Be familiar with the customs regulations and any necessary documents you will be expected to show to prove ownership.

Be sure to check the availability of supply parts and maintenance services in Vietnam for your computer through computer stores in the U.S. Otherwise, if you have computer problems, you might end up having to buy another computer in Vietnam or renting one at a high cost.

Note: X-ray machines at airports normally do not affect computers and diskettes.

### **3. Purchasing and Leasing a Computer in Vietnam**

Bringing a laptop from the U.S is recommended rather than buying one in Vietnam, but you can buy a generic desktop system in Vietnam for about \$700 and then sell it when you leave. Get references for a trustworthy dealer and make sure that your system comes with a warranty.

## **D. Electronic Communication**

Computer usage in Vietnamese universities is somewhat behind that in the U.S. Computerized library catalogues are common, but general facilities are often not available to students. Access to computers is limited to faculty members, researchers and graduate students in information systems, engineering, library and information science and related disciplines. In many cases they are unavailable to individuals in other fields.

All national universities are on an academic network, so e-mail is often used for communications. Some private universities are currently installing communication networks and these are expected to become

fully functional in a year or two. Many colleges are still in the research and planning stage for computer use.

E-mail accounts are not automatically provided as part of affiliation with an institution or a laboratory. A visiting scholar can request one from the appropriate authorities at the institution. This person is usually the professor in charge of the laboratory or information sciences center.

#### **E. American Center (AC)**

Both the U.S. Embassy and Consulate's Public Affairs Section AC are available for Fulbright grantees' usage. The Centers answer reference and research questions about the U.S. and bilateral issues between the U.S. and Vietnam. The subject emphasis is on American politics and government, society and culture, economics and trade, rule of law and foreign affairs, information technology, as well as global issues such as narcotics, human rights, and the environment. You can send in a request for specific information or sign up for their monthly "alert" service, which sends out a collection of articles on current issues. The Centers' libraries contain a small collection of periodicals such as the Atlantic Monthly, U.S. News, Forbes, etc., and reference books. This can be a good source of information for those of you who will be lecturing on topics related to American Studies, need research materials, or want to keep abreast of current issues.

There are also computer terminals that are connected to the Internet for your use. AC in HCMC is located in the Public Affairs Section, and in Hanoi, it's at the Embassy Annex (separate from the main Embassy).

The U.S. Embassy has also established American Corners (centers with English-language books, magazines, and computer access) in Da Nang and Haiphong. Additionally, universities throughout Vietnam have built brand-new information resource centers and libraries for student use, in Hue, Da Nang, Can Tho, Da Lat, and Nha Trang, among other locations.



## CHAPTER IV

# VIETNAMESE SOCIETY AND SOCIAL CUSTOMS



## **I. VIETNAMESE SOCIETY AND SOCIAL CUSTOMS**

Vietnamese society is usually described as being homogeneous; however, on close observation it is complex and diverse in terms of its socio-economic fabric. As in any other country, there are variations by region, community size, educational and cultural background, occupation and other factors. Vietnam is also home to more than 50 ethnic minority groups, which are becoming more expressive and active in general society. The following is a brief sketch of some major differences between Vietnamese and American social customs, and is intended to help ease your initial entry into Vietnamese society.

### **A. Use of Names**

Unlike in the U.S., where the title is followed by the family name, in Vietnam the title is followed by the *given* name. Therefore, while Americans would call Jane Doe "Miss Doe", in Vietnam she would be called "Miss Jane." To the Vietnamese, using the given name without the title is an egregious sign of disrespect; this practice is usually reserved only for the closest of friends or for family members.

### **B. Status of Women**

As in many parts of Asia, Vietnamese women are given plenty of hard work to do and they have little authority at the higher decision-making levels. The advent of the two-child policy seems to be benefiting women---more women are returning to the workplace once their children are grown, while others are delaying marriage and family to obtain an education.

### **C. Dating and Courting Patterns**

Dating and courting patterns are undergoing some major changes, especially in the cities, but the basic traditional pattern remains solid. Matchmaking is still prevalent, in which two persons are introduced by friends, family or go-betweens, mostly in remote areas.

While dating is common, the underlying assumption between two Vietnamese is that marriage is the eventual objective. Therefore, American visitors without marriage on their mind must be sure to make their intentions clear to avoid any misunderstanding. Do not be surprised to hear the term "girlfriend" or "boyfriend" used frequently in casual conversation, since these terms usually simply refer to female and male friends.

### **D. Sense of Privacy**

Americans frequently comment on the different sense of privacy, both physical and psychological, between Vietnamese and Americans. Physically, the Vietnamese are accustomed to living in much smaller spaces shared with many people. Only recently children in upper-middle class families are beginning to have their own bedrooms.

In the typical hospital or dentist's office the doctor will examine the patient not in an enclosed private office but in a curtained-off area or, if no undressing is involved, in full view of another patient sitting in the next chair being checked by another doctor.

Americans are often taken aback by what they consider to be the very private and personal questions they are commonly asked ("Do you have a boyfriend?" "Why aren't you married", "How old are you?"). You should realize that Vietnamese often ask these questions of each other and they are not regarded as prying or nosy. In a society where human relationships are so important, these are attempts to build intimacy across vertical social structures. Sometimes, these are the only English phrases that a Vietnamese may know and thus they may be attempting to make "small talk." A good way to defer answering is to return the question to the questioner, or replying in a joking manner. Always smile!

### **E. Physical Contact**

The differences between American and Vietnamese regarding physical contact may be summarized by the observation that Americans dislike physical contact with strangers which Vietnamese seem quite

indifferent or inured to, while avoiding physical contact with friends and members of the family which Americans indulge in freely.

A commuter in a crowded New York subway is careful to avoid any physical contact with the next strap-hanger whereas in Vietnam the typical commuter has no choice but to be pressed against several persons. Bumping someone on the street is considered rude in the U.S., whereas it is a common occurrence without even an "excuse me" in Vietnam. On the other hand, hugging and kissing in public among friends and family---even after a long separation---is uncommon in Vietnam. Vietnamese who have lived abroad will be more accustomed to the more effusive greetings of Americans but generally speaking, a warm handshake and grasping of the other's arm is within the comfortable parameters for the average Vietnamese.

#### **F. Entertaining Friends**

Invitations are extended in person, by telephone or printed invitation (formal receptions, dinners) and all should be taken seriously. If invited to a meal, it is likely that it will be at a restaurant rather than at someone's home. It is polite to arrive on time, to take a small token of your appreciation (a potted plant, flowers, sweets) especially if you are going to a private home, and to say thank you afterwards by telephone, postcard, or letter.

CAUTION 1: When eating Vietnamese food, never stick your chopsticks into rice since it is associated with the rice bowl placed in the funeral altar. If you are not using them, just place them on the chopstick stand or on the table.

CAUTION 2: If you are visiting a sick person at home or at the hospital, do not bring anything white or flowers with a strong fragrance. For example, white chrysanthemums would *not* be a good gift for a sick person because the color white is associated with death and funerals.

#### **G. Gift giving**

You will soon notice that gift giving is a Vietnamese custom. Vietnamese usually take flowers, fruits, or some sweets when visiting someone's home. After a trip, they usually bring back something for the office.

As an American, you are not expected to conform to the Vietnamese ritual of gift-giving, but may do it your own way to add a distinctive "American touch", which your friends will appreciate.

#### **H. Tipping**

One of the pleasures of living and traveling in Vietnam is the absence of tipping in everyday life. In hotels, taking taxis, dining out, having groceries delivered, ordering foods, having something repaired in your home and the like, no tipping is expected or necessary. Hotels and more expensive restaurants will add 10-15% service charge, but the same cheerful service without the expectation of a tip can usually be found in even a simple noodle or coffee shop. Exceptions are where one may request out-of-the-ordinary service.

#### **I. Crime, Safety and Drugs in Vietnam**

The Vietnamese attitude toward narcotics of any kind is very severe including marijuana. Importation or use of drugs will lead to incarceration until the time of deportation, and permanent barring from Vietnam. An individual can be arrested for use of drugs after several weeks or months after the act. There are absolutely no exceptions to the severity with which the law is applied (See Appendix D).

#### **J. Drinking Alcohol/Smoking**

In contrast to the strict laws and public attitude against the use of narcotics, the Vietnamese are very tolerant of what to Westerners may appear to be excessive drinking and public inebriation. Beer and rice-based spirits are available everywhere, including on trains and in almost all dining establishments. Most business entertainment takes place at night, and it is the common practice for office colleagues to

have a drink after a long day's work before going home. The Vietnamese tend to excuse whatever an individual may say or do under the influence of alcohol. The next day in the office, no reference is made to the previous night's behavior. This may be one aspect of the Vietnamese compartmentalization of behavior according to each situation rather than universal behavior applicable at all times.

If you do not wish to drink, it is perfectly acceptable to refuse and request a substitute. It is true, however, that the Vietnamese in general find alcohol to be a great social lubricant which frees them from the rigid strictures of their social and business obligations and customs.

Although planes and trains, their stations and platforms, hospitals, public offices, department stores, etc. practice the "no smoking" policy or provide separate smoking corners, smoking is not as strictly regulated as in the United States and other places.

## **K. National Holidays**

You should be aware of National Holidays in planning your schedule since most government and business offices, schools, and many shops will be closed on these days. Except for the Lunar New Year, department stores are open on holidays and Sundays, which are big shopping days in Vietnam.

<b>January 1</b>	New Year's Day
<b>4 days in Jan. or Feb.</b>	Lunar New Year Festival
<b>Tenth day of 3<sup>rd</sup> lunar month</b>	Hung Kings Festival
<b>April 30</b>	Victory (Reunification) Day
<b>May 1</b>	International Labor Day
<b>September 2</b>	Vietnamese National Day



## APPENDICES





## Introduction to the Fulbright Program in Vietnam

### The Fulbright Mission Statement:

*"To increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange."*



Senator J. William Fulbright

The Fulbright Program is the flagship international educational exchange program sponsored by the U.S. government and is designed to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries.

The Program was established in 1946 under legislation introduced by the late Senator J. William Fulbright of Arkansas and is sponsored by the United States Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).

Approximately 300,000 "Fulbrighters," 114,000 from the United States and 186,000 from other countries, have participated in the Program since its inception over sixty years ago. The Fulbright Program awards approximately 8,000 new grants annually. Currently, the Fulbright Program operates in over 155 countries worldwide.

Started in 1992, the Fulbright Program in Vietnam promotes cross cultural understanding through academic exchange.

The Program, administered by the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi, works with appropriate Vietnamese and American educational and governmental organizations to provide opportunities for study and research in various disciplines in the social sciences and humanities, science, and technology to all candidates who qualify through open an competition on the basis of academic and professional merit, without regard to race, religion, gender or affiliation.

The Fulbright Program in Vietnam is comprised of traditional and non-traditional components, as follows:

### Traditional Components:

- U.S. Scholar Program
- Vietnamese Scholar Program
- U.S. Student Program
- Vietnam Student Program

### Non-traditional Components:

- English Teaching Assistantship Program
- Specialist Program
- Science & Technology Ph.D. Program
- Scholar-in-Residence Program
- Occasional Lecturing Program
  - In-country Travel Plan
  - Regional Travel Plan

### **TRADITIONAL COMPONENTS**

#### **U.S. Scholar Program**

The Program offers American academics the opportunity to work as lecturers and researchers in Vietnamese universities and colleges, think tanks, and government ministries throughout Vietnam for terms of three to ten months. From six to eight awards are granted by the Fulbright Program to American scholars on an annual basis.

#### **Vietnamese Scholar Program**

The Program provides Vietnamese senior scholars opportunities to work as lecturers and researchers in U.S. universities for terms of three to nine months. Up to ten scholars from Vietnam travel to the United States on an annual basis.

#### **U.S. Student Program**

The Program brings American postgraduate students to Vietnam to carry out research on six to ten month grants. Up to 15 students from the United States travel to Vietnam on an annual basis.

#### **Vietnamese Student Program**

The Program provides 20 to 25 fully-funded fellowships for Vietnamese mid-career professionals on an annual basis. Most Fulbright Fellowship recipients will earn a master's degree in the Social Sciences or Humanities in two years.

### **NON-TRADITIONAL COMPONENTS**

#### **English Teaching Assistantship Program (ETA)**

This program brings newly graduated U.S. college students to Vietnamese universities and colleges in different parts of the country to support the English teaching and learning at those institutions for nine months. Up to 15 ETAs are brought to Vietnam on annual basis.

#### **Fulbright Specialist Program (FSP)**

Fulbright Specialist Program is a short-term program which brings U.S. faculty and professionals to work at Vietnamese institutions for two to six weeks. Interested institutions submit a request for a specialist. Up to 10 projects are approved per year.

#### **Fulbright International Science & Technology Ph.D. Program**

The award is created by ECA and is designed to be among the most prestigious international scholarships in science and technology. Approximately 40 outstanding international students who demonstrate unique attitude and innovation in scientific fields will be awarded a fellowship to pursue Ph.D. study at leading U.S. institutions in science, technology and engineering. The Fulbright Program in Vietnam nominates up to two prominent Vietnamese candidates for review and selection by a U.S.-based selection committee.

#### **Fulbright Scholar-in-residence (SIR)**

The Fulbright SIR Program brings visiting scholars and professionals from Vietnam to lecture at U.S. colleges and universities for one semester or one academic year upon request from U.S. institutions. In addition to

teaching courses, scholars give campus-wide and community lectures, help initiate international programs and contribute to curriculum development. The program is especially appropriate for small liberal arts colleges, minority-serving institutions, and community colleges, many of which do not often have the opportunity to host visiting scholars.

### **Occasional Lecturing Program (OLP)**

The Program provides travel awards through the Occasional Lecturer Program (OLP) that enable U.S Fulbright Scholars to accept guest lecturing invitations at colleges and universities throughout Vietnam. OLP recruits scholars whose affiliation is either in Vietnam or in regional countries. Up to ten grants are awarded annually. Each grant is from two to five days. Grants are subject to funding availability.



## HEALTH INFORMATION AND GUIDELINES

For expatriates who have come to a warm climate for the first time, it should be realized that most of the debilitating diseases, which gave the tropics an unenviable reputation in the past, have now, according to the WHO, been more or less controlled. It is relatively easy to keep fit practicing normal hygienic and sanitary measures, and a genuine application of common sense.

It is important to remember that a short period of adjustment is required after arrival in Vietnam. During the first few weeks rest is recommended and exposure to the sun should be avoided. It is important to drink plenty of fluids to counterbalance the loss from perspiration and avoid dehydration.

### I. Food Sanitation

Microbiologically unsafe food (i.e. food contaminated with viruses or bacteria) is much more likely to be the cause of food related illnesses than chemicals. Not only are the consequences of such consumption more apparent (acute diarrhea, for example), but also these health effects are more readily identified.

Chemical contamination health effects are typically chronic. Most pesticides/herbicides are fat-soluble and concentrate in high fat content foods. Consuming lean meat with all fat removed or low fat content poultry products may reduce exposure to chemicals.

Washing food with water, followed by scrubbing the food, serves the purpose of removing dirt or other particles, as well as food contaminants, which may be present in the food surface. The use of soap (in addition to the use of water and scrubbing) as an adjunct to remove or reduce surface pesticides has not been evaluated by the FDA for efficacy and safety, and therefore cannot be recommended. Additional measures which may reduce pesticide exposure from food include throwing away the outer leaves of leafy vegetables, such as lettuce and cabbage, as well as removing the skin or peel from vegetables prior to cooking or eating them.

- Be cautious when eating salads or raw vegetables in restaurants and from street stalls; all vegetables and fruits should be peeled or thoroughly cleaned before eating.
- Eat only freshly cooked and hot food.

### II. Water Quality

The following are a few rules that you should follow to keep healthy:

- Do not drink water from the tap; drink only boiled water, hot tea, coffee, or bottled drinks.
- It is recommended that you replace the charcoal filter every two months and monthly if you use the distiller a lot. Do not brush your teeth with untreated water.
- Do not use ice cubes unless you are certain they were made from safe water.

### III. Lead and Ceramics

The U.S. Embassy had a recent visit by a State Department Medical Technician who performed lead tests on several pieces of local ceramics. All were found to be lead free. Those interested may obtain their own lead testing kits through the Internet at [www.checkforlead.com/main.html](http://www.checkforlead.com/main.html) or [www.knowlead.com/test.htm](http://www.knowlead.com/test.htm).

Blood lead tests were performed on Embassy children between the ages of 6 months and 6 years, and no significant levels were found. However, the Technician noted that until a more significant number of children in the community are tested, it will be difficult to be confident that the risk does not exist in Hanoi.

### IV. Fluoride

Bottled and distilled water - which is recommended for all of us - has zero fluoride content.

For children the following is considered full fluoride supplementation (Only for children 6 months - 16 years):

- Children aged 3 to 13 should receive one mg of fluoride daily, Children should be instructed to chew the tablet and swish it in the mouth before swallowing to allow some topical benefit to erupted teeth.

- Children aged 2 to 3 should receive 0.50 mg fluoride per day
- Children aged six months to 2 should receive 0.25 mg per day and
- Children younger than six months should not receive fluoride. Too much fluoride can permanently stain the teeth.

## **V. General Health Precautions in Vietnam**

### **A. Malaria**

At this time, malaria prevention is not recommended in either Ho Chi Minh City or Hanoi. Outside of these two major cities the risk is probably higher. Forested areas are particularly likely to warrant concern. If traveling in the countryside particularly around dusk, prudent measures include the use of repellents, mosquito nets, and prophylactics with doxycycline (one day prior and 4 weeks after return). Mefloquine is an alternative.

### **B. Mosquitoes, Flies and Insects**

Besides malaria, mosquitoes also transmit dengue fever and Japanese encephalitis. The favorite breeding ground for mosquitoes is any stagnant water and care should, therefore, be taken that water is not allowed to accumulate on the ground of your home, in rain barrels, empty tin cans, etc.

A good rule of thumb is to know that flies and mosquitoes do not operate in low temperature conditions. Keeping your A/C below 20 F will minimize their activity.

You may find cockroaches in your kitchen and bathroom and the finest control measure is again to keep the areas scrupulously clean since cockroaches also carry diseases.

Small lizards, geckos, are common and you may see them on the windows of your home or running along the walls and ceilings. They eat insects and are harmless to you and should not be killed. However, they do leave small droppings, which at first may lead you to think that you have a mouse infestation.

### **C. Stray Dogs, Monkeys and Other Small Animals**

Rabies exist in Vietnam and as a consequence we recommend that:

- Contact with stray dogs, cats and monkeys be avoided, and children should be warned of the danger.
- Household pets are inoculated against rabies.

In the event of an animal bite, you should immediately take the following steps:

- Scrub the wound thoroughly with soap and clean water and apply an antiseptic solution and simple dressing
- Consult a doctor
- If possible, catch the animal so that it can be observed for 10 days.

### **D. Diarrhea Illnesses**

Recurring bouts of diarrhea are very common among foreigners living in Vietnam, particularly during the early months of their stay. Fortunately most cases of diarrhea are relatively mild and of short duration. Treatment with simple medications and a bland diet is recommended. Extra fluids should be taken to avoid dehydration, especially in children.

Foreigners in Vietnam are also known to suffer from worm infestation. It is recommended that the doctor be consulted within 3 months of arrival regarding de-worming measures.

### **E. Infectious Hepatitis and HIV/AIDS**

Proper care should be taken against Hepatitis, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. Always practice safe sex, avoid acupuncture, piercing of ears, tattooing, shaving at the street barbers, or manicure/pedicure, unless you have made sure that the instruments are absolutely clean, or you bring your own instruments.

## F. MSG

Monosodium Glutamate is widely used as a flavoring agent in Vietnamese cooking and is especially potent in the soups. Those with sensitivity to MSG should take extra care when eating local food.

## G. Vaccinations

Scholars and students are strongly urged to get all immunizations and well-baby check-ups taken care of before coming to Vietnam. The only exception is the Japanese Encephalitis shot, which is not available in the U.S. and can be administered in Vietnam.

CDC recommends the following vaccines (as appropriate for age):

See your doctor at least 4–6 weeks before your trip to allow time for shots to take effect.

- Hepatitis A or immune globulin (IG).
- Hepatitis B if you might be exposed to blood (for example, health-care workers), have sexual contact with the local population, stay longer than 6 months in the region, or be exposed through medical treatment.
- Japanese encephalitis, only if you plan to visit rural areas for 4 weeks or more, except under special circumstances, such as a known outbreak of Japanese encephalitis.
- Rabies, if you might be exposed to wild or domestic animals through your work or recreation.
- Typhoid vaccination is particularly important because of the presence of *S. typhi* strains resistant to multiple antibiotics in this region.
- As needed, booster doses for tetanus-diphtheria and measles, and a one-time dose of polio for adults. Hepatitis B vaccine is now recommended for all infants and for children ages 11–12 years who did not complete the series as infants.

## **HEALTH INSURANCE INFORMATION**

### **Accident & Sickness program for Fulbright Exchange Grantees**

#### **Contact Information:**

Seven Corners, Inc.

P.O. Box 3724, Carmel, Indiana 46082-3724 USA

*Telephone:* 1-800-461-0430 (toll free for grantees in the United States) or 317-818-2867 (a collect call for grantees outside of the United States)

*E-mail:* [aspeinfo@sevencorners.com](mailto:aspeinfo@sevencorners.com)

*Website:* [www.usdos.sevencorners.com](http://www.usdos.sevencorners.com)

For US grantees, Seven Corners offers a telephone number which can be dialed collect when outside of the United States. Seven Corners can provide assistance to US students trying to locate a physician overseas and in some cases has established a process where overseas physicians can direct bill Seven Corners (lessening the out-of-pocket expenses for US grantees). US grantees will also have the option to order maintenance drugs prior to their overseas departure. The contract between ECA and Seven Corners requires the third-party administrator to process properly-filed healthcare claims within 10 business days.

Please take a minute to review the new ASPE website ([www.usdos.sevencorners.com](http://www.usdos.sevencorners.com)), where you will find the ASPE benefits guide, downloadable ASPE forms and "MyPlan" --- a password accessible site which provides grantees services such as claims tracking and downloadable .pdf files of their ID cards.

As of April 1, 2007, all Fulbright grantees are provided the following increased health benefits coverage through ASPE:

\$100,000 maximum per accident or sickness

\$10,000 maximum repatriation, Actual cost of med-evacuation

\$1,000 maximum dental (for the alleviation of pain)

\$25 deductible per accident or sickness (which grantees are required to pay at the time of the healthcare provider visit)

## HOW TO APPLY FOR A VISA TO VIETNAM?

*Adapted from: [http://www.vietnamembassy.us/consular\\_services/visa\\_info/](http://www.vietnamembassy.us/consular_services/visa_info/)*

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

- Original PASSPORT.
- One completed and signed [visa application form \(PDF Form\)](#) with 01 passport-size photo glued or stapled.
- [VISA fee](#) in the form of MONEY ORDER, or CASHIER'S CHECK, or CERTIFIED CHECK payable to "THE EMBASSY OF VIETNAM." Applicants applying together may submit the fee in one money order.
- A prepaid return envelope, if the applicant requests the visa is returned by mail. Please use [US Express Mail](#) (UPS and DHL are not accepted for the return envelope). Applicants applying together may provide one envelope for visas to be returned to the same address.

2. Diplomatic and Official Visas: (this section is not relevant to Fulbrighters)

3. Business Visas:

- In addition to the documents specified in (1), the applicant must provide a visa pre-approval(1) obtained through his/her sponsor(2) in Vietnam. The Embassy will issue visas only upon approval issued by the Immigration Department, Ministry of Public Security in Vietnam.
- If the applicant does not have a host/sponsor in Vietnam, s/he may [contact the Embassy](#) for assistance.

4. Processing Time:

- 5 - 7 business days are required to process visa applications.
- Expedited processing requires 2 - 3 business days after the Embassy has received the application (additional fee required).
- Please keep the tracking numbers of the envelopes to and from the Embassy. When the above deadlines have passed, use the tracking number to check with the mailing service first. Please do not make telephone inquiries on the status of your application (make sure that you keep your passport number for this request) until after the 3rd business day for an expedited case and the 7th working day for a regular case.
- The Embassy will be closed on Vietnamese and US holidays. Please take account of the observed holidays in planning for your visa application and travel.

For further information, please [contact the Visa Section](#) of the Embassy: 9:30 – 12:30 M-F

### EMBASSY OF VIETNAM

1233 20th Street, NW, Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20036  
Phone: (202) 861- 2293, (202) 861-0694 or (202) 861- 0737  
Fax: (202) 861- 1297 or (202) 861- 0917  
Website: <http://www.vietnamembassy.us>

# CRIME, SAFETY AND SECURITY BRIEFING



Regional Security Office  
American Embassy Hanoi

**Note:** This document is given to new Embassy employees when they first apply. You can also view more information about safety and crime in Vietnam at the State Department travel Web site at <http://travel.state.gov/vietnam.html>.

## I. Traffic Safety and Road Conditions

While in Vietnam, Embassy staff will encounter road conditions, which differ significantly from those in the United States. The road system in large Vietnamese cities is rather chaotic and there is a REAL THREAT OF BEING involved in a traffic or pedestrian accident. Traffic accidents are an increasing hazard throughout Vietnam as more and more vehicles are on the road. Many serious accidents and deaths of foreigners are caused by traffic accidents. Pedestrians unaccustomed to walking across streets in Hanoi, HCMC or other Vietnamese cities should be extra cautious.

Streets in the major cities are very crowded with buses, cars, trucks, motorcycles, bicycles, and pedicabs (cyclos). Food peddlers sell from the sidewalks and sudden stops by shoppers on motorcycles and bicycles make driving a real hazard. There is little adherence to traffic laws. As a rule, most drivers, including bicyclists, do not yield. Accidents, therefore, are frequent on city streets. Horns are used constantly.

Outside the cities, the traffic situation is marked by a variety of vehicles and livestock vying for road space. Sections of highway are in need of repair and in poor condition. Driving at night is dangerous. Buses and trucks often travel at high speeds with five to six bright lights on the front of vehicles, which are rarely dimmed when approaching an oncoming car. Vehicles often stop in the middle of the road without lights. The Embassy in Hanoi advises those driving after dark, especially outside the major cities, to exercise extreme caution. The Embassy also strongly advises that Embassy staff riding a bike or driving their own motorcycle wear helmets, and whenever in a car use the seat belt.

The public transportation system in Hanoi and throughout Vietnamese cities mostly consists of taxis; cyclos (pedicabs) or motorbike taxis (xe oms). The Embassy recommends that staff use metered taxis for public transportation around the city rather than the cyclos (pedicabs) or motorbike taxis. While cyclos are an interesting cultural experience, they are the slowest and least maneuverable vehicle on the street and are not recommended as transportation. Xe oms are not recommended because they do not provide helmets for their passengers (creating the possibility of head injuries) while driving/riding motorbikes, which is a serious problem in Vietnam and the skills of the drivers vary considerably. Taxis are generally the largest vehicles on the road and provide more protection for passengers than cyclos or xe oms. Generally all taxis in Hanoi and HCMC use meters, which are reliable. There are occasions when taxis in VN, like many other cities of the world, may take an extra long path to reach their destination.

## II. Crime Threat

Vietnam is generally a safe country. However, large cities such as Hanoi and HCMC have crime problems typical of many other large cities throughout the world. The crime is primarily petty crime; violent crimes such as armed robbery are still relatively rare in Vietnam. Drug use is becoming more and more of a problem in Vietnam. In a June 1997 incident at the central market in Ho Chi Minh City, a tourist was killed when she resisted a purse-snatcher. It is recommended that travelers not resist such theft attempts, but report them both to police and to the RSO.

In general, the crime situation in HCMC is worse than in Hanoi, though Hanoi's crime rate is apparently increasing. In both cities, crime -- petty theft, purse snatching, and pick pocketing -- are most common in the areas frequented by foreigners such as major hotels and tourist sites. Street crimes in Hanoi and HCMC have been perpetrated by two people traveling on a motorbike, with the passenger snatching the victim's

bag, camera, etc. If the straps are over the shoulder or around the neck, the victim can be pulled down or dragged by the strap until it breaks. Alternatively a knife or other sharp cutting instrument can be used by the criminals to cut the strap. The criminals have apparently unintentionally cut some victims as they attempted to cut the strap of the bag, etc.

Cyclos (bicycle pedicabs) have been known to cooperate with the motorcycle bandits by taking the unwary passenger down deserted streets and positioning the passenger for the motorcycle to grab the bag and make an unhindered getaway. Another common ploy while walking on the street is to be swarmed by children or young adults. The victim only has two hands and those pockets that can't be covered are picked clean. Street vendors and children can artfully pick the shirt pocket of expensive fountain pens and sunglasses. In addition, there are reports of three or more adults or young adults working together to pickpocket victims. This typically involves one accomplice pushing a bicycle down the sidewalk that accidentally bumps into the victim from behind; at the same time another one or two accomplices create a commotion in front of the victim. While the victim is distracted by these two actions, another accomplice steals the wallet and/or any other items of value that can be safely taken.

When bags are stolen, passports, identity documents, and airline tickets are frequently lost. In view of the increasing theft, passports should be kept at home or other secure locations. It is recommended that embassy staff carry a **photocopy** of their passport and/or MFA ID card with them at all times. Vietnamese law requires that all persons have official identification with them at all times, passport with valid visa or MFA ID card.

When traveling, never leave possessions unattended. Thefts of briefcases or other items of luggage have occurred when the owner's attention is diverted. In general, the safety and security of hotel guestrooms in quality hotels is good. Travelers should keep valuables and important documents (passports, etc.) inside a safe in the room (provided by many of the better hotels) or in a safety deposit box at the front desk.

There have been reports of sexual harassment by Vietnamese males. This harassment may take the form of obscene gestures, lewd comments or graphic suggestions, small stones or fruit thrown at the target to induce a reaction, or even groping or impeding the passage of the victim.

US citizens have been detained after traveling in areas close to the borders with Vietnam's neighbors. Such areas are not always marked and there are no warnings about prohibited travel. Travelers should avoid such areas unless written permission is obtained from local authorities.

### **III. Dual Nationality**

US citizens who were born in Vietnam or are former citizens of Vietnam, and their children, while required to obtain visas, are treated in criminal matters as Vietnamese nationals by Vietnamese authorities. They also may be subjected to laws that impose special obligations upon Vietnamese nationals, such as military service and taxes. American citizens of Vietnamese origin may be charged with offenses allegedly committed prior to their original departure from Vietnam. Questions on dual nationality may be directed to the Office of Overseas Citizens Services, Department of State, Washington, DC 20520, telephone: 202-647-5226. For additional information, see the Consular Affairs home page on the Internet at <http://travel.state.gov/vietnam.html> for our [Dual Nationality flyer](#).

### **IV. Telephone/Fax/Internet Security And Policy**

Be aware that any non-encrypted communications, i.e. telephone, FAX, commercial Internet and e-mail access, is assumed to be monitored. At no time should classified or sensitive information be discussed over the regular telephone. Do not send sensitive information via FAX or commercial e-mail systems. Additionally, refrain from discussing personnel movements or travel, fellow employee personalities, weaknesses or official relationships over the telephone. Telephones and Faxes with encryption capability (STU/III) approved for use in classified conversations are available. Please see the RSO or IPC for further information

## Comments and recommendations from past grantees

### RELATIONSHIPS WITH HOST INSTITUTION

The introduction process is a serious one in Vietnam. Suits and ties for men are pretty much mandatory for men upon a first meeting and be prepared with your name cards (i.e. “business cards”)! Depending on the circumstance, the exchange of small university souvenirs or distinctive products from home is usually received warmly. You should also carry with you a tailor-made letter of introduction from your host if you are attempting to meet someone for the first time in a professional situation or engage in research or institutional interaction.

*Christian Collet*

*Scholar 04-05, HCMC College of Social Sciences & Humanities*

Be flexible in order to adapt to teaching conditions and to also develop research and other ongoing relationships for the future. Don't expect processes to be smooth, efficient, or clear. After all, they are not smooth, efficient, or clear at our home institutions in the U.S., so don't think they can be here. In fact, it is interesting to observe activities and note that despite cultural differences, there are many similarities in how organizations and people in them operate. People may behave similarly in bureaucratic settings across countries no matter what their cultural backgrounds. And as Fulbright Scholars we do have an advantage here: we are not as affected by bureaucratic maneuverings as we would be at our home institutions. We can sit back and watch.

*Donald Kopka*

*Scholar 03-04, Danang University*

Be persistent with academic institutions and try to gain an understanding of when the process is naturally slow as opposed to when there is active resistance.

*Anthony Dinh*

*Student 05-06, HCMC-CSSH*

Relationships are vital to success. These relationships include those with the Vietnamese community as well as those with other Fulbrighters. Relationships with local individuals can help you understand better what to do and how to do it. Close contact with other Fulbrighters can help you analyze this information and help you maintain perspective when not everything happens as planned.

*Ginger Davis*

*Student 05-06, Hanoi University*

Invest some time at the beginning to get to know your host. Focus some real effort into developing a rapport with them at the beginning and don't just rush into your project right away.

- The host has as little an idea what to expect from you as you have on what to expect from them. So try to be clear with them as you go along – and try to remind them once in a while along the way.
- Do something for the host institution, even as simple as mentor English to the staff.
- Include them into any official publication or important correspondence you have. They like the publicity.

*Tho Nguyen*

*Student 06-07, Can Tho University*

The relationships with affiliates vary a great deal. I had friends who worked almost exclusively within the context of their university, and others that were nearly independent. No model is “correct”, but rather it depends on the nature of the research.

*Josh Glasser*

*Student 07-08, Hanoi College of Social Sciences & Humanities*

Being successful as a researcher in South Vietnam is – at first- more about attitude than about knowledge. In America we may call it cronyism but in Vietnam people with influence helping their friends is just how business is done. So make friends with the director of your host institute and the department heads you want to be working under as quickly as possible and nurture those relationships. If there is ever an opportunity to spend casual time – i.e. a dinner out of a party of some sort – do not miss that opportunity to strengthen your bonds with your Vietnamese colleagues.

*Evan Forward*

**TEACHING WORK**

Cut your reading assignments to the students. Then cut them again. My course was one of seven my students were taking: in most of these the format seems largely lecturing and note-taking. The more minimal the reading, the greater likelihood that any number will complete it.

Consider the Internet your friend (that includes using it as a source for readings, something I didn't do). Print material is in such short supply that I ended up assigning a research paper that required students to (a) pick a historical topic of interest, (b) find 3-4 websites bearing on it, and c) critically evaluate these sites. It worked well, and the papers were good to excellent. In retrospect, what I might have done is prune the text reading and each week assign a third of the students to research (on the Web) one manageable issue, event, and report briefly on it.

*Richard Fried  
Scholar 05-06, Hanoi Foreign Languages U.*

One key to a successful teaching project in Vietnam is obtaining a knowledgeable, conscientious in-class translator, who is at least somewhat familiar with the subject of the course and who will spend time reviewing lecture notes ahead of class time. I had a superb translator and relied on her a lot. I even began to appreciate the pauses necessitated by translation, which allowed me to compose sentences more carefully and precisely. I sent my lecture notes to the translator about two weeks in advance, so she could look up words and she could question me about aspects she didn't understand.

I had very good experiences breaking the students into groups. Students would work on a project for 15 minutes (such as analysis of a film clip) and then report back to the class what they discussed....Other issues: Students are not accustomed to challenging their professors or asking probing questions, but they steadily improved over the semester. I had to teach them to argue with me. I frequently encountered problems with student cheating, mostly talking to each other during quizzes.

*Todd Berliner  
Scholar 05-06, Hanoi Academy of Theatre & Cinema*

One cultural aspect that affects teaching is that students perceive a "large distance" between professor and student. As a result, it is relatively difficult to get students to come to office hours for help. I would recommend arranging meetings with students early in the semester so they can get to know you and get used to talking to you. In general, I found the students very eager to participate in class discussions and to answer questions, but very reluctant to report problems or ask for help. This can only be reduced as the students become more comfortable with you.

*Randy Ribler  
Scholar 05-06, Hanoi VNU-College of Technology*

Try to assist with English language development of both students and teachers. I also conducted a workshop for faculty so they could try and improve their English capabilities.

*Donald Kopka  
Scholar 03-04, Danang University*

**RESEARCH WORK**

You should come with a clear sense of a research project and starting contacts, but keep an open mind. Many research methodologies simply won't work here, and I imagine one-third of students' research periods is usually devoted to solidifying contacts and the project framework. I would encourage new grantees not to become too anxious at the amount of time spent searching for approvals and contacts, and to use his or her time meeting as many people as possible outside the proposed project, as a way of creating a greater local network....Contact many organizations and choose partnerships based on the organization's openness to foreign cooperation, enthusiasm, work ethic, and desire (or more importantly, lack of desire) for financial remuneration. Keep updating your methodology, structure and content based on where you are at present, not based on unattainable ideals of how quickly or deeply research should progress in the United States.

## Appendix E

*Molly Hartman-O'Connell*

*Student, 05-06; HCMC College of Social Sciences & Humanities*

Your research can be conducted in a library, in an archive, or in a conversation on the street. It should be, in fact most likely needs to be, all three. Always keep your eyes and ears open for things that may not at first seem like they are related to your work but could open new doors for you.

*Nancy Nguyen*

*Student, 05-06, Institute of History*

If you are planning to do fieldwork:

- Get letters of support from your host and from the Fulbright program in Vietnam (also needed for access to library/archives).
- Develop a good relationship with your contact in the local government.
- Respect etiquette (asking how the family is, drinking tea) because these steps are just as important as whatever pressing issue you came to learn about.
- Patience is really a virtue when doing fieldwork, especially regarding local government. Some people like making things difficult, and you must learn to react with grace. Getting frustrated will not further your cause.

*Nathalie Miller*

*Student, 05-06; Hanoi National Economics University*

It is about self-direction and organization. I recommend spending your first months researching research in the region. Finding other students, professors, or organizations that are doing similar work as you, can be very helpful in guiding your direction and providing you substantive goals for your work. I was fortunate in finding several professors whose research interests were similar enough to mine that I was able to ostensibly partner up with them and tap them for support and advice whenever I need it. This made a big difference in keeping me on track. In general, I think the key to a fulfilling and productive Fulbright experience is learning to feel comfortable with not knowing everything. Ultimately, challenging yourself to simply put a box around what you know you do not know is far more productive than getting frustrated that the things you thought you knew in America do not seem to work or apply in Vietnam.

*Evan Forward*

*Student 07-08; Can Tho University*

The most difficult research issue I encountered was arriving at “unvarnished truth”. Factual information is not the same in Vietnam as in the U.S. There are very few published records, statistics are often altered, and most knowledge is transmitted orally. Thus it pays to be patient and talk to a lot of people. Over time, some general concepts will become more clear, even if the data remains murky.

*Josh Glasser*

*Student 07-08; Hanoi College of Social Sciences & Humanities*

I believe that a significant part of my success was that I took the role of a student. The professors at the university regard themselves very highly and since they are teachers they expect to be respected by everyone. I do not think that I would have been successful if I took the role of being someone with an American degree in Vietnam to talk about American ideas. By talking the role of student I did not overstep my bounds as a guest in the school, and I was able to interact with more people as a result of it. People were more willing to answer my questions and when I had an opinion, they were more open to hearing it.

*Tammy Nguyen*

*Student 07-08; HCMC University of Fine Arts*

Future grantees should plan to have various methods of which they may only employ a few. Plan to work alone if need be and constantly pursue opportunities that may provide more information or contacts than were otherwise unavailable.

*Lucas Thornblade*

*Student 07-08; Hue College of Medicine & Pharmacy*

My advice for future grantees would be foremost to be open and try to be as social as possible. Research is difficult to impossible here without contacts and the “good will” of faculty members. Once a sense of “trust” and “bonding” is reached your access and research potential is greatly augmented. Of course, for this adequate language skill is a must.

*Jason Hoai Tran*

## Appendix E

*Student 07-08; Han-Nom Institute*

### VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE

I would say that language is absolutely essential. Even though I always had an interpreter with me, I found that I had much more credibility with locals when I could speak basic Vietnamese. Since Vietnamese society is based on respect and personal credibility, this was extremely important.

*Josh Glasser*

*Student 07-08; Hanoi College of Social Sciences & Humanities*

Vietnamese people are extreme hospitable people and with just the very slightest interest shown on the part of the Fulbright visitor will extend every courtesy possible. Even the smallest ability in language is appreciated – learn a few phrases. The dividends of this small act are immeasurable.

*James Maxtone-Graham*

*Scholar 07-08; Hanoi Academy of Theater & Cinema*

The more language you can learn, the easier it is to build relationships and exchange ideas with the people in your host country and both of these activities are fundamental building blocks of success as a Fulbrighter.

*Evan Forward*

*Student 07-08; Can Tho University*

Pursue language study rigorously and continuously throughout the grant period. It is rewarding. It will offer a skill and accomplishment that can be carried with you beyond the time period of the grant.

*Lucas Thornblade*

*Student 07-08; Hue College of Medicine & Pharmacy*

### HOUSING

Living in the city rather than at the university made a huge positive difference in our experience in Vietnam. Living in the city we had to deal with Vietnamese reality and interact with our neighbors. The result was a much richer experience overall. If we had lived at the university we would have been much more isolated and “protected.”

*Jerman Rose*

*Scholar 03-04; Can Tho University*

The cost of housing is enormously varied, depending on location, size, whether the house readily accommodates the needs of Westerners. Shop around, negotiate. Landlords will generally make changes to the house and add furnishings at no additional cost to you.

*Todd Berliner*

*Scholar 05-06; Hanoi Academy of Theatre & Cinema*

We consulted ads in the Vietnam News, and after a few tries, found a friendly and professional agent who showed us our eventual apartment. Prices are going up quickly—especially in some of the “foreigner” apartment complexes—but a multi-level house in a decent location can still be had for a reasonable price.

*Christian Collet*

*Scholar 04-05; HCMC-CSSH*

Use a housing agent, you will need to pay a little more for housing, but it will be worth the extra cost because all the arrangements with the local police will be taken care of and you will have a strong contract with your landlord.

*Cary Trexler*

*Scholar 07-08; HCMC Agriculture and Forestry University*

I navigated this by myself and found a housing agent via word of mouth. Snap housing agents were critical in finding a rental: [http://www.snap.com.vn/Listings/Property\\_Rentals/Prop\\_Rentals\\_Category.asp](http://www.snap.com.vn/Listings/Property_Rentals/Prop_Rentals_Category.asp)

*Michelle Zjhra*

*Scholar 07-08; HCMC College of Natural Sciences*

### COMPUTER, INTERNET & ELECTRONICS

Purchase a mobile phone. Can readily add money to phone as needed by buying mobile phone card at the many shops that sell the cards. Have home phone or other connection that can be used for Internet.

*Donald Kopka  
Scholar 03-04; Danang University*

Bring backup CDs of all your computer files and computer programs. Leave separate backups with someone in the US who can mail them to you. When you get here, buy a LiOA NL-1000NM Automatic Voltage Stabilizer. It not only protects your electronic equipment from surges but has a voltage converter that will allow you to plug in electronics from home that use only 110 voltage.

*Todd Berliner  
Scholar 05-06; Hanoi Academy of Theater and Cinema*

### BANKINGSERVICES

When I first went to Vietnam 10 years ago changing money was an issue. Now this is not a problem. We took traveler's checks, cash and an ATM card. ATM was all we really needed, and is widely available.

*Jerman Rose  
Scholar 03-04; Can Tho University*

After a few failed attempts to open a savings account at Bank of America and Citibank, and visiting the ANZ bank, I opened an account at Vietcombank. That worked very well.

*Jerry Williams  
Scholar 03-04; Hanoi University of Technology*

Banking is still rudimentary in Vietnam, but ATMs are everywhere. We had to pay our rent in cash.

*Richard Fried  
Scholar 04-05; Hanoi College of Foreign Languages*

We opened an account with Citibank, which allowed us to get money (dong, not dollars) through the ATM located in the center of Hanoi. This was a convenient and easy option.

*Dana Sachs  
Scholar 05-06; Hanoi University*

The Fulbright grant was paid into my U.S. account. To access this money it is very important to arrange a wire transfer of funds with the home bank in the U.S. before departure. As soon as you establish an account at Vietcombank (VCB), inform your home bank of your account number and SWIFT number in Vietnam. There is a reasonable hefty fee to transfer money but it probably as economical as paying ATM fees. The fee tends to be per transaction so you will want to do this occasionally for large sums. Also, ATMs have daily limits on withdrawals that make getting a large amount difficult. The wire transfer also allows you to receive payment in dollars. Dealing with VCB was generally as easy as dealing with a U.S. bank. VCB has reasonable fees, is easy to deal with, and no minimum time for an account.

*Robert McNown  
Scholar 06-07; Hanoi National Economics U.*

### TRANSPORTATION/TRAVEL

I strongly recommend that Fulbrighters take the time to travel around the country (particularly up to Sapa, down to the Mekong Delta, and to other rural areas) as these excursions offer a perspective not provided by city living. It is good to travel early in the program before work pressures make it more difficult to get away.

*Babette Neuberger  
Scholar 03-04; Hanoi School of Public Health*

Get a motorbike to ride around; it is the best way to get around... Plan to park the motorbike inside your house at night to protect against theft.

*Donald Kopka  
Scholar 03-04; Danang University*

## Appendix E

Vietnam traffic is very hazardous for pedestrians. I usually walk a lot, 5-7 miles each day. I am careful, but even so, I was hit and hurt by motorbikes. I switched to using the bus. It was convenient. It was inexpensive. It was safe travel for me while I was aboard the bus.

*Jerry Williams*  
*Scholar 03-04; Hanoi University of Technology*

The Vietnamese, in my opinion, have a far more liberal conception of what is safe than Americans. The streets are kind of dangerous for pedestrians who are not vigilant. The sidewalks are cluttered with stalls, so one must step into the street a lot. Also the sidewalks often have dangerous things jutting out of them. Road vehicles barely notice pedestrians. Drivers talk on cellular phones. Most taxi cabs do not have seatbelts. The concept of drunk driving is, as far as I can tell, never considered.

*Todd Berliner*  
*Scholar 05-06; Hanoi Academy of Theater and Culture*

### HEALTH

Drink bottled water. You can get 20-liter water containers for home drinking water. Costs about 30,000 VDN for the container. You'll pay about 20,000 VDN for the water when exchanging the empty container for one filled with water.

*Donald Kopka*  
*Scholar 03-04; Danang University*

We were worried most about catastrophic illness, but it was the colds, coughs and fevers that were most nagging. Air conditioners make throats dry and upset the body's thermostat. Packing sunscreen, over-the-counter medications (e.g. Tylenol) and carrying clean handkerchiefs at all times is worthwhile.

*Christian Collet*  
*Scholar 04-05; HCMC College of Social Sciences & Humanities*

Drinking can also be a difficult cultural issue here. Alcohol is a frequent component to just about any social occasion—especially for and among men. For visitors, it is quite hard to refuse and moreover, given a language gap, refusal can seem almost impossible. Moreover, as anywhere, some people can become belligerent when inebriated.

*Christian Lentz*  
*Student 05-06; Hanoi Agricultural University*

### SHIPPING

When leaving the country I found it much cheaper to pay extra baggage fees at the airport rather than ship purchased items back to the U.S. using postal services. (The opposite is true going to Vietnam.) I cut my extra baggage fees in half (saving \$130 U.S.) by using the airport packaging service (cost \$2 U.S.) to wrap my two cardboard boxes together in one giant "postal bag" and bind the entire package with plastic strapping material. (The whole process took ten minutes at most.)

*Babette Neuberger*  
*Scholar 03-04; Hanoi School of Public Health*

### OTHER ADVICE

My advice to future grantees is simply to be flexible and have patience. Everything does not need to be done immediately and things can be done just as effectively at a slower pace. Be adventuresome. University accommodations may not be the Ritz and the water may not be as hot as you may want it to be. Consider that what you are experiencing is just another opportunity to see how blessed and pampered you are.

*Donald S. Castro*  
*Scholar 03-04; Hanoi National University*

The *Guidebook to Vietnam* prepared by the Fulbright Program in Vietnam is the best source for those who come to Vietnam. One thing I want to add here is that try to establish a good connection and relationship with Vietnamese scholars when you are in Vietnam. If you have good connection with people in the fields, things could be faster. People there are nice, friendly and happy to have an American friend or a future colleague. So

## Appendix E

do not hesitate to try new things. I felt some times, as scholars, we focus on everything we have done. It is a good thing, but sometimes just relax and open the eyes to see more things around you.

*Trian Nguyen*  
*Scholar 03-04; Hanoi Archeology Institute*

I think Fulbright Scholars need to keep in mind that "It's not all about the work!!!" It is very important to be open to people, ready to socialize, and build friendships and associations that can lead to long-term relationships for future research or other professional work

*Donald Kopka*  
*Scholar 03-04; Danang University*

Life in HCMC: There is a lot of noise, a lot of dust and exhaust fumes, and wet heat. Walking is fun, but motorcycles become required when the weather is hot. As an American, you will receive attention, but it is 99% friendly. The other 1% is just curious. Count your change and watch where the taxi driver is going and everything should be just fine.

*Christian Collet*  
*Scholar 04-05; HCMC College of Social Sciences & Humanities*

As a woman in professional situations, Vietnamese men can take a discomfoting interest in me and who I am. There have been a few instances where they find out my phone number or where I live and try to contact me even when I refuse their advances. Although to this point my safety isn't at risk, it still can be unnerving.

*Molly Hartman-O'Connell*  
*Student 05-06; HCMC College of Social Sciences & Humanities*

Make sure you introduce yourself to the Public Affairs section at the Consulate/Embassy because they are a valuable resource for you.

*Judith Green*  
*Scholar 04-05; HCMC College of Social Sciences & Humanities*

You really do have to be patient in Vietnam. It helps to come at problems with a flexible attitude and a sense that something doesn't always have to happen just as you expect it to. I also found it helpful to try and turn my adversaries into allies. For example, if someone tells me something can't be done, I try to look at them in an appealing and friendly way and say, "What do you suggest that I do to reach my goal?" Sometimes, that person will actually help you come up with an option that will work for you, one that you may never have considered.

*Dana Sachs*  
*Scholar 05-06; Hanoi University*

It is very important to be patient. Things move very slowly here, especially with regard to sensitive matters and materials. People are hyper-sensitive and are not willing to assume responsibilities. You may have to wait for weeks of months for the process of seeking authorization to complete. Personal friendship can make a real difference.

*Dr. Hung Nguyen*  
*Scholar 05-06; HCMC College of Social Sciences & Humanities*

In terms of social life for future grantees living in a big city like Hanoi or HCMC, I would suggest trying not to fall entirely into the expatriate community. There are a lot of people who travel all the way to Vietnam only to make friends with other foreigners. Although there are many interesting and wonderful foreigners to befriend, I believe that future grantees would lose an important element of the abroad experience if they were to limit themselves to the foreigner community.

*Nathalie Miller*  
*Student 05-06; Hanoi National Economics University*

Continue to balance research with cultural and social experiences. I could have done much of my work while sitting at my computer in the U.S. However, the chance to go out every day, meet people, and learn from them is a fundamental experience that should be valued at least as highly as the result of a yearlong study.

*Lucas Thornblade*  
*Student 07-08; Hue College of Medicine & Pharmacy*

## Useful Contact Information

### Emergencies and Assistance

Police	113
Fire	114
Ambulance	115
Directory Assistance	116
Time	117
International Operator	110
General Information	1080

### Fulbright Contact Information in Vietnam

#### Fulbright Program in Vietnam

Public Affairs Section  
U.S. Embassy—Hanoi  
Rose Garden Tower  
170 Ngoc Khanh, Hanoi - Vietnam  
Phone: (84-4) 3850-5000  
Fax: (84-4) 3850-5120  
Website: <http://vietnam.usembassy.gov/fulbright.html>

<p><b>Mr. Christopher W. Hodges</b> Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Embassy Tel: (04) 3850-5194 Email: <a href="mailto:HodgesCW@state.gov">HodgesCW@state.gov</a></p> <p><b>Mr. Michael A. Turner</b> Cultural Affairs Officer, U.S. Embassy Tel: (04) 3850-5025 Email: <a href="mailto:TurnerMA@state.gov">TurnerMA@state.gov</a></p>	<p><b>Ms. Vu Quynh Nga</b> Director, Fulbright Program in Vietnam Tel: (04) 3850-5000, Ext. 6114 Email: <a href="mailto:vuNQ@state.gov">vuNQ@state.gov</a></p>
<p><b>Ms. Do Thu Huong</b> Program Assistant, U.S. Programs Tel: (04) 3850-5000, Ext. 6225 Email: <a href="mailto:doHX@state.gov">doHX@state.gov</a></p>	<p><b>Ms. Nguyen Thi Hanh</b> Program Assistant, Vietnamese Programs Tel: (04) 3850-5000, Ext. 5089 Email: <a href="mailto:nguyenHT4@state.gov">nguyenHT4@state.gov</a></p>
<p><b>Ms. Vu Thi Diu</b> Program Assistant, Non-Traditional Programs Tel: (04) 3850-5000, Ext. 6033 Email: <a href="mailto:vuDT@state.gov">vuDT@state.gov</a></p>	<p><b>Ms. Do Thi Ngoc Ha</b> Administrative Clerk Tel: (04) 3850-5000, Ext. 6005 Email: <a href="mailto:doHTN@state.gov">doHTN@state.gov</a></p>

## Fulbright Contact Information in the U.S.

<p><b>U.S. Scholar Program</b></p> <p><b>Hilary H. Watts</b>, Program Officer Email: <a href="mailto:hwatts@iie.org">hwatts@iie.org</a></p> <p><b>Richard M. Emerson</b>, Program Associate Email: <a href="mailto:remerson@iie.org">remerson@iie.org</a></p> <p>Asia and the Pacific Program Institute of International Education Department of Scholar and Professional Programs Council for International Exchange of Scholars Scholars Division 3007 Tilden St. NW, Suite #5L Washington, DC 20008 p: 202-686-7865   f: 202-362-3442</p>	<p><b>U.S. Student Program</b></p> <p><b>Mr. Jonathan E. Akeley</b> Program Manager, U.S. Student Programs Institute of International Education 809 United Nations Plaza New York, NY 10017 Phone: (212) 984-5487 Fax: (212) 984-5325 Email: <a href="mailto:jakeley@iie.org">jakeley@iie.org</a></p>
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## Other useful contact information in Hanoi

U.S. Embassy	
<p><b>U.S. Embassy, Hanoi</b>                      7 Lang Ha, Hanoi                      Tel: (04) 3850-5000                      Fax: (04) 3850-5010                      Website: <a href="http://vietnam.usembassy.gov/">http://vietnam.usembassy.gov/</a></p>	<p><b>U.S. Embassy Annex</b>                      Rose Garden Tower, 170 Ngoc Khanh, Hanoi                      Tel: (04) 3850-5000                      Fax: (04) 3850-5120  <i>(Fulbright Program in Vietnam is located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor)</i></p>

Medical hospitals and Clinics	
<p><b>Family Medical Practice Hanoi</b>                      Van Phuc Compound                      298 I Kim Ma Road, Ba Dinh District, Hanoi                      Tel (04) 3843-0748                      Fax: (04) 3846-1750                      Email: <a href="mailto:hanoi@vietnammedicalpractice.com">hanoi@vietnammedicalpractice.com</a>                      Website: <a href="http://www.vietnammedicalpractice.com">www.vietnammedicalpractice.com</a></p>	<p><b>VietSing International Clinic</b>                      Pacific Place, 83B Ly Thuong Kiet Stree                      Hoan Kiem District, Hanoi                      Tel: (04) 3943-8888 – (04) 3944-8686                      Fax (04) 3942-8989                      Email: <a href="mailto:info@vietsingclinic.com.vn">info@vietsingclinic.com.vn</a>                      Website: <a href="http://vietsingclinic.com.vn">http://vietsingclinic.com.vn</a></p>
<p><b>International SOS Medical and Dental Clinic Hanoi</b>                      1 Dang Thai Mai Street, Tay Ho District, Hanoi                      Tel: (04) 3934 0666                      Fax: (04) 3934-0556                      Website: <a href="http://www.internationalsos.com">www.internationalsos.com</a></p>	<p><b>Hanoi French Hospital</b>                      1 Phuong Mai Road, Dong Da District, Hanoi                      Tel: (04) 3577-1100                      Fax: (04) 3576-4443                      Emergency: (04) 3574-1111                      Website: <a href="http://www.hfh.com.vn">http://www.hfh.com.vn</a></p>

Banks	
<p><b>ANZ Bank</b>                      14 Le Thai To, Hoan Kiem Dist., Hanoi                      Tel: (04) 3825 8190                      Fax: (04) 3825 8188                      Website: <a href="http://www.anz.com/vietnam">www.anz.com/vietnam</a></p>	<p><b>Citibank</b>                      17 Ngo Quyen, Hoan Kiem Dist., Hanoi                      Tel: (04) 3825 1950                      Fax: (04) 3824 3960                      Website: <a href="http://www.citibank.com">www.citibank.com</a></p>
<p><b>HSBC</b>                      83B Ly Thuong Kiet, Hoan Kiem Dist., Hanoi                      Tel: (04) 3933-3189                      Fax: (04) 3933-3198                      Website: <a href="http://www.hsbc.com.vn">www.hsbc.com.vn</a></p>	<p><b>Vietcombank Head Office</b>                      198 Tran Quang Khai, Hoan Kiem Dist., Hanoi                      Tel: (04) 3824 3524/ 3824 5716                      Website: <a href="http://www.vietcombank.com.vn">www.vietcombank.com.vn</a></p>

Travel Agents	
<p><b>The SinhTourist</b>                      52 Luong Ngoc Quyen Street, Hoan Kiem District, Hanoi                      Tel: (04) 3926-1568                      64 Tran Nhat Duat St., Ha Noi City                      Tel: (04) 3929-0394                      Website: <a href="http://www.thesinhtourist.vn">www.thesinhtourist.vn</a></p>	<p><b>Exotissimo Travel</b>                      26 Tran Nhat Duat Street, Hanoi                      Tel: (844) 828 2150                      Fax: (844) 828 2146                      Email: <a href="mailto:infohanoi@exotissimo.com">infohanoi@exotissimo.com</a>                      Website: <a href="http://www.exotissimo.com">www.exotissimo.com</a></p>

## Other useful contact information in Ho Chi Minh City

U.S. Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City	
<p><b>U.S. Consulate, HCMC</b>                      4 Le Duan Blvd., District 1                      Ho Chi Minh City Vietnam                      Tel: + 84-8-3520-4200                      Fax: +84-8-3520-4244                      Website: <a href="http://hochiminh.usconsulate.gov">http://hochiminh.usconsulate.gov</a></p>	<p><b>Public Affairs Section - HCMC</b>                      8th floor, Diamond Plaza                      34 Le Duan Blvd, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City                      Tel: (08) 3520-4610                      Fax: (08) 3520-4622  <i>(American Center is located in this location)</i></p>

Medical hospitals and Clinics	
<p><b>Family Medical Practice Ho Chi Minh City</b>                      Diamond Plaza                      34 Le Duan Street, District 1, HCMC                      Tel: (08) 3822-7848                      Fax: (08) 3822-7859                      Email: <a href="mailto:hcmc@vietnammedicalpractice.com">hcmc@vietnammedicalpractice.com</a>                      Website: <a href="http://www.vietnammedicalpractice.com">www.vietnammedicalpractice.com</a></p>	<p><b>Victoria Healthcare International Clinic Address 1</b>                      135A Nguyen Van Troi Street, Phu Nhuan District, HCMC                      Tel: (08) 3997-4545                      Fax: (08) 3997-9979                      Website: <a href="http://www.victoriavn.com">http://www.victoriavn.com</a></p>
<p><b>International SOS Medical and Dental Clinic HCMC</b>                      65 Nguyen Du Street, District 1                      Ho Chi Minh City                      Tel: (08) 3829-8520                      Fax: (08) 3829-8524                      Website: <a href="http://www.internationalsos.com">www.internationalsos.com</a></p>	<p><b>FV Hospital</b>                      6 Nguyen Luong Bang St., Saigon South (Phu My Hung), Dist. 7, HCMC                      Tel: (08) 5411-3333                      Fax: (08) 5411-3334                      Email: <a href="mailto:information@fvhospital.com">information@fvhospital.com</a>                      Website: <a href="http://www.fvhospital.com">http://www.fvhospital.com</a></p>
<p><b>FV Sai Gon Clinic</b>                      2nd Floor, Citilight Tower                      45 Vo Thi Sau St., Dist. 1, Ho Chi Minh City                      Tel: (08) 6290-6167                      Fax: (08) 6290-6168                      Website: <a href="http://www.fvhospital.com">http://www.fvhospital.com</a></p>	<p><b>Victoria Healthcare International Clinic Address 2</b>                      79 Dien Bien Phu Street, District 1, HCMC,                      Tel: (08) 3910-4545                      Fax: (08) 3910-3334                      Website: <a href="http://www.victoriavn.com">http://www.victoriavn.com</a></p>

Banks	
<p><b>ANZ Bank</b>                      11 Me Linh Street, District 1, HCMC                      Tel: (08) 3829-9309 Fax: (08) 3829-9316                      Website: <a href="http://www.anz.com/vietnam">www.anz.com/vietnam</a></p>	<p><b>HSBC</b>                      235 Dong Khoi Street, District 1, HCMC                      Tel: (08) 3829-2288                      Website: <a href="http://www.hsbc.com.vn">www.hsbc.com.vn</a></p>
<p><b>Vietcombank</b>                      29 Ben Chuong Duong, District 1, HCMC  <b>Tel: (08) 3821-4201</b></p>	

Travel Agents	
<p><b>The Sinh Tourists</b>                      246 - 248 De Tham St., Dist. 1, HCMC                      Tel: (08) 3838-9597                      Website: <a href="http://www.thesinhtravel.vn">http://www.thesinhtravel.vn</a></p>	<p><b>Exotissimo Travel</b>                      80-82 Phan Xich Long, Phu Nhuan Dist., HCMC                      Tel: (08) 3995-9898                      Website: <a href="http://www.exotissimo.com">www.exotissimo.com</a></p>



## **Provincial Areas**

If you will be living and working in a provincial area, such as Hue, Da Nang, Can Tho, Vinh, Hai Phong, etc., please contact the Fulbright program in Vietnam for more information regarding housing, banking, and medical services.

## **Recommended Websites**

### **General Expat sites, including housing:**

<http://www.newhanoian.com/>

<http://www.asialifehcmc.com/>

<http://www.livinginvietnam.com/>

<http://www.vnexpat.com/>

<http://www.hanoistay.com/Home.asp>

<http://www.vnhousing.com/>

**Hanoi International Women's Club:** <http://www.hanoi-iwc.com/>

**HCMC International Women's Club:** <http://www.ilvietnam.com/>

### **American Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam**

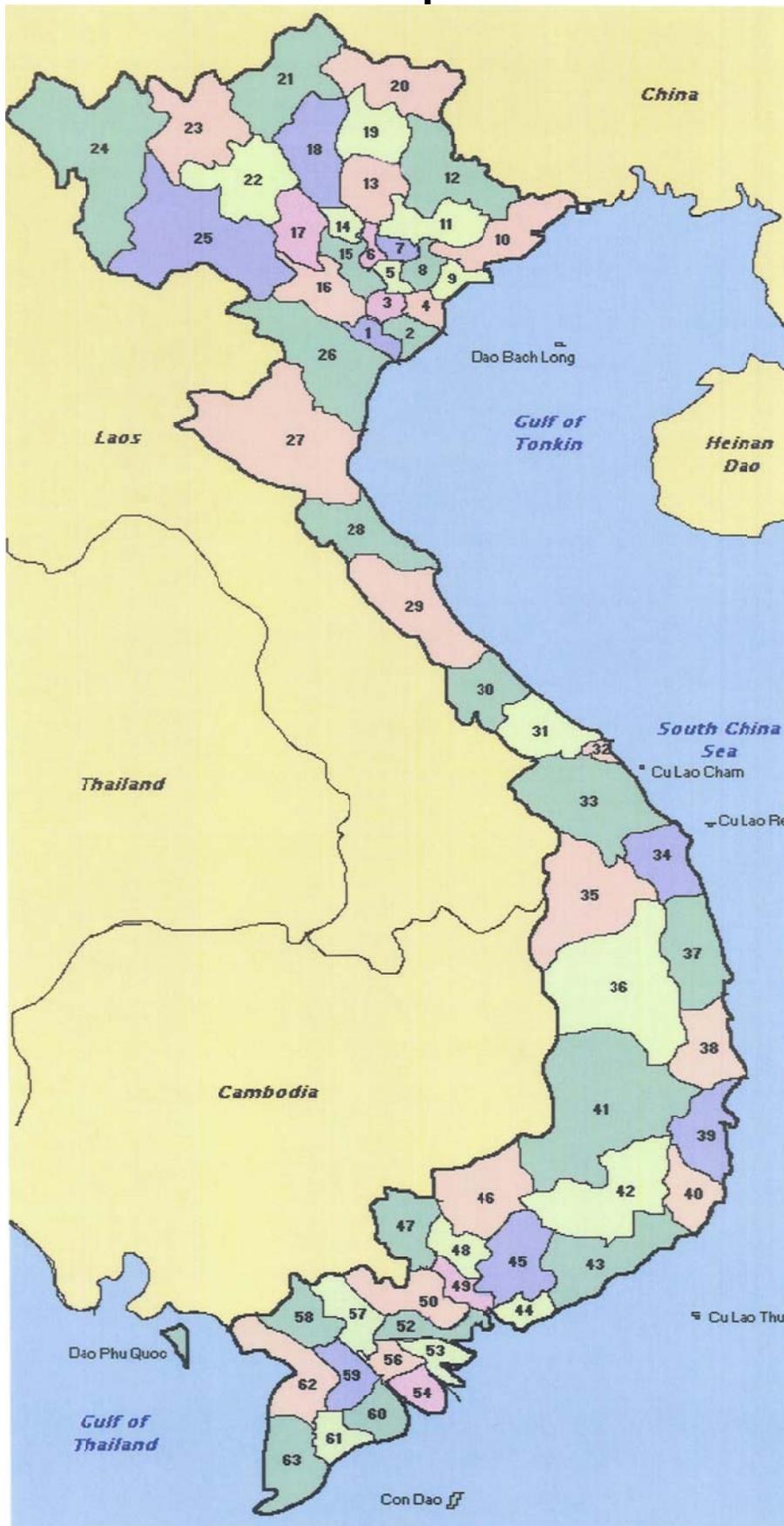
<http://www.amchamvietnam.com>

<http://www.amchamhanoi.com>

**NGO Resource Centre:** <http://www.ngocentre.org.vn>

**Vietnam Development Information Centre:** <http://www.vndic.org.vn>

# Map of Vietnam



## North

- 11 [Bac Giang](#)
- 19 [Bac Kan](#)
- 07 [Bac Ninh](#)
- 20 [Cao Bang](#)
- 21 [Ha Giang](#)
- 03 [Ha Nam](#)
- 06 [Ha Noi](#)
- 15 [Ha Tay](#)
- 08 [Hai Duong](#)
- 09 [Hai Phong](#)
- 16 [Hoa Binh](#)
- 05 [Hung Yen](#)
- 24 [Lai Chau](#)
- 12 [Lang Son](#)
- 23 [Lao Cai](#)
- 02 [Nam Dinh](#)
- 01 [Ninh Binh](#)
- 17 [Phu Tho](#)
- 10 [Quang Ninh](#)
- 25 [Son La](#)
- 04 [Thai Binh](#)
- 13 [Thai Nguyen](#)
- 18 [Tuyen Quang](#)
- 14 [Vinh Phuc](#)
- 22 [Yen Bai](#)

## Central

- 37 [Binh Dinh](#)
- 32 [Da Nang](#)
- 41 [Dak Lak](#)
- 36 [Gia Lai](#)
- 28 [Ha Tinh](#)
- 39 [Khanh Hoa](#)
- 35 [Kon Tum](#)
- 27 [Nghe An](#)
- 38 [Phu Yen](#)
- 29 [Quang Binh](#)
- 33 [Quang Nam](#)
- 34 [Quang Ngai](#)
- 30 [Quang Tri](#)
- 26 [Than Hoa](#)
- 31 [Thua Thien Hue](#)

## South

- 58 [An Giang](#)
- 44 [Ba Ria Vung Tau](#)
- 61 [Bac Lieu](#)
- 53 [Ben Tre](#)
- 48 [Binh Duong](#)
- 46 [Binh Phuoc](#)
- 43 [Binh Thuan](#)
- 63 [Ca Mau](#)
- 59 [Can Tho](#)
- 45 [Dong Nai](#)
- 57 [Dong Thap](#)
- 49 [Ho Chi Minh City](#)
- 62 [Kien Giang](#)
- 42 [Lam Dong](#)
- 50 [Long An](#)
- 40 [Ninh Thuan](#)
- 60 [Soc Trang](#)
- 47 [Tay Ninh](#)
- 52 [Tien Giang](#)
- 54 [Tra Vinh](#)
- 56 [Vinh Long](#)

# Vietnam Airlines Domestic Flights

