

Hanoi (Vietnamese: Hà Nội), the capital of Vietnam, and also its second largest city, is a fascinating blend of East and West, combining traditional Sino-Vietnamese motifs with French flair. It is largely unscathed from the decades of war, and is now going through a building boom, making it a rapidly developing city in Southeast Asia. The climate is tropical, with wet and hot weather much of the year. But due to the city's latitude, temperatures drop drastically in the wintertime and the wind chill and dampness means winter weather can feel cold. If possible, avoid the summer months of mid-May to mid-September, as the city turns into a sweltering sauna with little to no wind.

Wartime sites

- Hoa Lo Prison (The Hanoi Hilton), 1 Hoa Lo, Hoan Kiem. 08:30-11:30, 13:30-16:30. This prison was built by the French at the turn of the 20th century, in classical French prison design. This is where the French imprisoned and executed many of the Vietnamese revolutionaries. Now a museum (2/3 of the prison was torn down to make way for the Hanoi Towers), the museum exhibits the brutal French colonial regime and the struggle of the Vietnamese people against imperialism in chilling details. The prison was also known as the "Hanoi Hilton" during the Vietnam War as it held American POW's shot down. Little emphasis is given to this period however, and the exhibits shown can be frustratingly skewed in propaganda, choosing to show solely regime sanctioned photos of prisoners being treated well and playing basketball, playing chess, and other staged events. They also claim to have John McCain's flight suit from when his plane was shot down. 20,000VND.
- B-52 Lake – Huu Tiep Lake, Ngoc Ha Precinct, Ba Dinh District. Until 19 December 1972, this was just a small brackish pond just off Hoang Hoa Tham Street, about 1km west of the mausoleum. On that day, in a twisted retelling of the Hoan Kiem legend (see above), Vietnamese anti-aircraft guns took the eight-engined, 100-ton plane and sent it to the shallow bottom of the lake, where it remains today. There are more interesting things to see at your local junkyard.
- Downed Aircraft Memorial. Along Thanh Nien Street on Truc Bach lake there is a stone plaque commemorating the shooting down of a US Navy (not "USAF" as depicted) aircraft in 1967. Peruse the Vietnamese script and you can pick out the name of John McCain, one of the airmen.
- Army Museum, (Dien Bien Phu street, across from the Lenin Statue mini-park and is in the area of embassies). Retells the stories of many battles throughout the country's history. There are documents as well as models in the museum to make the retelling more interesting. They have the model of the B-52 plane, tanks and even canons.

Stay safe

Compared to other cities in the developing world, Hanoi is reasonably safe, especially for tourists and expats. You can easily book a room online at [hotels in Hanoi Vietnam](#). The most important danger to watch out for is avoiding traffic while crossing the street as car and motorbike traffic saturate most tourist areas of Hanoi. Violent crime is highly uncommon. Petty crime does happen on occasion, and usually takes the form of thievery of your valuables while in public or while in transit. Being attentive of your surroundings and valuables and using common sense should keep you safe and happy. As an aside, while not a physical crime, the common "crime" experienced is paying more for goods and services than locals do, sometimes by double the price or more. This generally happens when paying for food, transport, hotels, and useful information about this can be found on the Vietnam page.