

Mandy & Sean's Wedding

# Ho Chi Minh City

A Pocket Guide to Hidden Gems

TRAVEL GUIDE

# CONTENT

01

## Introduction

Brief overview of the destination. Highlights on what makes it unique

02

## Quick Facts

Essential information: best travel season, language, currency, time zone. Quick travel tips (local customs, important phrases)

03

## Travel Etiquette

Key customs to respect, including dress codes, temple behavior, and local traditions

04

## Top Things To Do

Key attractions. Suggested tours and activities for exploration

07

## Must-try Dishes

Overview of local cuisine and signature dishes. Recommended spots for authentic dining experiences

12

## Contact & Tips

Emergency contacts (local police, hospital, embassy). Additional travel tips



# INTRODUCTION

Ho Chi Minh City, still often called Saigon, is Vietnam's largest and most dynamic city—a place where history meets modernity, and every street buzzes with energy. From its colonial-era architecture and rich wartime history to its bustling markets and vibrant street food scene, Saigon offers something for every traveler.

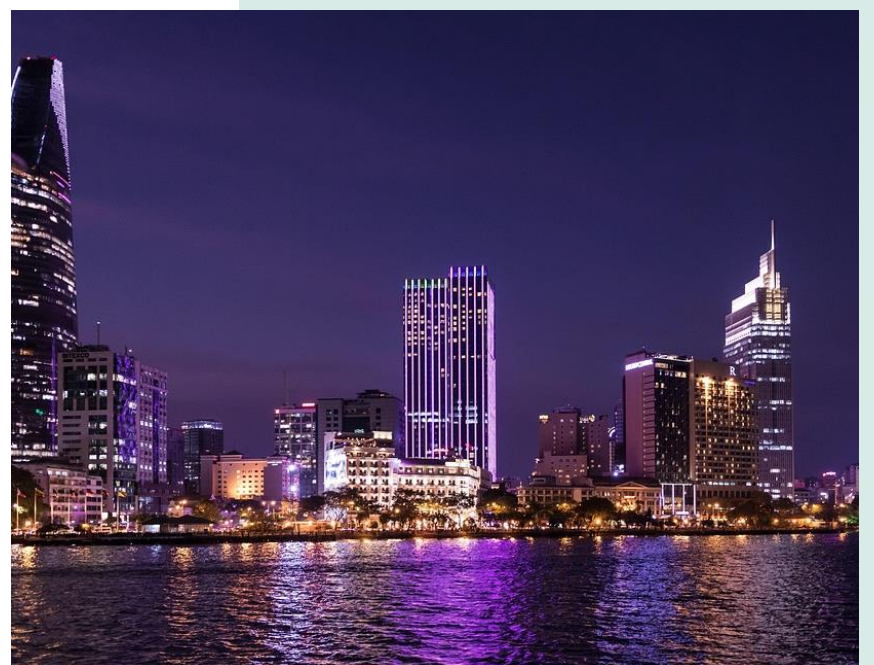
## Vibrant Cultural Hub

Ho Chi Minh City, formerly Saigon, is a dynamic blend of history, culture, and modernity, with iconic landmarks like the Notre-Dame Cathedral, War Remnants Museum, and bustling markets like Ben Thanh



## Economic and Commercial Center

As Vietnam's largest city, it's the country's economic engine, with a thriving business district, modern infrastructure, and a growing tech scene, attracting both locals and expats



## Culinary Paradise

Known for its delicious and diverse cuisine, Ho Chi Minh City offers everything from street food stalls serving pho and bánh mì to high-end restaurants, making it a haven for food lovers.



# QUICK FACTS

## Best Travel Season:

December to April (dry season), with pleasant weather and minimal rainfall.

## Currency:

Vietnamese Dong (VND). Cash is widely preferred, especially in smaller shops and markets

## Language:

Vietnamese, Cantonese and Mandarin; English is widely understood in tourist areas.

## Time Zone

ICT (Indochina Time) UTC/GMT +7 hours



Picture: Thien Hau Temple

## Local Customs

- Dress modestly when visiting temples or government buildings; cover shoulders and knees
- Offer a slight bow with a smile when greeting locals. When giving or receiving, it’s polite to use both hands.
- It’s common to remove shoes when entering homes, boutiques, and small businesses.



## Important Phrases

- **Hello:** "Hello" or “Xin Chao” (sin chow)
- **Thank You:** “Cam on” (gahm uhn)
- **Excuse Me/Sorry:** “Xin loi” (sin loy)
- **Yes / No:** “Da” / “Khong” (yah/khom)
- **Please:** “Lam on” (lahm uhn)
- **I want to go to:** “Toi muon di den” (toy moon dee den...)
- **Where is...?:** "... o dau?“ (... uh doh?)
- **How much?:** “Bao nhieu tien?“ (bow new teen-en?)
- **Too expensive!** “Mac qua!” (mahk waah!)
- **Can you lower the price?** “Giam gia duoc khong?“ (yahm yah duke khom?)
- **Goodbye:** “Tam biet” (tam bee-et)

# TRAVEL ETIQUETTE

01

## Cash is King

In smaller shops, markets, and rural areas, cash is preferred over credit cards. Carry enough Vietnamese Dong (VND) for most transaction. You can exchange currency when arriving at the airport or local banks.

02

## Weather Preparedness

Vietnam has tropical climate, so pack light, breathable clothing, sunscreen, mosquito repellent spray, and stay hydrated.

03

## Street Food

Vietnam's street food is delicious, but make sure to choose busy stalls that look clean and well-maintained to avoid foodborne illnesses. Tap water is not safe to drink, stick to bottled water.

04

## Bargaining is Common

In local markets, haggling is expected. Don't hesitate to negotiate prices but always remain polite and friendly during the process.

05

## Watch for Pickpockets and Snatchers

As in many major tourist destinations, pickpocketing, purse and phone snatching can happen. Keep your valuables secure and be aware of your surroundings, avoid wearing flashy jewelry.

06

## Tipping

Tipping isn't mandatory in Vietnam, but it's a nice way to reward good services and is always appreciated. Tipping is expected at spas, for hotel porters, and tour guides. Tipping is recommended for food delivery, taxis and high-end restaurants. You can simply round up the bill or leave \$1 or \$2.

# TOP THINGS TO DO

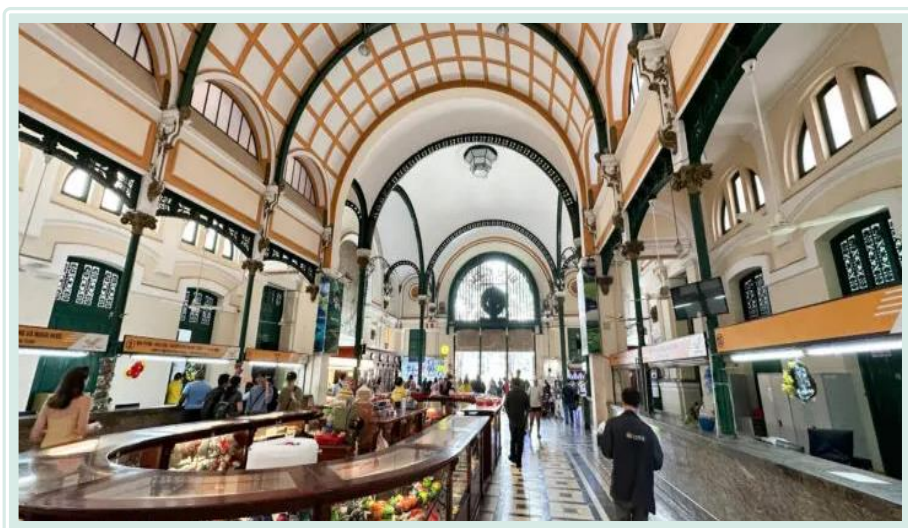
Ho Chi Minh city offers a wide range of activities catering to all types of travelers. Whether you're into history, culture, food, shopping or outdoor activities, the city has something for everyone:

- 1. RIDE LIKE A LOCAL** Experience the city's energy up close by hopping on the back of a motorbike, just like the locals do. Evening motorbike tours offer a thrilling way to take in the sights, sounds, and street vendors that bring Ho Chi Minh City to life after dark..
- 2. JOIN THE LOCALS ON THE SIDEWALKS:** The most authentic food is served on the sidewalk. Don't miss highlights such as bánh mì, southern-style savory pancakes (bánh xèo) and broken rice (cơm tấm).
- 3. CULTURAL & HISTORICAL EXPLORATION:** Dive into Vietnam's rich history with visits to the **War Remnants Museum**, which offers a sobering look at the Vietnam War, and the **Reunification Palace**, a symbol of the end of the war. For a spiritual experience, visit **Jade Emperor Pagoda**, **Thien Hau Temple** or the **Notre-Dame Cathedral**.
- 4. VISIT THE CHINESE QUARTER:** The Chinese neighborhood known as Chợ Lớn offers a vibrant experience from bustling markets, historic temples to delicious Cantonese cuisine.
- 5. HAIR WASHING:** In Vietnam, hair washing (gội đầu) is a spa-like treatment that includes a thorough hair wash, scalp massage, facial, and neck and shoulder relaxation-or even a full-body massage. And it's incredibly affordable for everything you get. Perfect after a long flight, or a long day of exploring and if you want to try it, check out [The Privé Spa!](#)
- 6. OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES:** Take a day trip to the Cu Chi Tunnels, an underground network used during the war or visit the Mekong Delta for a boat tour through lush landscapes and traditional villages. Binh Quoi Village offers a glimpse into rural Vietnamese life, with beautiful gardens and lakes.
- 7. WATER SPORTS:** While Ho Chi Minh City is not coastal, you can still enjoy boat rides on the Saigon River or take day trips to nearby beaches like Vung Tau for water sports, swimming, and relaxation by the sea.

# OTHER MAIN ATTRACTIONS

## Central Post Office

Notable for its perfect combination of neo-classical European architecture and Asian decorations



## Ben Thanh Market

A lively marketplace perfect for shopping, street food, and soaking in local culture.



## Tan Dinh Catholic Church

A striking Gothic-style church Known as the “Pink Church”.



## Nguyen Hue Walking Street

A lively pedestrian boulevard surrounded by shops, cafés, and historic landmarks.



## Bui Vien Walking Street

The go-to spot for nightlife, street performances, and an energetic atmosphere, not kid-friendly.



## Bitexco Financial Tower

A great place for panoramic views of the city skyline.



# TOURS

## City tours:

[Sightseeing tours](#)

[Food tours](#)

[Water Puppet Show](#)

[Saigon River Cruise](#)

[A O Show Bamboo Circus at Saigon Opera House](#)

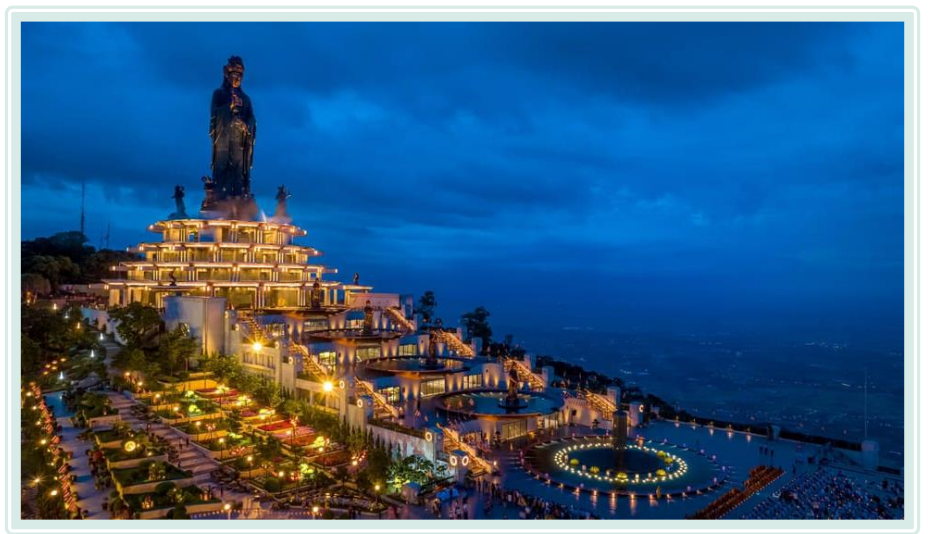
[Local Cooking or Coffee Classes](#)

## Day Trips:

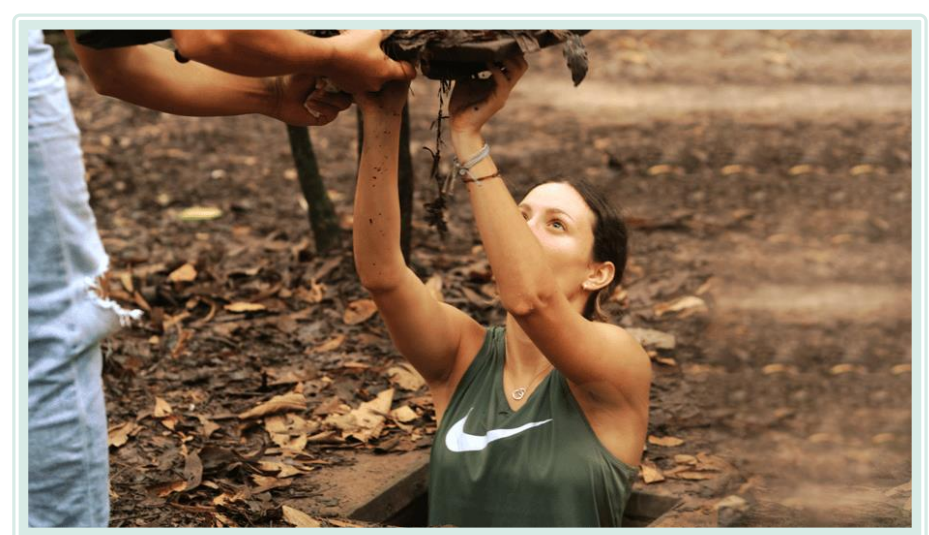
[Cu Chi Tunnels](#)

[Black Virgin Mountain & Temple Tours](#)

[Floating Market](#)



*Picture: Black Virgin Mountain*



*Picture: Cu Chi Tunnels*



*Picture: Floating Market*



*Picture: Mekong Delta boat tour*

[Beach tours](#)

[Boat tours Mekong Delta](#)

## Okay, I've seen enough of Ho Chi Minh City, what else can I do?

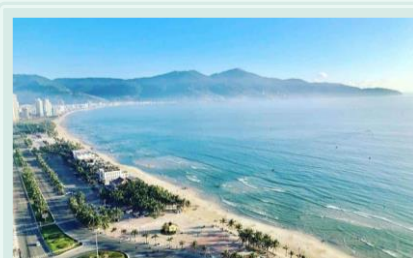
If you want to explore beyond Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, consider visiting Hanoi in the north for a more historical and cultural experience, including the Old Quarter, Hoan Kiem Lake, and nearby Halong Bay, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site; or Hoi An in the central region for its charming old town with lantern-lit streets, beautiful architecture, and relaxed beach vibes; Da Nang also in the central region offers a mix of modern city life with stunning beaches and easy access to nearby attractions like Hue's historical sites.



*Hanoi*



*Ba Na Hills - Da Nang*



*My Khe Beach  
ranked as the 6th most  
beautiful beach in Asia*



*Ancient Town – Hoi An*

# MUST-TRY DISHES

Vietnamese cuisine is a rich blend of traditional flavors, featuring fresh herbs, spices, and local ingredients. Rice is a staple, often served with meats, fish, or vegetables. The dishes are known for their bold, aromatic flavors including spicy, sweet, and savory notes.

## PHỞ



## BÁNH MÌ



## BUN THIT NUONG



## BROKEN RICE



## BANH XEO



## BANH CUON



## BUN CHA



## BUN BO HUE



## BUN RIEU



## BO LA LOT



# RECOMMENDED SPOTS

## PHỞ

**Phở Lê** 

[Address:](#) 413-415 Nguyen Trai Street, Ward 7, District 5

**Phở Hoàng** 

[Address:](#) 460 Nguyen Tri Phuong Street, Ward 9, District 10

**Phở Hoà Pasteur** 

[Address:](#) 260C Pasteur Street, Ward 8, District 3

**Chicken Pho – Pho Ga Ky Dong** 

[Address:](#) 14/5 Bis Ky Dong Street, Ward 9, District 3

## BANH MI

**Banh Mi Huynh Hoa**

[Address:](#) 26 Le Thi Rieng, Ward Pham Ngu Lao, District 1

**Banh Mi Hong Hoa**

[Address:](#) 54 Nguyen Van Trang, Ward Pham Ngu Lao, District 1

## BUN THIT NUONG

Rice vermicelli noodles topped with grilled pork, fresh herbs like basil and mint, and vegetables

**Bun Thit Nuong – Nguyen Trung Truc**

[Address:](#) 1 Nguyen Trung Truc, Ward Ben Thanh, District 1

## BANH XEO – SAVORY CREPE

Crispy, savory, rice flour pancake stuffed with pork, shrimp, bean sprouts, and spring onion

**Banh Xeo 46A– Dinh Cong Trang**

[Address:](#) 46A Dinh Cong Trang, Ward Tan Dinh, District 1

## BROKEN RICE - COM TAM

A Saigon's signature dish made from broken rice grains, typically served with grilled pork, an egg meatloaf and pickled vegetables

**Com Tam Ba Ghien** 

[Address:](#) 84 Dang Van Ngu Street, Ward 10, Phu Nhuan District

# RECOMMENDED SPOTS

## BUN CHA

The classic bún chả features tender, smoky grilled pork, well-seasoned meat patties and smooth rice noodles with a balanced soup base

**Bun Cha Ho Guom** 

[Address](#): 29 Truong Dinh, District 3

## BUN BO HUE

A mildly spicy noodle soup featuring a rich, lemongrass-infused broth with thick rice noodles, sliced beef, pork knuckles, sometimes coagulated pig's blood, and a variety of fresh herbs

**Bun Bo Hue 14B** 

[Address](#): 14B Street 46, Ward 2, District 4

## BUN RIEU

A noodle soup featuring a rich, tomato-based broth flavored with crab meat and paste, often including pork, and served with rice vermicelli noodles, fresh herbs, and vegetables

**Bun Rieu Ganh**

[Address](#): 163 Le Thanh Ton, Ward Benh Thanh, District 1

## BO LA LOT – GRILLED BEEF IN LOLOT LEAVES

Minced beef wrapped in a fragrant, peppery "lá lốt" (wild betel) leaf, then grilled over charcoal

**Co Lieng Restaurant** 

[Address](#): 321 Vo Van Tan Street, Ward 5, District 3

## BANH CUON – SAVORY RICE ROLLS

Steamed rice flour pancakes that are rolled and filled with pork shrimp and mushroom

**Banh Cuon Tay Ho** 

[Address](#): 127 Dinh Tien Hoang, Ward Da Kao, District 1

# RECOMMENDED SPOTS

## PIZZA

**Pizza 4P's** 

Multiple locations, google for the one closest to you

## HU TIEU

A noodle soup originating from Cambodia, characterized by a clear, lightly fatty pork broth with a subtle sweetness, often featuring chewy rice noodles, a variety of toppings like sliced pork, minced pork, shrimp, quail eggs, bean sprouts, and garnished with fresh herbs like Chinese celery

**Nhan Restaurant – Phnom Penh Style Rice Noodle Soup**

[Address](#): 122D Cach Mang Thang 8, Ward Vo Thi Sau, District 3

**Hu Tieu Thanh Dat**

[Address](#): 34 Co Bac, District 1

## BANH CANH CUA – CRAB UDON

A rich, thick crab soup served with translucent and chewy tapioca noodle

**Banh Canh Cua Co Tu**

[Address](#): 45 Bach Van, Ward 5, District 5

## XOI – SAVORY STICKY RICE

A bed of steamed glutinous rice topped with a variety of savory ingredients like Chinese sausage, dried shrimp, pork floss, pate, pickled vegetables

**Xoi che Bui Thi Xuan**

[Address](#): 111 Bui Thi Xuan, Ward Pham Ngu Lao, District 1

**Peofood – Ha Noi Style Xoi**

[Address](#): 180 Ky Con, District 1

**Ba Chieu Chicken Sticky Rice**

[Address](#): 318/1 Bui Huu Nghia, District Binh Thanh

**Quan Xoi La Chuoi (have sweet sticky rice)**

[Address](#): 85 Cao Thang, Ward 3, District 10

# VEGETARIAN RESTAURANTS

Because of the country's large Buddhist population, you'll find restaurants across the country serving up vegetarian (“chay” in Vietnamese) renditions of all the traditional Vietnamese foods you could ever want to try.

## **Am Thuc Chay – Vuon Chay**

[Address:](#) 428 Le Quang Dinh, Ward 11, District Binh Thanh

Signature dishes: Extensive menu featuring most traditional Vietnamese dishes listed above, all with vegetarian-friendly options.

## **Chay Garden**

[Address:](#) 52 Vo Van Tan Street, Ward 6, District 3

Signature dishes: Savory Crepe, Pad Thai, Burrito, Pineapple Fried Rice

## **Chay Ba Xa**

[Address:](#) 178/4 Pasteur, Ward Ben Nghe, District 1

[Address:](#) 107K Truong Dinh, Ward Vo Thi Sau , District 3

[Address:](#) 636 Nguyen Trai, Ward 7, District 5

[Address:](#) 53 Hoang Du Khuong, Ward 12, District 10

[Address:](#) 21G Nguyen Van Troi, Ward 11, District Phu Nhuan

Signature dishes: Claypot rice, HongKong style tofu, Tamarind Stir-fried Mushroom, Fermented Tofy Hotpot

## **Chay Nhat Tam**

[Address:](#) T6 Nguyen Huu Hao, Ward 6, District 4

Signature dishes: Butter Garlic King Oyster Mushrooms, Beijing –style Dried Tofu Skin, Stir-fried rice vermicelli with X.O sauce, Hotpot

## **Chay Bep Xanh An Duyen**

[Address:](#) 10 Nguyen Tri Phuong, Ward 6, District 10

Signature dishes: crispy rice cake, Beancurd skin in Peking Style, Five Spice fried rolls,

## **Phuong Mai Chay Quan**

[Address:](#) 82/86F Vo Thi Sau, District 1

Signature dishes: Hotpot, savory crepe, spring rolls, Thai style noodle

# CONTACT & TIPS

## **Do go with the flow**

If minor inconveniences easily frustrate you, you might struggle to enjoy your time here. Flexibility is key-laugh things off and adapt. Schedules shift, queuing is almost nonexistent, and the city's noise and traffic can be overwhelming. Take a deep breath and let the small stuff slide. Your trip will be so much better for it.

## **Do feel safe**

While petty theft can occur in Vietnamese cities, the country as a whole is incredibly safe.

Vietnamese people are generally kind and helpful-especially in the south, where they are the friendliest, most accommodating, and forgiving. You might even find, as I did, that you feel safer in Vietnam than in many Western countries.



## **Local Police:**

*113*

## **Emergency Ambulance:**

*115*

## **City International Hospital**

*No. 3, Street 17A, Binh Tri Dong B Ward,  
Binh Tan Dist.,*

## **Emergency U.S Embassy Number:**

*02438505000*