



# Travel Guide to **VIETNAM**



# Ha Long Bay

Ha Long Bay is the most popular travel destination in Vietnam, and just glancing at a friend's travel photos will show you why. The emerald-green waters, verdant mountains, grottoes, and spectacular limestone islands sprinkled throughout the bay beckon tourists from all over the world. In this UNESCO World Heritage Site, there are so many ways to take in the beauty of this area: boat cruises, kayaking, scuba diving, hiking, cave exploration, swimming, and shopping.

The scenery in Ha Long Bay (sometimes spelled Halong Bay) is spectacular and majestic, with gorgeous monolithic islands in a calm bay. There are approximately 2,000 tiny islands (steep limestone islands with lush vegetation on top), some of which contain lakes and caves. Most are uninhabitable and difficult to explore except by boat. A few are large enough to explore by car, and have hotels, resorts, and restaurants. The larger, inhabitable islands include Dao Cat Ba, Dao Tuan Chau, Tra Ban, and Ngoc Vung Islands. Dao Ngoc Vung is along the shoreline of the bay and has one of the most beautiful beaches in the area; in addition, you can rent primitive beach huts here.



## Boat Tours

One of the most popular ways to explore the rock islands, hidden beaches, and scenic beauty of this area is with a hospitable cruise tours. Because there is so much to see, most people opt for one of the many popular 2-3 day boat tours with a private sleeping cabin; however, single day excursions are also available. Longer boat tours give you a chance to explore some of the famous floating island villages in the bay and several of the area's celebrated caves. Adventure-seeking and active travelers enjoy hiking, kayaking, snorkeling, swimming, and spelunking.

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## Cat Ba Island

Cat Ba Island is the largest of these limestone islands in the Ha Long Bay (Cat Ba Island is 354 sq km, or about 220 sq. mi). It is located roughly in the center of the bay and has hotels, restaurants, a national park, and many interesting tourist features. Cat Ba National Park is a lush park with mangrove forests, lakes, and coral along the shore. The park is most often explored by bike or by hiking (trekking), but there are a few roads and tour buses also available. It is home to the critically endangered Golden-Headed or Cat Ba langur, and Cat Ba island is the only known place where this primate is known to live in the wild. To get to Cat Ba island, you have three options: you can take a ferry from Tuan Chau Island, a group junk boat ride from Bai Chay, or embark on a group boat ride from Hanoi. Many boat tours in Ha Long Bay also stop at Cat Ba Island.

## Hanoi

Hanoi beckons to millions of tourists each year to Vietnam thanks to its thriving arts scene, colonial architecture, museums, shopping districts, and the scenic natural beauty of over 20 lakes, pagodas, and more than 50 Buddhist temples.

Hanoi, the capitol of Vietnam, was ranked in the 2015 Traveler's Choice Awards™ as the #4 destination in the world and is the most affordable of all 25 destinations that made it on the list. Just one look around this city reveals that it has a wide array of things to explore, whether you're a music lover, a theater buff, a history buff, a shopper, or a foodie.

### Old Quarter

The vibrant, narrow alleys of Old Quarter (home to the city's craft guilds) date back over 2,000 years. Originally a crocodile-infested swamp, this section of Hanoi was built up over hundreds of years. By the 11th century, it was a celebrated hotspot of workshops and artisans who came from different villages, bringing their own religious practices with them (which is why each street has its own temple). This area of town is also known as 36 Streets, because of the 36 original sections of the area that were the central location for each of the city's craft guilds. Today, artisans still work in these shops, but you can also find an interesting mix of restaurants, shops, wares, silks, and other products created in Vietnam on each street.

### Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum

This is the burial tomb of Ho Chi Minh (who died in December of 1969), the first president of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Many make a pilgrimage to this solemn, many pillared edifice (also known as Chu Tich Mo-Chi-Minh) annually to honor the revered leader. Here, the embalmed remains of Ho Chi Minh (lying with his hands crossed, in a dimly lit and cold stone room) are seen housed behind glass. Visitors are welcome but must be appropriately dressed and remain quiet and respectful when visiting this site.

### Thang Long Water Puppet Theater

This famous water puppet theater is considered one of the top must-see cultural displays in Hanoi. The puppet shows have special effects like smoke breathing dragons and fireworks, making it all the more interesting. Dramatic live music and exciting theatrical effects bring tales of rural life and legendary ancient tales to life, making it easy to understand the story. Water puppetry is a unique Vietnamese art form going back 1,000 years, with performances taking place in rice paddies, lakes, and rivers throughout the country. The Thang Long Water Puppet Theater is considered the best place to see this unique art form. The original water puppet shows were performed by people from the Red River Delta starting in the eleventh century. Today, performers stand waist deep in river water behind a bamboo screen and control the puppets with long sticks. After the hour-long performance, the screen will rise and you can see the performers.

## Hoan Kiem Lake

Tourists on Sunbeam Bridge over Lake Hoan Kiem in central Hanoi Vietnam.

Coming to Hanoi almost always includes a visit to Hoan Kiem Lake. Whether you're coming here for a morning cup of coffee or tea in one of the cafes, or a relaxing stroll around the tree lined path surrounding the lake, this is definitely a can't miss spot in Hanoi and is one of the most beautiful parts of the city. While here, you can see the monuments, walk across the Sunbeam Bridge, and enjoy the natural beauty. Locals and visitors come here daily to meet with friends, exercise or watch the tortoises in the lake (which are considered a sacred animal in traditional Vietnamese culture).



## Temple of Literature

Main entrance gate to the Temple of Literature in Hanoi, Vietnam.

A visit to Hanoi must include a stroll around the buildings and grounds of the Temple of Literature, which was built to honor Confucius (the celebrated Chinese philosopher) during the Ly Dynasty in the year 1070. The red-lacquered Temple of Confucius in the central portion of the complex is just one of the things to see here. You'll stroll through ornamental gates that are over 900 years old, enjoy finely sculptured gardens that have been maintained by monks, visit ponds, see the National Academy (with its extensive collection of ancient literary texts and learning tools), see bell towers, courtyards, and may even see a human chess game taking place in the fourth courtyard (with brightly costumed participants taking the part of each chess piece).

## Ho Chi Minh's Stilt House (Nha Bac Ho, or Uncle Ho's House)

When the Democratic Republic of Vietnam named Ho Chi Minh the first president in 1954, he decided that the Presidential Palace was too ornamental and elaborate for a government official, so he had a humble stilt house built on the grounds of the Presidential Palace. In modest, simplistic style, the house and original furnishings are on display to visitors year round. The Botanical Gardens, with several lakes, a sculpture garden, and fishponds are surrounding the house and are also worth a visit. While here you can see the exterior of the Presidential Palace, although tours are not available.

## Dong Xuan Market

Located on Dong Xuan Street / Market Street, this three-story market is the oldest covered marketplace area in Hanoi. Here you can buy everything from housewares to incense to silk pajamas. If you're looking to buy typical tourist souvenirs, Hang Hom or Hang Gai might have more what you're looking for (they cater more to tourists), but a stop at the Dong Xuan Market gives you an authentic Hanoi market experience with all the locally made products front and center. When you go, bear in mind that most stalls will be closed for the lunch hour and early afternoon nap. In the evening, there are more food stalls that open up, making the place a popular destination for locals.

## History Museum

Considered one of the best museums in the country, this grand two-story French colonial style building in the capitol city of Vietnam houses a rich display of Vietnamese artifacts dating back to prehistoric days. From engraved drums, to exquisite sculptures, you'll find a richly detailed rendering of the history of Vietnam at this museum. After browsing the extensive collection of artifacts, you can explore the park gardens behind the building, which include sculptures of sacred dragons and Cham goddesses. Please note that like many other tourist sites in Hanoi, the museum is closed Mondays.

## Bach Ma Temple

Situated in Old Quarter, this historic temple represents the cultural history of the area. It is not the largest temple in Hanoi, but it is one of the oldest and most well kept (it was restored to its original brilliance over 100 years ago). As such, there is a steady stream of visitors to this picturesque and holy site in Old Quarter. The temple is well known for its white horse statue in honor of the magical protecting spirit of a white horse, which showed King Ly Thai To where to build the city walls of Hanoi in the year 1010. Visitors are welcome to this temple but are asked to remain respectful (no loud behavior and immodest clothing, please).

## Fine Arts Museum in Hanoi

With glorious, many-armed Buddha statues galore, this fine art museum is located in the Ba Dinh District, in the same section as popular tourist sites such as Ho Chi Minh's Stilt House, the Temple of Literature, and One Pillar Pagoda. In fact, this museum is the home of a famous Enlightened Being statue (Bodhisattva) with 1,000 eyes and 1,000 arms. Some artifacts date back to the Stone Age and Bronze Age. Other notable exhibits include an impressive collection of lacquer paintings on the second floor.



## Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)

Ho Chi Minh City at night.

As the largest city in Vietnam and one of the most prosperous areas of the country, Ho Chi Minh City (also known as Saigon) is often known as the Paris of the Orient. With rich cultural influences from France and China, Ho Chi Minh City is the most multicultural city in Vietnam. Here you can find vibrant shopping districts, international cuisine, museums, pagodas, historical monuments and buildings, parks and gardens, and the liveliest nightlife and bars in the country. Here are 8 must-see attractions in Ho Chi Minh City.

## Cu Chui Tunnels

Over 75 miles of underground tunnels and chambers make up the Cu Chi Tunnels.

A visit to Ho Chi Minh City must include an excursion to the intriguing Cu Chi Tunnels, located 40 km (25 mi) outside the city. Guided tours take visitors through two impressive networks of tunnels, which have been used for centuries. The tunnels were famously used by Vietnamese civilians and the Viet Cong guerilla troops during the Vietnam War (also known as the Second Indochina War of 1955-1975), which is known as the American War in Vietnam. Here you can see the narrow tunnels, concealed entrances, underground bunk rooms, kitchens, ammunition dumps, and a system of booby traps the Vietcong used against the enemy. Despite infrared technology, the American troops never conquered the tunnel system.



## Mariamman Hindu Temple

Exterior detail of Mariamman Hindu Temple in Ho Chi Minh City.

This vibrant and colorful Hindu temple is used by a small Hindu and community in Ho Chi Minh, as well as many Buddhists. Located near the Ben Thanh market, this well-maintained 19th century temple welcomes visitors from sunup to sunset. It honors the Hindu Goddess of Strength, Shakti, and its vividly painted and elaborately carved façade can't be missed. Both Buddhists and Hindus come here to worship and pray while holding sticks of incense. If you're looking for something out of the ordinary, a visit to the Mariamman temple is like a trip to southern India.



## Jade Emperor Pagoda

Jade Emperor Pagoda in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Built to honor the Jade Emperor (Ngoc Huang) in 1909, this elaborate pagoda is emblematic of the finest pagodas in Vietnam. From its elaborately tiled roof to the rich religious symbolism of the art and sculpture adorning the walls and surfaces, the Jade Emperor Pagoda is a favorite tourist attraction and is open from 6am to 6pm daily. The outer courtyard offers benches and tranquil ponds.

## Reunification Hall

Reunification Hall (also known as Independence Palace) in Ho Chi Minh City.

Visitors can tour this large building to learn about Vietnam's history. This building (largely rebuilt after being mostly destroyed in the early 1960s) was once the palace of President Van Thieu, who was overthrown by the North Vietnamese troops when tanks broke through the gates. Visitors can walk through lavish living quarters and assembly room of the former president in the upper floors, as well as the austere military bunkers housed in the basement. After the tour, you can walk through the adjoining grounds and gardens.



# Markets of Cholon

A coconut seller in Cholon Market in Ho Chi Minh City.

The Markets of Cholon are the largest indoor and outdoor market areas in Vietnam. This is the city's huge China Town, and here you can find anything from electronics to silk to fish to coconuts. A trip to Ho Chi Minh must include a bit of shopping, and there is nowhere better than in the legendary shopping district of Cholon.



## Museum of Vietnamese History

Museum of Vietnamese History in Ho Chi Minh.

Located up the street from the Reunification Hall, this important history museum showcases artifacts from all eras of the country's history, spanning back to the Dong Son culture over 2000 years ago. Collections are housed by era, so you can walk through and gain a thorough understanding of this area's history up to the present day. Water puppet shows run daily in the nearby local theater.



## Botanical Gardens and Zoo

The Zoo and Botanical Gardens in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam.

Who can resist spending a few minutes admiring a group of elephants in a beautiful setting? At the Saigon Botanical Gardens and Zoo, you can escape from the hectic traffic and fast pace of the bustling city and relax. As one of the oldest zoos in the world, the Saigon Zoo (also known locally as Thao Cam Vien) offers a wide variety of animals and is Vietnam's largest zoo (with over 100 species of animals).



## War Remnants Museum

Formerly known as the "War Crimes Museum," this sobering collection documents atrocities committed by American, French, and Chinese soldiers to Vietnamese soldiers and civilians. Graphic photographs, captured American warplanes, and videos are on display.



## Hoi An

The historic city of Hoi An is on the central coast of Vietnam and was a major international trading port up until the 19th century. Hoi An has much to offer for tourists: excellent cuisine, ancient ruins, sandy beaches, great shopping, and enough historic buildings to make it a UNESCO World Heritage site. It's one of the few cities in Vietnam that was not damaged by bombing during the Vietnam-American war. Thanks to this, Hoi An has a lot of atmosphere and is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Vietnam. Despite the city's small size, there are over 80 hotels here, ranging from exclusive resorts

to budget hotels. Comfortable cafes and easy bike rentals make touring this city convenient and fun. Highlights of Hoi An include touring pagodas, taking a river cruise, and visiting historic buildings. Nearby UNESCO sites are favorite day trips from Hoi An, including the famous My Son and Cham Towers. Shopping for custom-tailored clothing is a favorite activity, along with sunbathing at the nearby beach. Here are the 10 top sights in Hoi An, Vietnam.



## Japanese Covered Bridge

This 16th century covered bridge (also called Cau Chua Pagoda) is the most popular landmark in Hoi An. Built by Japanese traders, the bridge is built over a small tributary of the Thu Bon River. It connects Nguyen Thi Minh Khai Street with Tran Phu Street (famous for its art galleries), right at the entrance to Old Quarter. For centuries, the Japanese Covered Bridge has provided shelter from rain and sun to the people of Hoi An. The 18th century addition of a shrine to the Tao God Bac De (the Jade Emperor) is the only major change the bridge has undergone since it was built in 1593.



## Cua Dai Beach

This charming, white sand beach is located just 4 km (2.48 mi) northeast of Hoi An and several Hoi An hotels and resorts are located here. It's close enough to the city to get to by bike, although the roads can be crowded and difficult to navigate. Although the beach is open year round to visitors, swimming season is April to October. Check the weather before you leave for the beach, though, as typhoons occur sporadically in August and September.



## Bicycle Tour of Cam Kim Island

You can take a short ferry ride from the center of Hoi An to Cam Kim island, a rural island with rice paddies and farmhouses, which is a popular spot to explore by bike. Bike rentals and bike tours are available here, through quiet roads with little or no traffic that connect a few villages. The area's famous wood carvers live here and you may see some at work.



## My Son Archeological Site

Located 40km (25 mi) southwest of Hoi An is the world-famous My Son temple ruin complex, which includes ruins of 70 Hindu temples built between the 4th and 13 centuries. Here you can see intricate relief sculptures, stone pilasters, and walk inside thousand-year-old temples. The Cham towers are the most famous of these buildings. Only 20 temples are still standing today, due largely to bombing during the Vietnam War (known locally as the American War), as well as the effects of time. Inside some of the standing buildings are galleries of sculpture saved from the bombed out ruins.



## Handicrafts Workshop

In this 200-year old building, you can watch artisans make finely crafted silk lanterns by hand or learn to make a lantern yourself with expert help. Twice a day, there is a cultural show with singing, traditional music, and dancing in the courtyard.



## Phuc Kien Assembly Hall and Pagoda

Open from 7:30am to 5pm daily, you can walk inside this resplendent 17th century temple to see statues of the Goddess of the Sea, Thien Hau, and her attendants. Originally a Buddhist temple built by the Viet people, it fell into disrepair in the 1800s and was sold to wealthy Chinese traders, who restored it and put in statues of different deities.



## Hoi An Old Quarter

A stroll down the streets of Old Quarter is like going back to the time when Hoi An was one of the richest ports in the area. Designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Old Quarter is a remarkable mix of architecture from China, Japan, France, Vietnam, and other areas. For 500 years, Hoi An was a major port in Asia and foreign traders waited for favorable winds in Hoi An for months. Some settled here permanently or built lavish homes for their annual visits. The elegant 18th century House of Tan Ky is open to visitors. You can visit Old Town's monuments, chapels, community halls, cafes, and shops and partake of the ambiance of this quaint area.

## Central Market

The two narrow streets of Central Market are filled with housewares, fresh produce, jewelry shops, and other items, but the most popular shops in the market are the clothing stores. Here, you can get custom-fitted clothing (in all sizes and fashions) at inexpensive prices. If you have a style in mind, bring in a photo and they'll make it for you, usually within a day.



## Museum of Trade Ceramics

Hoi An's artisans became famous for their ceramics in the 16th century, and from this port some of the world's finest wares were made. The museum showcases dishes and vases made during the 16th, 17th, and 18th century, including many that have been recovered in shipwrecks.



## Hoi An River Cruises

One of the best ways to appreciate the architecture and beauty of this city is by taking a river cruise from Hoi An along the Thu Bon River. Along the river, you can see the intricate canal system cut through the city, and once you get past the city itself you can see what life is like along the lush green river beds for the fishermen and women who live here.



# Hue

The 3-story Tomb of Khai Dinh is carved into a hillside 6 miles from Hue and is one of 7 historic tombs open to visitors in this area.

In the culturally rich city of Hue, Vietnam, you can explore many UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including The Forbidden City, 7 Royal Tombs, and many pagodas. Affordable hotels and savory cuisine beckon visitors year round. Countryside bike tours and river boat tours are also enjoyable ways to explore

this scenic area. Hotels are located in the South of the city, while most of the attractions (including the famous Citadel) are in the North. With attractive prices (\$40 US or less per night for most hotels), it's easy to see why Hue continues to attract its share of visitors.



## Hue Citadel

Entrance to Hue citadel and Forbidden City in Hue, Vietnam.

The elaborate fortress in the heart of Hue was once the Imperial City of Vietnam, where the ruling emperor, his court, and government officials lived and worked. The citadel includes several palaces, pavilions, a temple, the Royal Theater. In the center lies the Forbidden City (also called Dai Noi), the personal living quarters for the emperor, where only the emperor, his family, concubines, and servants were allowed. Today, one of the palaces has been converted into the Museum of Royal Fine Arts, in the grand 19th century Long An Palace. You can see several exhibits from the Nguyen Dynasty here. Visitors into the Citadel and interior palaces and other buildings are allowed daily.



## Buddhist Pagodas

Octagonal towers of Thien Mu Pagoda, built in 1601.

If you have limited time in Hue, stop by the 17th century Tu Dam Pagoda, which is conveniently located within a few km of the Citadel. However, the most iconic and picturesque pagodas of Hue are a few kilometers southwest of the city. The 7-tiered Thien Mu Pagoda is the tallest and the oldest pagodas in the area and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Tu Hieu Pagoda is small and stately, with a lotus pond in front and is near Tu Duc's Tomb, and is the iconic pagoda that Hue is known for.



## Perfume River Boat Tour

Scenic Boat cruises along the Perfume River can take you to the Royal Tombs and other sights.

You can take a scenic Perfume River cruise in a dragon boat and explore several interesting sights in the area without fighting the infamous traffic of Hue. Some of the longer boat tours can take you to see Hon Chen Temple, Thien Mu Pagoda, and Minh Mang Tomb. Sunset cruises are available, which often include local folk music and dining.

The former Imperial City of Hue offers visitors a historic and culturally rich place to explore. Located near the coast, it's also within a short drive of Thuan An Beach, which is less than 15km from Hue. Thuan An Beach is a perfect getaway if you want a relaxing day in the sun and water.



## Royal Tombs

Tu Duc Tomb is one of 7 royal tombs of the Nguyen Emperors you can see just outside of Hue, Vietnam.

Just 6 km (4 mi) outside the city of Hue, the first of 7 royal tombs of Nguyen emperors can be found, the Royal Tomb of Tu Duc. These UNESCO World Heritage Sites are nestled within the forests outside Hue. Some tombs are well preserved and others are in ruins, damaged during the Tet Offensive of the Vietnam/American War. Other notable tombs along this route include the Tomb of Thieu Tri, the Tomb of Khai Dinh, the Tomb of Dong Khanh, and the Tomb of Gia Long. You can take a boat tour along the Perfume River to see these tombs, rent a motorbike, or take a bus tour. Almost all tours will take you to the Royal Tomb of Tu Duc, which is one of the grandest and most impressive of all the tombs.

## Dong Ba Market

Bundles of incense on display in Dong Ba Market.

This is the city's biggest marketplace where you can buy anything you'd like, from electronics to incense to housewares to clothing and accessories. The lacquer ware here is particularly fine, as is the silver jewelry.





## The Mekong Delta

Come visit the Mekong Delta region of Southern Vietnam to discover hidden wonders. Ecotourism is a strong industry in this lush tropical region. Cruise down the Mekong River in a boat taxi and discover a world from the past. Floating markets, ancient temples, fruit orchards, museums, and scenic rice paddy farms dot the area. Here are 7 must see sights in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam.



## Chau Doc

Famous Fish Statue in the town of Chau Doc, on the waterfront.

Situated along the river, you can explore the town of Chau Doc's monuments, mosques, and temples, as well as a vibrant marketplace. From the De Dao Trang Plaza to the Chau Phu Temple, you'll find many cultural and religious sites to explore. The Chau Giang Mosque and the Murbarak Mosque are located across the river and are worth a trip, and there are many short boat taxis available for a quick trip.





## Sam Mountain

Buddhist temple at the base of Sam Mountain.

Sam Mountain sits near the city of Chau Doc, and climbing the relatively small but stately peak is a cultural as well as scenic experience, as you will pass dozens of shrines, tombs, relief statues, and even a temple (the Phat Thay An Temple, at the base of Sam Mountain). The short climb is regarded as a pilgrimage for many Vietnamese and Chinese. At the top of the peak, there's a small military outpost, where you can enjoy stunning views looking into Cambodia on one side and Vietnam on the other side.



## River Boat Cruises

Top tourist attractions are the scenic boat cruises along the Mekong Delta. This one departs from Ben Tre village.

One of the most enjoyable ways to experience this region is by taking a boat cruise along sections of the Mekong River. From Vin Long or My Tho, there are several tours taking visitors along the river and its various canals daily. Some tours stop at flower farms, rice paper factories, and nearby temples. Every tour you take will lead you past thick forests of palm trees, rice farms, and villages.



## Vinh Trang Pagoda

Daily tours are offered at the Vinh Trang Pagoda.

A favorite tourist spot, this pagoda is located in My Tho (near Ho Chi Minh City). This stately and elaborate building (built in a combination of eastern and western styles) has mosaic decorations made out of broken pottery.

## Floating Markets

Farmers sell their produce in floating markets in the Mekong Delta.

Quintessentially Vietnam, the floating markets of the Mekong Delta show a vibrant part of local life in this thriving agricultural area. You can buy pineapple and other tropical fruits from the growers themselves in boats. Most of the rice exported from Vietnam is grown in the Mekong Delta, and there are many fruit orchards and flower farms here as well.



## Tra Su Indigo Forest

Boat tour in the Tra Su Indigo Forest, Vietnam (during high water season).

This fascinating ecotourism site in the An Giang Province is a vibrant (but dry) forested area most of the year and it turns into a flooded forest in September and October, during rainy season, which are considered the best times to visit the region. During high water season, you can take a guided boat tour through the forest from Ho Chi Minh City.



## Ecotourism

Vietnam is the third largest exporter of rice in the world, and most of the country's rice is grown in the rich fields of the Mekong Delta.

The Mekong Delta has the richest farmland in the country, which is why the area has been fought over by neighboring countries for thousands of years. The region offers some of the world's most interesting eco tours of rice paddies, fruit orchards, flower growers, and riverbeds. Taking tours in this area supports the local economy and encourages responsible environmental stewardship.



# Nha Trang

Nha Trang, Vietnam is the country's top beachside resort town.

If you enjoy leisurely days at sparkling beaches, delicious Vietnamese cuisine, or underwater adventures in coral reefs, Nha Trang is the spot for you to travel. Known as the most appealing beachside resort-town in Vietnam, Nha Trang Bay has an interesting history and a wide variety of activities to enjoy in and out of the water, which gives it additional appeal to tourists from all over the world.

With beaches beckoning and more nightlife than most beach towns in Vietnam, Nha Trang has a lot to offer tourists. If you're interesting in looking beyond the basics of beach and restaurants, check out these interesting sites to visit that are "must see spots" for tourists.





## Po Nagar Cham Towers

Just 2 km outside of the city of Nha Trang are the impressive Po Nagar Cham Towers, brick temples which have stood on a hill for over 1000 years, on the banks of the Cai River. Originally, there were eight towers here built to honor the mother of the kingdom (the name Po Nagar Cham means The Tower of the Lady), but only four towers remain. Each tower faces east. The towers are still used daily by Vietnamese Buddhists for religious purposes, but visitors are welcome daily. Of the four towers, Thap Chinh (located in the north of the complex) is the most grand and impressive and has vaulted ceilings.

## Vinpearl Resort

With cable cars, a water park, famous water slides, restaurants, an amusement park, a golf course, sweeping views of Nha Trang bay, an aquarium, and a 5-star hotel make this a favorite destination for many tourists. Whether you're staying in the hotel or not, you are welcome to visit the amusement park for a fee and enjoy amusements for the day.

## Thap Ba Hot Springs Center

Have you ever wanted to take a bath in mineral mud, or relax all your cares away in a natural jacuzzi-like hot spring bath? At Thap Ba Hot Springs Center you can take group mud baths or pay more for a private mud bath. The tubs are drained in between groups and filled up again with clean mud from the natural hot springs for each new group. Onsite, you can rent towels and get a locker for your things. Just bring your swimming suit.

## Monkey Island

Monkey Island is one of many islands within an hour's boat ride from Nha Trang, but this one is unique due to its large population of monkeys (200 were brought here in 1985 from Malaysia). You can take a ferry ride to Monkey Island for a few hours or for the whole day. On the island is a beach, hiking trails, and an animal show with trained monkeys. There are also some places where you can buy bags of food and feed the monkeys.

## National Oceanographic Museum of Vietnam

If you'd like to see the marine life in the South China Sea up close before you go scuba diving or snorkeling, this is the place to come. You'll see all the native species of fish, sea turtles, and sea life in tanks on the first floor, along with swamp dwellers like crocodiles. Labels identifying each species are in both Vietnamese and English, which is helpful for all the tourists.



## **Ba Ho Waterfall**

If you've always wanted to hike through a jungle to a hidden waterfall, you'll enjoy a trek to Ba Ho Waterfall (also known as Sui Ba Ho), located 35 km (about 22 miles) out of the city. You can take a guided tour here (which is recommended, since the trailhead is only marked with a few old stone pillars. You can also rent motorbikes and come out here. If you travel by car, be prepared for flat tires because the road is not maintained regularly. This is one of the reasons why so many people come here with a tour group. The hike itself is a 3 km trek through mostly shaded jungle, passing three pools until you come to the waterfall itself. It's a beautiful spot and an excellent place to beak away from the crowds and get close to nature. Just make sure you wear good shoes, because you'll be jumping and climbing over boulders on the path, which can sometimes be slippery.

## **Snorkeling at Hon Mun Island Marine Park**

Hon Mun Island is one of the many islands in the Nha Trang bay with well-developed coral reef ecosystem. You can go snorkeling or scuba diving here or on several other nearby islands and experience the underwater beauty of the place. There are many colorful fish and diverse corals to see throughout the reef. Scuba diving certification is less expensive here than almost anywhere in the world, attracting many adventure tourists.

## **Nha Trang Bay Boat Tours**

Enjoy a relaxing boat tour of one of the most beautiful bays in the world, Nha Trang. There are dozens of boat touring companies ready to take you on group tours, private expeditions, dinner cruises, whale watching expeditions, or scuba and snorkeling adventures. One of the favorite activities to do in this area is to relax and enjoy the spectacular views on a boat cruise in Nha Trang Bay.