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WELCOME TO VIETNAM

Thank you for choosing TEFL International Vietnam as your study location of TESOL Course. Below, we have prepared some useful facts about Vietnam, please have a look.

1. Customs

Before picking up your luggage from the baggage claim area you will proceed to the Customs desk.

If you have a visa approval letter, you need to get visa at the VISA ROOM before Customs desk.

2. Transportation upon Arrival

Ho Chi Minh City is a 20-minute taxi ride from the airport. A metered taxi charges approximately US\$ 10 from Tan Son Nhat to the city center where our courses are located.

3. Time

Vietnam is seven hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT).

4. Working in Vietnam

If you are planning on seeking work in Vietnam, please bring along your original diplomas, degrees and transcripts from the college, technical school or high school and your police background check with notarizing. Please bring a copy of your marriage license if you are married.

Job prospects throughout Vietnam and Asia are very good and easily available for citizens from all countries. Should you accept a work position in Vietnam you will need to get a working visa!

5. A general view of Ho Chi Minh City

Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) is a sprawling metropolis of 7 million people. Still referred to as "Saigon" today, Ho Chi Minh City is the hub of financial activity and is the largest and most developed city in Vietnam. You will witness a mix of the old and new where modern skyscrapers are juxtaposed with faded colonial buildings. Amid the city's modernization still exists traditional elements visible in the variety of Chinese-style pagodas and historical landmarks such as the Notre Dame Cathedral, Old Post Office and the Reunification Hall.

Ho Chi Minh City has a vibrant nightlife with many local and western bars and cafes concentrated in the city center. The city is also the culinary capital where you can sample a variety of foods ranging from Vietnamese regional specialties to international cuisine. Here you can find the best Vietnamese, French, and Chinese restaurants.

6. Clothing

Light, comfortable, easy to launder clothing in natural fabrics such as cotton is most suitable in Vietnam. Good walking shoes and sandals that can be easily removed are recommended especially when entering temples and people's homes.

7. Food



One of the delights of Ho Chi Minh City is the amazing cuisine. You'll never have to look very far for food. Both Vietnamese and Western food are widely available and English-language menus are becoming increasingly common. One of the characteristics of Vietnamese food is that it is always fresh being bought the same morning straight from the market. Rice and noodle dishes are the staple of Vietnamese food. Fish, chicken, and/or pork dishes along with cooked vegetables and rice form a typical meal. The dishes are usually not spicy and are accompanied with a variety of condiments, including chili sauce, fish sauce or 'nuoc mam' (smells like anchovies), and soy sauce. It is advisable to have hot, well-cooked meals (including vegetables) until you think you get used to the Vietnamese foods, which always have lots of fresh vegetables. Typical Vietnamese dishes you can expect to try include "pho", a type of rice noodle soup eaten for breakfast, "cha gio" ("nem"), deep-fried spring rolls and "goingosen", a delicious salad made with lotus stems, shrimps and peanuts. Sea products are also super: fresh fish, lobster, crabs, Cuttlefish. Eating utensils will mostly be chopsticks. Just request for a fork (pronounced "nia") if you haven't mastered the chopstick.

Central Saigon is the place to look for fine Vietnamese and Western food. The prices vary from US\$2-4 (Vietnamese office set lunch) to US\$4/dish (western food).

Many local Vietnamese restaurants do not have prices on the menu. You must definitely ask the total price when you place your order because overcharging is quite common.

8. Vegetarians

Due to the strong Buddhist influence in Vietnam, vegetarian food is widely available. Vegetarians will have no difficulty eating in Vietnam as fresh vegetables and fruits are in abundant supply, in addition to a number of vegetarian restaurants. All fruits and vegetables should be cooked or peeled.

9. Tipping when eating

It is probably the most asked question. It is a western introduction. In the large cities when dining in large hotel restaurants tips are included. If you feel the service was good you can tip around 10,000 – 20,000 Dong (around US\$ 0.80 – 1.50). As you travel and eat on the roadside it is not required that you tip.



Vietnames currency

10. Drinks, Snacks, Personal Food Items

Coffee, tea, soft drinks and snacks may be purchased at a small cost from the shops across the street or down the road. Drinks may be taken into the training room during input sessions.

Bottled water and mineral water are obtainable at any shops in most cities but remember to check the seal for possible contamination. Ice cubes especially served on the roadside or small towns should be avoided. It is advisable to drink boiled water and not to drink ice and tap water. The trend is starting to move towards chilling the drinks instead of putting ice in it.

11. Internet

There is a free Internet access at our Center

12. Mail

There are many post offices around the city where you can send mails.

You may receive mail at this address:

IEL360 Building

80B Ly Chinh Thang Street, Ward 8, District 3, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

13. First Aid

All minor injuries can be treated at the training location. Medication for food poisoning - including antibiotic drugs - is available at local drug stores. In the case of food poisoning or other stomach problems trainees are advised to temporarily avoid eating. Drink only bottled water until the symptoms subside and then gradually introduce other foods into your diet beginning with steamed rice.

If there is any serious injury, please inform the Course Director or one of the staff and transportation will be provided to a local hospital for treatment. An emergency contact list is posted in the classroom.



14. Course administrative information

a. Training Course Schedule

The first class and orientation will take place on Monday morning at 9:00 a.m. The course schedule will be provided on Monday morning. Sessions generally run between 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. with appropriate breaks.

Trainees are expected to attend all inputs and other sessions included on the schedule unless they are sick and require medical treatment. This is particularly important for Teaching Practice (TP). It is very difficult to arrange an alternate TP time and there will be an additional fee for rescheduled TP.

There is no required reading before the course as such as we start from scratch in all areas and assume no prior knowledge apart from the ability to speak English. However, there are a couple of books that you may want to either purchase or read through at some stage:

“The Practice of English Language Teaching”, by Jeremy Harmer (Longman - ISBN: 0582403855), and “English Grammar in Use”, by Raymond Murphy (Cambridge University Press – ISBN: 052143680X).

b. Course Dress Requirements

For all input and tutorial sessions at the training location, there are no specific dress requirements, yet we ask that you be mindful of your peers and respectful of the fact that you are a visitor in another country. During Teaching Practice, however, there are specific dress requirements that adhere to the local working culture and basic ideas of professionalism. All trainees are expected to dress “casually smart” according to the following guidelines:

i. Women:

Shoulders should be covered. Very thin straps or tank tops are not. No low-cut necklines or very short skirts. Bare midriffs must not be visible, even when lifting arms up. Open-toed shoes are acceptable.

ii. Men:

Long pants; no jeans; Short- or long-sleeved shirt with a collar; a tie is not required. Loafers or dress shoes, sandals are not acceptable. Long hair should be neatly tied back into a pony-tail.

c. Resources

Please bring a pen and a notebook for taking notes during class. All relevant forms and instructions will be provided, as well as notes from the input sessions.

You may want to bring a mobile phone with you, especially one which records. It is not required equipment, but many trainees have commented that the possession of their mobile phone made the course easier for them (in preparing tapes, interviewing and listening to conversations with students).

Various books are provided for use by trainees. However, no books should be removed from the classroom without specific permission from the Course Academic Director. Inventory of all books will be conducted at the end of the course to ensure that no books have been accidentally removed.

You will be required to prepare materials for your Teaching Practice. The school keeps an initial supply of basic tools necessary to make student materials. However, the trainees are responsible for providing additional poster board, markers, glue, pens, paper, etc., for creating teaching materials. These can be purchased at a local stationery store in Ho Chi Minh City.

d. Trainee course feedback sessions

There will be a trainee feedback session at the end of the course to give trainees the opportunity to provide feedback regarding anything to do with the course, accommodations, and so on. We welcome your open and honest feedback so we can continue to improve the training course and the facilities provided at the training location. Although there are scheduled feedback times, please feel free to give feedback to the Course Director or the Academic Director at any time. Of course, we welcome all positive comments as well!

e. Problems and Complaints

If any trainee has a personal problem which may interfere with course studies, please talk to one of the trainers.

If any trainee has a complaint about any aspect of the course or about any of the trainers, please see the Course Director.

15. Additional information

a. In-town Transportation

Motorbike and bicycle rentals are readily available at many travel agencies and backpacker Cafes located along Pham Ngu Lao Street. Motorbike rentals usually are US\$ 2- 5 per day and bicycle rentals are US\$ 1 per day. In Vietnam, car rentals are accompanied with a driver. If you have witnessed the chaotic streets in Vietnam you will understand why it is best to leave the driving to the locals! Car rentals can be arranged by a local tour company. Prices will vary depending on the distance traveled.



b. Shopping

In recent years, Ho Chi Minh City has blossomed into a shoppers' paradise, catering both tourists and the local market. To the Western mind, one of the odd things about shopping in Ho Chi Minh City is the tendency for vendors of the same product to congregate all in one spot. The shops offer little to choose between them – prices, quality and selection are nearly identical in all adjacent businesses. At least in theory, cut-throat competition like this should create a buyers' market. In practice, Vietnamese shopkeepers wouldn't be in business if they were not making a profit.

As a general principle, try to find a shop that does not cater particularly to tourists and puts price tags on all its items. In touristy areas, items sold with no visible price tags must be bargained for – expect the vendor to start the bidding at two to five times the real price. Though the touristy areas are where the best selection of souvenir goods are sold, you may find a better deal if you are willing to hunt around the back alleys and markets of Ho Chi Minh City, the rents are lower.

Central Saigon is the place to shop. Dong Khoi and Nguyen Hue St. are thick with shops geared towards the tourist traffic, but are also where a large number of scams and rip-offs take place. When shopping (or just strolling, for that matter) in this area, be very careful of your belongings: skilled pair of motorcycle cowboys perform like world-class acrobats and can swipe your bag and be hundreds of meters away by the time it registers that you've been robbed!

c. Pham Ngu Lao Backpacker Area

The Pham Ngu Lao budget zone offers good pickings and has steadily acquired a string of down-market shops geared towards backpackers. Price are reasonable, rapacious bargaining is rare, staff speak English and there is a wild selection of interesting items. Check out the shops along Pham Ngu Lao St., De Them St., and Bui Vien St. It's also productive to look at some of the stalls at Ben Thanh Market.



d. Money

The official currency, the Dong, at the time of writing trades at 21,000 Dong to US\$ 1. Travelers checks can be cashed at authorized foreign exchange outlets and banks, and require presentation of passport. There is normally a 2 to 5 percent transaction fee for cashing traveller's checks. Credit cards including Visa, MasterCard, and American Express are accepted at most large hotels and restaurants.

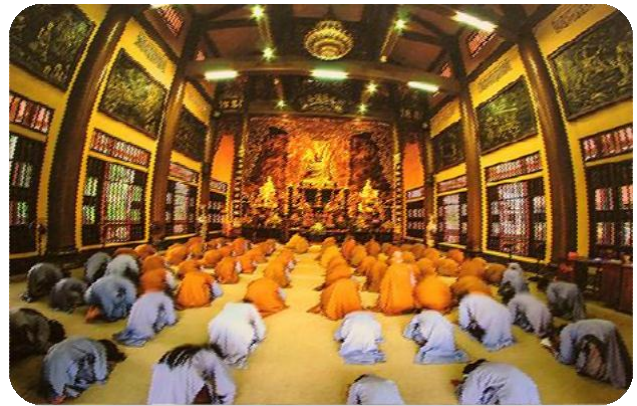
Major international banking institutions in Vietnam are: ANZ (Australia & New Zealand), Hong Kong Shanghai Bank, Citibank, Indovina Bank (Indonesian).



e. Things to See

The Vietnam (American) War is a topic that still fascinates foreigners, and many of Ho Chi Minh City's tourist attractions focus on this interest. In central Saigon, the most intriguing sites for war buffs include the War Remnants Museum and Reunification Palace. A day trip to the Cu Chi tunnels is also most rewarding.

If you'd rather pursue the topic of religion, be sure to check out the Giac Lam Pagoda, Jade Emperor Pagoda and VinhNghiem Pagoda. A day-long excursion to TayNinh is required to visit the incredible Caodai Great Temple. Another worthwhile excursion is to the One Pillar Pagoda.



Giac Lam Pagoda

Boat trips on the Saigon River are always a great way to take refuge from the urban pandemonium. Further afield, beach buffs are sure to appreciate either the glitter of commercialized Vung Tau or the tranquility of barely developed Long Hai.

f. Local Weather Conditions

Being only 10.5° north of the equator and 5m to 10m above the sea level, Ho Chi Minh City has a tropical climate. There are two main seasons: wet and dry. The wet season (summer) lasts from May to November (June to August are the wettest months). During this time, there are heavy but short-lived downpours almost daily, usually in the afternoon. The dry season (winter) runs from December to April. Late February through May are the hottest months, when it's also very humid, but things cool down slightly when the summer rainy season begins.

Temperatures vary little with seasons, averaging 26°C in January and 28°C in July. Summer daily high are usually in the low 30s, while in January the overnight lows are about 21°C. Average humidity is 80%. Annual rainfall averages 1979mm, most of which occurs during summer. The coldest temperature ever recorded in Ho Chi Minh City was 14°C.

g. Other Preparations

If you require a particular medication, take an adequate supply, as it may not be available locally. Take part of the packaging showing the generic name rather than the brand, which will make getting replacements easier. It's a good idea to have a legible prescription or letter from your doctor to show that you legally use the medication to avoid any problems.

Sunburn can be more to skin than just uncomfortable – it can lead to skin cancer in later years. Bring sunscreen (UV) lotion and wear something to cover your head. Protect your eyes with decent sunglasses. Please make sure you've got a pair before coming to Vietnam since sunglasses here are not very good!

h. Get Acquainted!

Before your arrival, we highly recommend you purchase a descriptive guide book or do some online research to familiarize yourself and get acquainted with Vietnam and all it has to offer. For more information on Vietnam and Ho Chi Minh City, we recommend the following sites:

Lonely Planet Online www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/south-east-asia/ho-chi-minh

Asia Travel www.asiatravel.com/vietnam.html

We look forward to welcoming you to beautiful Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam!

