Relocating to Ho Chi Minh City

RESIDENT VIETNAM
Relocation and Immigration Management

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VIETNAM AT A GLANCE

Official Name: Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Capital: Hanoi

Population: 90 Million

Area: 331,210 sq km/ 128,565 sq miles

Currency: Vietnam Dong (VND), 23,500 VND = 1 USD

GDP: 193.6 Billion USD (2015)

Government: Vietnam is a single party state.

Country Code: +84

Time Zone: UTC/GMT +7

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VIETNAM AT A GLANCE (continued)

Weather: Due to the length of the country, the weather in the North and the South can be quite different. The North experiences a somewhat more typical "4 Seasons" although snow is rare. Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) typically experiences two main seasons, the dry season and the wet season. HCMC temperatures throughout the year remain basically stable between 23 and 31 °C (75 and 90 °F). HCMC and the South is normally quite humid year round.

Location: Vietnam is centrally located in Southeast Asia and within just a short 1 or 2+ hour flight from Bangkok, Singapore, Cambodia and Hong Kong. Other approximate flight times (not including layovers) from Ho Chi Minh City:

To Tokyo, Japan: 6+ Hours

To Paris, France: 13 Hours

To Sydney, Australia: 7+ Hours

To San Francisco, USA: 18 Hours

To New York, USA: 20 Hours

Major Cities	Population
Ho Chi Minh	9.0 Million
Hanoi	7.5 Million
Hai Phong	2 Million
Danang	1 Million

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VIETNAM AT A GLANCE (continued)

Language: Vietnamese is the official language. The Romanized Vietnamese alphabet was developed by Catholic missionaries in the 17th century. English is the dominant second language with some French still spoken. Some English is spoken in the tourist and central business districts of the main cities but in general, English is not spoken in government offices or outside the city. It is not necessary to become fluent in Vietnamese but we recommend at least some study of basic words and phrases.

English	Vietnamese	Pronunciation
Hello	Xin chào	*sin chow*
Thank You	Cám ơn	*kahm uhn*
Yes	Có	*koh*
No	Không	*khom*

Note the use of diacritical marks in Vietnamese writing. The marks provide a guide to the tones of the language, the pronunciation and help define meaning.

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FOCUS ON HO CHI MINH CITY

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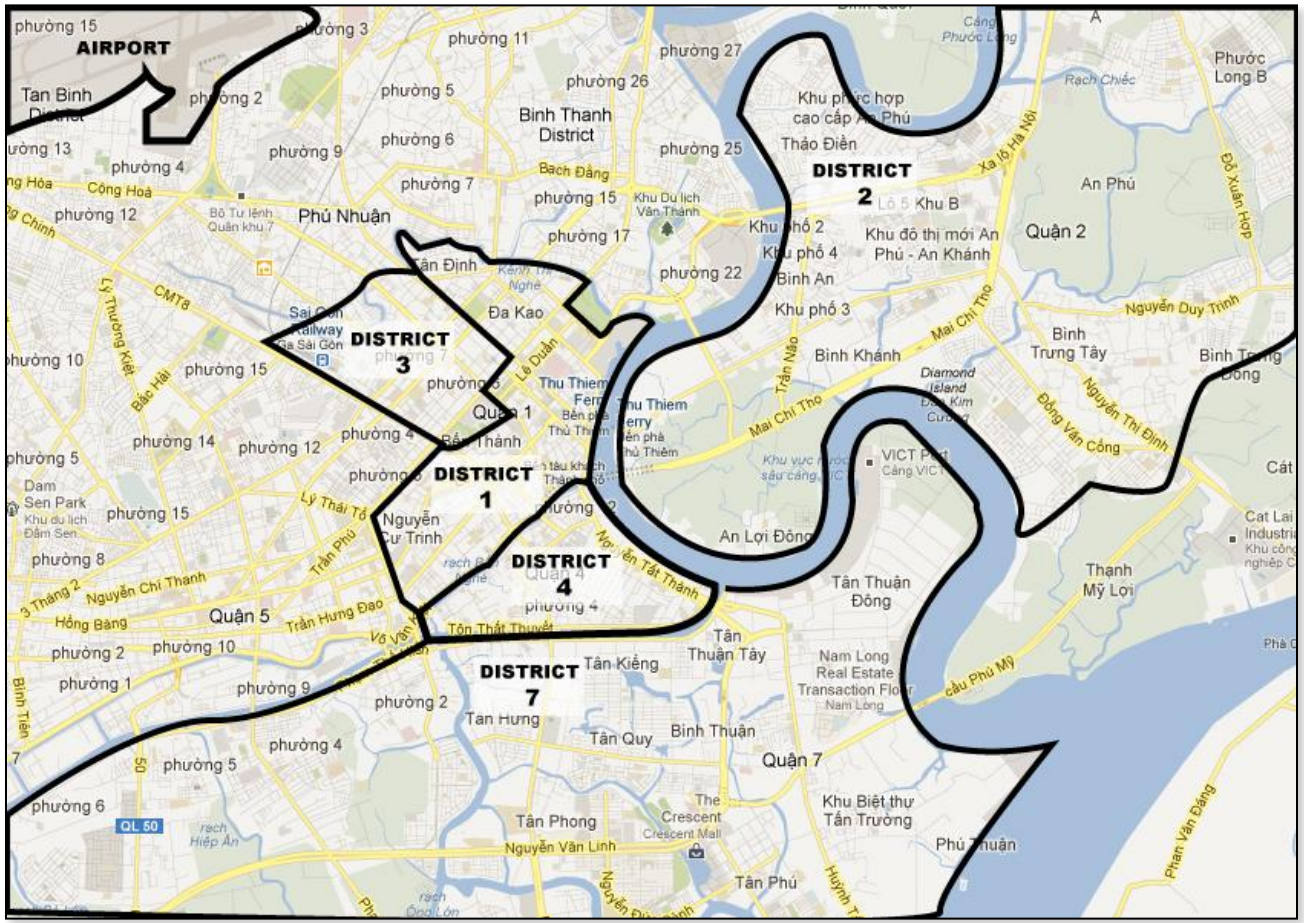
FOCUS ON HO CHI MINH CITY

City Map: HCMC (also called Saigon) is divided into Districts. The main districts for expat business, housing and schooling are:

- **District 1**: Central business district, most shopping, hotels and major offices are here. (20 minutes from airport)
- **District 2:** Traditional Expat Area with major International Schools (15 to 20 minutes from District 1).
- **District 7:** ""Saigon South" suburban-like, newly developed area of the city. (20 to 25 minutes from District 1).



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FOCUS ON HO CHI MINH CITY: Overview

Overview: HCMC provides a vibrant mix of dynamic business, local culture and a variety of modern conveniences and brands. Although still very much a developing country with challenges like traffic, pollution and lack of infrastructure, it is changing rapidly and can be a great place to live and work for expats from a variety of backgrounds.

There are no official numbers on the amount of expats living and working in HCMC but there is a vibrant and supportive network of expats from all over the world that live here. International schools provide numerous activities, nightlife spots and social and sports groups offer expats and their spouses many options for socializing and networking.

In general, Vietnam is relatively safe for foreigners in comparison to many other major cities in Asia and the West. Petty theft like bag snatching or pick pocketing can occur while walking on the street and it is important to consider security when viewing possible living options (especially when looking at villas or houses). Although safe, HCMC is still like any other major city and normal precautions should be taken to ensure your safety.

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FOCUS ON HO CHI MINH CITY: Expatriate Life

Medical: Excellent medical care is available in Ho Chi Minh City although it is somewhat limited. There are two major international Clinics that offer quality, international doctors, modern facilities and 24 hour emergency services. There are also international dental clinics. Most major insurance is accepted and evacuation services are offered. These clinics can cover a large variety of tests, check ups and basic care, but for major procedures or tests, most expats will fly the 1 to 2 hour flight to either Bangkok or Singapore where the major regional International hospitals are located. The main medical international clinics in HCMC are:

- **Raffles International Clinic:**
- **Family Medical Clinic**

Transportation: Public transportation is not recommended for expats and lacks real infrastructure although the first line of a subway is due to be completed around 2020. The majority of expats will use a private car and driver or take taxis which are very common, safe and inexpensive. It is not recommended that expatriates drive motorbikes or their own cars due to the very chaotic traffic. It is highly dangerous to drive motorbikes.

Shopping and Dining: There are a variety of malls, supermarkets and restaurants that offer International brands, products and cuisine throughout the city. It can however be a challenge at times to find the exact items or particular high quality products.

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FOCUS ON HO CHI MINH CITY: Expatriate Life

Expat Community and Working Spouses: There are many groups for socializing and networking with other expats. Spouses who would like to work while in Vietnam are not covered by their husband or wife's work permit. They must either freelance or obtain a work permit separately from a company. Some groups and organizations of interest include:

- Women's groups in both HCMC and Hanoi including International Ladies of Vietnam
- A variety of adult sports groups including cycling, golf, rugby and more
- Business Associations: EUROCHAM, AMCHAM, Hong Kong Chamber of Commerce, etc.
- Theatre troupe, dance lessons and more

Leisure and Culture: Although perhaps not as culturally rich for expats as places like Singapore or Hong Kong, Ho Chi Minh offers many things to do at night and on weekends for single people or for whole families.

- Numerous places and events of historical and cultural interest
- Traditional and Modern art galleries
- Outdoor activities: golf, swimming, tennis
- Concerts and networking events put on by International Chambers of Commerce
- Movie theatres with English language blockbuster movies
- Many different bars and cafes including sports bars

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FOCUS ON HO CHI MINH CITY: Housing

Villas: Options for living in Villas are found typically in District 2 or District 7. There is a huge amount of variety in the market as far as quality, furnishings and helpfulness of the landlord. In general, although villas can feel more like a traditional home, the upkeep and attention required are much more than one would find in an apartment. Other notes:

- Villas can be found either free-standing or in compounds
- The majority of compounds and villas lack adequate security services or proper central management
- Most villas are owned and managed by individual local landlords
- Villas in District 2 can many times include a small yard, pool and large interior
- District 7 homes will be smaller and more like townhouses in comparison to District 2 houses.
- There is a mix of furnished and non-furnished homes available. Typically, homes are semi-furnished meaning that basic furniture like beds, refrigerator and washer is included.
- Quality and design in Vietnam may not meet some expats expectations. It is very important to manage expectations when viewing properties and take into account that most villas will be older and may not be up to International standards.
- Be cautious when searching the internet for properties as it is a highly unregulated market and much of the info online is either inaccurate or simply false. Resident Vietnam works with reliable local agents to find quality properties.

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FOCUS ON HO CHI MINH CITY: Housing Continued

APARTMENTS: In recent years, HCMC has seen many new, International standard apartment complexes. These apartments are located in District 1, 2 and 7 and provide quality services, design, security and construction:

- **Non-Serviced Apartments:** These are owned by individual local landlords and therefore have a variety of prices, furnishings and services. When renting non-serviced apartments, the tenant must normally deal directly with the landlord for fixes or problems.
- **Serviced Apartments:** This type of apartment is somewhere between a hotel and apartment. Normally, they include all services, all furniture and housewares and most utilities in the rental price. Services may include daily cleaning, centralized maintenance services and management. Serviced apartments can be double the price of a similarly sized non-serviced apartment.
- District 1 apartments (non serviced or serviced) are the most expensive in the city. District 2 and 7 can be much more affordable and more space can be had for less money.
- Most apartment complexes include full facilities including pool, fitness center, even tennis courts. The fees for these may or may not be included in the rental price .
- 2 or 3 bedroom apartments are the most common. There are penthouses also available throughout but primarily outside of District 1
- Non-serviced apartments will either come semi furnished, fully furnished or non-furnished. It depends on the individual landlord.

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FOCUS ON HO CHI MINH CITY: Schooling

International Schools: HCMC has a good selection of very high quality

International Schools and daycare for children of all ages. The main International schools are located in District 2 and District 7. Outside of HCMC and Hanoi, there a little to no options for International schooling. Notes:

- **A variety of curriculum:** IB, American, Australian, French, Japanese, Korean
- **Waiting lists:** In general, waiting lists are not currently an issue however, should you be planning to enroll your children, it is very important to begin the admissions process as soon as possible. If there are waiting lists, they are normally for primary grades.
- **Day Care/Pre-School:** There are International options for Day Care/Pre-School in the various Districts.
- **Transportation:** All major International schools offer private bus service
- **Average Costs:** 12,000 USD to 22,000 USD per child/year (earlier grades to secondary)
- **Major International Schools:**

International School	District
ISHCMC: International School of Ho Chi Minh	District 2
SSIS: Saigon South International School	District 7
AIS: Australian International School	District 2
BIS: British International School	District 2, District 3
Lycee Francais International Marguerite Duras	District 9

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FOCUS ON HO CHI MINH CITY: Useful Expat Websites

There are some good online resources for expats in HCMC and some dynamic forum groups.

You can start with a few below:

- **Facebook Groups:** There are several groups and for most you will need to send a request to join. You can search on Facebook the following to get you started:
  - Saigon International Families (lots of info for parents and on kids resources)
  - Expat Domestic Help Saigon (resource to find maids and other household help)
- **City Pass Guide:** Online version of expat magazine includes listings, lifestyle articles and more.

  https://www.citypassguide.com/

Saigoneer: Online version of expat magazine includes listings, lifestyle articles & more.

- http://saigoneer.com/

- **English Language Vietnam News Site:** VNExpress
  - https://e.vnexpress.net/

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Summary and Contact Info

Welcome to Vietnam:

Moving to a new country can be a challenge. Our team at Resident Vietnam is here to help make sure that your transition to Ho Chi Minh City is smooth and your time on your assignment is successful for you, your family and your company.

Throughout your relocation, your Resident Vietnam Coordinator will be sending you more information specific to your relocation needs and working with you at each step.

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