VIETNAM

Capital	Hanoi	
Largest city	Ho Chi Minh City	
Official languages	Vietnamese	
Official scripts	Vietnamese	
Ethnic groups	•86.2% Kinh (Viet) •1.9% Tay •1.7% Tai •1.5% Mường •1.4% Khmer Krom •1.1% Hoa •1.1% Nùng •1% Hmong •4.1% Others	
Demonym	Vietnamese	
Government	Marxist–Leninist single-party state	
	President	Trương Tấn Sang
	Prime Minister	Nguyễn Tấn Dũng
	Chairman of National Assembly	Nguyễn Sinh Hùng
	Chief Justice	Trương Hòa Bình
	Communist Party General Secretary	Nguyễn Phú Trọng
Legislature	National Assembly	
Formation		
	Independence from China	938
	Independence from France	2 September 1945
	Vietnam War	1955-1975
	Reunification	2 July 1976
	Current constitution	15 April 1992
Area		

1. Etymology

Vietnam (/ˌviːətˈnɑːm/, /vi, ɛt-/, /-ˈnæm/, /ˌvjɛt-/; Vietnamese pronunciation: [viət˧˨ - naːm˧˨) officially the Socialist Republic of Vietnam *(Cộng hòa Xã hội chủ nghĩa Việt Nam)*, is the easternmost country on the Indochina Peninsula in Southeast Asia. With an estimated 90.3 million inhabitants as of 2012, it is the world's 13th-most-populous country, and the eighth-most-populous Asian country. The name Vietnam translates as *"South Viet*", and was officially adopted in 1945. The country is bordered by China to the north, Laos to the northwest, Cambodia to the southwest, and the South China Sea to the east. Its capital city has been Hanoi since the reunification of North and South Vietnam in 1976.

	Total	331,210 km2 (65th) 128,565 sq mi
	Water (%)	6.4
Population		
	2012 estimate	90,388,000 (13th)
	Density	272/km2 (46th) 703/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2012 estimate	
	Total	$320.677 billion
	Per capita	$3,547
GDP (nominal)	2012 estimate	
	Total	$138.071 billion
	Per capita	$1,527
Gini (2008)	35.6 medium	
HDI (2012)	0.617 medium •	
Currency	đồng (₫) (VND)127th	
Time zone	ICT (Indochina Time) UTC+7 (UTC+7)	
	Summer (DST)	No DST (UTC+7)
Drives on the	right	
Calling code	+84	
Internet TLD	.vn	

The Vietnamese became independent from Imperial China in 938 AD, following the Battle of Bạch Đằng River. Successive Vietnamese royal dynasties flourished as the nation expanded geographically and politically into Southeast Asia, until the Indochina Peninsula was colonized by the French in the mid-19th century. Following a Japanese occupation in the 1940s, the Vietnamese fought French rule in the First Indochina War, eventually expelling the French in 1954. Thereafter, Vietnam was divided politically into two rival states, North and South Vietnam. Conflict between the two sides intensified, with heavy foreign intervention, during the Vietnam War, which ended with a North Vietnamese victory in 1975.

Vietnam was then unified under a Communist government, but was politically isolated and impoverished. In 1986, the government initiated a series of economic and political reforms, which began Vietnam's path towards integration into the world economy. By 2000, it had established diplomatic relations with most nations. Vietnam's economic growth has been among the highest in the world since 2000, and in 2011 it had the highest Global Growth Generators Index among 11 major

economies. Its successful economic reforms resulted in it joining the World Trade Organization in 2007. However, the country still suffers from relatively high levels of income inequality, disparities in healthcare provision, and poor gender equality

The name Việt Nam (Vietnamese pronunciation: [viət na:m]) is a variation of "Nam Việt" (Chinese: 南越; pinyin: *Nányuè*; literally "Southern Việt"), a name that can be traced back to the Trieu dynasty of the 2nd century BC. The word Việt originated as a shortened form of Bách Việt (Chinese: 百越; pinyin*: Bǎiyuè*), a word applied to a group of peoples then living in southern China and Vietnam. The form "Vietnam" (越南) is first recorded in the 16th-century oracular poem *Sấm Trạng Trình*. The name has also been found on 12 steles carved in the 16th and 17th centuries, including one at Bao Lam Pagoda in Haiphong that dates to 1558.

Between 1804 and 1813, the name was used officially by Emperor Gia Long. It was revived in the early 20th century by Phan Boi Chau's *History of the Loss of Vietnam*, and later by the Vietnamese Nationalist Party. The country was usually called Annam until 1945, when both the imperial government in Hue and the Viet Minh government in Hanoi adopted Việt Nam. Since the use of Chinese characters was discontinued in 1918, the alphabetic spelling of Vietnam is official.

2. History

2.1 Prehistory

Archaeological excavations have revealed the existence of humans in what is now Vietnam as early as the Paleolithic age. Homo erectus fossils dating to around 500,000 BC have been found in caves in Lang Son and Nghe An provinces in northern Vietnam. The oldest *Homo sapiens* fossils from mainland Southeast Asia are of Middle Pleistocene provenance, and include isolated teeth fragments from Tham Om and Hang Hum. Teeth attributed to Homo sapiens from the Late Pleistocene have also been found at Dong Can, and from the Early Holocene at Mai Da Dieu, Lang Gao and Lang Cuom.

2.2 Bronze Age

A Dong Son bronze drum

By about 1000 BC, the development of wet-rice cultivation and bronze casting in the Ma River and Red River floodplains led to the flourishing of the Đông Sơn culture, notable for its elaborate bronze drums. At this time, the early Vietnamese kingdoms of Văn Lang and Âu Lạc appeared, and the culture's influence spread to other parts of Southeast Asia, including Maritime Southeast Asia, throughout the first millennium BC.

2.3 Dynastic Vietnam

The legendary Hồng Bàng dynasty of the Hùng kings is considered the first Vietnamese state, known in Vietnamese as Văn Lang. In 257 BC, the last Hùng king was defeated by Thục Phán, who consolidated the Lạc Việt and Âu Việt tribes to form the Âu Lạc, proclaiming himself An Dương Vương. In 207 BC, a Chinese general named Zhao Tuo defeated An Dương Vương and consolidated Âu Lạc into Nanyue. However, Nanyue was itself incorporated into the empire of the Chinese Han Dynasty in 111 BC after the Han–Nanyue War.

Map showing ancient Nam Viet at its greatest extent.

For the next thousand years, Vietnam remained mostly under Chinese rule. Early independence movements, such as those of the Trưng sisters and Lady Triệu, were only temporarily successful, though the region gained a longer period of independence as Vạn Xuân under the Anterior Lý Dynasty between 544 and 602 AD. By the early 10th century, Vietnam had gained autonomy, but not true independence, under the Khúc family.

In 938 AD, the Vietnamese lord Ngô Quyền defeated the Chinese forces of the Southern Han state at Bạch Đằng River and regained full independence for Vietnam after a millennium of Chinese domination. Renamed as Đại Việt (Great Viet), the nation enjoyed a golden era under the Lý and Trần dynasties. During the rule of the Trần Dynasty, Đại Việt repelled three Mongol invasions. Meanwhile, Buddhism flourished and became the state religion.

Following the 1406–7 Ming–Hồ War which overthrew the Hồ Dynasty, Vietnamese independence was briefly interrupted by the Chinese Ming Dynasty, but was restored by Lê Lợi, the founder of the Lê Dynasty. The Vietnamese dynasties reached their zenith in the Lê Dynasty of the 15th century, especially during the reign of Emperor Lê Thánh Tông (1460–1497). Between the 11th and 18th centuries, Vietnam

Map of Vietnam showing the conquest of the south (the Nam Tien1069–1757)

expanded southward in a process known as Nam Tiến *("southward expansion")*, eventually conquering the kingdom of Champa and part of the Khmer Empire.

From the 16th century onwards, civil strife and frequent political infighting engulfed much of Vietnam. First, the Chinese-supported Mạc dynasty challenged the Lê dynasty's power. After the Mạc dynasty was defeated, the Lê dynasty was nominally reinstalled, but actual power was divided between the northern Trịnh lords and the southern Nguyễn lords, who engaged in a civil war for more than four decades before a truce was called in the 1670s. During this time, the Nguyễn expanded southern Vietnam into the Mekong Delta, annexing the Central Highlands and the Khmer lands in the Mekong Delta.

The division of the country ended a century later when the Tây Sơn brothers established a new dynasty. However, their rule did not last long, and they were defeated by the remnants of the Nguyễn lords, led by Nguyễn Ánh and aided by the French. Nguyễn Ánh unified Vietnam, and established the Nguyễn dynasty, ruling under the name Gia Long.

2.4. 1887–1940: French Vietnam

Vietnam's independence was gradually eroded by France – aided by large Catholic militias – in a series of military conquests between 1859 and 1885. In 1887, the entire country formally became part of French Indochina. The French administration imposed significant political and cultural changes on Vietnamese society. A Western-style system of modern education was developed, and Roman Catholicism was propagated widely. Most French settlers in Indochina were concentrated in Cochinchina, basing themselves around Saigon. Developing a plantation economy to promote the export of tobacco, indigo, tea and coffee, the French largely ignored increasing calls for Vietnamese self-government and civil rights. A nationalist political movement soon emerged, with leaders such as Phan Boi Chau, Phan Chu Trinh, Phan Dinh Phung, Emperor Hàm Nghi and Ho Chi Minh fighting or calling for independence. However, the royalist Can Vuong was defeated in the 1890s after a decade of resistance, and the 1930 Yen Bai mutiny of the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang was suppressed easily.

The Imperial City in Huế.

The Imperial crown of the Nguyễn emperors.

The French maintained control of their colonies until

World War II, when the war in the Pacific led to the Japanese invasion of French Indochina in 1941. The Japanese Empire exploited Vietnam's natural resources to support its military campaigns, leading to the Vietnamese Famine of 1945, which caused up to two million deaths

2.5. 1945–1954: First Indochina War

In 1941, the Viet Minh – a communist and nationalist liberation movement – emerged under the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary Ho Chi Minh, who sought independence for Vietnam from France and the end of the Japanese occupation. Following the military defeat of Japan and the fall of its puppet Empire of Vietnam in August 1945, the Viet Minh occupied Hanoi and proclaimed a provisional government, which asserted national independence on 2 September. In the same year, the Provisional French Republic sent the French Far East Expeditionary Corps to restore colonial rule, and the Viet Minh began a guerrilla campaign against the French in late 1946. The resulting First Indochina War lasted until July 1954.

French soldiers fight a Viet Minh ambush in 1952.

A French-marked USAF C-119 flown by CIA pilots releases paratroopers over Dien Bien Phu in 1954

The defeat of French and Vietnamese loyalists in the 1954 Siege of Dien Bien Phu allowed Ho Chi Minh to negotiate a ceasefire from a favorable position at the subsequent Geneva Conference. The colonial administration was ended and French Indochina was dissolved under the Geneva Accords of 1954, which separated the loyalist forces from the communists at the 17th parallel north with the Vietnamese Demilitarized Zone. Two states formed after the partition – Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the north and Emperor Bảo Đại's State of Vietnam in the south. A 300-day period of free movement was permitted, during which almost a million northerners, mainly Catholics, moved south, fearing persecution by the communists.

The partition of Vietnam was not intended to be permanent by the Geneva Accords, which stipulated that Vietnam would be reunited after elections in 1956. However, in 1955, the State of Vietnam's Prime Minister, Ngo Dinh Diem, toppled Bảo Đại in a fraudulent referendum organized by his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu, and proclaimed himself president of the Republic of Vietnam.

2.6 1954–1975: Vietnam War

The pro-Hanoi Vietcong began a guerrilla campaign in the late 1950s to overthrow Diem's government. In the North, the communist government launched a land reform program, and executed between 50,000 and 172,000 people in campaigns against wealthy farmers and landowners, amid broader purges. In 1960 and 1962, the Soviet Union and North Vietnam signed treaties providing for further Soviet military support. In the South, Diem went about crushing political and religious opposition, imprisoning or executing tens of thousands.

A Vietcong soldier stands guard during a prisoner exchange with American forces in 1973.

In 1963, Buddhist discontent with Diem's regime erupted into mass demonstrations, leading to a violent government crackdown. This led to the collapse of Diem's relationship with the United States, and ultimately to the 1963 coup in which Diem and Nhu were assassinated. The Diem era was followed by more than a dozen successive military governments, before the pairing of Air Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky and General Nguyễn Văn Thiệu took control in mid-1965. Thieu gradually outmaneuvered Ky and cemented his grip on power in fraudulent elections in 1967 and 1971. Under this political instability, the communists began to gain ground.

To support South Vietnam's struggle against the communist insurgency, the United States began increasing its contribution of military advisers, using the 1964 Tonkin Gulf incident as a pretext for such intervention. US forces became involved in ground combat operations in 1965, and at their peak they numbered more than 500,000 The US also engaged in a sustained aerial bombing campaign. Meanwhile, China and the Soviet Union provided North Vietnam with significant material aid and 15,000 combat advisers. Communist forces supplying the Vietcong carried supplies along the Ho Chi Minh trail, which passed through Laos.

The communists attacked South Vietnamese targets during the 1968 Tet Offensive. Although the campaign failed militarily, it shocked the American establishment, and turned US public opinion against the war. Facing an increasing casualty count, rising domestic opposition to the war, and growing international condemnation, the US began withdrawing from ground combat roles in the

early 1970s. This process also entailed an unsuccessful effort to strengthen and stabilize South Vietnam.

Following the Paris Peace Accords of 27 January 1973, all American combat troops were withdrawn by 29 March 1973. In December 1974, North Vietnam captured the province of Phuoc Long and started a full-scale offensive, culminating in the Fall of Saigon on 30 April 1975. South Vietnam was briefly ruled by a provisional government while under military occupation by North Vietnam. On 2 July 1976, North and South Vietnam were merged to form the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The war left Vietnam devastated, with the total death toll standing at between 800,000 and 3.1 million, and many thousands more crippled by the use of chemical weapons such as Agent Orange.

2.7 1976–present: reunification and reforms

In the aftermath of the war, under Lê Duẩn's administration, the government embarked on a mass campaign of collectivization of farms and factories. This caused economic chaos and resulted in triple-digit inflation, while national reconstruction efforts progressed slowly. At least one million South Vietnamese were sent to reeducation camps, with an estimated 165,000 prisoners dying. Between 100,000 and 200,000 South Vietnamese were executed; another 50,000 died performing hard labor in "New Economic Zones". In the late 1970s and early 1980s, millions of people fled the country in crudely built boats, creating an international humanitarian crisis; hundreds of thousands died at sea.

In 1978, the Vietnamese military invaded Cambodia to remove from power the Khmer Rouge, who had been attacking Vietnamese border villages. Vietnam was victorious, installing a government in Cambodia which ruled until 1989. This action worsened relations with the Chinese, who launched a brief incursion into northern Vietnam in 1979. This conflict caused Vietnam to rely even more heavily on Soviet economic and military aid.

Saigon Trade Center, one of the first skyscrapers to be built in Ho Chi Minh City after the Doi Moi reforms.

At the Sixth National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam in December 1986, reformist politicians replaced the "old guard" government with new leadership. The reformers were led by 71-year-old Nguyen Van Linh, who became the party's new general secretary. Linh and the reformers implemented a series of free-market reforms – known as Đổi Mới ("Renovation") – which carefully managed the transition from a planned economy to a "socialist-oriented market economy".

Though the authority of the state remained unchallenged under Đổi Mới, the government encouraged private ownership of farms and factories, economic deregulation and foreign investment, while maintaining control over strategic industries. The Vietnamese economy subsequently achieved strong growth in agricultural and industrial production, construction, exports and foreign investment. However, these reforms have also caused a rise in income inequality and gender disparities.

3. Government and politics

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam, along with China, Cuba, and Laos, is one of the world's four remaining single-party socialist states officially espousing communism. Its current state constitution, which replaced the 1975 constitution in April 1992, asserts the central role of the Communist Party of Vietnam in all organs of government, politics and society. The General Secretary of the Communist Party performs numerous key administrative and executive functions, controlling the party's national organization and state appointments, as well as setting policy. Only political organizations affiliated with or endorsed by the Communist Party are permitted to contest elections in Vietnam. These include the Vietnamese Fatherland Front and worker and trade unionist parties. Although the state remains officially committed to socialism as its defining creed, its economic policies have grown increasingly capitalist, with *The Economist* characterizing its leadership as "ardently capitalist communists"

The Presidential Palace in Hanoi, formerly the Palace of The

The Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum in Hanoi.

The President of Vietnam is the titular head of state and the nominal commander-in-chief of the military, serving as the Chairman of the Council of Supreme Defense and Security. The Prime Minister of Vietnam is the head of government, presiding over a council of ministers composed of three deputy prime ministers and the heads of 26 ministries and commissions.

The National Assembly of Vietnam is the unicameral legislature of the state, composed of 498 members. Headed by a Chairman, it is superior to both the executive and judicial branches, with all government ministers being appointed from members of the National Assembly. The Supreme People's Court of Vietnam, headed by a Chief Justice, is the country's highest court of appeal, though it is also answerable to the National Assembly. Beneath the Supreme People's Court stand the

provincial municipal courts and numerous local courts. Military courts possess special jurisdiction in matters of national security.

3.1 Military

The Vietnam People's Armed Forces consists of the Vietnam People's Army, the Vietnam People's Public Security and the Vietnam Civil Defense Force. The Vietnam People's Army (VPA) is the official name for the active military services of Vietnam, and is subdivided into the Vietnam People's Ground Forces, the Vietnam People's Navy, the Vietnam People's Air Force, the Vietnam Border Defense Force and the Vietnam Marine Police. The VPA has an active manpower of around 450,000, but its total strength, including paramilitary forces, may be as high as 5,000,000. In 2011, Vietnam's military expenditure totaled approximately US$2.48 billion, equivalent to around 2.5% of its 2010 GDP.

3.2 International relations

Throughout its history, Vietnam's key foreign relationship has been with its largest neighbor and one-time imperial master, China. Vietnam's sovereign principles and insistence on cultural independence have been laid down in numerous documents over the centuries, such as the 11th-century patriotic poem *Nam quốc sơn hà* and the 1428 proclamation of independence *Bình Ngô đại cáo*. Though China and Vietnam are now formally at peace, significant territorial tensions remain between the two countries

Vietnamese troops on one of the disputed Spratly Islands in 2009.

Currently, the formal mission statement of Vietnamese foreign policy is to: "Implement consistently the foreign policy line of independence, self-reliance, peace, cooperation and development; the foreign policy of openness and diversification and multi-lateralization of international relations. Proactively and actively engage in international economic integration while expanding international cooperation in other fields." Vietnam furthermore declares itself to be "a friend and reliable partner of all countries in the international community, actively taking part in international and regional

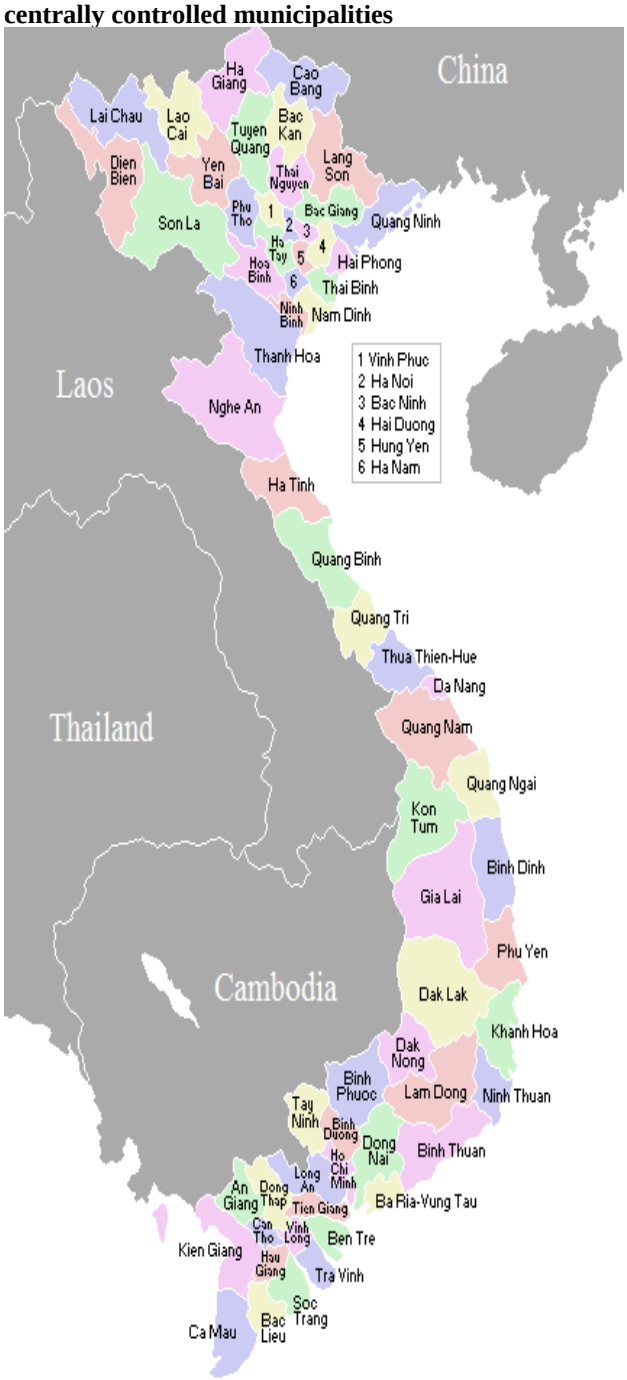
cooperation processes."

By December 2007, Vietnam had established diplomatic relations with 172 countries, including the United States, which normalized relations in 1995. Vietnam holds membership of 63 international organizations, including the United Nations, ASEAN, NAM, Francophonie and WTO. It is furthermore a member of around 650 non-government organizations.

3.3 Administrative subdivisions

Vietnam is divided into 58 provinces (Vietnamese: tỉnh, from the Chinese 省, shěng). There are also five municipalities (thành phố trực thuộc trung ương), which are administratively on the same level as provinces

Map of Vietnam exhibiting its 58 provinces and 5 centrally controlled municipalities



Red River Delta Bắc Ninh Hà Nam Hải Dương Hưng Yên Nam Định Ninh Bình Thái Binh Vĩnh Phúc Hanoi (municipality) Hai Phong (municipality)	Central Highlands Đắk Lắk Đắk Nông Gia Lai Kon Tum Lâm Đồng
Northeast Bắc Giang Bắc Kạn Cao Bằng Hà Giang Lạng Sơn Lao Cai Phú Thọ Quảng Ninh Thái Nguyên Tuyên Quang Yên Bái	South Central Coast Bình Định Binh Thuan Khánh Hòa Ninh Thuận Phú Yên Quảng Nam Quảng Ngãi Da Nang (municipality)
Northwest Điện Biên Hòa Bình Lai Chau Sơn La	Southeast Bà Rịa–Vũng Tàu Binh Duong Bình Phước Province Dong Nai Tay Ninh Ho Chi Minh (municipality)

North Central Coast	Mekong Delta
Ha Tinh	An Giang
Nghe An	Bạc Liêu
Quảng Bình	Bến Tre
Quảng Trị	Cà Mau
Thanh Hóa	Đồng Tháp
Thừa Thiên-Huế	Hậu Giang
	Kiên Giang
	Long An
	Sóc Trăng
	Tiền Giang
	Trà Vinh
	Vĩnh Long
	Cần Thơ (municipality)

The provinces are subdivided into provincial municipalities (thành phố trực thuộc tỉnh), townships (thị xã) and counties (huyện), which are in turn subdivided into towns (thị trấn) or communes (xã). The centrally controlled municipalities are subdivided into districts (quận) and counties, which are further subdivided into wards (phường).

4. Geography

Vietnam is located on the eastern Indochina Peninsula between the latitudes 8° and 24°N, and the longitudes 102° and 110°E. It covers a total area of approximately 331,210 km^2 (127,881 sq mi),[2] making it almost the size of Germany. The combined length of the country's land boundaries is 4,639 km (2,883 mi), and its coastline is 3,444 km (2,140 mi) long.[2] Vietnam's land is mostly hilly and densely forested, with level land covering no more than 20%. Mountains account for 40% of the country's land area, and tropical forests cover around 42%.

The northern part of the country consists mostly of highlands and the Red River Delta. Phan Xi Păng, located in Lào Cai province, is the highest mountain in Vietnam, standing 3,143 m (10,312 ft) high. Southern Vietnam is divided into coastal lowlands, the mountains of the Annamite Range, and extensive forests. Comprising five relatively flat plateaus of basalt soil, the highlands account for 16% of the country's arable land and

Topographic map of Vietnam.

22% of its total forested land. The soil in much of southern Vietnam is relatively poor in nutrients.
The Red River Delta, a flat, roughly triangular region covering 15,000 km^2 (5,792 sq mi), is smaller but more intensely developed and more densely populated than the Mekong River Delta. Once an inlet of the Gulf of Tonkin, it has been filled in over the millennia by riverine alluvial deposits. The delta, covering about 40,000 km^2 (15,444 sq mi), is a low-level plain no more than 3 meters (9.8 ft) above sea level at any point. It is criss-crossed by a maze of rivers and canals, which carry so much sediment that the delta advances 60 to 80 meters (196.9 to 262.5 ft) into the sea every year.

A panorama of Vietnam's Ha Long Bay, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

4.1 Clim

Because of differences in latitude and the marked variety in topographical relief, the climate tends to vary considerably from place to place. During the winter or dry season, extending roughly from November to April, the monsoon winds usually blow from the northeast along the Chinese coast and across the Gulf of Tonkin, picking up considerable moisture. Consequently, the winter season in most parts of the country is dry only by comparison with the rainy or summer season. The average annual temperature is generally higher in the plains than in the mountains, and higher in the south than in the north. Temperatures vary less in the southern plains around Ho Chi Minh City and the Mekong Delta, ranging between 21 and 28 °C (69.8 and 82.4 °F) over the course of the year. Seasonal variations in the mountains and plateaus and in the north are much more dramatic, with temperatures varying from 5 °C (41.0 °F) in December and January to 37 °C (98.6 °F) in July and August.ate

4.2 Ecology and biodiversity

The saola, one of the world's rarest mammals, is native to Vietnam.

Vietnam has two World Natural Heritage Sites – Ha Long Bay and Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park – and six biosphere reserves, including Can Gio Mangrove Forest, Cat Tien, Cat Ba, Kien Giang, the Red River Delta, and Western Nghe An.Vietnam lies in the Indomalaya ecozone. According to the 2005 National Environmental Present Condition Report. Vietnam is one of twenty-five countries considered to possess a uniquely high level of biodiversity. It is ranked 16th worldwide in biological diversity, being home to approximately 16% of the world's species. 15,986 species of flora have been identified in the

country, of which 10% are endemic, while Vietnam's fauna include 307 nematode species, 200 oligochaeta, 145 acarina, 113 springtails, 7,750 insects, 260 reptiles, 120 amphibians, 840 birds and 310 mammals, of which 100 birds and 78 mammals are endemic.

Vietnam is furthermore home to 1,438 species of freshwater microalgae, constituting 9.6% of all microalgae species, as well as 794 aquatic invertebrates and 2,458 species of sea fish. In recent years, 13 genera, 222 species, and 30 taxa of flora have been newly described in Vietnam. Six new mammal species, including the saola, giant muntjac and Tonkin snub-nosed monkey have also been discovered, along with one new bird species, the endangered Edwards's Pheasant.[99] In the late 1980s, a small population of Javan Rhinoceros was found in Cát Tiên National Park. However, the last individual of the species in Vietnam was reportedly shot in 2010.

In agricultural genetic diversity, Vietnam is one of the world's twelve original cultivar centers. The Vietnam National Cultivar Gene Bank preserves 12,300 cultivars of 115 species. The Vietnamese government spent US$49.07 million on the preservation of biodiversity in 2004 alone, and has established 126 conservation areas, including 28 national parks.

5. Economy

The Saigon River cargo port in Ho Chi Minh City.

In 2012, Vietnam's nominal GDP reached US$138 billion, with a nominal GDP per capita of $1,527, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). According to a December 2005 forecast by Goldman Sachs, the Vietnamese economy will become the world's 17th-largest by 2025, with an estimated nominal GDP of $436 billion and a nominal GDP per capita of $4,357. According to a 2008 forecast by PricewaterhouseCoopers, Vietnam may be the fastest-growing of the world's emerging economies by 2025, with a potential growth rate of almost 10% per annum in real dollar terms. In 2012, HSBC predicted that Vietnam's total GDP would surpass those of Norway, Singapore and Portugal by 2050.

Ho Chi Minh City's Bitexco Financial Tower, the second-tallest building in Vietnam.

Vietnam has been, for much of its history, a predominantly agricultural civilization based on wet rice cultivation. There is also an industry for Bauxite mining in Vietnam, an important material for the production of aluminum. However, the Vietnam War destroyed much of the country's agrarian economy, leading the post-war government to implement a planned economy to revitalize agriculture and industrialize the

nation. The collectivization of farms, factories and economic capital was implemented, and millions of people were put to work in government programs. For a decade following the Vietnam War, Vietnam's economy was plagued with inefficiency and corruption in state programs, poor quality and underproduction, and restrictions on economic activity. It also suffered from the post-war trade embargo instituted by the United States and most of Europe. These problems were compounded by the erosion of the Soviet bloc, which included Vietnam's main trading partners, in the late 1980s.

In 1986, the Sixth National Congress of the Communist Party introduced socialist-oriented market economic reforms as part of the Đổi Mới reform program. Private ownership was encouraged in industries, commerce and agriculture. Thanks largely to these reforms, Vietnam achieved around 8% annual GDP growth between 1990 to 1997, and the economy continued to grow at an annual rate of around 7% from 2000 to 2005, making Vietnam one of the world's fastest growing economies. Growth remained strong even in the face of the late-2000s global recession, holding at 6.8% in 2010, but Vietnam's year-on-year inflation rate hit 11.8% in December 2010, according to a GSO estimate. The Vietnamese dong was devalued three times in 2010 alone.

Manufacturing, information technology and high-tech industries now form a large and fast-growing part of the national economy. Though Vietnam is a relative newcomer to the oil industry, it is currently the third-largest oil producer in Southeast Asia, with a total 2011 output of 318,000 barrels per day (50,600 m3/d). In 2010, Vietnam was ranked as the 8th largest crude petroleum producers in the Asia and Pacific region. Like its Chinese neighbors, Vietnam continues to make use of centrally planned economic five-year plans.

Deep poverty, defined as the percentage of the population living on less than $1 per day, has declined significantly in Vietnam, and the relative poverty rate is now less than that of China, India, and the Philippines. This decline in the poverty rate can be attributed to equitable economic policies aimed at improving living standards and preventing the rise of inequality; these policies have included egalitarian land distribution during the initial stages of the Đổi Mới program, investment in poorer remote areas, and subsidizing of education and healthcare. According to the IMF, the unemployment rate in Vietnam stood at 4.46% in 2012.

5.1 Trade

Since the early 2000s, Vietnam has applied sequenced trade liberalization, a two-track approach opening some sectors of the economy to international markets while protecting others. In July 2006, Vietnam updated its intellectual property legislation to comply with TRIPS, and it became a member of the WTO on 11 January 2007. Vietnam is now one of Asia's most open economies: two-way trade was valued at around 160% of GDP in 2006, more than twice the contemporary ratio for China and over four times the ratio for India.[111] Vietnam's chief trading partners include China, Japan, Australia, the ASEAN countries, the United States and Western Europe.

Vietnam's Customs office reported in July 2013 that the total value of international merchandise trade for the first half of 2013 was US$124 billion, which was 15.7% higher than the same period in 2012. Mobile phones and their parts were both imported and exported in large numbers, while in the natural resources market, crude oil was a top-ranking export and high levels of iron and steel were imported during this period. The U.S. was the country that purchased the highest amount of Vietnam's exports, while Chinese goods were the most popular Vietnamese import.

As a result of several land reform measures, Vietnam has become a major exporter of agricultural products. It is now the world's largest producer of cashew nuts, with a one-third global share; the largest producer of black pepper, accounting for one-third of the world's market; and the second-largest rice exporter in the world, after Thailand. Vietnam has the highest proportion of land use for permanent crops – 6.93% – of any nation in the Greater Mekong Subregion. Other primary exports include coffee, tea, rubber, and fishery products. However, agriculture's share of Vietnam's GDP has fallen in recent decades, declining from 42% in 1989 to 20% in 2006, as production in other sectors.

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5.3 Transport

Much of Vietnam's modern transport network was originally developed under French rule to facilitate the transportation of raw materials, and was reconstructed and extensively modernized following the Vietnam War.

5.3.1 Air

Vietnam operates 17 major civil airports, including three international gateways: Noi Bai in Hanoi, Da Nang International Airport in Da Nang, and Tan Son Nhat in Ho Chi Minh City. Tan Son Nhat is the nation's largest airport, handling 75 percent of international passenger traffic. According to a state-approved plan, Vietnam will have 10 international airports by 2015 – besides the aforementioned three, these include Lien Khuong International Airport, Phu Bai International Airport, Cam Ranh International Airport, Phu Quoc International Airport, Cat Bi International Airport, Cần Thơ International Airport and Long Thanh International Airport. The planned Long Thanh International Airport will have an annual service capacity of 100 million passengers once it becomes fully operational in 2020.

A Vietnam Airlines Boeing 777

Vietnam Airlines, the state-owned national airline, maintains a fleet of 69 passenger aircraft, and aims to operate 150 by 2020. Several private airlines are also in operation in Vietnam, including Air Mekong, Jetstar Pacific Airlines, VASCO and VietJet Air

5.3.2 Road

Vietnam's road system includes national roads administered at the central level; provincial roads managed at the provincial level; district roads managed at the district level; urban roads managed by cities and towns; and commune roads managed at the commune level. Bicycles, motor scooters and motorcycles remain the most popular forms of road transport in Vietnam's urban areas, although the number of privately owned automobiles is also on the rise, especially in the larger cities. Public buses operated by private companies are the main mode of long-distance travel for much of the population.

Buses in Ho Chi Minh City.

Road safety is a serious issue in Vietnam – on average, 30 people are killed in traffic accidents every day. Traffic congestion is a growing problem in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, as the cities' roads struggle to cope with the boom in automobile use.

A section of the North–South Expressway linking Cầu Giẽ and Ninh Bình

5.3.4 Rail

Vietnam's primary cross-country rail service is the Reunification Express, which runs from Ho Chi Minh City to Hanoi, covering a distance of nearly 2,000 kilometers. From Hanoi, railway lines branch out to the northeast, north and west; the eastbound line runs from Hanoi to Ha Long Bay, the northbound line from Hanoi to Thai Nguyen, and the northeast line from Hanoi to Lao Cai.

In 2009, Vietnam and Japan signed a deal to build a high-speed railway using Japanese technology; numerous Vietnamese engineers were later sent to Japan to receive training in the operation and maintenance of high-speed trains. The railway will be a 1,630-km-long express route, serving a total of 26 stations, including Hanoi and the Thu Thiem terminus in Ho Chi Minh City. Using Japan's Shinkansen technology, the line will support trains travelling at a maximum speed of 360 kilometers (220 mi) per hour. The high-speed lines linking Hanoi to Vinh, Nha Trang and Ho Chi Minh City will be laid by 2015. From 2015 to 2020, construction will begin on the routes between Vinh and Nha Trang and between Hanoi and the northern provinces of Lao Cai and Lang Son

5.3.5 Water

Sunset on the South China Sea off the village of Mui Ne on the south-east coast of Vietnam

As a coastal country, Vietnam has many major sea ports, including Cam Ranh, Da Nang, Hai Phong, Ho Chi Minh City, Hong Gai, Qui Nhơn, Vung Tau and Nha Trang. Further inland, the country's extensive network of rivers play a key role in rural transportation, with over 17,700 kilometers (11,000 mi) of navigable waterways carrying ferries, barges and water taxis. In addition, the Mekong and Red River deltas are vital to Vietnam's social and economic welfare – most of the country's population lives along or near these river deltas, and the major cities of Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi are situated near the Mekong and Red River deltas, respectively. Further out in the South China Sea, Vietnam currently controls the majority of the disputed Spratly Islands, which are the source of longstanding disagreements with China and other nearby nations.

6. Demographics

The census of 1 April 2009 recorded the population of Vietnam as standing at approximately 85.8 million. The population had grown significantly from the 1979 census, which showed the total population of reunified Vietnam to be 52.7 million. In 2012, the country's population was estimated at approximately 90.3 million.

Hmong women in traditional dress in Bac Ha, northern Vietnam

6.1 Ethnicity

According to the 2009 census, the dominant Viet or Kinh ethnic group constituted nearly 73.6 million people, or 85.8% of the population. The Kinh population is concentrated mainly in the alluvial deltas and coastal plains of the country. A largely homogeneous social and ethnic group, the Kinh possess significant political and economic influence over the country. However, Vietnam is also home to 54 ethnic minority groups, including the Hmong, Dao, Tay, Thai, and Nùng. Many ethnic minorities – such as the Muong, who are closely related to the Kinh – dwell in the highlands, which cover two-thirds of Vietnam's territory. Before the Vietnam War, the population of the Central Highlands was almost exclusively Degar (including over 40 tribal groups); however, Ngo Dinh Diem's South Vietnamese government enacted a program of resettling Kinh in indigenous areas.[126] The Hoa (ethnic Chinese) and Khmer Krom people are mainly lowlanders. As Sino-Vietnamese relations soured in 1978 and 1979, some 450,000 Hoa left Vietnam.

Largest cities or towns of Vietnam
2009 Census

Ho Chi Minh City

Hanoi

Rank	City name	Province	Pop.
1	**Ho Chi Minh City**	**Ho Chi Minh City**	7,396,446
2	**Hanoi**	**Hanoi i**	6,472,200
3	**Hai Phong**	**Hai Phong**	1,907,705
4	**Cần Thơ**	**Cần Thơ**	1,187,089
5	**Da Nang**	**Da Nang**	887,069
6	**Bien Hoa**	**Dong Nai**	784,398
7	**Nha Trang**	**Khánh Hòa**	392,279
8	**Buôn Ma Thuột**	**Đắk Lắk**	340,000
9	**Huế**	**Thừa Thiên–Huế**	333,715
10	**Thái Nguyên**	**Thái Nguyên**	330,707

Hai Phong

Cần Thơ

6.2 Languages

The official national language of Vietnam is Vietnamese (Tiếng Việt), a tonal Mon–Khmer language which is spoken by the majority of the population. In its early history, Vietnamese writing used Chinese characters. In the 13th century, the Vietnamese developed their own set of characters, referred to as Chữ nôm. The folk epic Truyện Kiều ("The Tale of Kieu", originally known as Đoạn trường tân thanh) by Nguyễn Du was written in Chữ nôm. Quốc ngữ, the romanized Vietnamese alphabet used for spoken Vietnamese, was developed in the 17th century by the Jesuit Alexandre De Rhodes and several other Catholic missionaries. Quốc ngữ became widely popular and brought literacy to the Vietnamese masses during the French colonial period.

Vietnam's minority groups speak a variety of languages, including Tày, Mường, Cham, Khmer, Chinese, Nùng, and H'Mông. The Montagnard peoples of the Central Highlands also speak a number of distinct languages. The French language, a legacy of colonial rule, is spoken by some educated Vietnamese as a second language, especially by the older generation; Vietnam remains a full member of the Francophonie, and education has revived some interest in the language. Russian – and to a much lesser extent German, Czech and Polish – are known among some Vietnamese whose families had ties with the Soviet bloc during the Cold War. In recent years, as Vietnam's contacts with Western nations have increased, English has become more popular as a second language; the study of English is now obligatory in most schools, replacing French, though the latter is used at times in higher education. Chinese, Japanese, and Korean have also grown in popularity as Vietnam's links with other East Asian nations have strengthened.

6.3 Religion

Bell Tower of Bái Đính Temple in Ninh Binh Province

For much of Vietnamese history, Mahayana Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism have been the dominant religions, strongly influencing the national culture. About 85% of Vietnamese identify with Buddhism, though not all practice on a regular basis. According to the General Statistics Office of Vietnam's report for 1 April 2009, 6.8 million (or 7.9% of the total population) are practicing Buddhists, 5.7 milion (6.6%) are Catholics, 1.4 million (1.7%) are adherents of Hòa Hảo, 0.8 million (0.9%) practise Cao Đài, and 0.7 million (0.9%) are Protestants. In total, 15,651,467 Vietnamese (18.2%) are formally registered in a religion. According to the 2009 census, while over 10 million people have taken refuge in the Three Jewels of Buddhism, the vast majority of Vietnamese people practice ancestor worship in some form. According to a 2007 report, 81% of Vietnamese people do not believe in God.

About 8% of the population are Christians, totaling around six million Roman Catholics and fewer than one million Protestants, according to the census of 2007. Christianity was first introduced to Vietnam by Portuguese and Dutch traders in the 16th and 17th centuries, and was further propagated by French missionaries in the 19th and 20th centuries, and to a lesser extent, by American Protestant missionaries during the Vietnam War, largely among the Montagnards of South Vietnam. The largest Protestant churches are the Evangelical Church of Vietnam and the Montagnard Evangelical Church. Two-thirds of Vietnam's Protestants are reportedly members of ethnic minorities.

The main Cao Dai temple in the city of Tay Ninh

The Vietnamese government is widely seen as suspicious of Roman Catholicism. This mistrust originated during the 19th century, when some Catholics collaborated with the French colonists in conquering and ruling the country and in helping French attempts to install Catholic emperors, such as in the Lê Văn Khôi revoltof 1833. Furthermore, the Catholic Church's strongly anti-communist stance has made it an enemy of the Vietnamese state. The Vatican Church is officially banned, and only government-controlled Catholic organizations are permitted. However, the Vatican has attempted to negotiate the opening of diplomatic relations with Vietnam in recent years.

Several other minority faiths exist in Vietnam. About 3% of the population are adherents of Cao Dai, a syncretic modern religion whose followers are largely concentrated in Tay Ninh Province. Sunni and Cham Bani Islam is primarily practiced by the ethnic Cham minority, though there are also a few ethnic Vietnamese adherents in the southwest. In total, there are approximately 70,000 Muslims in Vietnam,[146] while around 50,000 Hindus and a small number of Baha'is are also in evidence.

The Vietnamese government rejects allegations that it does not allow religious freedom. The state's official position on religion is that all citizens are free to their belief, and that all religions are equal before the law. Nevertheless, only government-approved religious organizations are allowed; for example, the South Vietnam-founded Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam is banned in favor of a communist-approved body.

6.4 Education

The University of Medicine in Hanoi

Vietnam has an extensive state-controlled network of schools, colleges and universities, and a growing number of privately run and partially privatized institutions. General education in Vietnam is divided into five categories: kindergarten, elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and universities. A large number of public schools have been constructed across the country to

raise the national literacy rate, which stood at 90.3% in 2008.

A large number of Vietnam's most acclaimed universities are based in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Facing serious crises, Vietnam's education system is under a holistic program of reform launched by the government. Education is not free; therefore, some poor families may have trouble paying tuition for their children without some form of public or private assistance. Regardless, school enrollment is among the highest in the world, and the number of colleges and universities increased dramatically in the 2000s, from 178 in 2000 to 299 in 2005.

6.5 Health

In 2009, Vietnam's national life expectancy stood at 76 years for women and 72 for men, and the infant mortality rate was 12 per 1,000 live births. By 2009, 85% of the population had access to improved water sources. However, malnutrition is still common in the rural provinces. In 2001, government spending on health care corresponded to just 0.9% of Vietnam's gross domestic product (GDP), with state subsidies covering only about 20% of health care expenses.

Tam Duc Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City

In 1954, North Vietnam established a public health system that reached down to the hamlet level. After the national reunification in 1975, a nationwide health service was established. In the late 1980s, the quality of healthcare declined to some degree as a result of budgetary constraints, a shift of responsibility to the provinces, and the introduction of charges. Inadequate funding has also contributed to a shortage of nurses, midwives, and hospital beds; in 2000, Vietnam had only 250,000 hospital beds, or 14.8 beds per 10,000 people, according to the World Bank.

Since the early 2000s, Vietnam has made significant progress in combating malaria, with the malaria mortality rate falling to about 5% of its 1990s equivalent by 2005, after the country introduced improved antimalarial drugs and treatment. However, tuberculosis cases are on the rise, with 57 deaths per day reported in May 2004. With an intensified vaccination program, better hygiene, and foreign assistance, Vietnam hopes to reduce sharply the number of TB cases and annual new TB infections.

As of September 2005, Vietnam had diagnosed 101,291 HIV cases, of which 16,528 progressed to AIDS, and 9,554 died. However, the actual number of HIV-positive individuals is estimated to be much higher. On average, 40–50 new infections are reported every day in Vietnam. As of 2007, 0.5% of the population is estimated to be infected with HIV, and this figure has remained stable since 2005.

In June 2004, the United States announced that Vietnam would be one of 15 nations to receive funding as part of a US$15 billion global AIDS relief plan.

7. Culture

The Municipal Theatre in Ho Chi Minh City

Vietnam's culture has developed over the centuries from indigenous ancient Dong Son culture with wet rice agriculture as its economic base. Some elements of the national culture have Chinese origins, drawing on elements of Confucianism and Taoism in its traditional political system and philosophy. Vietnamese society is structured around làng (ancestral villages); all Vietnamese mark a common ancestral anniversary on the tenth day of the third lunar month. The influences of immigrant peoples – such as the Cantonese, Hakka, Hokkien and Hainan cultures – can also be seen, while the national religion of Buddhism is strongly entwined with popular culture. In recent centuries, the influences of Western cultures, most notably France and the United States, have become evident in Vietnam.

The traditional focuses of Vietnamese culture are humanity (nhân nghĩa) and harmony (hòa); family and community values are highly regarded. Vietnam reveres a number of key cultural symbols, such as the Vietnamese dragon, which is derived from crocodile and snake imagery; Vietnam's National Father, Lạc Long Quân, is depicted as a holy dragon. The lạc – a holy bird representing Vietnam's National Mother, Âu Cơ – is another prominent symbol, while turtle and horse images are also revered.

In the modern era, the cultural life of Vietnam has been deeply influenced by government-controlled media and cultural programs. For many decades, foreign cultural influences – especially those of Western origin – were shunned. However, since the 1990s, Vietnam has seen a greater exposure to Southeast Asian, European and American culture and media.

7.1 Media

Vietnam's media sector is regulated by the government in accordance with the 2004 Law on Publication. It is generally perceived that Vietnam's media sector is controlled by the government to follow the official communist party line, though some newspapers are relatively outspoken. The Voice of Vietnam is the official state-run national radio broadcasting service, broadcasting internationally via shortwave using rented transmitters in other countries, and providing broadcasts from its website. Vietnam Television is the national television broadcasting company.

Since 1997, Vietnam has extensively regulated public Internet access, using both legal and technical means. The resulting lockdown is widely referred to as the "Bamboo Firewall". The collaborative project OpenNet Initiative classifies Vietnam's level of online political censorship to be "pervasive", while Reporters without Borders considers Vietnam to be one of 15 global "internet enemies". Though the government of Vietnam claims to safeguard the country against obscene or sexually explicit content through its blocking efforts, many politically and religiously sensitive websites are also banned.

7.2 Music

Traditional Vietnamese music varies between the country's northern and southern regions. Northern classical music is Vietnam's oldest musical form, and is traditionally more formal. The origins of Vietnamese classical music can be traced to the Mongol invasions of the 13th century, when the Vietnamese captured a Chinese opera troupe.

7.3 Literature

The Temple of Literature in Hanoi

Vietnamese literature has a centuries-deep history. The country has a rich tradition of folk literature, based around the typical 6–to-8-verse poetic form named ca dao, which usually focuses on village ancestors and heroes. Written literature has been found dating back to the 10th-centuryNgô Dynasty, with notable ancient authors including Nguyễn Trãi, Trần Hưng Đạo, Nguyễn Duand Nguyễn Đình Chiểu. Some literary genres play an important role in theatrical performance, such as hát nói in ca trù. Some poetic unions have also been formed in Vietnam, such as the Tao Đàn. Vietnamese literature has in recent times been influenced by Western styles, with the first literary transformation movement – Thơ Mới – emerging in 1932

7.4 Festivals

Vietnam has a plethora of festivals based on the lunar calendar, the most important being the Tết New Year celebration. Traditional Vietnamese weddings remain widely popular, and are often celebrated by expatriate Vietnamese in Western countries.

7.5 Tourism

Vietnam has become a major tourist destination since the 1990s, assisted by significant state and private investment, particularly in coastal regions. About 3.77 million international tourists visited Vietnam in 2009 alone.

A traditional Tết (Lunar New Year) tree.

Popular destinations include Hanoi, Saigon, the former imperial capital of Hue, the World Heritage Sites of Hoi An and Mỹ Sơn, coastal regions such as Nha Trang, the caves of Ha Long Bay and the Marble Mountains. Numerous tourist projects are under construction, such as the Binh Duong tourist complex, which possesses the largest artificial sea in Southeast Asia.

On February 14, 2011, Joe Jackson, the father of American pop star Michael Jackson, attended a ground breaking ceremony for what will be Southeast Asia's largest entertainment complex, a five-star hotel and amusement park called Happyland. The US$2 billion project, which has been designed to accommodate 14 million tourists annually, is located in southern Long An province, near Ho Chi Minh City. It is expected that the complex will be completed in 2014.

Hoi An's Ancient Town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site

7.6 Clothing

The áo dài, a formal girl's dress, is worn for special occasions such as weddings and religious festivals. White áo dài is the required uniform for girls in many high schools across Vietnam. Áo dài was once worn by both genders, but today it is mostly the preserve of women, although men do wear it to some occasions, such as traditional weddings. Other examples of traditional Vietnamese clothing include the áo tứ thân, a four-piece woman's dress; the áo ngũ, a form of the thân in 5-piece form, mostly worn in the north of the country; the yếm, a woman's undergarment; the áo bà ba, rural working "pyjamas" for men and women; the áo gấm, a formal brocade tunic for government receptions; and the áo the, a variant of the áo gấm worn by grooms at weddings. Traditional headwear includes the standard conical nón lá and the "lampshade-like" nón quai thao.

7.7 Sport

The Vovinam and Bình Định martial arts are widespread in Vietnam, while soccer is the country's most popular team sport. Other Western sports, such as badminton, tennis, volleyball, ping-pong and chess, are also widely popular. Vietnam has participated in the Summer Olympic Games since 1952.

Vietnam first competed in the Olympic Games in 1952 as the State of Vietnam. After the Partition of Vietnam in 1954, only South Vietnam competed in the Games, sending athletes to the 1956 and 1972 Olympics. Since the reunification of Vietnam in 1976, they have competed as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, attending every Olympics from 1988 onwards. The present Vietnam Olympic Committee was formed in 1976 and recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1979.[179] Vietnam has never competed in the Winter Olympics, but will begin in 2014.

7.7 Cuisine

Pho is one of the most popular Vietnamese dishes. It can be found in most major cities in the world.

Vietnamese cuisine traditionally features a combination of five fundamental taste "elements" (Vietnamese: ngũ vị): spicy (metal), sour (wood), bitter (fire), salty (water) and sweet (earth). Common ingredients include fish sauce, shrimp paste, soy sauce, rice, fresh herbs, fruits and vegetables. Vietnamese recipes use lemongrass, ginger, mint, Vietnamese mint, long coriander, Saigon cinnamon, bird's eye chili, lime and basil leaves. Traditional Vietnamese cooking is known for its fresh ingredients, minimal use of oil, and reliance on herbs and vegetables, and is considered one of the healthiest cuisines worldwide.

In northern Vietnam, local foods are often less spicy than southern dishes, as the colder northern climate limits the production and availability of spices. Black pepper is used in place of chilis to produce spicy flavors. The use of meats such as pork, beef, and chicken were relatively limited in the past, and as a result freshwater fish, crustaceans – particularly crabs – and mollusks became widely used. Fish sauce, soy sauce, prawn sauce, and limes are among the main flavoring ingredients. Many signature Vietnamese dishes, such as bún riêu and bánh cuốn, originated in the north and were carried to central and southern Vietnam by migrants.

Source:Wikipedia