

HO CHI MINH CITY - A HOT TOURIST DESTINATION



Vietnam's commercial hub has become a very hot tourist destination; the attractions range from the colonial past to the horrors of Vietnam War or today's economic success. Ho Chi Minh City is all about diversity and charm.

For a significant period after the war in Vietnam, tourists were reluctant to come here for a visit. However, decades have passed and the Vietnamese managed to turn their luck around and use the past to their advantage.

Ho Chi Minh City was formerly known as Saigon. In 1976, the city merged with the neighboring province and was renamed after the national hero, who fought for the country's independence. **During the 1960s, the city was swarming with the Viet Cong fighters and became the centre of resistance.** Not 75 km north of Ho Chi Minh City are the Cu Chi Tunnels. Definitely a challenge for all visitors, these 70 cm wide and 90 cm high underground routes offered refuge to thousands of Vietnamese in times of war. Many spent years living down here.

Ho Chi Minh today features some charming colonial architecture as well as museums dedicated to retelling the country's past. The War Remnants Museum is an eye-opener, as it presents a rather vivid account of the Vietnam War. Even here visitors may enter a network of underground tunnels, one of which leads to the Revolutionary Museum, where visitors learn about the Vietnamese struggle against French colonialism and the American invasion.

Even today, **the French influence is very visible in the wide boulevards and colonial buildings.** The most beautiful are now the Reunification Palace, City Hall, Municipal Theater and the Notre-Dame Cathedral. Visiting the Saigon Zoo and Botanical Gardens, which date back to 1865 is a great family day out. Ho Chi Minh City is now the commercial hub, a blend of cultures and a vibrant tourist magnet which embraces all with an amazingly sparkling spirit.

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