

# DISCOVERING VIETNAM



For many years, Vietnam was associated with the horrors of war and appeared as the last place any tourist would wish to explore. However, the country has been rapidly changing; Vietnam is now a growing economical power in Asia, appealing to many foreign investors and thus the quality of local services is improving considerably. Vietnam truly is a unique country with a diverse culture, friendly and welcoming people and many treasures still

waiting to be discovered.

Its two major cities - Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City - are the popular tourist magnets. The outskirts of Hanoi may not give a favorable impression on first looking. However, it is a very old city, proudly presenting The Temple of Literature. Not only it is 900 years old, but is one of the oldest universities in the world. Exploring the Old Quarter is an unforgettable experience. The French influence is overwhelmingly charming and the typically Asian scenic composition of the Old Quarter is really unique. The prospect of the Ngoc Son Temple, located on a small island in the middle of Hoan Kiem Lake, is absolutely breathtaking. The Buddhist symbols are very frequent - especially local charming pagodas, such as the Tran Quoc Pagoda, or the One-Pillar Pagoda. Those visitors who are eager to get a taste of the "true local" character should pay a visit to the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum - the experience may be very diverting.

Adventurers who prefer discovering the charm of natural sceneries should head for the Ha Long Bay. It is some two hours away from Hanoi and was added to the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 1994. The nearby Cat Ba Island is a very charming place to visit as most of it is in fact a natural park.

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