

Vietnam at a Glance...

Study in Vietnam provides unparalleled opportunities to learn in a nation that is experiencing incredible economic liberalization and rapid development blended with its traditional roots and a strong cultural heritage.

Located in southeastern Asia and bordered by China, Laos, Cambodia and the South China Sea, Vietnam has experienced a long and turbulent history to become the colorful nation it is today. Around the 3rd century B.C., the sophisticated Dong Son culture emerged in Vietnam. A number of civilizations inhabited the area until the 2nd century A.D. when China invaded and began their 1000-year rule: a period of tenacious resistance by the Vietnamese. Chinese rule ended in 938, and Vietnam managed to repulse the Chinese invasions until the French arrived and colonized the country in the mid 1800s.

After their defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, the French were forced out of Vietnam and the country was temporarily divided into two zones by the Geneva Accords of the same year. Armed struggle continued, with U.S. involvement, and was not resolved until the country was reunified on April 30, 1975. Over the years, Vietnam has also had border conflicts with the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia as well as the Chinese to the north. The collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War in 1991 prompted Vietnam to engage a number of countries and re-establish diplomatic and trade relations.

Vietnam launched an ambitious policy of economic reconstruction in the mid-1980s to reform the country's old economic mechanisms, such as central planning and the collectivization of agriculture, which were forming a roadblock to progress. This economic policy, called Doi Moi, created a market economy operating under the Socialist state. It focused on increasing production of food, consumer goods and exports; reducing state intervention in business; opening trade relations with the outside world; and encouraging foreign and domestic private investment.



As a result of the Doi Moi movement, Vietnam experienced

significant economic growth up until the Asian financial crisis in 1997. Recent economic recovery has indicated a very positive potential for the future. Some of Vietnam's main industries include: food processing, garments, shoes, machine building, glass, oil, paper, rice, rubber, and chemicals.

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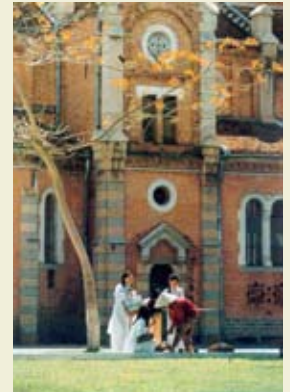
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One of the primary areas of reform has been Vietnam's educational system. Vietnam continues to make progress in this area, achieving a 94 percent literacy rate in 2001 and reaching its target of universal primary education.

The higher education system currently consists of over 100 institutions including universities, two open universities, specialized colleges, community colleges, and junior colleges. They come under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) and the provinces. Since 1993, Vietnam has developed 5 multidisciplinary universities: Hanoi National University, Ho Chi Minh City National University, Hue University, Thai Nguyen University, and Da Nang University.

Study in Vietnam yields fascinating opportunities. Study abroad programs in Vietnam are usually specially prepared courses for foreigners. Many programs allow students to gain foundational understanding of Vietnamese culture and language, history, and/or Asian studies. For those interested in religious studies, the religious scene in Vietnam offers a fascinating mix of Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Christianity.

Vietnam is also known for Tam Giao ("triple religion"), which is a mix of Taoism, Chinese beliefs, and ancient Vietnamese animism. The country also provides a rich and animated environment for studying political science, economics, social sciences, and anthropology. For those interested in development studies, Vietnam is a perfect place to witness first-hand the affects of major changes in economic and development strategies, as the country works to implement its Doi Moi policies. Vietnam provides a unique context in which to explore the blend of ancient traditions with the increasingly modern culture of cosmopolitan commercial cities.



Online Resources

Vietnam Embassy:

<http://www.vietnambassy-usa.org>

UNESCO – Vietnam Education:

<http://www.unesco.org/iau/cd-data/vn.rtf>

Lonely Planet:

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com>

CIA Factbook:

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook>



Vietnam Fast Facts

Population: 82,689,518 (July 2004 est.)

Capital: Hanoi

Currency: dong (VND)

Religion(s):

Buddhist, Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, Christian (predominantly Roman Catholic, some Protestant), indigenous beliefs, Muslim

Language(s):

Vietnamese (official), English (increasingly favored as a second language), some French, Chinese, and Khmer; mountain area languages (Mon-Khmer and Malayo-Polynesian)

Major Events:

Tet – Late January/early February
Liberation of Saigon – April 30
Wandering Souls Day – August
Ho Chi Minh's Birthday – May 19
Independence Day – September 2 (1945)

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