



HANOI ATTRACTIONS

The 36 streets of Hanoi's Old Quarter, bustling for more than 1,000 years, make up one of Vietnam's most lively and unusual places to visit. In the 13th century, Hanoi's artisan guilds established themselves here, each taking a different street. Today it's a shopping paradise, with specialized streets named for the products traditionally sold there. On Hang Ma (literally, 'Counterfeit St'), pick up some ghost money, traditionally burned at Buddhist ceremonies for good luck. Other areas have had modern businesses and [boutique hotels in Hanoi](#) take over, however - Hang Hanh (Onion St) is now better known as Coffee St for the bars and cafes lining the road.

Bach Ma Temple (White Horse Temple), a lovely pagoda attended by white-bearded guards sipping tea, commemorates the appearance of a divine white horse that appeared to show Ly King where to build the city walls. You can still witness the emperor's success at the well-preserved 11th century Old East Gate.

Considered the heart of Hanoi, Hoan Kiem Lake is its symbol. Ngoc Son Temple on the lake is dedicated to the God of literature, General Tran Hung Dao, who defeated the Mongolian enemy in the 13th century and the patron Saint of physicians. A large tortoise carcass of 2.1 m long and weighing 250 kilos that lived some 400-500 years is still kept at the temple. Ngoc Son Temple is linked with the Bank by a beautiful curved bridge called The Huc (Morning sunshine). Just at the beginning of the bridge is a stone brush tower. It is located on a small hillock with three carved Chinese characters "Ta Thanh Thien" (writing on the blue sky). At its foot is Dai Nghien (Ink-stab).

Many central and municipal bodies as well as busy trade streets are located around Hoan Kiem Lake. In the centre of the Lake there is an islet where the Tortoise Tower stands. The monument of King Le Thai To is situated on the Western Bank of the lake. The Hanoi Old Citadel was destroyed and restored many times. At present, only the Northern Gate of the citadel on Phan Dinh Phung street still remains. On its walls, there are traces of bullets left by the French army attacking Hanoi.

On Dien Bien Phu Street stands the Hanoi flag-tower (60m high), consisting of three layers made of baked bricks. It was built in 1812 in a prism shape with spiral stairs leading to the platform. It is also a symbol of the capital. Inside Hanoi Old Citadel traces of the grounds of destroyed palaces still remain.

The Ba Dinh Square zone is situated south of West Lake and North of Hanoi Old Citadel and is well-known for the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, opened on September 2, 1975, standing on the historical Ba Dinh Square. This architectural structure has a rectangular form and evokes a lotus. Its upper part was made in the style typical of a traditional Vietnamese pagoda. The Mausoleum is opened daily for people coming to pay their homage to president Ho Chi Minh.

The Ho Chi Minh House-on-stilts is located in the compound of the Presidential Palace (former Residence of the Governor General of Tonkin). It is made from wood, in the style typical of the houses of mountain ethnic minorities. Next to the house are century old trees, by the side of a beautiful lake. President Ho Chi Minh lived, worked and hold meetings with top leaders from 1954 until he passed away in this house (September 1969). The Ho Chi Minh Museum, a five-storey architectural project is situated behind Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum. It was opened on September 2, 1990 on

the occasion of the 100th birthday of the President. In this Museum many objects and documents relating to Ho Chi Minh are kept.

The West Lake zone has an area of over 800 hectares. It is a former section of the Red River. There are many legends about this lake. Formerly this lake was called "Dam Dam" (Misty lake). Around the lake, stand many palaces of feudal kings and lords. Numerous ancient and beautiful pagodas and temples are also seen in the surroundings of West Lake. In the old times, in the area around West lake there were craft villages specializing in paper and silk production, etc., and villages providing the city with flowers or vegetables.

Mot Cot Pagoda (One Pillar Pagoda) is what remains of an ancient and much more imposing pagoda. It was built in 1049 in the shape of a lotus flower. According to a legend, King Ly Thai To, who had no male offspring, once saw in a dream the Goddess of Compassion (Avalokitesvara) sitting on a lotus who handed a boy to him. The King later married a young peasant woman he had met by chance and a son was born to them. As a token of gratitude, he had the pagoda built and dedicated to the Goddess. It is a square pavilion (3x3m) on top of a cylindrical stone pillar (diameter: 1.25m).

Quan Su Pagoda (Ambassadors' Pagoda) is the most active Buddhist centre in Hanoi. In the 15th century, this was the site of the Guesthouse for Ambassadors coming from Buddhist countries, with a small pagoda nearby. The pagoda was rebuilt in 1936-42.

Ba Da Pagoda (Pagoda of the Stone Lady) - As the soil was being dug for the building of the citadel of Thang Long (ancient Hanoi), a stone statue of a woman was unearthed. A temple was built to be dedicated to her. It later became a pagoda. The temple dates back to the 15th century.

Hai Ba Temple (Temple of the Two Ladies) is dedicated to Trung Sisters. One can see in the sanctuary the statues of two women, kneeling with arms raised, as if addressing the people.

Quan Thanh Temple (or Tran Vu) wrongly called "Pagoda of the Big Buddha" by the French colonialists was built by West Lake under the Ly Dynasty (1010-1225) and later reconstructed. Tran Vu was the God of the North. His attributes are a tortoise and a snake. A bronze statue (1677) is 3.72 meters high and weighs 4 tons. A bronze bell dates back to 1677.

Tran Quoc Pagoda by West Lake has a stele (1639) that carries an inscription on the history of the pagoda. It was built probably on the site of an old royal summer palace.

Van Mieu Temple (the Temple of Literature), built in 1070 and later rebuilt is dedicated to Confucius. It was also the first University in Vietnam (training scholars mandarins) which opened in 1076. It features quietness and harmony with the greenery surrounding it. There is Khue Van Pavilion, 82 stone steles bearing the names of the laureates of royal examinations held over a period of three hundred years (1484-1787).

Voi Phuc Temple (Temple of Kneeling Elephants) was, according to a legend, built under the reign of King Ly Thanh Tong (1054-1072) and dedicated to Prince Ling Lang who defeated the Sung aggressors, attacking the enemy with his war elephants. Statues of Ling Lang and his men can be seen there.

Co Loa Citadel (Spiral-shaped Citadel), in Dong Anh district, suburban area of Hanoi contains the ruins of a fortified palace with walls arranged in a spiral that was built in the 3rd century B.C. to serve as the capital of King An Duong Vuong. Of the nine coils of the spiral, which covered an area of more than 5 square kilometers, there remain only the vestiges of three, which in certain places are now about 2 meters high and

15 meters wide. In the centre of the citadel some buildings with valuable sculptures, are still found such as temples dedicated to King An Duong Vuong and his daughter, Princess My Chau, whose love for her husband caused the fall of the kingdom. The Museum of the Revolution contains various relics of the Vietnamese people's patriotic and revolutionary struggle. The Museum of History has rich collections of archaeological findings of great scientific and artistic value, including some relating to the era of the Hung kings, about 4,000 years ago represent the evolution of the Vietnamese nation. The Museum of the Army reflects great periods of the armed struggle of the Vietnamese people. The Women's Museum has thousands of objects on historical tradition of Vietnamese women in the cause of building and safeguarding the country are displayed. Moreover, there is a special section dealing with the wholehearted support of world's women towards Vietnamese women. The Museum of Ethnology is a superb museum that showcases the depth of Vietnamese cultural diversity with an astounding collection of 15,000 artifacts gathered from throughout Vietnam. Maps, displays and dioramas are labeled in Vietnamese, French and English. Displays portray a typical village market, the making of comical hats and a Tay shamanic ceremony; videos show the real thing. You can also check out a traditional Black Thai house reconstructed in the museum. There's also a center for research and conservation where scientists from all over the world study traditional Vietnamese cultures. The Museum of Fine Arts contains artistic works of great value, ranging from bronze drums (first millennium B.C.) to sculptures, paintings, engravings, and lacquer works by contemporary artists are displayed, not to mention folk art.

The Opera House (also known as the Hanoi Municipal Theatre) was built by the French in 1911 after the architecture of Paris Opera House. This theatre is the stage for the most interesting and important performances in Hanoi. Labour's Culture Palace was built with the help of the Soviet Union, and inaugurated in 1985 on the site of the former Exhibition House. The large hall has 1,200 seats and a round stage. The small hall has 250 seats. There are also many places reserved for 24 clubs with various activities.

Thang Long Water Puppet Theatre where the traditional water puppet shows are staged with original and interesting programs. It is a folk art particular to the people cultivating wet rice fields in North Vietnam. The artists hidden behind a curtain while immersed in water manipulate the puppets through an apparatus put under in the water surface, which serves as the stage. Traditional Art Club where scenes from the most interesting Vietnamese traditional plays are shown.

The Cathedral of Hanoi (St. Joseph's Church), built in 1886 in Gothic style, is the most beautiful and largest church in Hanoi. Near the Cathedral is the office of Hanoi's bishop, and in front of it is the Madonna Monastery.

The Cua Bac Church has architecture that is slightly influenced by that of Vietnamese pagoda and temple. Lenin Park (Thong Nhat Park) was built over a former marsh, this park surrounds a large lake containing a statue of Lenin.

The Perfume Pagoda is a complex of pagodas and Buddhist shrines built into the limestone cliffs of the Huong Tich Mountains (Mountains of Fragrant Traces) and is accessible only by water. Among the better known sites here are the Thien Chu (Pagoda Leading to Heaven), Huong Tich Chu (Pagoda of the Perfume Vestige) and

Giai Oan (Purgatorial Pagoda), where the faithful believe deities purify souls, cure illnesses and grant offspring to childless couples. Vast numbers of Buddhist pilgrims make their way here during the early spring, where they spend their time praying, boating, hiking and exploring the caves. Despite the sometimes numerous visitors, the Perfume Pagoda is a peaceful, perhaps holy, place.

Magnificent Ha Long Bay, with its 3,000-plus islands rising from the clear, emerald waters of the Gulf of Tonkin, is one of the natural wonders of Vietnam. In 1994, the 1500-sq-km (580-sq-mi) expanse dotted with tiny islands punctuated by perfect beaches and deserted grottos, was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site. Ha Long means, 'Where the dragon descends into the sea.' Legend has it that the islands of Ha Long Bay were created by a great dragon who lived in the mountains. As it ran toward the coast, its flailing tail gouged out valleys that filled with water and formed mountains that peek above the sea as rocky islands. While the vast majority of the islands in Ha Long Bay are uninhabited vertical rocks sticking out of the sea, Cat Ba Island - the largest in the bay - actually has a few tiny fishing villages. About half of the island was declared a national park in 1986 and protects the island's several diverse ecosystems. Waterfalls, mangrove forests, spectacular limestone hills and a large lake are just some of the reasons why people make the [Halong bay trip](#).

There are some 20 types of mammals, 70 species of birds and almost 800 plant species to see. An 18km (11mi) hike is popular with travelers; bring a flashlight as you might want to explore some caves. There are also 17 sites on the island where stone tools and bones from circa-4500 BC have been discovered; the most famous is Cai Beo Cave.

The National Preserve of Cuc Phuong is one of the last tropical primeval forest reserves on earth. There are 64 species of fauna and thousands of species of flora, many of which are extinct everywhere else in the world. Bizarre and fascinating species of animals from flying lizards to monkeys dwell within the park's 61,000 acres. Caves and grottoes, where various artifacts have been discovered, are located in the mountains within. This National Park was dedicated by Ho Chi Minh personally in 1963. Though much of Vietnam's biodiversity has suffered in the turbulent past decades, this 222 sq. km (86sq. mi) of tropical forest preserves and amazing variety of plant and animal life. Excellent hiking opportunities abound, from scaling the park's highest peak (648m; 2125ft) to a three-day trek that takes you through isolated Muong villages. Guides are mandatory for longer hikes. Also on site is the Endangered Primate Rescue Centre, run by German and Vietnamese biologists. There are currently 13 types of rare Gibbon and Langedur monkeys here (four types of Langedur may exist only in Cuc Phuong National Park). Black market demand for these monkeys has pushed several species to extinction. All of the animals at the center were either rescued from illegal traders or were bred in captivity.

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