

THE IN-FLIGHT MAGAZINE OF AIR NIUCINI VOLUME I JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2016



# PARADISE

## 2016 ALMANAC

The must-see events in PNG, Asia and the South Pacific

## PNG JOURNEYS

Papua New Guineans write about travels in their own country

## CITY GUIDE

Everything you need to know about Ho Chi Minh City

## PLUS:

PNG culture, books, movies & gadgets



# HULI TIME

A stunning photo journey with the Wigmen in PNG's Southern Highlands.

*Marisa Howden* unearths one of Asia's most renowned cities, leaving no monument untouched, no war story untold and no *pho* uneaten.

Still referred to as Saigon by the locals, there's no doubt that Ho Chi Minh City has come far from its early days of French and American occupation. With a dynamic food scene, lively energy and fascinating history, it's become one of Asia's most-alluring cities, having done its best to shed its war-torn past.

Renamed in 1975 after Vietnam's most popular communist leader, Ho Chi Minh City is now a buzzing metropolis – an eclectic mix of old and new.

The city is divided into 13 districts but you'll most likely stick to District 1, where the majority of sights, restaurants and hotels are located. You don't need more than a few days to experience the very best of Saigon, but be warned – it will leave you wanting to see more of this remarkable country. ➤

City guide:

# Ho Chi Minh City



PICTURES: MARISA HOWDEN, ISTOCK

Flower power ... Ho Chi Minh City's floating flower market at Tet adds to the colour of the city.

## City guide: Ho Chi Minh



## GETTING AROUND

Driving in Vietnam is not for the faint hearted. The motorbikes that engulf the streets of Ho Chi Minh and their ability to intertwine with each other in perfect unison is jaw-droppingly magnificent, but not something you'd ever want to try yourself.

So unless you're brave enough to tackle this crazy labyrinth, I'd suggest a taxi. They are relatively cheap, with most fares within District 1 costing less than PGK10.

Be sure to only use VinaSun branded taxis, or else you may be duped by false meters.

Cyclos are another fun option and an excellent way to get between the sights in District 1, but be sure to negotiate the fare beforehand and be willing to pay tourist prices.

## SIGHTS

The Saigon Opera House (Dong Khoi, Ben Nghe, District 1) is a stunning example of French colonial architecture, with its extravagant facade and ornate design. It's home to AO Circus Entertainment ([aoshowsaigon.com](http://aoshowsaigon.com)) and the Ho Chi Minh City Ballet Symphony Orchestra and Opera. Built in the late 1800s by French colonists, the Notre Dame Cathedral (Han

Thuyen, District 1) bellows high above the surrounding streets, with its 58-metre bell towers. It's open to the public for viewing, with mass held on Sundays at 9.30am.

Just opposite the Cathedral is Ho Chi Minh's iconic Central Post Office (2 Cong Xa Paris), where a reminder of a bygone era is captured through attractive architecture and detailed design. ➤



## CULTURE CULTURE

The War Remnants Museum (28 Vo Van Tan, District 1) pays a haunting tribute to not only the three million-plus people who died in the Vietnam War, but the millions of people whose lives have been affected by the aftermath of warfare.

With its 1960s design, the Reunification Palace (Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, District 1, pictured) presents a snapshot in time, offering insight into South Vietnam's former Presidential Palace looked like up to the day it was seized by the Communist Party.



## City guide: Ho Chi Minh

**CHILD'S PLAY**

In a city that is so defined by its wartime past, it is much to my surprise that kids are so well catered for. Kiz City (Ku Cong vien Khanh Hoi, (08 3825 3868) is a popular amusement centre where little ones are given the opportunity to experience 'real world' professions as they play along, learning how to be a baker, firefighter, beautician and pilot.

If you're interested in seeing a traditional Vietnamese water puppet show, the Golden Dragon Water Puppet Theatre ([goldendragonwaterpuppet.com.vn](http://goldendragonwaterpuppet.com.vn)) is a great option for kids and adults alike, with several shows on offer a day.

**RETAIL THERAPY**

The Ben Thanh Markets (Le Loi, District 1) are a shopaholic's mecca, with endless lanes of specialty stores and boutique stalls. Selling everything from fruits and spices, to home wares and clothes, it's a great place to visit even if you're not looking to shop.

The shops set in and around the Rex Hotel Arcade (141 Nguyen Hue, District 1) is where the luxury aficionados go. The timeless colonial architecture is even more beautiful than some of the goods on offer, but Rolex, Hugo Boss plus many others are available for those looking to spend up.

The ever-colourful Wholesale Flower Market in District 10 (Ho Thi Ky) is the city's biggest flower market and sells every type of flower you can ever dream of, including orchids, roses and lilies. Visit late at night or the wee hours of the morning for the best viewing selection.

**SPORTING LIFE**

Guided walking and cycling tours are the way to experience the city's many delights, while still keeping active. Vietnam Bike Tours ([vietnambiketours.com](http://vietnambiketours.com)) has a range of full and half-day tours in and around the city, while Saigon Free Walking Tours ([saigonfreewalkingtours.com](http://saigonfreewalkingtours.com)) has an excellent tour of the main sites within District 1.

Saigon Heat ([saigonheat.com](http://saigonheat.com)) is Ho Chi Minh's premier basketball team, touring as part of the ASEAN Basketball League. The Heat's season runs between October to March and local games can be seen at the Canadian International School Stadium.

For those looking to get out on the green, there are several golf courses within a couple of hours of the city. The Greg Norman designed Bluffs Ho Tam Strip ([thebluffshotram.com](http://thebluffshotram.com)) is an exciting links-style course on the southern Vietnamese coastline, while the Vietnam Golf and Country Club ([vietnamgolfcc.com](http://vietnamgolfcc.com)) has two championship courses, home to the Vietnam Masters Asian Tour events.

**Market day ... the centrally located Ben Thanh Market (right); the Mekong Delta, the food bowl of Vietnam (opposite page).**



City guide: Ho Chi Minh



ESCAPE

Considered the 'food bowl' of Vietnam, a visit to the Mekong Delta is well worth the two to three-hour drive outside the city. The region spans over 39,000 square kilometres, so you'll have to

do your research on where exactly you'd like to go. Can Tho Province is frequented by tourists due to its famous Cai Rang Floating Market, but if you want a more authentic experience head to Ben Tre Province to discover what life as

a local farmer is like (exotravel.com).

One of the more popular day tours is a trip to the Cu Chi Tunnels, approximately 90 minutes outside Ho Chi Minh. The 120-kilometre long complex of tunnels played an

important role in the Viet Cong's campaign against the French and US forces, and offers a glimpse into wartime guerilla tactics. ➤



PLANTATION  
**walindiresort**  
mvfebrina  
LIVEABOARD

Kimbe, West New Britain

Relax in a tropical bungalow, dive or snorkel the world renowned reefs of Kimbe Bay, take a birdwatching tour or nature hike, book a scuba course or join a liveaboard trip exploring Witu Islands, Fathers Reefs and beyond. Contact our friendly staff for a package to suit you.

www.walindifebrina.com | resort@walindifebrina.com | p: +675 7373 4199 or +675 983 5441

City guide: Ho Chi Minh



**PILLOW TALK**

Located on the outskirts of District 1 is the Nikko Hotel Saigon ([hotelnikkosaigon.com.vn](http://hotelnikkosaigon.com.vn)), one of the more-affordable luxury hotels in town. The rooms are comfortable and tailored to suit business travellers, offering modern amenities, a well-equipped gym and an impressive breakfast buffet.

Considered a landmark and one of the first luxury hotels to reopen after the war, the Caravelle Hotel (pictured, [caravellehotel.com](http://caravellehotel.com)) offers understated elegance in the heart of the business, shopping and entertainment precinct of District 1.

**WATERING HOLES**

The 2 Lam Son bar (2 Lam Son Square) at the Park Hyatt Hotel may be the classiest bar in town, with its sleek design aesthetic and


tantalising range of cocktails.

If you want to venture a little further afield, try Vung Oi Mo Ra in District 3 (17 Ngo Thoi Nhien Street), a well-hidden, French-inspired cafe set in an old colonial building. It's popular among the locals and features Vietnamese music after 9pm.

There is no shortage of coffee shops in the city. It's like every second storefront serves coffee, which is useful when you want to stop somewhere to give your tired feet a break. Rather than visiting any particular coffee shop, you're better off trying one of Vietnam's specialty coffees, including iced coffee with condensed milk, or the decadent Vietnamese egg coffee. ➤

FinCorp provides the steps for you, your family, your business and your way of life.



 Like Us on Facebook

**Contact us Now**

Call Centre: 7200 2100 | Port Moresby: 325 4209 | Lae: 472 7240 |  
Kokopo: 982 8340 | Mt.Hagen: 542 1492 | Goroka: 532 3504

## City guide: Ho Chi Minh



A taste of Vietnam ... (from left) *bun cha gio*, plates of street food, the famous *pho bo*.

## EATS

Set outdoors in a leafy garden, with a vast selection of street-style food on offer, is Nha Hang Ngon (160 D Pasteur; 3827 7131) – a must try while in town. Whether you order from the menu or choose from the different options on display, you'll be sure to be treated to some of the best Vietnamese available.

Hoa Tuc Restaurant (74/7 Hai Ba Trung; hoatuc.com) is in a funky courtyard of a former opium refinery in the heart of

the Dong Khoi area in District 1. The menu has an excellent selection of Vietnamese dishes, but with an Asian fusion touch. The barbecue turmeric mackerel will be sure to awaken your senses.

If you're looking for traditional Vietnamese food at its best, then try Temple Club (29 Ton That Thiep; templeclub.com.vn) in District 1.

If the beautiful colonial architecture doesn't inspire you, then the spirited cocktail list and extensive menu will be sure to do the trick.

## TUCK IN

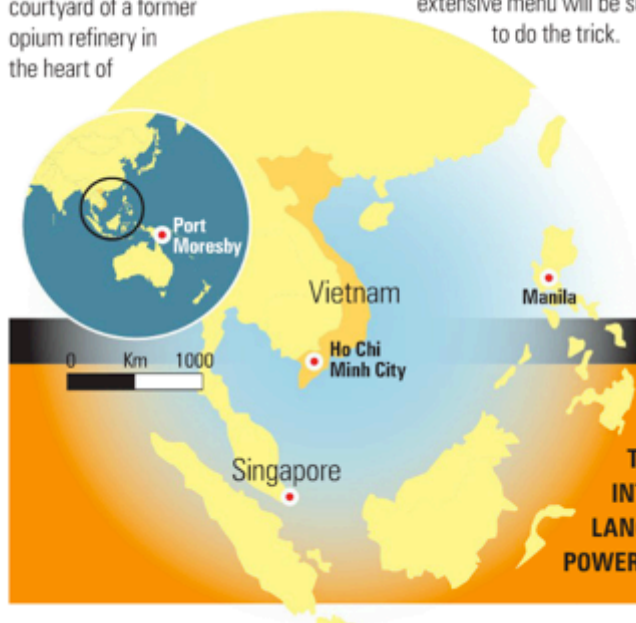
With so many delightful dishes on offer, it's hard to suggest just one. But some tempters include the ever-popular *pho bo* (noodle soup with beef) and French-inspired *banh mi* (baguette filled with a range of meats/salads).

My favourite is *bun cha gio* (Vietnamese spring rolls with vermicelli noodles) for an incredible freshness and balance of flavours.

It's included on most menus, but the best I have sampled is at Nha Hang Ngon's (as above), for its out-of-this-world take on pork and crab spring rolls.

## SAIGON SPECIAL

If you're keen to sample more of the city's delicious street food, then a great place to start is by joining a food tour. Vietnam Vespa Adventures (vespaadventures.com) offers a Saigon After Dark tour, which visits some of the city's most authentic eateries, while cruising on the back of a vintage Vespa. ■



## HO CHI MINH

POPULATION: Nine million

CURRENCY: Vietnamese Dong VND759,115 = PGK100

TAXI FARE FROM AIRPORT: To Dong Khoi Area, District 1, VND300,000

INTERNATIONAL DIALLING CODE: +84

LANGUAGE: Vietnamese

POWER: Two pins, round.