

Vietnam



Capital:	Hanoi
Population:	84.4 million (approx)
Religion:	Buddhism, with some 36 million followers, is the principal religion. There are also sizeable Taoist, Confucian, Hoa Hao, Cao daist, Muslim, and Christian minorities.
Government:	Communist state
Ethnic Groups:	85-90% Vietnamese (Kinh), 3% Chinese. Ethnic minorities include Muong, Thai, Meo, Khmer, Man, Cham and various mountain dwellers.
Language:	The official language is Vietnamese. Other languages spoken include Russian, French, Chinese, English, Khmer and a variety of Mon-Khmer and Malayo-Polynesian local dialects.
Currency:	Vietnam's unit of currency is the dong, indicated by the symbol 'VND', and divided into 100 xu.

- Vietnam is located on the eastern coast of the Southeast Asian Indochinese Peninsula.
- Although Vietnam claims a national history dating back 4,000 years to the Hung kings, the Vietnamese people are believed to have originated from minority ethnic groups in southern China who moved south in times of repression.
- Vietnam has spent much of its past at war. In 1946, the French sought to reassert control over Vietnam. The conflict ended in 1954 with the division of the country into the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) and the Republic of South Vietnam. America supported South Vietnam against the communists, and did not withdraw until 1975, at which time Vietnam allied itself with Russia, continuing its military conflict occupying Cambodia and confronting China. Finally in 1990, Vietnam entered its present course of social and economic reform, known as Moi Doi.
- Communicating with the Vietnamese presents a number of difficulties. First, because it is a developing country that has spent decades at war, Vietnam's transportation and communication infrastructure is inferior or nonexistent. Second, few Vietnamese possess the technical knowledge and management skills needed to interact with business counterparts from other countries. Third, few Vietnamese speak English. Fourth, residual strains of communist ideology often present barriers to efficient business communications.
- However like China, Vietnam is a communist country that is fast emerging as a market economy and is turning to the markets and investment of noncommunist countries to spur its growth. Taiwan, Hong Kong and Australia are the largest investors to date.

Business and Social Etiquette

- It is customary to shake hands on meeting and departing; both hands are offered to show respect and hospitality. Women are more likely to nod slightly than to shake hands.
- Business cards should be presented and received with both hands.
- At business meetings, males should wear suits and traditional dress ('Ao Dai') or suits for females.
- Business meetings are usually held between 8am and 10am or between 2pm and 3pm.
- It is wise to expect delays when travelling in Vietnam and build them into your schedule. Likewise, in business dealings or travel, there may be many government-induced obstacles to work around.
- Due to language difficulties, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of business sophistication in Vietnam, allow plenty of time for communicating, and make generous allowances for unexpected delays.
- Because Vietnam was preoccupied with war and civil disruption for much of its recent history, there is presently little business sophistication or expertise. Many businesses are state-owned and managed by government officials. International business people should not assume that common business terminology is understood by a Vietnamese; business transactions should be carefully discussed and explained.
- Business interactions require a personal element. It is important to establish a good relationship with business counterparts, even prior to undertaking business negotiations or transactions.
- Gifts of cakes or flowers are acceptable if visiting a Vietnamese home.
- Shoes are removed before entering a private home or temple. Ladies should not wear short skirts or shorts.
- At meals, the most senior or eldest person, or the host, will start first.
- It is impolite to spit or blow one's nose in public.
- Never touch the heads of people, including children.
- Smoking is not allowed in offices.

Language

- Family names come before given names. For example, Truong Phuong (Ms Truong) and Ngyuen Ky (pronounced Ngweean Ghee) (Mr Nguyen). Generally family names are used in the first instance, and as people get to know each other given names may be used. Always wait to be invited to use an alternative. It is very difficult to know a Vietnamese person's gender from their name.
- Always use Mr, Mrs or Miss with Vietnamese names. This should also be followed when you are more familiar and can use given names eg. Miss Phuong, not Phuong (unless invited to). The Vietnamese word for Mr or Ms is 'ong' for men, 'co' for women and 'ba' for elderly or very senior women.
- Vietnamese women keep their family name after marriage.

English	Vietnamese	Phonetics
Hello	Chao ong	Chow awng (to a young man)
	Chao bac	Chow bahk (to an older man)
	Chao co	Chow ko (to a young woman)
	Chao chi	Chow chay (to an older woman)
Yes (in the north)	Vang	Vangh
Yes (in the south)	Da	Yah
No	Khong	Kohng
Please	Xin moi	Seen mah-ee
Thank you	Cam on	Kam un
You're welcome	Khong co chi	Kohng gaw chee
I don't understand	Toi khong hieu	Toy kohng hee-oo

For further information, please contact:

Tom Verghese

Cultural Synergies Pty Ltd

Level 5, Causeway House

306 Little Collins Street

Melbourne VIC 3000

Australia

Tel: +61 3 9654 6161

Mob: +61 419 999 292

Fax: +61 3 9650 7350

www.culturalsynergies.com