



# OSAC Country Security Report

## Vietnam

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*This report is intended to supplement the U.S. Department of State Vietnam Travel Advisory and [Vietnam Country Information Page](#).*

### Embassy & Consulate Contact Information

#### U.S. Embassy in Hanoi

7 Lang Ha Street, Ba Đình, Hanoi  
Tel: +84 24-3850-5000

#### U.S. Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City

4 Le Duan Blvd., Bến Thành Ward, District 1, HCMC  
Tel: +84 28-3520-4200.

### OSAC Country Chapters

Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) each has an active OSAC Country Chapter.

Contact [OSAC's Asia team](#) with any questions.

### Vietnam Travel Advisory

The current U.S. Department of State [Travel Advisory](#) at the date of this report's publication assesses that travelers should exercise normal precautions in Vietnam.

### Crime

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) as being **HIGH**-threat locations for crime directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Crime "C" Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Vietnam.

The crime emergency line in Vietnam is **113**.

Although most travelers feel relatively safe, non-violent crimes do occur in Vietnam with some frequency; petty crimes occur regularly, especially in crowded areas and tourist locations. Most crimes targeting foreigners are petty thefts, sexual harassment, and the most common target is cell phones – so much so that a market area on Hanoi's Quán Thánh street selling used cell phones and tables is colloquially known as "Stolen Phone Street."

Pickpocketing – specifically drive-by bag snatching – is another frequent crime in both Hanoi and HCMC. Two criminals riding a motorcycle will ride up to a target; the motorcycle passenger will then snatch the victim’s camera, cell phone, or purse. This tactic can be especially dangerous to the victim if the strap of the bag is wrapped over their shoulder or around their neck, as the assailant can pull down and injure the victim more easily that way. There is typically an increase in petty crime during the Christmas and Tết (Lunar New Year) holiday seasons, including during the day and in well-lit areas.

Keep a tight hold on bags as you enter and exit vehicles and as you walk around. Hold tightly to cell phones when using them outside and lock and stow phones until you actually need to use them.

Since 2019, there has been a significant increase in the number of reports of sexual harassment and assault by groping. In 2021, the Ministry of Public Security increased the penalty to VND 8 million (\$350) for acts of groping and sexual harassment; the penalty for sexual harassment and sexual assault remains a fine without any jail time. In addition, the police do not take groping and sexual harassment very seriously, so having them investigate it is difficult at best.

The instances of burglaries rose during COVID lockdowns in the Hanoi and HCMC residential areas, and especially in the weeks leading up to the Tết holiday. Neighborhoods popular with the expatriate and diplomatic communities are especially vulnerable. Single-family houses tend to be the most frequent targets of residential break-ins. These break-ins have not resulted in injuries to residents as they have occurred only when residents are not home. If a burglar confronts you, do not react using force, as that may lead to an escalation of violence. In general, high-rise apartment complexes with 24-hour guards and access-control systems have lower burglary rates. Additionally, the safety and security of guest rooms in quality hotels is adequate.

For those living in Vietnam, it is common to employ domestic help. The Regional Security Office is aware of occasional instances in which domestic help are suspected of stealing valuables from their employers.

Violent crime (e.g., armed robbery, kidnapping, sexual abuse) against foreigners is uncommon, but does occur. There have been instances of Westerners being offered cigarettes that turned out to be laced with drugs; the victims passed out, and at least one was robbed (with no recollection of events). There have also been reports of drink doctoring to incapacitate victims in bars and restaurants expatriates frequent. In one case, a British man lost a computer after taking a woman he met in a bar back to his rented house.

Criminals have copied credit and debit cards to make illegal purchases and withdraw funds without the account holder’s knowledge or consent. The Hanoi Metropolitan Police has reported discovery and seizure of devices designed to duplicate debit card information and ATM cards.

Sexual harassment, groping, and sexual assault is common, and foreigners are targeted, especially in Tây Hồ, a high-end Hanoi residential area where many expatriates live and work.

There are no high-crime areas that are considered off limits to U.S. government personnel, due to the nonviolent nature of crime overall in Hanoi and HCMC.

## Kidnapping Threat

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Kidnapping “K” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Vietnam.

Kidnapping does happen, albeit infrequently, in Vietnam. Most kidnappings are related to family and friend group disputes as opposed to being targeted kidnaps for ransom.

## Terrorism

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City as being **LOW**-threat locations for terrorism directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Terrorism “T” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Vietnam.

There is very little information available and almost no historical context to rate Vietnam's approach to terrorism. The counterterrorism officials with whom U.S. Embassy Hanoi officials routinely deal assess an almost zero risk of terrorism throughout the country, due in part to Vietnam's restrictive and pervasive surveillance network. Vietnam's security services are quite aggressive in deterring any suggestion of terrorism. There are no known terrorist groups operating in Vietnam, although authorities do consider several anti-government organizations as terrorist organizations, and claim they are responsible for occasional violent incidents that use terrorist tactics.

In 2019, authorities detained an individual for allegedly causing an explosion in a Bình Dương province tax office, charging him with a terrorism offense. The explosion may have taken place in a restroom inside the four-story building. Authorities claim the individual was acting under the guidance of a U. S.-based organization called the "Provisional National Government of Vietnam," which is classified as a terrorist organization in Vietnam. Authorities have arrested others for purported participation in this group, including more than a dozen for a purported plot against the airport in 2017, several in 2020 for sharing “terrorist propaganda,” and several more in 2021 for purportedly “carrying out activities to overthrow the government.”

The Vietnamese government has also designated California-based pro-democracy group Việt Tân as a terrorist organization, accusing the group of training members to sneak into Vietnam to organize protests and instigate violence. Among others, authorities in 2019 arrested a Vietnam-born, Australian citizen for his work with the group, convicting him of working to “fund terrorist operations.”

On 11 June 2023, a group of unidentified gunmen attacked Peoples' Committee offices in Cu Kuin district, Dak Lak province located in Vietnam's Central Highlands. One group of assailants attacked the Ea Tieu Commune People's Committee while a second group simultaneously attacked the Ea Ktuk Commune People's Committee, killing four police officers, two commune officials and two civilians. Two police officers were seriously injured. Dak Lak province has a long history of armed, ethnic minority-led separatist groups conducting violent attacks to seek greater autonomy or independence for the Central Highlands. Such groups were particularly active beginning in the 1960s and after reunification through the 1980s. Despite this history, the province has not seen an attack like this for decades. Government statistics indicate members of Dak Lak's ethnic minorities constitute 36 percent of the overall population, and the authorities often accuse these ethnic minority leaders of being "reactionary elements" backed by foreign organizations. On 20 January 2024, the People's Court of Dak Lak sentenced 10 defendants to life imprisonment for their involvement in the attack.

## Political Violence and Civil Unrest

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City as being **LOW**-threat locations for political violence directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Civil Unrest "U" Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Vietnam. Civil unrest can develop quickly without prior notice, often interrupting logistics and services. Avoid demonstration activity, as even those planned to remain peaceful have the potential to turn violent.

## Elections/Political Stability

During national elections for members of the steering committee and Politburo (held every five years), the city of Hanoi remains locked down due to dignitary protection events and road closures. There are no rallies, no protests, and most of the delegates leave the city before the results are announced. The entire process is very secretive.

Due in part to the 2020 pandemic, political stability has been quite high, as much of the population rallied around the central government's efforts to fight the disease. Vietnam is a one-party country and elections proceed in a very organized manner.

## Protests & Demonstrations

The government places heavy controls on political protests and public demonstrations, making civil unrest relatively uncommon. Small-scale, peaceful demonstrations have occurred, often due to territorial disputes between Vietnam and the People's Republic of China (PRC); large-scale demonstrations are rare. Avoid large gatherings, as they can become violent with little or no warning.

Local authorities monitor protests in Vietnam heavily. The U.S. Embassy Hanoi has been the target of pickets by land reform activists as recent as summer 2024. These protests were often

over in 15 minutes and the police removed the protestors away quickly. Protests over land use are not uncommon throughout the country. While ownership of all land is technically held by the state, land confiscations have become a flashpoint, with residents accusing the government ignoring the interests of small landholders in favor of lucrative real estate or industrial developments.

In 2018, demonstrations took place in Hanoi, HCMC, and some other provinces; thousands of people protested a draft law for new economic zones. The legislation would have allowed Chinese companies to lease land in Phú Quốc island, Vân Đồn island and Vân Phong Gulf for up to 99 years.

Anti-China demonstrations occasionally protest the PRC's occupation of the Paracel Islands (Quần Đảo Hoàng Sa) in the South China Sea (a territory that the PRC still holds), generally after the Chinese government or navy is involved in a maritime incident.

### Anti-U.S./Anti-Western Sentiment

Most Vietnamese regard most Westerners in a positive manner and are friendly to foreigners. The most recent Pew Research poll of Vietnamese showed approximately 92% had a favorable view of the United States.

### Law Enforcement

The Ministry of Public Security is responsible for internal security and controls the national police, a special national security investigative agency, and other internal security units. Police entities that travelers are most likely to meet are the traffic police (cảnh sát giao thông), public security (công an), and fire departments. The traffic police wear khaki uniforms and are like highway patrol units or police officers whose primary job is the enforcement of traffic laws. Public security, who wear green uniforms similar to the military, oversee general security and enforcing local laws. The Public Security Ministry is analogous to the U.S. FBI, DHS (Immigration, Customs & Border Patrol, etc.), DEA, NSA, and CIA all in one agency.

### Police Response

Police are often lack proper funding and training. Local police will issue a report of a crime but generally will only initiate investigations for crimes they determine serious; the definition of *serious* does not always equate with U.S. standards. Investigations can take several months to complete. While the overall situation is improving, some police have asked for bribes, ostensibly to support local police efforts or to facilitate investigation of a crime. If you are involved in a situation where a police officer is soliciting money, contact American Citizen Services at the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi or the U.S. Consulate General on HCMC.

If arrested for a crime, authorities will transport you to a jail and bring you before a judge. Insist on contacting American Citizen Services. There are often delays in notification by the

Vietnamese authorities to the U.S. Embassy or U.S. Consulate General and officials have been known to delay consular access to prisoners for several weeks.

## Travelers with Special Considerations

For [specific traveler concerns](#) in Vietnam, review the local laws and circumstances on the Department of State's Country Information Page.

- [Women Travelers](#)
- [LGB Travelers](#)
- [Travelers with Disabilities](#)
- [Student Travelers](#)
- [Faith-Based Travelers](#)

## Rule of Law, Arbitrary Detention, Official Harassment, Corruption, & Transparency

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Risk of Wrongful Detention “D” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Vietnam.

Vietnamese citizens do not enjoy civil liberties, and the Vietnamese police do not consider any detention arbitrary. There are always concerns over corruption. Local police officers are known anecdotally to accept bribes in lieu of small fines.

Although the law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials and there were multiple arrests and convictions for corruption, the government does not implement the law effectively, and officials frequently engage in corrupt practices. This includes existing and retired officials from the politburo, central party, military, and public security services.

## Cybersecurity

Cybercrime has become more sophisticated in Vietnam. Vietnam has one of the world's highest levels of infected personal computers and malware penetration. This is due in part to the prevalence of unlicensed and expired software, which may not receive necessary security patches and updates. Not only do malicious cyber actors target individuals for personal information, but they also conduct attacks against businesses and foreign government agencies for economic and political information. According to reports, foreign cybercriminals have remotely attacked bank accounts and taken large amounts of money from account holders.

## Import/Export Restrictions

Vietnamese law prohibits the export of antiques. However, these laws are vague and unevenly enforced. Customs authorities may inspect and seize your antiques without compensating you,

and the determination of what is an “antique” can be arbitrary. If you purchase non-antique items of value, retain receipts and confirmation from shop owners and/or the Ministry of Culture and the Customs Department to prevent seizure when you leave the country.

Vietnamese authorities have seized documents, audio and video tapes, compact discs, literature and personal letters they deem to be pornographic or political in nature or intended for religious or political proselytizing. It is illegal to import weapons, ammunition, explosives, military equipment and tools (including uniforms), narcotics, drugs, toxic chemicals, pornographic and subversive materials, firecrackers, or children's toys that have "negative effects on personality development, social order and security. "

In Vietnam, importing satellite phones is currently subject to strict regulations, with the government requiring foreign companies providing satellite telecommunication services to have a local gateway station and comply with stringent data security measures, essentially limiting the ability of individuals to freely import and use satellite phones without specific authorization. However, the recent announcement of a pilot program for satellite internet services like Starlink indicates a potential shift towards more relaxed restrictions on satellite communication technology, with the government maintaining tight control over its usage.

A country-specific listing of items/goods prohibited from being exported to the country or that are otherwise restricted is available from the U.S. International Trade Agency [website](#).

*Additional resources and reports can be found in the [OSAC Traveler Toolkit](#).*