

Learn Vietnamese



Free online phrasebook for travellers

Although in popular tourist destinations and larger cities it is just about possible to get by without knowing a word of Vietnamese, insisting on speaking your own language all the time will isolate you from the majority of Vietnamese people and leave you less likely to make friends and relationships you will remember from your travels. By learning to speak just a few words of Vietnamese you can greatly improve your experience, reduce misunderstandings and frustrations and have a chance to talk - however briefly - with individuals who work outside of the tourist service industry, giving you a far greater appreciation of the Vietnamese culture and outlook on life.

We think any responsible traveller should at a minimum learn how to meet and greet people and how to be polite, but taking the time to learn a few more phrases will certainly enhance your enjoyment - even if it just means you are able to recognise a few more items on that otherwise baffling Vietnamese menu. Use our free online phrasebook to sharpen your skills and prepare for your trip - or download it as a PDF to put on your Kindle, mobile, iPhone, iPod touch or other ebook reader.

The original copy of this guide can be found at <http://www.vietnamtravel.org/learn-vietnamese>

Basic Vietnamese Phrases

Simplest Phrases

At the very minimum it is important to at least know how to say 'Hello' and 'Thank you' - it takes moments to learn yet can make a big impression, as you will already know more than 90% of travellers arriving in Vietnam

Hello	Xin chào
Goodbye	Tạm biệt
Thank You	Cám ơn

I am sorry	Xin lỗi
No problem.	Không sao

Addressing people

For Vietnamese people it is important to use the correct form of address than signifies your age and relationship to the person you are speaking to. In general, when talking to someone younger than you you may call them 'Em', or if you think you are

younger than them you may call yourself 'Em' and use a range of pronouns based on the other person's gender and age.

As a traveller however it is acceptable to 'cheat' and use a generic 'Tôi' for 'I' and 'Bạn' for 'Friend', rather than finding the correct form of address - this is not disrespectful and will help you make yourself understood.

I, me	Tôi
I am	Tôi là
You	Bạn
She, her	Cô ấy
He, him	Anh ấy
They, them	Họ
We, us	Chúng ta
It	Nó

Basic Vocabulary

You may find some of the following vocabulary useful for forming simple sentences:

Like	Thích
Want	Muốn
Eat	Ăn
Drink	Uống
Like to eat	Thích ăn
I like to eat	Tôi thích ăn
What	Cái gì
What do you like to eat?	Bạn thích ăn cái gì?
I'm hungry	Tôi đói (bụng)
I'm thirsty	Tôi khát nước

I am sorry	Xin lỗi
No problem.	Không sao
What is this?	Cái này là cái gì?
Where is the nearest internet shop?	Gần đây có internet không?
Where is the post office?	Bưu điện ở đâu?

Where is the ATM?	ATM ở đâu?
Yesterday	Hôm qua
Today	Hôm nay
Tomorrow	Ngày mai
To go	Đi
Bus	Xe Buýt
Station	Ga
I am going to the bus station	Tôi đi ga xe buýt

Pronunciation, Tones + the Vietnamese Alphabet

Like the majority of South East and East Asian languages, Vietnam is a tonal language. This means that for each syllable there are six different tones that can change the meaning of a phrase.

This can be unusual for Westerners since there are times we have a natural inclination to change the tone of our speech - the most common is raising the pitch of your voice when asking a question. Don't let it put you off though - once you have mastered the pronunciation, Vietnamese is a satisfyingly straightforward language, with a grammar system that is much easier than that of a language like French.

Another great advantage learners of Vietnamese have over those studying other Asian languages is that the Vietnamese alphabet is essentially a modified version of the Roman alphabet, making it easy to read signs and addresses when travelling around.

Tones

Description	Diacritic	Sample word	Meaning
High rising	／	Má	Mother
Low falling	＼	Mà	That
Start in a low tone, go down, and gently back up (I tend to imagine a bored butler - 'Ye-es M'lud?')	？	Mả	Tomb
Start high, bring voice down, cut off and go back up*	～	Mã	Horse
Bring voice down and cut off abruptly (imagine a parent firmly saying 'No.')	•	Mạ	Rice Shoots
Mid range voice, go flat and level	(No mark)	Ma	Ghost

* This tone is very strong in the North around [Hanoi](#) where there is a perceptible 'cut' in the sound. In the South around [Saigon](#) people tend to speak in a more 'smooth' manner, and many would say this tone becomes almost identical to the low, rising tone above it ('Ye-es, M'lud')

Vietnamese Alphabet

Although the Vietnamese use the same alphabet as Latin languages such as English and French, some of the

sounds are fairly different to their English equivalent. There are a few similarities with French, however.

Consonants

d	Like ' z ' as in zero
đ	Like ' d ' in English as do
g,gh	Like ' g ' in go
gi	Like ' y ' in yes
kh	Like ' Karen '
nh	Like ' n ' in Cognac
ng, ngh	Like Singer
ph	Like ' f ' in forest
r	Normal R in English
s	Normal S in English
t	As in Tan
th	As in Thump
tr	As in Train
v	As in Violet

Vowels

One rule to pronouncing vowels in Vietnam that is very useful to remember is that whenever you get two vowels together - for example 'ui' - the first vowel should have much more emphasis than the second - '**ui**'

a	As in father
ă	like 'a' in "father", except said very quickly
â	As a in black
ai	l
Ao	Loud
au	Ow
Âu	As in go
ay	As in day
ây	As in David
e	Like in America
eo	Like meow -cat's noise

ê	Like in café
i	Like in see
la	Like in idia
le	Like in yes
o	Like in door
oa	Like in Oasis
oai	Like in Why
oay	Like in Uruguay
oe	Where
oi	Coin
ô	Joseph
ôi	Like in toy
ơ	Like in Burger
ơi	ơi
u	Like in Sue
ua	Like Ecuador
ư	fur
uê	Like in 'Question'
ui	Like oo-ee
uy	Like ' oui ' in French
uya	As French ' Culture '
uyen	when
y	Like letter ' e '
yeu	Like in few

Vietnamese Phrases: Eating + drinking

One of the most enjoyable aspects to travelling in Vietnam is discovering the delicious, fresh and unique cuisine on offer - but for the less adventurous a foreign menu can be very off putting. Make the most of your meals by brushing up on your food

vocabulary before you go, and avoid eating fried noodles in every restaurant along the journey!

At the restaurant

Restaurant	Nhà Hàng
Menu	Thực đơn
Food	Thức ăn
Drink (n)	Đồ uống
A pair of chopsticks	Đôi đũa
I am a vegetarian	Tôi ăn chay
Not too spicy	Không rất cay
No chilli please	Không có ớt
No fish sauce	Không có nước mắm
Can I have the bill please?	Tính tiền
Delicious	Ngon quá
I am full	Tôi no rồi
Medium	Vừa
Rare	Tái
Well-done	Chín
Without	Không có
A little	Ít
Sugar	Đường

One more	Thêm một
One more beer	Thêm một bia
Meat	Thịt
Seafood	Hải Sản
Chicken	Gà
Beef	Bò
Pork (South / North)	(Thịt) Heo / Lợn
Fish	Cá
Squid	Mực
Prawns	Tôm
Crab	Cua
Soft shell crab	Cua lột
Fried / Deep Fried	Chiên
Stir fried	Xào
Grilled	Nướng

Steamed	Hấp
Stewed	Kho
With	Với
Fish sauce	Nước mắm
Stir fried chicken	Gà xào
Grilled chicken	Gà nướng
Morning glory	Rau muống
Water	Nước
Ice	Đá
Red wine	Rượu đỏ
White wine	Rượu trắng
Can I have the menu please?	Có thực đơn không?
Can I have chicken sate please	Tôi muốn gà sa tế
Can I have a glass of red wine please?	Tôi muốn một ly rượu đỏ

Drinks / Fruit Juices / Fruits

Lemon Juice	Nước Chanh
Orange Juice	Nước Cam
Coconut Juice	Nước Dừa
Apple Juice	Nước Táo
Mango Juice	Nước Xoài
Pashion Fruit Juice	Nước Chanh Dây
(green) Tea	Trà
Iced Tea	Trà Đá
Black (Lipton) Tea	Trà Lipton
Black Coffee (hot)	Cà Phê Đen (Nóng)
Ice Black Coffee	Cà Phê Đá
White Coffee	Cà Phê Sữa (Nóng)
Iced White Coffee	Cà Phê Sữa Đá
Condensed Milk	Sữa
Fresh Milk	Sữa Tươi
Do you have fresh milk?	Bạn có sữa tươi không?
Fruit Shake	Sinh Tố
Vietnamese Desert	Chè

Vegetables

Aubergine / Eggplant	Cà tím
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Tomato	Cà Chua
Mushrooms	Nấm
Onions	Hành
Spring Onions	Hành Lá
Vegetables	Rau
Morning Glory (water spinach)	Rau Muống
Coriander	Ngò
Sweet Basil	Rau thơm
Mint	Bạc Hà
Garlic	Tỏi
Chilli	Ớt
Spicy	Cay

Vietnamese Phrases: Getting Around

Taxis + Motorbike Taxis

Do you use the meter?	Bạn có chạy theo đồng hồ không?
I like to go the cinema, please	Tôi muốn đi rạp chiếu phim
Motorbike Driver	Xe Ôm
Bicycle Rickshaw (Cyclo)	Xích Lô
Bus Station	Trạm Xe Búýt
Train Station	Ga Xe Lửa
Airport	Sân Bay
How much is it to go from here to Russian Market?	Đi chợ Nga bao nhiêu tiền?
That's expensive, I pay 30,000 VND ?	Mắc quá, tôi trả ba mươi ngàn?
I'm in a hurry	Tôi đang vội
Please slow down!	Đi chậm lại!
I don't want to die	Tôi không muốn chết!

Directions

Go straight	Đi thẳng
Turn left	Quẹo trái
Turn right	Quẹo phải
Stop here please	Dừng lại ở đây
Next to, by	Bên cạnh

Left hand side	Bên Trái
Right hand side	Bên phải

Vehicles

Car	Xe Hơi/ Xe ô tô
Taxi	Taxi
Motorbike	Xe Máy
Motorbike Taxi	Xe Ôm
Bicycle	Xe Đạp
Bus	Xe Buýt
Train	Tàu / Xe Lửa (old)
Boat	Thuyền
Aeroplane	Máy Bay

Tickets

Ticket	Vé
One Way	Một Chiều
Return Ticket	Khứ Hồi
I would like a ticket to Nha Trang	Tôi muốn mua vé đi Nha Trang
How much does a ticket to Hanoi cost?	Vé đi Hà Nội bao nhiêu tiền?
How far is it (Km) to Phan Thiet	Đ i Phan Thiết bao nhiêu cây số?
How long is the journey to Hoi An ?	Đi Hội An bao lâu?
That's a long time!	Lâu Quá!
That's quick!	Nhanh quá!
That's expensive!	Mac Quá!
That's cheap!	Re Quá!
Is it faster to go by train?	Đi tàu có nhanh hơn không?
Is it cheaper to go by bus?	Đi xe buýt có rẻ hơn không?
Is the bus direct?	Xe buýt có đi thẳng không?
Seat	Ghế
Reclining Seat / Soft Seat	Ghế Nằm / Ghế Mềm
Bed	Giường

Hiring vehicles

For Hire	Cho Thuê
I want to hire a motorbike	Tôi muốn thuê xe máy

I want to hire a bicycle	Tôi muốn thuê xe đạp
I want to hire a car with a driver	Tôi muốn thuê xe hơi với tài xế
.. To go to Dalat	Tôi muốn thuê xe hơi với tài xế đi Đà Lạt
How much to hire it for an hour?	Thuê một giờ bao nhiêu tiền?
.. For two days?	Thuê hai ngày bao nhiêu tiền?
How much to hire for a week?	Thuê một tuần bao nhiêu tiền?
Do you have a helmet	Bạn có nón bảo hiểm không?

Issues

Excuse me	Xin Lỗi
Help me	Gúp tôi với
My bicycle has a puncture	Xe đạp của tôi bị xì lốp
My motorbike has broken down	Xe máy của tôi bị hư
I've run out of petrol!	Tôi hết xăng rồi
Where can I buy more petrol?	Đổ xăng ở đâu?
You're too drunk to drive	Bạn quá xỉn để lái xe!

Vietnamese Phrases: Making Friends

When you meet someone it is natural to ask their name and where they are from, as these are great ice breakers. Please note though there are some differences between Vietnamese and Western cultures that may come as a surprise!

Basic Greetings

Hello	Xin chào
Hi	Chào
How are you?	Bạn có khỏe không?
Fine. And you?	Khỏe. Còn bạn thì sao?
I am happy	Tôi vui
I am sick	Tôi bệnh
I am tired	Tôi mệt
What's your name?	Bạn tên gì?
My name's John	Tôi tên là John
It's lovely to meet you	Rất vui được gặp bạn.
Where are you from?	Bạn từ đâu đến?
I am from England	Tôi đến từ nước Anh.
France	Pháp
America	Mỹ

Australia	Úc
Spain	Tây Ban Nha
Canada	Canada
Japan	Nhật
Korea	Hàn Quốc
China	Trung Quốc
Goodbye	Tạm biệt
See you later	Hẹn gặp lại
Goodnight	Chúc ngủ ngon

Age

In Vietnam it is also perfectly normal and polite to ask someone's age, as for the Vietnamese to be polite it is very important to know someone's age know how to address someone correctly, so please don't be offended if someone asks your age and don't be afraid to ask somebody else's.

If you feel a little put out by the question, just remember - in Vietnam the older and wiser you are the higher your status and the more respected you are - people are only asking so they can show you the appropriate level of respect and reverence.

How much / how many	Bao Nhiêu
How old are you?	Em/Anh/Chị bao nhiêu tuổi?
I am 23 years old	Tôi là hai mươi ba tuổi
He is 46 years old	Anh ấy là bốn mươi sáu tuổi

Money

Likewise, despite the taboo nature of directly asking someone's salary in the West, in Vietnam it is a perfectly normal question and in no way impolite. If you do not wish to answer you may demur but please do not take offense should the question arise, as the person asking will have no idea it could make you feel uncomfortable.

Family

The family is held in very high regard in Vietnam, and so people will be delighted if you take an interest in theirs, and eager to know about your own family back at home. They will be even more delighted to meet them, and love to see families travelling together.

Family	Gia đình
Parents	Ba mẹ
Mother	Mẹ
Family	Gia đình
Brother (older)	Anh trai
Brother (younger)	Em trai
Sister (older)	Chị gái
Sister (younger)	Em gái
Children	Con
Do you have any brothers or sisters?	Bạn có anh chị em không?
Yes, I have an older brother and younger sister.	Vâng, tôi có một anh trai và một em gái

Do you have any children?	Bạn có con không?
Yes, I have a little boy and two girls	Vâng, tôi có 1 cậu con trai nhỏ và hai con gái.
How many people are there in your family?	Có bao nhiêu người trong gia đình bạn?
Where do your parents live?	Ba mẹ bạn sống ở đâu?

Marriage & Relationships

It is common for people in Vietnam to marry young, and highly unusual for couples to live together before marriage, so you may find when travelling people assume you are married or find it unusual if you are not - particularly if you are over twenty five. Boyfriend and girlfriend suggest a casual relationship so if you are with a long term unmarried partner you may find it easier to state you are married, particularly in more rural, traditional areas.

Boyfriend	Bạn trai
Girlfriend	Bạn gái
This is my boyfriend	Đây là bạn trai của tôi
Wife	Vợ
Husband	Chồng
Are you married yet?	Bạn đã kết hôn chưa?
Yes, for three years already	Có, được ba năm rồi
We are engaged	Chúng tôi đã đính hôn
When is your wedding?	Khi nào bạn đám cưới?
Next year	Năm Sau
We are on our honeymoon	Chúng tôi đang hưởng tuần trăng mật

Vietnamese Phrases: Numbers, times + dates

Vietnamese numbers are quite easy to follow, as higher numbers use the same words as lower - for example, twenty five would be expressed as 'Two Ten Five', or 365 as 'Three Hundred Six Ten Five'. This means that once you have learnt to count from one to ten other numbers are pretty easy.

There is one irregularity with numbers: since the word for 5 (Năm) is the same as for year(s) (Năm) it changes to 'Lăm' avoid confusion, for example:

- 5 - Năm
- 20 years - Hai Mươi Năm
- 25 - Hai Mươi Lăm
- 55 - Năm Mươi Lăm
- 55 years - Năm Mươi Lăm Năm

0	Không
1	Một
2	Hai

3	Ba
4	Bốn
5	Năm
6	Sáu
7	Bảy
8	Tám
9	Chín
10	Mười
11	Mười một
12	Mười hai
13	Mười ba
14	Mười bốn
15	Mười lăm
16	Mười sáu
17	Mười bảy
18	Mười tám
19	Mười chín
20	Hai Mười
21	Hai Mười Một
30	Ba Mười
32	Ba Mười Hai
100	Một Trăm
1,000	Một Nghìn
100,000	Một Trăm Nghìn
1,000,000	Một Triệu
1 bn	Một Tỷ / Tỉ

Money

Since money in Vietnam is demarcated in thousands it is acceptable to skip the 'thousand dong' when negotiating prices, or to use slang. Do note though that 'Chuc' is used more in the south and may not be recognised in the north.

1 \$	Một đô
1 £	Một bảng
1,000 Dong	Một Nghìn Đồng
50,000 Dong	Năm Mười (Nghìn đồng)
20, 000 / Twenty bucks (slang)	Hai Chục
50,000 / 50 bucks (slang)	Năm Chục

Units of Time

Minute	Phút
Hour	Giờ
Day	Ngày
Week	Tuần
Month	Tháng
Year	Năm

Days of the week

Monday	Thứ Hai (Day 2)
Tuesday	Thứ Ba (Day 3)
Wednesday	Thứ Tư (day 4)
Thursday	Thứ Năm (day 5)
Friday	Thứ Sáu (day 6)
Saturday	Thứ Bảy (day 7)
Sunday	Chủ Nhật (God's day)

Months of the year

January	Tháng Một(Month 1)
February	Tháng Hai (Month 2)
March	Tháng Ba (Month 3)
...	...
November	Tháng Mười Một (Month 11)
December	Tháng Mười Hai (month 12)

Time of day

Morning	Buổi Sáng
Afternoon	Buổi Chiều
Evening	Buổi Tối
Night	Tối/Đêm
Lunch time	Bữa Trưa
Midday	Giữa Trưa
Midnight	Nửa Đêm
Rush hour	Giờ Cao Đỉnh

Meals of the day

Breakfast	Ăn Sáng
Lunch	Ăn Trưa
Dinner	Ăn Tối

Telling time and numbers

What time is it?	Mấy giờ rồi?
It's 1 o'clock.	Một giờ rồi
Now	Bây Giờ
Now it is ten past three	Bây Giờ là ba giờ mười phút
Today	Hôm nay
Tomorrow	Ngàymai
Yesterday	Hôm qua
Next / Before	Trước
Last / after	Sau
Last week	Tuần Sau
Next year	Năm trước
Before five pm	Trước năm giờ chiều
After 7 am	Sau bảy giờ sáng
After dinner	Sau ăn tối
Between ... And .. / From ... to	Từ...đến
Breakfast is between 7 and 9 am	Ăn sáng từ bảy giờ đến 9 giờ
How long?	Bao lâu?
How long have you been in Vietnam?	Bạn ở Việt Nam bao lâu?
Since February	Từ Tháng Hai
When	Khi Nào?
When will you go home?	Khi nào đi về nhà?
Until	Đến
I'm in Vietnam until March	Tôi ở Việt Nam đến tháng Ba
Already	Rồi
I've been in Vietnam 2 weeks already	Tôi ở Việt Nam hai tuần rồi.

Special occasions

Birthday	Sinh nhật
Today it is my birthday	Hôm nay là sinh nhật của tôi
Tet (Lunar New Year)	Tết
Western New Year	Tết Tây
Party	Tiệc
Full Moon Festival / Mid Autumn Festival	Tết Trung Thu
Full moon	Trăng Rằm

Christmas	Noel
Anniversary	Lễ kỷ niệm
Wedding	Đám cưới

Vietnamese Phrases: Shopping

Shopping

A favourite activity for many travellers to Vietnam is shopping. With a huge range of unique crafts available Vietnam is a great place to find souvenirs, and thanks to cheap prices and very talented tailors it is also a popular place to have clothes made. By sprinkling some Vietnamese into your shopping not only will it be easier to get things you want but you may even get some better bargains too. Don't forget to take a look at our section on dates, numbers and money too.

Where	Ở đâu
Where is Ben Thanh market?	Chợ Bến Thành ở đâu?
Where can I buy sun cream?	Tôi có thể mua kem chống nắng ở đâu?
How much is it?	Bao nhiêu tiền?
It is too expensive	Mắc quá
Do you have something cheaper?	Bạn có cái nào rẻ hơn không?
Can I pay by card?	Tôi có thể trả bằng thẻ tín dụng không?
Can I pick it up later?	Tôi có thể lấy nó sau được không?
Can you ship it overseas?	Bạn có gửi hàng ra nước ngoài không?
Can I have a receipt please?	Tôi muốn hóa đơn
Can I try it?	Tôi có thể thử nó được không?
It doesn't fit	Nó không vừa
Do you have a bigger one?	Bạn có cái lớn hơn không?
Do you have a smaller one?	Bạn có cái nhỏ hơn không?
It's perfect	Rất tốt

Shops

Market	Chợ
Night market	Chợ đêm
Food market	Chợ thức ăn
Pharmacy	Tiệm thuốc tây
Clothes shop	Cửa Hàng quần áo
Computer shop	Cửa Hàng Vi Tính
Electronics shop	Cửa Hàng Điện

Supermarket	Siêu Thị
Bookstore	Nhà sách
Department store / Mall	Khu mua sắm
24 hours	Hai mươi bốn giờ / Siêu thị mini

Clothing

T-shirt	Áo thun
Shirt	Áo sơ mi
Suit	Áo vét
Trousers	Quần
Jeans	Quần Jean
Shoes	Giày
Sandals	Xang Đan
Dress	Áo đầm
Skirt	Váy
Jacket	Áo khoát
Rain Coat	Áo mưa
Handbag	Giỏ
Sunglasses	Kính mát
Hat	Nón (Mũ in Hanoi)
Helmet	Nón bảo hiểm
Jewellery	Nữ Trang
Watch	Đồng Hồ
Ring	Nhẫn
Necklace	Dây chuyền
Bracelet	Vòng tay, Lắc tay