

After buying nearly every guidebook ever made about Vietnam, and then following through on absolutely none of the information we read, we simply went with the flow and followed the sun from Hanoi, to Da Nang and all the way to Nha Trang, which is sadly where the sun disappeared behind the prominent rain clouds, for days, and days, and about a week actually! As first-timers to Vietnam with service of [Vietnam visa on arrival](#), we wanted to get a good taste of the country, which I certainly did, green chicken curry, Hanoi curry, and sweet and sour pork were among the regular orders, even though the climate was as hot as the cuisine. Vietnam enjoys a tropical climate and is hot year-round, although the three seasons; dry, cool and rainy are experienced depending on where and when you travel. Another interesting thing to note is inland areas experience all three seasons, whereas the southern coastal and island regions have only two seasons; dry and rainy. Look carefully into this if you are like us, living in Tasmania creates an urge to discover prolonged sunshine that won't burn you to a crisp in a couple of hours.

Always travel with an open mind; Vietnam can be quite the cultural shock for Australian visitors. Within hours of touching down in Vietnam, you will see why it's touted as the land of smiles. You are greeted politely and thanked graciously for your patronage everywhere you go. As with any destination, you'd be crazy to assume everyone is trying to help you out. We had a friendly Thai man approach us when walking to a Hanoi shopping center. He talked to us for 10 minutes, planning our whole itinerary for the 26-nights while sweat dripped off his head and onto our oversized map. Our pre-existing knowledge was being confirmed, Vietnamese people are super friendly, but perhaps this occasion was a bit out of the ordinary. He went on to inform us that the shopping center we were going to was closed (major warning sign) and that we should take a tuk-tuk for 5\$ to a random area on our map, because it's good for shopping. With our faces strained from smiling so much and the salty sweat running down our faces and coming in contact with our lips, we kindly said 'no thank you' before heading to the air-conditioned shopping center 100 meters away. It was no surprise to us that the shopping center was indeed open. Vietnam is diverse, not many destinations are as popular for backpackers as they are for honeymooners. You can get caught up in the chaos of Hanoi one day and be relaxing on a private beach on a secluded island the next day. This is what makes Vietnam a fascinating destination. It deserves time to be explored and appreciated for what it is. Whilst Vietnam can be seen as a mad party destination, it is also very culturally sensitive and I recommend doing your research on this before you go.

We had an unforgettable time and don't regret any of our selected destinations. Although, as it should be, you never come home satisfied with what you experienced. Otherwise you have no reason to return. We shamefully missed Phu Quoc Island, due to a lack of decision-making, and the weather forecast

was for some rain while we were in Da Nang. It took us a few nights to really settle into Hanoi, so we missed many attractions there. Some travelers recommend staying a short time in Hanoi, while others prefer longer. This is exactly why we made up our itinerary as we went. When we arrived in Hanoi, the only thing we had booked was 4-nights at [Hotels in Hanoi Old Quarter](#). We made the rest up as we went along, much to the discontent of my sister who doubles as our travel agent. To prevent back tracking our itinerary was based on arriving in Hanoi and departing from Da Nang. We also knew we would need to be on Ho Chi Minh on the 17th of November for the Full Moon Party at Nha Trang beach. When we were doing our pre-trip research we found it difficult to know what the best form of travel was between destinations and also what areas of Da Nang and Hoi An were the best to stay. We hope that our itinerary helps give you an understanding of what options you have when traveling around Vietnam.