



U.S. Embassy Hanoi/U.S. Consulate General Ho Chi Minh City United States Citizen Services (USCS) Newsletter

February 2015

The U.S. Embassy in Hanoi and U.S. Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City are sending the following monthly newsletter via the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) as a public service to U.S. citizens in Vietnam. Please pass this newsletter on to any other U.S. citizens you may be aware of, and encourage them to enroll in STEP to receive the newsletter in the future. The newsletter is also available on the U.S. Consulate's Website at <http://hochiminh.usconsulate.gov> under U.S. Citizen Services.

CLOSING NOTICE FOR HOLIDAYS

From **February 16** to **February 23**, the U.S. Consulate General and U.S. Embassy will be closed for Presidents' Day and the Lunar New Year. The Consulate and Embassy will resume normal hours on **February 24**.



For emergency assistance **involving a U.S. citizen**, please call 24/7:

U.S. Consulate General: (08) 3520-4200 within Vietnam, or
(+84)(8)3520-4200 internationally

U.S. Embassy in Hanoi: (04) 3850-5000 within Vietnam or (+84)(4)3850-5000 internationally.

U.S. citizen emergencies include, but are not limited to: illness, death, destitution, arrest or being the victim of a crime.

In this issue:

1. Operating hours for ACS HCMC and SCS Hanoi
2. Holiday Closures
3. Information for Overseas Tax Filers
4. Information on new Vietnamese Immigration Law
5. U.S. Citizen Services Visits
6. Information for Social Security Beneficiaries
7. Beware of Theft
8. Staying Healthy and Safe
9. Travel Alerts and Warnings
10. Register Your Travel
11. Embassy and Consulate Location and Hours



1. Operating Hours for U.S. Citizens

Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City uses a service-by-appointment system. Please visit our Website at <https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=HCM&appcode=1> to make an appointment to apply for a U.S. passport, a Consular Report of Birth Abroad, as well as for notary services, authentications, and additional visa pages.

Those with genuine emergencies, such as the death, arrest, or life threatening illness of a U.S. citizen, can appear on a walk-in basis during the Consulate's normal business hours, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, or call us any time at (84-8) 3520-4200.

Gentle Reminder: Every day we have a number of no-shows for routine services. If you make an appointment and find you cannot keep it, please log back into the appointment system and cancel the appointment so that the appointment slot will be available to another client.

Those picking up passports, Federal Benefits checks/correspondence, or submitting additional information related to a Consular Report of Birth Abroad case do not need to make an appointment but can do so between the hours of 8:30 – 11:30 a.m., Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday.

Hours for Hanoi are 8:30 – 11:30 and 1:00 – 3:30, Monday through Friday. All services in Hanoi are by appointment only. You may book an appointment by going to the Website: http://vietnam.usembassy.gov/acs_appointmentsystem.html.



2. Holiday Closures

The Embassy and Consulate will be closed on the following days:

February 16	Presidents Day
February 17 – 23	Tet (Lunar New Year)

A complete list of all of our holiday closings for 2015 is available on-line at <http://vietnam.usembassy.gov/holidays.html>.

3. Information for overseas tax filers

Who Must File?

All U.S. citizens and resident aliens must file a U.S. individual income tax return, even if they permanently live outside the United States and may not owe any tax because of income exclusion or tax credit.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has provided the following guidance for U.S. citizens abroad preparing for the 2015 tax filing season. This IRS guidance is posted under [Federal Benefits and Obligations](http://travel.state.gov) on travel.state.gov.



4. Information on New Vietnamese Immigration Law



On **January 1, 2015**, the new law on Entry, Exit, Transit, and Residence of Foreigners in Vietnam came into effect. The new law may affect procedures for obtaining and using Vietnamese visas by foreign citizens. Under the new law, individuals can only use their Vietnamese visa for the purpose that it was granted (i.e., an individual may not enter Vietnam as a tourist and then seek to change their visa class to be able to work or study). Those intending to work in Vietnam must first obtain a work permit *before* applying for their work visa. For further information about these and other changes under the new law, please contact local immigration authorities or the Embassy of Vietnam in Washington DC.

5. Social Security Online



5. U.S. Citizen Services visit to Nha Trang

Officials from the American Citizen Services (ACS) Unit in Ho Chi Minh City will offer consular services at the following location:

Nha Trang on February 11, 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. at the InterContinental Hotel.

Consulate officials will offer notarial services, deliver federal benefits checks, and U.S. citizens will be able to apply for U.S. passports. Federal benefits annuitants may sign in during the visit.

At this time, officials will not be interviewing for consular reports of birth abroad. Also, visa and immigration services will not be provided. Only the services listed above will be available during the visit to Nha Trang. For additional information concerning applying for U.S. passports and notary services, please see our website at: <http://hochiminh.usconsulate.gov/service.html>.

6. Notice to SSA beneficiaries in Vietnam



The Social Security Administration has notified us that as of January 1, 2015, SSA beneficiaries will only need to visit the Consular Section at the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi or the U.S. Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City once every three months to sign for their benefits instead of every month. Benefits will continue being delivered on their regular schedule. If you have questions about the change or any other non-emergency U.S. citizen service, you can contact us at http://vietnam.usembassy.gov/contact_acs.html in Hanoi or http://hochiminh.usconsulate.gov/contact_acs.html in Ho Chi Minh City.

7. Beware of Theft



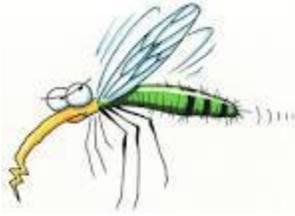
Pick pocketing and bag snatches are a constant threat in Vietnam. When on the streets be mindful of your possessions. Keep them close, and don't let them out of your sight. The thieves are faster than you can imagine. An unattended bag can be gone in an instant. Do not carry unnecessary ID (such as your U.S. driver's license) nor all of your credit cards with you. If you need to carry a credit card, carry just one. Leave the others in your hotel safe, hotel safe-deposit box, or at home. It is also wise not to carry all of your cash with you.

Also, don't carry your passport unless you absolutely have to. Carry a copy of your passport and visa and leave the passport in your hotel safe or at home.

A new trend we are seeing is thieves on motorbikes hanging out near hotel entrances. When a passenger is getting out of a taxi and is distracted with paying the driver, retrieving bags, etc., the thief grabs the handbag or backpack and flees.

8. Staying Healthy and Safe

Dengue Fever



Even though the rainy season has ended, Dengue Fever remains a high risk throughout Vietnam.

Dengue virus is present in all tropical and many subtropical areas worldwide. The mosquitoes that carry dengue bite most often in the morning and evening and during hot, wet times of the year. However, they can bite and spread infection all year long and at any time of day. Apply insect repellent sparingly to exposed skin. An effective repellent will contain 20% to 30% DEET (N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide). DEET in high concentrations (>30%) may cause side effects, particularly in children. Therefore, avoid formulations containing >30% DEET. Use aerosols in an open space to avoid inhalation. Avoid applying repellent to the hands of children. Wear long-sleeved clothing and long pants if you are outdoors during the day and evening.



Ebola

Concerned about Ebola? The State Department has prepared a fact sheet to answer any questions you may have. Please click the link to go to the site.

<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/Ebola.html>

Eat, drink, and be healthy

Thinking about sampling the native cuisine? Of course you are! Enjoying local delicacies is part of the wonderful experience of overseas travel, but eating the wrong things could make you very sick. Many countries don't have the same food handling and preparation standards found in the United States. Food that is not stored or cooked properly could make you sick. Do your research on which local foods and drinks to avoid.



Stay away from raw foods.

Choose your local restaurants carefully. If it looks unsanitary in the dining room, it could be worse in the kitchen.

Local water supplies could also be a breeding ground for bacteria. Always use bottled water (even to brush your teeth), and beware of fake bottled water – tap water sold as bottled. Be aware that ice may also be made from local tap water.

Practicing healthy habits, like washing your hands regularly, will help ensure that you stay healthy and enjoy your entire trip.



While you are keeping your eye on what you are drinking, make sure you keep an eye on who's pouring it as well. There have been cases in which certain drugs have been added to a person's drink without that individual's knowledge or consent. These drugs can make you sleepy, unaware, or even unconscious. Remain aware of your drinks and:

Don't drink anything you did not open yourself or that you didn't see being opened or poured by a bartender. Always watch your drink at parties and bars and get a new one if you leave it unattended for a while.

Get more health information from these expert sources:

Travel Health Information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Travel Health Information from the Food and Drug Administration

Travel Health Information from the World Health Organization

9. Travel Alerts and Warnings

The U.S. Department of State regularly issues travel alerts or travel warnings for various countries and regions. Travel warnings and alerts issued recently include Ukraine, Republic of South Sudan, Chad, Mali, Iran, Libya, Liberia, Nigeria, and Cameroon.

The State Department has also issued an alert regarding potential implications for travel because of Ebola in parts of West Africa.



For information regarding all travel alerts and warnings, please go to this site: http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html

On January 9, 2015, the Department of State issued a Worldwide Caution on the continuing threat of terrorist actions and violence against U.S. citizens and interests throughout the world. U.S. citizens are reminded to maintain a high level of vigilance and to take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness. For the current advisory please visit

<http://www.travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings/worldwide-caution.html>



10. Enroll in STEP

Enrolling in the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) will allow us to assist you better in the event of an emergency and provide you with routine travel information throughout the year. To learn more about STEP and enroll in this free program, visit <https://step.state.gov/step/>. (In accordance with the Privacy Act, the Department of State may not release information on your welfare or whereabouts to inquirers without your express written authorization.)

11. Embassy and Consulate Location and Office Hours

American Citizen Services
U.S. Embassy in Hanoi
170 Ngoc Khanh, Ba Dinh District
Hanoi, Vietnam

Email: acshanoi@state.gov
Telephone: (84-4) 3850-5000 ext. 6133 or 6103
Fax: (84-4) 3850-5010

Notarial services, passport services, Consular Reports of Birth Abroad, and other services by appointment only (please visit our webpage for appointment information).

American Citizen Services
U.S. Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City
4 Le Duan, District 1
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

For routine inquiries, submit your question via: http://hochiminh.usconsulate.gov/contact_acs.html.
Telephone: (84-8) 3520-4200 (for 24/7 assistance involving an arrest, death or life threatening illness)
Fax: (84-8) 3520-4244

Notarial services, passport services, Consular Reports of Birth Abroad, and other services by appointment only (please visit our Webpage for appointment information).