



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

December 2014

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.

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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.

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2. Holiday Closures

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

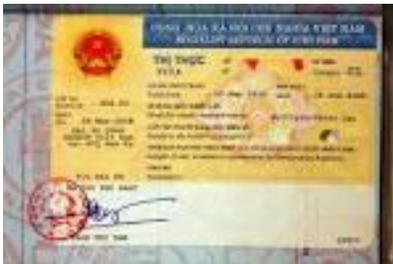
December 25	Christmas Day
January 1	New Year's Day

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

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3. Information on New Vietnamese Immigration Law

Visitors to Vietnam should be aware of upcoming changes to Vietnamese immigration law. On **January 1, 2015**, the new law on Entry, Exit, Transit, and Residence of Foreigners in Vietnam will take effect. The new law may affect procedures for obtaining and using Vietnamese visas by foreign citizens. After January 1, individuals will only be able to 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 anticipated changes under the new law, please contact local immigration authorities or the Embassy of Vietnam in Washington DC.



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4. U.S. Citizen Services visit to Da Nang

Officials from the U.S. Citizen Services unit in Ho Chi Minh City will offer consular services at the following location:

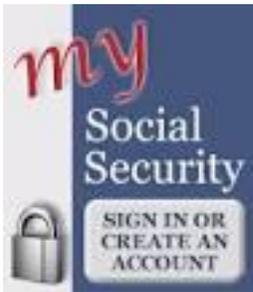


Da Nang on December 17, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM at Bread of Life restaurant, 4 Dong Da, Da Nang.

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 Da Nang. For additional information concerning applying for U.S. passports and notary services please see our Website at: <http://hochiminh.usconsulate.gov>. [Back to top ↵](#)

5. Social Security Online



The Social Security Administration has introduced "SSA online service" at www.ssa.gov or www.socialsecurity.gov. Using this online tool, claimants can estimate their retirement benefits (this does not require an account) or create a social security account to check payment information and earning records as well as obtain a Social Security Statement or benefit verification letter. Clients can also file for benefits online using this tool. [Back to top ↵](#)

6. 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. [Back to top ↵](#)

7. Staying Healthy and Safe

Typhoon Season

We would like to pass along some severe weather preparation tips to U.S. citizens residing or traveling in Vietnam.



During the approach of a typhoon or severe storm U.S. citizens are encouraged to monitor the storm's path by listening to the radio, watching television, or monitoring the U.S. [Joint Typhoon Warning Center](#), the Vietnam [National Center for Hydro-Meteorological Forecasting](#), or [Tropical Storm Risk](#).

In the event of severe tropical depressions, please note the following recommendations to ensure minimal disruption or damage to yourself and your property: secure loose outdoor items around the home; fill vehicles and generator fuel tanks; check and charge all cell phones: check and assemble flashlights, tools, and first aid kits; procure batteries, candles, matches, potable water, canned or dry food, pet foods, medications, etc.

Dengue Fever

Even though the rainy season is coming to an end, Dengue Fever is still 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 dirty 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

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 in the last month or so include the Central African Republic, Syria, Colombia, Philippines, El Salvador, Djibouti, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lebanon, and Haiti.



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 October 10, 2014, 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>. [Back to top ↩](#)

9. 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.) [Back to top ↴](#)

10. 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 urgent assistance involving an arrest, death or life threatening illness)
Fax: (84-8) 3520-4244

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