





Hanoi: The Heartbeat of Vietnam

Founded over a thousand years ago, Vietnam's capital is a city where the past and present live side by side. Hanoi's roots run deep from the streets of its rambling Old Quarter, dating back to the 14th century, to the

French colonial villas lining the boulevards. Wandering its tree-shaded lanes past crumbling facades feels like stepping back in time. Yet, Hanoi is no museum piece. Today, the city brims with modern cafés, buzzing

art galleries, world-class restaurants, and rooftop bars that sparkle at sunset. This is the cultural heartbeat of Vietnam, a place that surprises, charms, and overwhelms in equal measure.



A City of Dragons and Legends

Founded along the Red River, Hanoi was originally called Thăng Long the “soaring dragon” by Emperor Lý Thái Tổ in 1010. Over the centuries, it has endured wars, floods, and

dynastic changes, growing from swampy ground into the charismatic capital of today. Every detail tells a story: the ancient gates, the sound of a thousand motorbikes weaving through narrow streets, the taste of freshly brewed bia hơi in a bustling alley.



The Old Quarter and Hoan Kiem Lake

No visit begins without a ride through the Old Quarter by xích lô, the local cycle rickshaw. The maze of streets reveals centuries-old houses, temples, and shopfronts. At its heart lies Hoan Kiem Lake, home to Ngọc Sơn Temple, built in the 18th century to honor the

guardian spirit of Hanoi. Cross the iconic red bridge to the island and feel the hum of history beneath the city's calm surface.

Nearby, stroll down Trang Tien Street past the elegant Hanoi Opera House and the legendary Sofitel Legend Metropole. The French Quarter unfolds in wide boulevards, shaded parks, and grand villas.





The Ancient House at 87 Ma May Street

The Ancient House at 87 Ma May Street offers a rare glimpse into Hanoi's past, right in the heart of the bustling Old Quarter. Originally built in the early 19th century, during a period of rapid cultural and social development, the house reflects the ingenuity of local merchants and tradespeople. Like many homes in this district, it was designed as a classic "tube house"—a style defined by its narrow facade and deep, elongated interior. This architectural approach emerged in response to high land costs and tax policies based on street-front width. The result

was not only a practical use of space but also a surprisingly airy and livable design that has endured for centuries.

Restored in 1999 to preserve its authenticity, the house remains a vivid emblem of Hanoi's traditional lifestyle. Beyond its historical importance, it is a living example of feng shui principles, where every detail—from its orientation to its layout—was carefully chosen to create balance, harmony, and positive energy for the family who lived there.

Today, the Ancient House at Ma May Street is more than a museum—it is a living reminder of how design, tradition, and philosophy intertwined to shape the homes of Hanoi's past.



Water Puppets and Ancient Temples

Hanoi's heritage is also found in its performances. Dating back to the 11th century, water puppetry is a uniquely Vietnamese art form. Puppeteers stand waist-deep in water, bringing lacquered wooden figures to life in folk tales and village scenes. It's enchanting, timeless, and unlike anything else in the world.

Among the city's most revered sites is the Temple of Literature, Vietnam's first university, founded in 1070 and dedicated to Confucius. With its courtyards, stone turtles, and scholarly atmosphere, it remains a national symbol of education and culture. Another landmark, the Thăng Long Imperial Citadel — a UNESCO World Heritage Site — showcases the city's millennium of political and military history with its ancient gates and excavated palaces.



Train Street: A Hanoi Original

Few experiences capture Hanoi's energy better than Train Street. In this narrow alley, cafés hug the railway tracks so closely that,

when the train thunders through, tables and chairs vanish in seconds. The air stills. The ground shakes. And then the train is gone, leaving behind laughter, relief, and another unforgettable memory.



Markets and Everyday Life

For a taste of local life, start with an egg coffee at Café Phở Cổ, hidden behind a silk shop in the

Old Quarter. Then wander through Đồng Xuân Market, Hanoi's oldest and largest, where vendors sell everything from spices to silk. This is Hanoi at its most authentic: noisy, colorful, and alive.





Hanoi by Vespa: Streets, Bridges, and Stories

To truly feel Hanoi's pulse, hop on a vintage Vespa. The ride winds from the Opera House through hidden alleys to Long Biên Bridge, a century-old iron giant stretching over the

Red River. Once Hanoi's lifeline during wartime, the bridge still shelters small communities living in boats beneath its spans.

From here, descend to Banana Island, a peaceful patchwork of farmland and river life — a stark contrast to the city's chaos just above. Continue



to Trấn Quốc Pagoda, Hanoi's oldest Buddhist temple, perched serenely on West Lake. On nearby Trúc Bạch Lake, visit the John McCain monument marking the site where his plane was shot down during the Vietnam War.

The ride also reveals poignant sites like Hữu

Tiếp Lake, where the wreckage of a downed B-52 bomber rests as a reminder of Hanoi's wartime resilience. Pass the botanical gardens, the Presidential Palace, and finally the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, before stopping for one of Hanoi's most famous inventions: rich, creamy egg coffee.



where to stay

Grand Mercure Ha Noi
9 Cat Linh, O Cho Dua Ward,
Hanoi, 100000 Hanoi





Tucked away at the end of 3B Alley, Hang Tre Street, Hidden Gem Café is an eco-friendly sanctuary in the heart of Hanoi's bustling Old Quarter. Recognized as the largest recycling café in Vietnam, it turns sustainability into an art form. Every corner tells a story: repurposed furniture, upcycled décor, and creative details that reflect a deep commitment to protecting the environment.

But Hidden Gem is more than a café—it is an eco-home. Guests are welcomed with warm, attentive hospitality, creating a space that feels as inviting as it is inspiring. Alongside exceptional Vietnamese coffee, including the must-try Egg Coffee, the menu features healthy, organic, and authentic Vietnamese cuisine prepared with care.

Whether you come for a quiet break from the city's energy or to soak in the café's blend of culture, art, and eco-conscious design, Hidden Gem Café offers a truly memorable experience of Hanoi.

Menu highlights for a light lunch include a refreshing Papaya Salad, freshly baked Vietnamese Bread, delicate and flavorful Pho Rolls, and a hearty Southern-style Five-color Beef Noodle Soup. To complete the experience, don't miss Vietnam's iconic Egg Coffee—a rich and velvety blend of robust Vietnamese coffee topped with a frothy layer of whipped egg yolk, sugar, and condensed milk. This indulgent creation is often described as a "liquid tiramisu," offering a uniquely smooth, sweet, and aromatic finish.



Hidden Gem Café Hanoi

where to eat

