



Why Hop-Off in Hanoi, Vietnam?

Buzzing scooters, vibrant temples, winding alleyways and a veritable army of food hawkers criss-crossing the streets make Hanoi one of Vietnam's most energetic cities. You could easily lose yourself exploring its Old Quarter, where a trip to a market turns into a discovery of a clamouring local cafe and then a stumble across a brightly lit, brashly decorated Buddhist shrine. Here, there are secrets to be discovered, and far more than can be found in just a day or two. Hanoi's energy and complexity make it one of our favourite places to hop-off with our [Vietnam tourist visa](#), and here are just a few reasons why!

Explore the 36 guilds

Hanoi's Old Quarter is a rabbit warren of 36 streets, which were once controlled by trade guilds as far back as the 13th century. One guild was responsible for each street, resulting in a maze of highly-specified avenues which were named after their goods. Today, you can still hear the pounding of hammers on 'Tin Street,' and 'Lazy Old Man Street' (named after a lazy, though somehow famous physician) remains redolent with the scent of traditional medicines. Even if the goods have modernised ('LED Street' is certainly a new addition), each street remains largely specialised, and you can meander down one road selling traditional musical instruments, onto another hawking cellphones, and to a third brightly coloured with the reds and golds of paper grave offerings. Getting lost in these guild streets is a guaranteed adventure, especially if you're lucky enough to stumble across one of the ancient guild's communal houses.

Eat and drink your way through the city

What's your fancy? Something fried, roasted, sweet or savoury? Hanoi's got it. Eating is not limited to three meals a day there, as quick and cheap food can be found on every corner and every sidewalk. Noodles sizzle behind push-cart windows, and motorcycles zip through the city with makeshift counters attached to their sides. Most iconically, older women in conical hats carry bamboo rods across their shoulders, with baskets of fruit or snacks hanging off from each end. Some hungry entrepreneurs have even started street food tours of Hanoi, to take you into right into the belly of the culinary scene. And don't forget the drinks – Hanoi is home to both sidewalk bia hoi (fresh beer) joints and the unique ca phe trung, black Vietnamese coffee topped with egg beaten into condensed milk. Try a cup at one of Old Quarter's atmospheric cafes – we love Giang Cafe and Cafe Pho Co.

Explore the (contemporary) culture scene

If you're curious to see Vietnam's traditional art forms up-close-and-personal, Hanoi is the heartland for performances. Most famously, it's the best place to see water puppetry – a form of storytelling developed in the Red River Delta. Ca tru, a traditional music form featuring a female singer, is also alive and well, with near nightly performances at the Thang Long Theatre. But Hanoi isn't just home to the traditional – it's also home to a thriving contemporary art scene. Visit Manzi, a venue which acts mercurially as performance space, cinema and cafe, or San Art, an artist residency programme with collaborations between local and international artists, for Hanoi's most innovative art. If video is more your thing, DOCLAB features both movie nights and video workshops, putting you behind the camera.

Head to Halong Bay

Hanoi's allure isn't just bound to the city itself, but also its proximity to one of Vietnam's most famous national wonders – Halong Bay. Here, nearly 2000 limestone islands rise abruptly out of blue waters, shooting towards the sky like the back of a dragon (or so local legend would have us believe). This otherworldly landscape has been the backdrop for films such as *Indochine* and *Tomorrow Never Dies*, and was once the site of both trade routes and naval battles. Nowadays, traditional junk boats still ply its waters, carrying their modern cargo of camera-happy travellers. If you're keen to explore the landscape up-close-and-personal, we recommend at least a 3 day, 2 night tour of the bay, which typically offer kayaking and caving trips into the islands themselves. You can book the Halong bay tours at any [hotels in Hanoi](#) with many options on price.

Go trekking in the far north

Once you've gotten your fill of cosmopolitan life, use your hop-off time in Hanoi to get back to the countryside. Vietnam is home to over 50 different ethnic groups, with most of its diverse minority tribes holding tightly to their preserved traditions in the northern mountains. A few hours north of Hanoi, you can trek to Sapa, Dao, and Tay villages where hand-woven clothing is the norm and animist beliefs run supreme. The town of Sapa is by far the biggest jumping-off point for treks, famed for its jaw-dropping views of verdant rice terraces, knowledgeable (though pushy) guides and easy accessibility. However, if you'd rather explore these regions without the buzz of 'Buy bracelet? Buy bag?' in your ear, head northeast to Bac Ha, where a weekly Sunday market sees vendors descend from local villages to sell wares as diverse as traditional clothing, fruit and vege, gardening equipment, animals and livestock (sorry, those puppies aren't pets), and even home-brewed moonshine. If you ask politely, you might just get a sample!

Source: [Đặt khách sạn](#)