ACS Newsletter

VIETNAM SEPTEMBER 2016

The monthly newsletter of the American Citizen Services Units of the U.S. Embassy Hanoi and the U.S. Consulate General Ho Chi Minh City

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Upcoming U.S. Citizens Services Visits

Officials from the American Citizen Services (ACS) unit in Ho Chi Minh City will offer consular services in **September** at the following locations:

Can Tho

Date: Thursday, 8 September 2016

Place: Victoria Hotel, Cai Khe Ward, Ninh Kieu District, Can Tho City (Phường Cái Khế, Quận Ninh Kiều, Tp. Cần Thơ)

Time: from 09:00am to 12:00pm

Da Nang

Date: Thursday, 15 September 2016 Place: Bread Of Life, 4 Dong Da, Thuan Phuoc, Hai Chau, Da Nang. (4 Đống Đa, Thuận Phước, Hải Châu, Đà Nẵng)

Time: from 9:00am to 12:00pm

No appointments are necessary. 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 who have not been contacted by SSA or consulate for the stop of quarterly physical presence please come to finalize the paperwork.

At this time, officials will not be interviewing for Consular Reports of Birth Abroad. Visa and immigration services will not be provided. Only the services listed will be available during the visits.

For additional information concerning applying for U.S. passports and notary services please see our Website at: https://vn.usembassy.gov/

The ACS unit also has a planned services trips to Da Lat, Vung Tau, and Nha Trang in the next few months. Please check our website for more information as it becomes available.

August Holiday Closures

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

*September 2– Vietnamese National Day
+September 5– Labor Day

A complete list of all of our holiday closings for 2016 is available on-line at http://vn.usembassy.gov/holiday-calendar/

*Vietnamese Holiday
+American Holiday

This newsletter is also available on the U.S. Consulate's website at: https://vn.usembassy.gov/

Please pass this newsletter on to any other U.S. citizens in Vietnam and encourage them to enroll in STEP (https://step.state.gov/step/) to receive the newsletters in the future.

Mission Vietnam was honored to welcome President Obama in May. These are a few photos from the visit (photo credit: AP). You can see more about the President's visit here. You can also follow Ambassador Osius on his Facebook page:

Ambassador Ted Osius

Vietnam Extends Visa Validity for U.S. Citizens Traveling For Business and Tourism

On April 9, the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam approved a plan to issue 12-month, multiple-entry visas to American citizens who travel temporarily for business or tourism. The new reciprocity arrangement, entered into force on 29 May 2016, will benefit American and Vietnamese tourists and business travelers, generating new opportunities for trade, investment and tourism. The successful conclusion of the arrangement underscores the commitment of the U.S. and Vietnam to improve the bilateral relationship by expanding existing trade and economic opportunities and developing people-to-people ties.

Although the agreement officially took effect on May 29, 2016, Vietnam has not yet completed full routine implementation. As a result, American citizens applying at Vietnamese embassies abroad may discover those embassies are not yet prepared to issue multiple-entry 12-month visas. The U.S. is working closely with the GVN to resolve the issues hampering full implementation of the arrangement.

We welcome feedback from American citizens applying for 12-month visas. Information about their experience with the application process will help us to better work with the GVN towards full implementation of the arrangement.

To share your experience, please contact us at ACShanoi@state.gov .

Absentee Voting Information for U.S. Citizens Abroad

Voting Is Now Easier Than Ever Before

All U.S. citizens can now receive their blank ballots electronically. Depending on the state in which you are eligible to vote, you may get your ballot by email, fax, or internet download. To start, go to www.FVAP.gov to complete a new Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), print and sign the form then return it to your local election office in the United States. We recommend overseas U.S. citizens get in the habit of completing FPCAs each January. You should include your email address on the form so it's easier for your election officials to reach you if there is a problem. If your state delivers ballots electronically by fax only, be sure to include your fax number. If you request electronic delivery and include your email address or fax number, you'll receive your blank ballot 45 days before general and mid-term elections and generally 30 days before special, primary, and run-off elections for federal offices. Most states now have voter registration verification websites, and many offer a means of tracking the status of your registration and ballot.

Absentee Voting Basics
Absentee voting is a simple 2 step process.

1. Every year, you send in a completed Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) to your local election officials.

- They confirm your eligibility to vote, and put your name on a list to receive absentee ballots for any elections held that calendar year.
- They send you a blank absentee ballot electronically or by mail.

2(a). You complete the ballot and send it back so it arrives before your state's ballot return deadline.
2(b). Or, if you haven't received your blank ballot 30 days before an election, don't wait any longer; use the emergency Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot to vote.

Overseas voters have a number of options for returning voted ballots:

- *Local mail* If you have good mail service to the United States, put your ballot in the mail with appropriate international postage.
- *U.S. Embassy Pouch/APO/FPO* You can drop off your ballot request or voted ballot at the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for return to the United States, or you can have someone drop it off for you. It must be addressed to your local election officials and have sufficient postage or be in a postage-paid envelope. A postage-paid envelope is available on the FVAP web site. Click here for more information for Ho Chi Minh City and here for more information for Hanoi.
- *Fax, Email, or Internet* A number of states now allow the electronic return of voted ballots. Consult the Federal Voting Assistance Program's Voting Assistance Guide for electronic transmission options for your state.
- *Express Courier Service* If time is short or local mail is unreliable, you can use professional courier services such as FedEx, DHL, or UPS. NOTE: FedEx does not deliver to P.O. boxes.

For more information about overseas voting, visit http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/abroad/legal-matters/benefits/voting.html.

Exciting News! The U.S. Mission to Vietnam has launched an updated public website – making just one place to obtain all information and services for U.S. Citizens traveling to or visiting Vietnam! It's https://vn.usembassy.gov/. Please note that you may need to update your web browser bookmarks.

Services for U.S. Citizens

Ho Chi Minh City

The Consulate General in **Ho Chi Minh City** uses a service-by-appointment system. Please visit our Website at : https://vn.usembassy.gov/ to make an appointment to apply for a U.S. passport, a Consular Report of Birth Abroad, and for notary services and authentications.

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 from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday (except Vietnamese and American public holidays) or call us any time at (84-8) 3520-4200.

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.
If you are *picking up passports* or *Federal Benefits checks/correspondence* you do not need to make an appointment and can walk in for assistance between the hours of 8:30 – 11:30 a.m., Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, excluding Vietnamese and American holidays. If you are submitting additional information related to a *Consular Report of Birth Abroad* case you can walk in for assistance between the hours of 1:15 – 2:00 p.m., Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, excluding Vietnamese and American holidays.

Hanoi

The U.S. Embassy in Hanoi uses a service-by-appointment system. Please visit our website at https://evisaforms.state.gov/Instructions/ACSSchedulingSystem.asp to make an appointment to apply for a U.S. passport, a Consular Report of Birth Abroad, as well as for notary services.

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 from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday (except Vietnamese and American public holidays) or call us any time at (84-4) 3850-5000.

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.

If you are *picking up passports* or *Federal Benefits checks/correspondence* you do not need to make an appointment and can walk in for assistance between the hours of 8:30 – 16:30 p.m., Monday to Thursday, excluding Vietnamese and American holidays. If you are submitting additional information related to a *Consular Report of Birth Abroad* case you can walk in for assistance between the hours of 1:15 – 2:00 p.m., Monday to Thursday, excluding Vietnamese and American holidays.

ALL APPOINTMENTS ARE FREE (no cost) FOR U.S. CITIZEN SERVICES, including passports, notary services, and Consular Reports of Birth Abroad. The website also has detailed instructions about service costs and required documents/procedures for each service. WE ARE DEDICATED TO FIGHTING FRAUD. If you wish to report fraudulent activity related to any of the Consular services we provide, please contact our Consular Fraud Prevention Unit at HCMCFPU@state.gov for Ho Chi Minh City or HanoiFPU@state.gov for Hanoi.

Zika Virus Information

In May 2015, the World Health Organization reported the first local transmission of Zika virus in the Western Hemisphere, with locally acquired cases identified in Brazil. As of January 15, 2016, local transmission had been identified in at least 14 countries or territories in the Americas, including Puerto Rico (See Pan American Health Organization [PAHO] link below for countries and territories in the Americas with Zika virus transmission). Further spread to other countries in the region is likely.

Zika virus is spread to people through mosquito bites. The most common symptoms of Zika virus disease are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting from several days to a week. Severe disease requiring hospitalization is uncommon. However, Zika virus has been linked to Guillain-Barré syndrome and to pregnant women giving birth to babies with birth defects and poor pregnancy outcomes.

In response to the Zika virus outbreak in Latin America, CDC has issued a travel alert (Level 2-Practice Enhanced Precautions) for people traveling to regions and certain countries where Zika virus transmission is ongoing.

For information on Zika virus, including transmission, prevention and a list of areas where the virus has been found, please see the CDC website at http://www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html. You can also see more information at http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/go/Zika.html.

Typhoon Season Tips

The typhoon and severe storm season in Vietnam runs from approximately May through November. Before this year's season gets underway, 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 following websites:

- U.S. Joint Typhoon Warning Center
- Vietnam National Center for Hydro-Meteorological Forecasting (Tiếng Việt)
- Tropical Storm Risk

If you are in the path of a typhoon or severe tropical storm, please take the following precautionary measures to ensure minimal disruption or damage. You should also contact friends and family in the United States with updates on your whereabouts.

- Locate shelter and follow all official instructions, including evacuation if ordered.
- Carry your travel documents at all times (i.e., copies of your U.S. passport, birth certificate, picture ID's, etc.) or secure them in a safe, waterproof location.
- Secure loose outdoor items (limbs, roofing material, windows (coverings), doors, debris (trash), etc.).
- Fill vehicle, generator, and water tanks.
- Check and charge radios.
- Charge cell phones and carry your charger, including portable chargers available for most cell phone models at many convenience stores and electronic shops.
- Have bottled water; make ice.
- Gather flashlights, tools, and first aid supplies.
- Have fresh batteries, candles, matches, water, groceries (canned and/or dry foods), and pet supplies.
- Assure an adequate supply of first aid materials and prescription medications.
- Stay home and let your family and office know how you plan to weather the storm, especially those family members in the United States.

Additional information on natural disasters including hurricanes/typhoons and storm preparedness may be found on the following disaster preparedness websites.

General Disaster Preparedness Websites

U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs Emergencies Abroad website - general information and resources for U.S. citizens experiencing an emergency outside of the United States.

U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs Natural Disasters website - general information and resources pertaining to natural disasters.

U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Ready website - general information and resources for emergency preparedness

American Red Cross - Member of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Air Quality Monitors in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City

The U.S. Embassy and U.S. Consulate have installed air quality monitors to measure PM 2.5 particulates as an indication of the air quality. You can read more information and check the current reading for Hanoi and for Ho Chi Minh City at: https://vn.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/embassy/air-quality-monitor/ for Hanoi, and https://vn.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/ho-chi-minh-city/air-quality-monitor/ for Ho Chi Minh City.

For more details on air quality index, please follow the link to the Environmental Protection Agency's ***Air Now*** website. The AQI can be observed either by clicking on the location on the map, or by selecting Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City in the "Select a City" option on the upper right part of the page. The page provides AQI over the last 24 hour period as well as pollutant concentration and a downloadable historical document.

Please note that citywide analysis cannot be done with data from a single monitor. This data provides an accurate measure of the air quality in the section of each city close to the location of the monitor. The Vietnamese Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment also provides air quality data for Hanoi. You can view this information at http://www.cem.gov.vn/.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has developed a formula to convert PM 2.5 readings into an air quality index (AQI) value that can help inform health-related decisions. Meanings of AQI numerical values can be seen in the chart below. For more information on AQI and how it is

Air Quality Index Levels of Health Concern	Numeri-cal Value	Meaning
Good	0 to 50	Air quality is considered satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk
Moderate	51 to 100	Air quality is acceptable; however, for some pollutants there may be a moderate health concern for a very small number of people who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	101 to 150	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is not likely to be affected.
Unhealthy	151 to 200	Everyone may begin to experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
Very Unhealthy	201 to 300	Health warnings of emergency conditions. The entire population is more likely to be af-fected.
Hazardous	301 to 500	Health alert: everyone may experience more serious health effects.

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 Haiti, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon, Nigeria, Honduras, DR Congo, North Korea, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Iran, Isreal and Turkey.

For information regarding all travel alerts and warnings, please go to this site: http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html

A Worldwide Caution was released on March 3, 2016 regarding the possible risks for travel due to increased terrorist threats. See the whole caution here.

U.S. citizens are reminded to maintain a high level of vigilance and to take appropriate steps to increase

We're on the web!

(Ho Chi Minh City) and (Hanoi)

https://vn.usembassy.gov/

Travelling with pets?

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service launched a new web site to help international travelers determine travel requirements for pets. For more info, please visit the site here.

How to Subscribe/Unsubscribe to this Newsletter

The U.S. Embassy in Hanoi and U.S. Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City are sending this monthly newsletter via the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) as a public service to U.S. citizens in Vietnam.

If you are departing Vietnam after a long stay, please be sure to update your status in STEP: https://step.state.gov/step/

Updating your status if you move away from Vietnam will remove you from the mailing list for this newsletter and other Embassy and Consulate Messages for U.S. citizens in Vietnam.

If you encounter any difficulties or have any questions about the travel registration website, please send an e-mail to CASTEP@state.gov

Please note: Inclusion of Non-U.S. Government links or information does not imply endorsement of contents.

Contact Us

Hanoi

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Ho Chi Minh City

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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: https://vn.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/contact-us/
Telephone: (84-8) 3520-4200 (for urgent assistance involving an arrest, death or life threatening illness)
Fax: (84-8) 3520-4244