ACS Newsletter

VIETNAM

JANUARY 2017

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 do not have any service trips scheduled for the month of January.

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 trip to Phu Quoc in the next month. Please check our website for more information as it becomes available.

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.

Upcoming Holiday Closures

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

+ Monday, January 2– New Year's Day (observed)
+ Monday, January 16– Martin Luther King Day
+ 26 Jan– 01 Feb– Tet Holidays

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

For Your Information

Glasses No Longer Accepted in Photos

When you take your next passport or visa photo, be sure to take it **without** your glasses. Starting November 1, 2016, eye glasses will no longer be allowed in U.S. visa and passport photos. For more information, visit the Nonimmigrant Visa, Immigrant Visa, and Passport pages on U.S. Mission Vietnam's website.

Are you interested in a career with the U.S. Foreign Service?

You can take the written exam in Ho Chi Minh City! First, check out this website - https://careers.state.gov/work/foreign-service/officer. Then, choose a career track. Finally, register for the Foreign Service Officer Test (FSOT) at the link. http:/www.pearsonvue.com/fsot/.

If you are in Ho Chi Minh City on February 4, 2017; the U.S. Consulate Ho Chi Minh City will offer the FSOT. To find more information about the Foreign Service check out this website - https://careers.state.gov/work/foreign-service/officer.

Attention U.S. citizens!

Beginning January 1, 2017, the IRS will require that all (Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITINs) not used on a federal tax return at least once in the last three years will no longer be valid for use on a tax return. Find more information, please visit our website https://vn.usembassy.gov/ or at IRS.gov.

For the info in Vietnamese, please go to: vn.usembassy.gov/vi/u-s-citizen-services-vi/internal-revenue-service-u-s-taxes-vi/

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, currently visa fees and length of validity of visas for U.S. citizens vary from place to place. Vietnamese embassies and consulates are currently issuing 12-month multiple-entry visas to U.S. citizens, but visa fees vary. Shorter-term visas are available at some Vietnamese embassies and consulates.

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 .

Zika Virus Information

The U.S. Embassy in Vietnam informs U.S. citizens that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued Travel Guidance for Vietnam regarding the risk of Zika virus infection. Zika virus is **endemic**. The risk of Zika to travelers, especially pregnant women, in endemic countries is likely lower (but not zero) than in areas where Zika is newly introduced and spreading widely. Women who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant should discuss their travel plans with their medical provider and consider postponing nonessential travel to Vietnam. Men whose partners are pregnant or are considering pregnancy should talk to their medical provider about **CDC's recommendations** on how to avoid sexual transmission of Zika infection to their partners.

The CDC has concluded that the Zika virus is a cause of **microcephaly** and other severe fetal brain defects in some fetuses and babies born to some infected mothers. Zika also rarely may lead to the **Guillain-Barré syndrome** or other neurological conditions, which can affect individuals of any age or sex.

Zika virus is typically transmitted by the day biting Aedes aegypti mosquito, but there have been confirmed cases of transmission through sexual contact and blood transfusion. CDC reports that travel to elevations higher than 2,000 m (6,500 ft) above sea level is considered to have minimal likelihood for mosquito-borne Zika virus transmission, even within countries reporting active transmission.

For general information and the latest updates about Zika and steps to prevent mosquito bites and sexual exposure to the virus, please visit the **CDC website**.

For further information:

- See the **State Department's travel website** for the **Worldwide Caution**, Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and ***Vietnam Country Specific Information.***

- Enroll in the **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program** (**STEP**)to receive security messages and make it easier to locate you in an emergency. Please remember to complete the privacy waiver located in the **STEP**registration as well; should the need arise, the Embassy can then contact the persons or offices that you designate.

- Contact the U.S. Embassy in Vietnam, located at 7 Lang Ha Street, Hanoi, Vietnam, at (84) (4) 3850 5000 from Vietnam or (+84) (4) 3850 5000 internationally, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., and from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. After hours emergency telephone (84) (4) 3850 5000/3850 5105 from Vietnam or (+84) 4 3850 5000/3850 5105 internationally

- Contact the U.S. Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, located at 4 Le Duan Blvd, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City, at (84) (8) 3520-4200 from Vietnam or (+84) (8) 3520 4200 internationally, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., and from 1:00p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. After-hours emergency number for U.S. citizens, please call the U.S. Consulate General 24/7 at (08) 3520-4200 within Vietnam, or (011) (84) (8) 3520-4200 internationally

- Call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries from8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

- Follow us on **Twitter** and **Facebook**.

United States Embassy Hanoi

United States Consulate General Ho Chi Minh City

Emergency Message for U.S. Citizens

October 11, 2016

The State Department alerts U.S. citizens to the South Pacific Tropical Cyclone Season, which begins November 1, 2016, and ends April 30, 2017. This Travel Alert expires on April 30, 2017.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) recommends that people living or traveling in regions prone to tropical storms and tropical cyclones be prepared. Minor tropical cyclones can develop into typhoons very quickly, limiting the time available for a safe evacuation. Inform family and friends of your whereabouts and remain in close contact with your tour operator, hotel staff, transportation providers (airlines, cruise lines, etc.), and local officials for evacuation instructions during a weather emergency. For further information about tropical cyclone preparedness, please visit our Tropical Season – Know Before You Go and Natural Disaster webpages, and NOAA's Tropical Cyclones Preparedness Guide.

While we do our best to assist U.S. citizens in a crisis, local authorities bear primary responsibility for the safety and well-being of people living or traveling in their countries. For more information, please visit our What the State Department Can and Can't Do in a Crisis page.

For further information on tropical cyclone warnings in the South Pacific region, consult the Joint Typhoon Warning Center, the National Weather Service's Central Pacific Hurricane Center, the Government of Fiji's Regional Specialized Meteorological Center, or the Government of Australia's Bureau of Meteorology.

For further information:

- See the State Department's travel website for the Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and Country Specific Information for your destination.
- Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (**STEP**)to receive security messages and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.
- Check the website of the U.S. embassy or consulate with consular responsibilities for the territory you will be visiting.
- Call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries from8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).
- Follow us on Twitter and Facebook.

Typhoon Season Tips

The typhoon and severe storm season in Vietnam runs from approximately May through November. 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 shoullso contact ends 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. For information regarding all travel alerts and warnings, please go to this site: http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html

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

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.

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.