ACS Newsletter

VIETNAM JANUARY 2018

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 **January** at the following locations:

Phu Quoc

Date: Thursday, 25 January 2018

Place: Cassia Cottage Hotel,

Address: KP 7, Tran Hung Dao, Duong Dong, Phu Quoc

Time: from 09:00am to 11:30pm

No appointments are necessary. Consulate officials will offer notarial services, 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/

Please check our website for more information as it becomes available.

This newsletter is also available on the U.S. Embassy & 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, 01 January 2018– New Year's Day
+ Monday, 15 January 2018– Martin Luther King's Birthday
+/* Wed– Tue, 14– 20 February 2018– Lunar New Year/ President's Day

A complete list of all of our holiday closings for 2018 is available on-line at http://vn.usembassy.gov/holiday-calendar/

*Vietnamese Holiday
+American Holiday

ALERT

The U.S.-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued a notice for travelers to Vietnam as the country has reported a record number of dengue fever cases this year. The notice said that travelers to Vietnam should protect themselves against mosquito bites to avoid getting the illness as there is no vaccine or medicine currently available to prevent or treat the disease. As of August 25, Vietnam recorded more than 100,000 dengue fever cases with 26 deaths, up 63% and 52% from last year, respectively, according to the latest statistics from the Department of Preventive Medicine under the Ministry of Health. The most affected localities included: Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Binh Duong, Da Nang, Dong Nai, Dong Thap, Khanh Hoa, Soc Trang, and Tien Giang, among others.

https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/watch/dengue-vietnam

Dengue Fever

Dengue is the fastest emerging infection transmitted by mosquitos. The highest incidence is currently being seen by countries of the Asia Pacific Region. More than 70% of the populations at risk reside in Asia Pacific countries. There has been an increased frequency of outbreaks and expansion to new geographical areas that were previously unaffected. Dengue Fever continues to be a health threat throughout Vietnam, with an upsurge in cases reported this year.

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WHAT IS DENGUE FEVER?

Dengue fever is a viral illness transmitted to humans by the bite of mosquitoes infected with the Dengue virus. *Dengue is known to be caused by any of four closely related viruses. This means that an individual can be infected with Dengue more than once*. After feeding on a person whose blood contains the virus, the female mosquito can transmit Dengue immediately; however, the virus can remain virulent in the mosquito for 8 to 10 days.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF DENGUE?

Symptoms of Dengue usually appear within 5 to 8 days after being bitten. Dengue fever is characterized by flu-like illness with sudden onset of high fever which lasts from 2 to 7 days, chills, severe head-ache, bone and muscle aches and sometimes eye pain, a rash which can occur up to 4 days after onset of fever, bleeding gums, nose bleeds, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, cough and abdominal pain. Generally, younger children and those with their first dengue infection have a milder illness than older children and adults.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR DENGUE?

There is no specific medication for the treatment of Dengue. Illness with Dengue is treated symptomatically and care for an individual with suspected Dengue is mostly supportive. If you develop any of the symptoms listed above, you should see a medical provider. Persons with probable Dengue should take pain relievers with acetaminophen and **avoid** those pain relievers containing ibuprofen, Naproxen, aspirin or aspirin containing products. They should also get plenty of rest and drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO REDUCE THE RISK OF ACQUIRING DENGUE?

Please review your home environment and make sure that you are taking the recommended measures to keep mosquitos out. Remember, these mosquitoes can breed inside, so follow the recommendations below for both inside and outside your home. Mosquitos can bite during the daytime, in shady areas, and on cloudy, overcast days. They may be particularly active during early morning hours before daybreak and in the late afternoon before dark.

Dengue Fever, cont.

General Precautions

- Avoid environments that are known to harbor the Aedes mosquitoes that carry the viruses causing Dengue Fever. Some Aedes mosquitoes prefer to breed, rest, and feed on humans in gardens, where it is cool and shady and where they find small collections of fresh water to lay their eggs, such as at the bases of large leaves. Mosquitoes that carry the dengue viruses like to bite during the daytime in shady areas, and on cloudy, overcast days. They may be particularly active during early morning hours before daybreak and in the late afternoon before dark.

- When possible, stay in well screened or air-conditioned areas. Check your location for places mosquitoes can get in, such as between bricks that is not sealed correctly, a torn screen, or a door that does not close properly.

- Mosquitoes that carry dengue breed in containers of still, fresh water. Therefore, if you have any standing water in or around your house or apartment it is best to remove this water, or change it daily. Examples are jars without lids, small ponds, vases, plates for potted plants, pet water dishes, and any discarded containers on your property or adjacent properties, such as old tires, tin cans, glass or ceramic jars. If you are being bitten by mosquitoes in your garden, you may wish to consider trimming or removing large, leafy plants, and opening up the garden to more sunshine and less shade. Check your neighbor's yards, too. They may be unaware that they have Aedes breeding places.

- Mosquito netting around beds, cribs, and strollers may provide some additional protection from the mosquitoes.

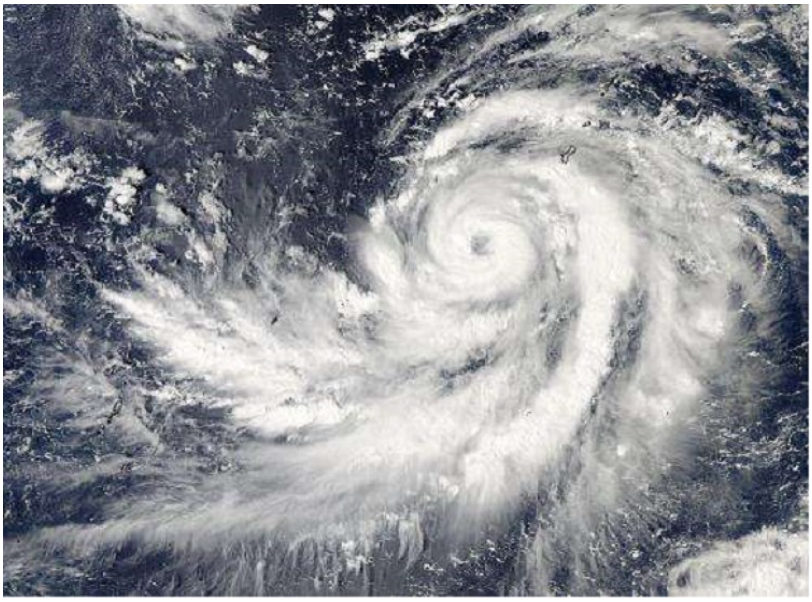
- Proper use of mosquito repellents containing 20% to 30% DEET as an active ingredient on exposed skin and clothing decreases the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes. The most effective insect repellent is DEET. Check labels of repellent for DEET. Adults should use a concentration of 30% or less and for children, use a 10% concentration. Use DEET sparingly on children under 6 years and not at all on children under 2 months old. Avoid using concentration of DEET above 30% because the usefulness of DEET plateaus at a concentration of 30%. The major difference in the efficacy of products relates to their duration of action. Products with concentrations around 10% are effective for periods of approximately two hours. As the concentration of DEET increases, the duration of activity increases. For example, a concentration of about 24% DEET has been shown to provide an average of 5 hours of protection. So, the wise approach would be to select the lowest concentration effective for the amount of time spent outdoors.

- Persons should get the flu vaccine every year since Dengue initially presents like the flu. If you receive the flu vaccine, then it is less likely that you have the flu and dengue would have to be considered.

For further information, please review: www.cdc.gov/dengue http://www.who.int/denguecontrol/en/

https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/watch/dengue-vietnam

Typhoon Season 2017



The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) expects five to eight tropical cyclones to affect the central Pacific this season. If you are a U.S. Citizen traveling or residing in Vietnam, you may enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive safety messages and other travel information. During the approach of a typhoon you should monitor the U.S. Joint Typhoon Warning Center and the Vietnam National Center for Hydro-Meteorological Forecasting (Tiếng Việt).

You should also have an emergency plan in place before the approach of a typhoon, as even areas far from the coastline can experience dangerous winds, tornadoes, mudslides, and floods. Please consider the following precautionary measures prior to the advance of a typhoon:

•Locate shelter in your area and follow all official instructions from local authorities, 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 up your 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.

•Pack an adequate supply of first-aid materials and prescription medications.

•Let your family and office know how you plan to weather the storm, especially those family members in the United States. Keep them updated regarding your location and well-being.

For more information on how to prepare for typhoons and other natural disasters, please visit the State Department's Natural Disaster webpage. Please also check the State Department's Worldwide Caution webpage for Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and Vietnam Country Specific Information.

Updated Zika Virus Information

The U.S. Embassy in Vietnam informs U.S. citizens that on March 10, 2017, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued updated Travel Guidance for Vietnam regarding the risk of Zika virus infection. The CDC and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) have simultaneously made recommendations that pregnant women should not travel to areas with risk of Zika virus infection. The updated guidance covers travel to areas previously in CDC Travel Alerts and Considerations but also to additional areas that were added based on epidemiologic data regarding Zika transmission.

CDC and WHO Guidance

a. WHO Interim guidance with new Zika virus country classification scheme: http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/254619/1/WHO-ZIKV-SUR-17.1-eng.pdf?ua=1

b. CDC Zika Travel Information and pregnancy recommendations: https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information

c. CDC website with an overview of Zika virus is found at: Zika Virus | CDC.

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 trans-mission, even within countries reporting active transmission.

For general information and the latest updates about Zika and steps to prevent mosquito bites and sexual expo-sure 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 lo-cate 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) (24) 3850 5000 from Vietnam or (+84) (24) 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) (24) 3850 5000/3850 5105 from Vietnam or (+84) 24 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) (28) 3520-4200 from Vietnam or (+84) (28) 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. Embassy Hanoi: (024) 3850-5000 within Vietnam or (+84)(24) 3850-5000 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.

For Your Information

The Federal Voting Assistance Program

Just voted in November? Still traveling or living overseas? You should register and request your absentee ballot to vote again in 2017 to ensure your election office knows where to send your ballot for any upcoming special elections for federal office. Some states are also holding gubernatorial or other statewide elections this year.

The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) recommends all overseas U.S. citizens send in a completed Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) early every year. The FPCA is the registration and ballot request form accepted by all states and territories.

You can use the FPCA online assistant, complete the fillable PDF version, or pick up a hardcopy version from your nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Be sure your contact information is accurate in case your election office needs to reach you.

If you'd like more information on the Federal Voting Assistance Program or need help with the absentee voting process please go to FVAP.gov or call FVAP at 703-588-1584 (toll free 1-800-438-VOTE or DSN 425-1584) or email vote@fvap.gov.

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/u-s-citizen-services/internal-revenue-service-u-s-taxes/ 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/

Glasses are no longer accepted in passport or visa photos. For more info, visit: Nonimmigrant Visa, Immigrant Visa, and Passport pages on U.S. Mission Vietnam's website.

NOTICE REGARDING SOCIAL SECURITY SERVICES

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has consolidated its overseas operations into several regional offices that provide a full range of SSA services for U.S. citizens residing outside of the United States.

Effective October 1, 2017, individuals residing in Vietnam who require social security services or have questions about SSA benefits must contact the SSA Federal Benefits Unit (FBU) located in Manila, Philippines, rather than Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City.

Please be advised that as of October 1, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City can no longer accept telephone calls, emails, or walk-in consultations regarding Social Security issues.

For more information or any questions about the services provided at the FBU in Manila, Philippines and how to contact them, please visit their webpage at: www.ssa.gov. You can also reach them at (phone number) 632-301-200, extensions 5085, 6302 and 6319 or (email address) FBU.manila@ssa.gov.

For comprehensive information on SSA's services abroad, please visit SSA's webpage, "Service Around the World."

If you are already receiving SSA benefits payments, there will be no change in the method of distribution of those payments.

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

The new reciprocity arrangement entered into force on 29 May 2016 and will benefit American and Vietnamese tourists and business travelers. 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, and single-entry visas are available online at https://www.immigration.gov.vn/. We welcome feedback from American citizens applying for 12-month visas to 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 .

U.S. Citizens Eligible for E-Visa Program

In February 2017, Vietnam launched a pilot e-visa program for citizens of 40 countries, including the United States. The program uses an online application process to issue 30-day, one-entry visas for $25, payable via bank transfer. E-visa holders may enter and exit Vietnam through 28 designated international border gates, including all international airports. The pilot program will continue through January 31, 2019 subject to review and extension. The Vietnamese e-visa instructions and application are available online. The correct Vietnamese government websites for e-visas are https://www.immigration.gov.vn/ and https://www.xuatnhapcanh.gov.vn.

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/hanoi-air-quality/ for Hanoi, and https://vn.usembassy.gov/hmc-air-quality/ 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 calculated, please click here.

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 (84-28) 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* 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, please send an email to VietnamCRBAAppt@state.gov with the subject line: "The additional required documentation – [NAME OF YOUR CHILD]", we will then set up a date for you to come in the Consulate for a review of your additional documents. Each child will need a separate appointment.

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 (84-24) 3850-5000.

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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.