ACS Newsletter

VIETNAM SEPTEMBER 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 will offer consular services at the following locations:

Nha Trang

Date: Friday, 14 September 2018

Place: InterContinental Hotel, Address: 32-34 Tran Phu, Nha Trang City (32-34 Trần Phú, Tp. Nha Trang)

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

Da Nang

Date: Friday, 28 September 2018

Place: Bread of Life, 4 Dong Da, Thuan Phuoc, Hai Chau, Da Nang

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

Sa Pa

Date: Friday, 21 September 2018

Place: Silk Path Grand Resort & Spa Sapa

Address: Doi Quan 6, Group 10, Sa Pa, Lào Cai 330000

Time: 11:15 am to 12:15 pm

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/

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, 3 September: Vietnamese National Day/Labor Day
+ Monday, 8 October: Columbus 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

Passport Fee Increase

Effective April 2, 2018, the passport execution fee will increase from $25 to $35. The $10 execution fee increase applies to U.S. passport applicants using the DS-11 form including: first-time applicants over age 16, children under age 16, and applicants who reapply after reporting their previous passport lost or stolen.

Customers applying with the DS-11 form at a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad pay two separate fees: an application fee to the U.S. Department of State and the execution fee to the Passport Acceptance Facility (such as a post office in the United States or a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad). Accordingly, the total passport fee for such applicants will increase by $10 in total.

The $10 fee increase does not apply to adults eligible to renew their passport using the DS-82 form. The Department of State published a Final Rule confirming this fee change on January 31, 2018.

For Your Information

The Federal Voting Assistance Program

Still traveling or living overseas? You should register and request your absentee ballot to vote again in 2018 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.

To register and request your ballots, you can use the FPCA online assistant or complete the fillable PDF version. 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.

Toll-free phone numbers from 67 countries are listed on FVAP.gov. Find FVAP on Facebook at facebook.com/DoDFVAP and follow @FVAP on Twitter.

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.

Have an ACS experience to share? Share your story with:

ACShanoi@state.gov

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) 00632-301-2000, extension 9 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.

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 website for e-visas is

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/embassy-consulate/embassy/air-quality-monitor/ and https://vn.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulate/ho-chi-minh-city/air-quality-monitor/

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	Numerical 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 affected.
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.

The U.S. Embassy Hanoi wishes to take this opportunity to remind American citizens in Vietnam that protests can happen spontaneously and quickly turn violent. It is recommended citizens do the following:

- Avoid the areas of the demonstrations.
- Exercise caution if unexpectedly in the vicinity of large gatherings or protests.
- Monitor local media for updates.
- Keep a low profile.
- Visit Vietnam Country Information.
- Enroll in Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive security updates.
- Follow us on Facebook.

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 *only 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://vn.usembassy.gov/ 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.

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 *only 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.

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.