



Harmony Outreach

Dear Pastor,

Your teaching trip to Saigon, Vietnam is rapidly approaching. I am praying that you will have an adventure of Biblical proportions that bears much fruit. As a frequent traveler to SE Asia, I wanted to provide you some tips and answers to frequently asked questions.

1. **Airline Seating:** Call the airline in advance to request the type of seat you prefer. Most people prefer an isle or window seat over a middle seat.
2. **International Phone Service:** WiFi is the best way to keep in touch by either texting or facebook messaging. You may also pick up a sim card at the airport for international calling.
3. **Jetlag:** Carry ibuprofen PM with you on the flight. It helps to relax muscles, relieve pain, and put you to sleep. You can also bring a sleep aid like Simply Sleep to help you overcome jetlag and transition to the new time zone as quickly as possible. You will likely arrive at the hotel in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) around midnight. After checking in, pop a Simply Sleep and go to bed. The Simply Sleep will help you to sleep through the night and avoid waking up at 3 am, which is typical of jetlag. On subsequent days, avoid taking naps. Go to bed at the normal time you would if you were in the US. For example, if you normally go to sleep at 10 pm in the US, then push through and don't go to sleep in Vietnam until 10 pm.
4. **Contact:** Upon arriving, the Elios Hotel will pick you up. They will hold up a sign with your name on it. If something goes wrong, go to the airport information desk and call the Elios Hotel and tell them you are awaiting pickup. If dialing from a landline phone dial 3838-5584 or 3838-5585. If the airport information counter is closed because it is late, then borrow a cell phone from anyone (Vietnamese are friendly), but you must add a "08" before dialing the numbers above. 08 is the area code. Pastor Song will also provide transportation throughout your stay. His email is songugoc@gmail.com. His phone number is 0918281182. The country code is "84." Mitch Saad is a previous pastor in the U.S. who now lives in Saigon. He would love to meet with you. His phone is +84868600264 and his email is mitchsaad@gmail.com.
5. **Hotel:** You will be staying at the Elios Hotel, which is located at 233 Pham Ngu Lao Street, Dist. 1, HCMC, Vietnam. The phone number is (84 8)3838 5585. The website is (www.elioshotel.vn). Check in time is 4:00pm. The hotel is a step up from most of the guest houses that frequent the tourist area in which you will be staying. They offer free internet and two free water bottles per day, and you can have your laundry done for a fee. The hotel offers a free buffet breakfast every day. When you get to your room, you must slip the room key into a slot on the wall. That turns on the electricity in the room. It is not required, nor is it recommended, that you keep your passport on your person after you clear the airport. My recommendation is that you keep it safely zipped up in your luggage.
6. **Money:** Call your bank before you leave and tell them to put a note on your account that you are traveling to Vietnam. Otherwise the first time you use your credit or ATM card, your bank will interpret it as fraud and put a freeze on your account. You can change money in the hotel and there are ATMs nearby. Vietnamese currency is called the Dong and you get approximately 20,000 Dong per dollar. Although some tourist shops will accept American currency, many will not.

7. **Food:** Breakfast is free at the hotel. A Vietnamese lunch is provided at the teaching site during days that you teach. Dinner is on your own. The hotel has decent room service. There are numerous restaurants serving all kinds of food all around the hotel. Many small stands sell smoothies, fresh fruit and coffee-based drinks. They are quite good and very affordable. The staple food of Vietnam is Pho (a hearty soup, which is pronounced “fa-uh”). It is tasty and the pastors know the best places to get it.
8. **Weather:** Weather in Vietnam is tropical and generally pleasant. Dress for a warm-to-hot climate with a possibility of rain. During teaching times dress business casual. Otherwise, there are no restrictions for men.
9. **Travel Insurance:** Linda will be emailing each of you a page with your Proof of Insurance prior to departure from the US. The policy covers medical expenses greater than \$250 (by reimbursement) and emergency airfare home if needed.
10. **Crossing the street:** You will quickly see that they drive differently in Vietnam than here. Laws, if there are any, are a mere suggestion. To cross the street walk *slowly*. Never jet across. The drivers see you and will determine where you will be when they get to you. If you rush, that is when the accidents can happen.
11. **Transportation:** If you decide to take a taxi, be sure to **ONLY** take the VINASUN Taxi. They are the only “authorized” taxi in Vietnam. Be careful of knockoffs. The picture on the right shows the name of the taxi company.
12. **Electricity:** Vietnam, like most of the rest of the world, uses 220 volt electricity. Most electronics are dual voltage. Check your power cord and if it says something like 110-240, you are good to go. If your electronics are not dual voltage (like a blow dryer), you will need a power converter. In any event you may need a plug *adapter* to have your plug in fit into the wall socket.
13. **Teaching Protocols:** Keep in mind that not all Christians agree on doctrinal points. You should present the Word as you believe it, but don’t overly argue your perspective in an attempt to convince them you are correct (Holy Spirit, gifts, women pastors, etc). Also, keep in mind that men are very much in the minority so there may be women leaders at the local level.
14. **Fun Stuff:** There are a lot of fun things to see near your hotel. Saigon has many small tour companies that offer tours to a variety of locations for very affordable prices. I would recommend you take advantage of these. Also, there are a lot of fun shops and restaurants near your hotel where you can buy DVDs, traditional handicrafts, get a massage or foot massage, and dine. Massages are fine so long as you pick a place where the purpose is actually a massage and not a cover for prostitution. You can usually tell the difference just by looking at the place and who is offering it. There is nothing better than a one-hour, \$5 foot massage! At night, beware of the 7 Deadly Sins—that are people offering you alcohol, girls or marijuana. That element comes out mostly at night. But don’t let that detract or distract you from enjoying your evenings out. Just say, “No, thank you” and keep walking.



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