

Moving to Vietnam: Your Relocation Guide



By Appointment To
Her Majesty The Queen
Removals and Storage Contractor Abels

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Customs

To the best of our knowledge, the following documentation is required to import household goods and personal effects into Vietnam. However, it is advisable to check with the authorities that documentation is in order, prior to despatch.

ENTRY VISAS

Work permits are required to import personal effects shipments with the exception of air shipments that are less than 300 kgs gross.

Foreigners working in Vietnam are required to obtain work permits regardless the duration of their employment. Entry visas are required to enter Vietnam and can be obtained for one or three months, single or multiple entries.

Household Goods & Personal Effects

Origin Agent must provide:

- Airway bill / Original bill of lading (telex release is acceptable)
- A legible inventory / packing list (in English)

Shipper must be employed by a licensed company / organisation in Vietnam and must provide:

- Copy of passport (ID page)
- Entry Visa (valid 3+ months) or temporary
- Work Permit
- Copy of employer's business license in Vietnam (your destination agent can arrange to collect in Vietnam)
- Original Vietnam Arrival-Departure Card and copies
- Application Letter & Power of Attorney (Abels Moving Services will provide)

Three copies of each document required for each shipment. If there are multiple shipments, a separate set of documents (of 3) are required.

Ho Chi Minh:

Certified true copies required, this can be obtained by bringing the original document to the people's Committee Office of Ho Chi Minh City.

Documents must be signed and stamped (company seal) by the shipper's registered local employer in Vietnam.

Hanoi:

Customs requires labour contract copy in addition to above documents.

All documents must be signed and stamped (company seal) by the shipper's registered local employer in Vietnam. Certified true copies are not required.

*Air shipments must arrive within 30 days of the shippers' arrival.

All shipments **except** diplomatic, are subject to physical inspection and to import duty, even for temporary imports.

Duty is calculated based on the tariff provided by the Ministry of Finance.

Shippers are allowed to import one sea and one air shipment. Exceptions can be made on a case by case basis. Air shipments **MUST** arrive within 30 days of the shipper's arrival to Vietnam.

Arrival – Departure Declaration

The shipper **MUST** complete this when arriving at the Vietnam airport and have it signed and stamped by customs. One card required per shipment. The shipper should declare either 1 sea or 1 air shipment on each card as relevant.

Write "Y" when answering "Any unaccompanied baggage".

This is strictly required for customs clearance and will also help alleviate VND 5,000,000 in taxes / duties (approx. US\$250).

The shipper must have arrived in Vietnam at least one time before prior to customs clearance to submit their original arrival / departure card as the clearance cannot be completed without this document.

In Ho Chi Minh, it takes approximately 1-2 working days to clear air shipments, 2-3 working days to clear FCL shipments and 3-5 days to clear LCL shipments through Customs. Please allow 3 weeks or longer for vehicles.

In Hanoi, it takes approximately 1-3 working days to clear air shipments, 7-14 working days to clear FCL and LCL shipments.

Above estimates are based on completed documentation being available at the time of shipment arrival for normal Customs clearance.

Shipper must specify on the Arrival Form under the Unaccompanied Luggage section that there will be an unaccompanied sea, an air or both shipments coming after the shipper's arrival to Vietnam.

Duties

Customs and Cultural officers may inspect all shipments to access duties and screen cultural times. Below is a short list of dutiable items. The items that are subject to duty are mainly electrical appliances and furniture, subject to change.

- Duties on consumer electronics 40-60%
- Alcohol 125-150%
- Furniture 10%
- Bicycles 100%
- Clothes and personal belongings duty free with reasonable quantity in service of the trip's purpose
- Computer software, including floppy disks, music disks, tapes and all video tapes 40%, videos, cd's are screened for contents. Cost approximately US\$2.00 each. All written material is screened for contents
- Vehicles approx 170% and upwards

Books, CDs, Audiotapes Computer Disks

Books, CDs, audiotapes, computer disks have to be inspected by the Ministry of Culture prior to release (allow one week for clearance).

All items should be packed separately noting the quantity of each “type” on the carton and packing list. Undesirable material, publications mentioning / referring to Vietnam will be confiscated.

Cultural items guideline

If cultural items are packed in less than 20 small boxes (30x30x50cm) the check is made by Customs officials and is usually easy.

If cultural items are packed in 20 smaller boxes, an official from the Ministry of Culture must be called and a cultural inspection fee paid (can be time consuming and costly).

Laser Colour Printers and Colour Copiers

Laser copy printers and colour copiers will be inspected by the Department of Communication and a separate licence will be issued for registration of installation.

Upto one colour / laser printer can be imported without a license. Subsequent printers will require a special license.

If you have laser colour printers, please mark clearly its details on the packing list.

Electrical Items

Each family is allowed to bring in one set of each electrical item.

All electronic items must have the brand name, model, and serial number details on the packing list.

Diplomatic Removals

Documents required:

- Diplomatic ID Card
- Inventory/packing list
- AWB/OBL (original not required)
- Passport copy (identification pages only)
- Original Vietnam Arrival-Departure Card
- Application Letter & Power of Attorney (Embassy/Consulate will provide their own)

Additional Documents Required to Import Vehicle

- Original Duty Free Book
- Original ID Card

Diplomatic shipments are duty free and may import one car duty free.

Quantity of liquor that may be imported duty free varies depending on the degree of diplomatic status.

Application for Customs Clearance

Customs requires that an Application for Customs Clearance be processed for all diplomatic shipments. Normally the Embassy or Diplomatic Organisation will complete the Application for Customs Clearance and pass the documents to us for processing; some embassies take 1 – 2 weeks to process these documents therefore it is important that you notify your agent as early as possible about the shipment’s arrival.

The shipper must have arrived in Vietnam at least one time prior to customs clearance to submit their original arrival / departure card as the clearance cannot be completed without this document (proving that the shipper has already arrived in Vietnam).

It takes approximately 1-3 working days to clear an air shipment through Customs, 2-3 working days to clear a FCL sea shipment and 3-5 days to clear a small LCL shipment.

Above estimates are based on completed documentation being available at the time of shipment arrival for normal Customs clearance.

You should check with Abels prior to dispatching your shipment, most importantly air shipments.

Vietnamese Students Returning Citizen

Allowed to bring into Vietnam maximum 2 cubic metres

Note: Customs for Vietnamese Returning Citizens will take at least 2 weeks and will incur Port storage / demurrage charges.

- Student Visa / Residence card / Student ID from Origin Country (at least 1 year stay).
- Letter from the school in Origin Country: stating shippers study from...to... and when completing the course.
- Copy Passport + Vietnamese ID Card + Vietnamese family record book – 3 copies Notarised.
- Origin Arrival Card (declare with customs at the airport that you have Personal Effects and will arrive by sea / air, customs will stamp and sign).

NOTE FOR THE ARRIVAL CARD: Airports no longer issue Arrival Cards for all passengers, but if you have Used Household goods and will arrive into Vietnam, you must ask airport customs at entrance counter for the form for an ARRIVAL CARD. Declaring to Customs for Returning citizen will take at least 2 weeks.

Vehicles

Documents required for used cars less than 5 years old:

- Proof of ownership, Registration and Insurance Documents
- Details of vehicle, make, model etc
- Import Permit
- History of vehicle

- Other documents will be prepared by your agent and will require the customer to sign and stamp with company seal

New vehicles cannot be imported for personal use.

Must be left hand drive.

Diplomats may import a new or less than five years old plus 80% new, car duty free based on allocated import quota.

Import duties / taxes are approx 170% of the value determined by the customs valuation book.

Vehicle must arrive within 30 days of shippers arrival. All documents related to the vehicle must be in the name of the shipper.

Please contact Abels for current information

For clearance allow 10 to 15 working days or longer.

The Customs clearance process for the vehicles is finalised after the Ministry of Transport – Vietnam Register issues the Certificate of conformity from inspection of quality technical safety and environmental protection for imported motor vehicles.

For Hanoi NON diplomats and Vietnamese citizens CANNOT import vehicles for personal use even if they agree to pay duty and taxes.

Antiques

Document required:

Information required:

- Name
- Age of piece
- Material it is made of
- Origin
- Photograph
- Dimensions

Item/s will be inspected and registered upon entry which takes an additional 2 – 3 days.

It is recommended that if antiques are shipped to Vietnam, to make sure that all items are clearly photographed and well documented. Antiques should be inspected and registered upon entry. If antiques are not registered upon entry, it may be restricted from being exported at a later time. Please advise to your destination agent if there are any antiques on the shipment and send to them the details before packing.

Details should be clearly noted on the packing list and cartons. Send photograph and documented item (name, age, material, origin).

To help facilitate cultural inspection, mark the carton / item clearly and load closest to the container doors.

Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco

Documents required:

- Inventory with exact number, size of bottles and strength of liquor
- Airway Bill or Bill of Lading with consignee mentioned in name and address of shipper's company in Vietnam
- Letter applying for the importation with shipper's company stamp
- Letter of authorisation to the Movers

Import tax is from 125% to 150%.

Liquor: The following amounts are duty free: liquor of 22% proof or higher (1.5litres) liquor of under 22% proof (2 litres), alcoholic drinks, beer (3 litres).

Tobacco: The following amounts are duty free: rolled cigarettes (400 cigarettes) cigars (100 cigars), shredded tobacco (5 grams).

Import of alcohol is allowed for diplomats but limited to annual quota agreed by the local Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the respective embassies in the country.

Clearance allow 3 days for air shipments and 10 days for sea shipments.

Domestic Pets

For pets travelling as excess baggage documents required:

- Copy of owner's passport (travelling with pet)
- Pet's vaccination record with proof of rabies vaccination
- Pet's origin health certificate / export permit
- Pet's destination health certificate / import permit

For pets travelling as manifest cargo (additional to documents stated above):

- Shipper's Vietnam entry visa copy (must be valid 3+ months)
- Pet's flight details and air waybill number
- Power of Attorney and application letter
- Owner's original Arrival Customs Declaration Card

Each shipper is allowed to import two pets.

Quarantine is not required.

Pets should arrive on a weekday (Monday to Friday) before 3.30pm. If the pet arrives later, please contact your destination agent immediately so that they can assist with special arrangements.

Restricted Items

- Weapons
- Ammunition
- Radio transmitters

- Narcotics
- Drugs
- Pornographic / subversive materials
- Satellite dishes
- Publications motioning / referring to Vietnam
- Used motorbikes

Food

We strongly recommend that shippers be advised not to ship any commercially prepared and purchased food product with your unaccompanied personal goods.

This includes: wines, spirits, beer, cider, spices, herbs, canned packed or wrapped foods, pet food, pastas, rice, food supplements, vitamins, fruit juices, carbonated / non-carbonated drinks, milk, perishable foods, dry foods and any other item intended for human or animal consumption.

If the shipper insists on shipping food items, the specified information below must be gathered and provided for each food item imported. If the information is not provided, the food items may face refusal of entry, requiring segregation / manipulation of the shipment under customs supervision at a bonded facility, at substantial additional cost. Costs could be in the thousands of dollars and can not be anticipated. These costs will be the responsibility of the client.

- Product brand name
- Product classification
- Country of production
- Country of packaging
- Type of product (canned, bottled, packaged)
- Quantity

Ask for **Abels form QF565** for completing.

Canned food is limited to the members of the client's family.

General Information on the Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Background

The conquest of Vietnam by France began in 1858 and was completed by 1884. It became part of French Indochina in 1887. Vietnam declared independence after World War II, but France continued to rule until its 1954 defeat by communist forces under Ho Chi MINH. Under the Geneva Accords of 1954, Vietnam was divided into the communist North and anti-communist South. US economic and military aid to South Vietnam grew through the 1960s in an attempt to bolster the government, but US armed forces were withdrawn following a cease-fire agreement in 1973. Two years later, North Vietnamese forces overran the South reuniting the country under communist rule. Despite the return of peace, for over a decade the country experienced little economic growth

because of conservative leadership policies, the persecution and mass exodus of individuals – many of them successful South Vietnamese merchants – and growing international isolation. However, since the enactment of Vietnam's "doi moi" (renovation) policy in 1986, Vietnamese authorities have committed to increased economic liberalization and enacted structural reforms needed to modernise the economy and to produce more competitive, export-driven industries. The communist leaders maintain tight control on political expression but have demonstrated some modest steps toward better protection of human rights. The country continues to experience small-scale protests, the vast majority connected to either land-use issues, calls for increased political space, or the lack of equitable mechanisms for resolving disputes. The small-scale protests in the urban areas are often organised by human rights activists, but many occur in rural areas and involve various ethnic minorities such as the Montagnards of the Central Highlands, H'mong in the Northwest Highlands, and the Khmer Krom in the southern delta region.

Geography

Vietnam is a long and narrow country, over 1,600km long. It is only 50km across at its narrowest point. It borders China to the north, to the northwest lies Laos, to the west is Thailand and to the southwest is Cambodia. Three quarters of the country is mountainous. The main cultivated areas are in the north, around the Red River Delta and in the south around the Mekong Delta. The high fertility of the area is due to silt carried by the rivers. Forest used to cover 40% of the country but now covers only 20% due to deforestation.

Climate

There is tropical weather in the south. It's Monsoonal in the north with the hot, rainy season from mid May to mid September and warm and the dry season from mid October to mid March.

Population

It is estimated at over 85 million. Life expectancy is 68 for men and 74 for women. 80% of the population is rural and most are farmers. Density is 200 people per km² but can rise to 20,000 per km² in Ho Chi Minh City, one of the highest in the world.

Environmental Issues

Logging and slash and burn agricultural practices contribute to deforestation and soil degradation. Water pollution and overfishing threaten marine life populations. Groundwater contamination limits potable water supplies. Growing urban industrialisation and population migration are rapidly degrading the environment in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

International Disputes

Southeast Asian states have enhanced border surveillance to check the spread of avian flu; Cambodia and Laos protest

Vietnamese squatters and armed encroachments along border; Cambodia accuses Vietnam of a wide variety of illicit cross-border activities; progress on a joint development area with Cambodia is hampered by an unresolved dispute over sovereignty of offshore islands; an estimated 300,000 Vietnamese refugees reside in China; establishment of a maritime boundary with Cambodia is hampered by unresolved dispute over the sovereignty of offshore islands; the decade-long demarcation of the China-Vietnam land boundary was completed in 2009; China occupies the Paracel Islands also claimed by Vietnam and Taiwan; Brunei claims a maritime boundary extending beyond as far as a median with Vietnam, thus asserting an implicit claim to Lousia Reef; the 2002 “Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea” has eased tensions but falls short of a legally binding “code of conduct” desired by several of the disputants; Vietnam continues to expand construction of facilities in the Spratly Islands; in March 2005, the national oil companies of China, the Philippines, and Vietnam signed a joint accord to conduct marine seismic activities in the Spratly Islands; Economic Exclusion Zone negotiations with Indonesia are ongoing, and the two countries in Fall 2011 agreed to work together to reduce illegal fishing along their maritime boundary.

Currency

US Dollars are accepted everywhere. If you choose Vietnamese Dong (VND) (to save money), you might need an extra big shopping bag to drag it around. Vietnamese Dong comes in the following denominations:

Notes: 200, 500, 1000, 2000, 5000, 10,000, 20,000 & 50,000.

Be aware that the 5,000 Dong note and the 20,000 Dong note are the same blue colour and look almost identical.

It is best to change money from Official Exchange Banks. You can use credit cards (Visa, MasterCard & Amex) in the cities at most major hotels.

Banks – Banking services are not well developed in Vietnam. You will see many inviting Foreign Bank offices but they cannot offer full services. If a Bank only has a representative office, you cannot open your private or business account there. Only Branch Office Banks offer the possibility to transfer money to or from your account. When changing money, bring your passport.

Economy

Vietnam is a densely populated developing country that has been transitioning from the rigidities of a centrally-planned economy since 1986. Agriculture’s share of economic output has shrunk from about 25% in 2000 to 18% in 2014, while industry’s share increased from 36% to 38% in the same period. State-owned enterprises now account for only about 40% of GDP.

Vietnamese authorities have reaffirmed their commitment to economic modernisation and a more open economy. Vietnam

joined the WTO in January 2007, which has promoted more competitive, export-driven industries. Vietnam was one of 12-nations that concluded the Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade agreement negotiations in 2015.

Hanoi has oscillated between promoting growth and emphasising macroeconomic stability in recent years. During 2015, Vietnam’s managed currency, the dong, depreciated about 5%. Poverty has declined significantly, and Vietnam is working to create jobs to meet the challenge of a labour force that is growing by more than one million people every year.

Vietnam is trying to reform its economy by restructuring public investment, state-owned enterprises, and the banking sector, although Hanoi’s progress in meeting its goals is lagging behind the proposed schedule. Vietnam’s economy continues to face challenges from an undercapitalised banking sector and nonperforming loans.

Language

The official language of Vietnam is a mixture of Chinese, Mon Khmer and Thai. It has six tones and is monosyllabic. Vietnamese is written in Roman script with additional markings for the tones. Many people speak English, French or Russian – often depending on their age. Those aged over 50 tend to speak French while the younger generation, especially in the south, speak English.

For those planning to live in Vietnam, it is advisable to take some introductory lessons on pronunciation. Because of the different tones, it will be impossible to pronounce words correctly without a few hours of drill instruction. Once the tones are understood, progress can be made individually.

The Vietnamese written language was transcribed by a French missionary in the 1600’s. It is extremely exact, in that there are almost no exceptions to pronunciation rules.

Grammar in Vietnamese is quite simple, once the pronunciation barrier is overcome. Don’t be afraid to sound silly for the first few months! Even the smallest working knowledge of Vietnamese will make living in Vietnam a wonderful experience. Given the inexpensive labour costs, private tutors are readily available for a few Dollars per hour. The northern accent from Hanoi is recognised as the preferred way to speak Vietnamese. Its pronunciation is sharper and clearer than the southern accent.

Religion

The major religion is a mixture of Confucianism, Taoism, and Mahayana Buddhism with elements of ancient animist beliefs. However, most people practice what could most accurately be referred to as ancestor worship. The churches are called ‘temples’ or ‘pagodas’.

A substantial minority of the population are Roman Catholics (8 - 10%). Catholicism was introduced and promoted under the French.

Daily Life

Security – The Socialist Republic of Vietnam has a large force of Police and as a foreigner you will not be bothered. Keep in mind that just a few years ago, foreign presence was almost nil and each person individually attracted attention. Always be careful in what you write, fax, or say by phone, you don't want to annoy your host!

Always be careful when walking around down town. Do not carry large sums of money, wear expensive jewellery, or carry nice pens or sunglasses. These will attract unnecessary attention. Vietnam's streets are safe to walk, but it is recommended not to walk alone at night and to take taxis instead of cycles when it gets late.

Customs and Superstitions

Doing Business – The most striking custom is the use of business cards. Indeed, you use them liberally. Everybody has one and they are printed for a low price, so never go without them. Remember to give them and receive them using BOTH your hands, one thing foreigners seem to forget easily, you give somebody something, always use both hands. It is rude to use one hand especially your left hand.

The higher Vietnamese officials or more internationally orientated businessmen speak English. If you want to have a meeting, they might have a translator, but it is advisable to bring your own person in the beginning. It is sometimes advisable to take your own notes in a business meeting and then to present this to your host at the end. The Western concept of time is new for most Vietnamese businesses. Presenting a list of your goals and expectations might help clear communication gaps.

Keep in mind that the tendency in Vietnamese business and government structure is to default to superiors. Therefore, the person with whom you meet might have to get 'permission' or 'approval' before they can proceed. This is nothing unusual.

Vietnamese have the custom to say 'YES, YES OK' even if they wonder what you are talking about. It is a way of being polite and they consider it very rude to say 'NO' to someone. If you ask: 'So they did not bring my laundry?' they will respond 'YES' to confirm that the sentence was correct. It is always safest to ask questions in the positive and sometimes phrasing the question two or three times will ensure that everything is understood.

Waving or beckoning with an up-pointed finger is highly impolite. If you signal somebody to come over, you do this with the whole hand and your palm turned down. Never touch anyone on the head, this is considered as a personal insult to the individual or even his ancestors. Also, touching someone on the shoulder is not a good idea. If you touch one shoulder, you are supposed to touch the other as well, as this helps to offset bad luck. People of Vietnam have a habit of not looking into your eyes when they talk to you.

This is often because of shyness, but traditionally they don't look into the eyes of those they respect or those higher in rank

when talking to them. Vietnamese people smile a lot this can be a polite or sceptical reaction. Loud argument or heated discussions are frowned upon and are seldom heard among the Vietnamese. Well-bred people are trained in self discipline.

Vietnamese try to avoid the sun. They are considered lower class if they have a tan. They cover as much as possible when working on the roads, in the fields, or driving motorcycles around Saigon.

Going 'Dutch' is not appreciated at restaurants, etc. if you run into someone in a restaurant and join their table let them pay the whole bill or pay it all YOURSELF. The senior person usually pays.

Working Hours – Most local businesses operate from 0800 to 1130 and then break for lunch. The afternoon schedule is from 1300 / 1330 to 1600 / 1700. It is best to schedule meetings early in the morning and plan to finish by 1100. In the afternoon, nothing really gets up to speed again, with the same productivity as in the morning. Avoid calling people between 1130 and 1400. Most people are eating lunch at this time and many will take a rest after lunch. Foreign Offices maintain a more Westernised schedule, with a shorter lunch and finishing later in the afternoon, more towards 1700 or 1800.

Dress in Vietnam – Because of the hot climate, dress codes are more liberal in Vietnam than in most other countries. Men should always wear trousers on workdays. Shorts are frowned upon by the Vietnamese. Women should dress modestly, as in all Asian countries, during work. Long skirts, dresses and slacks are preferred. Suits are not as common in HCMC as they are in Hanoi, partly due to the climate. It is simply too hot to wear suits in Saigon. Generally, white shirts and ties are considered respectable business dress and suits for receptions or important meetings. In Hanoi, suits are more common, both among the Vietnamese and the expatriate communities. Shoes have a tendency to get scuffed easily, but can be shined for a few thousand Dongs on the street. Extra pairs are useful as Western quality shoes are almost impossible to find in Vietnam.

Vietnamese Names – Most Vietnamese names are made up of three words, i.e. Nguyen Van Tam, a typical man's name. "Nguyen Van" is the family name, and "Tam" is his given name. For a formal address in conversation, one would refer to him as "Mr Tam", never "Mr Nguyen" or "Mr Nguyen Van". The same is applicable for women i.e. Nguyen Thi Hoa would become "Mrs Hoa".

When meeting someone for the first time, always use Mr, Ms, or Mrs. With their first name as indicated above. After developing a close relationship with someone, you might call them by their given name only. Some foreigners choose to adopt this manner with their staff, using Mr John or Mr Mark, one reason being that foreign given names are usually easier to pronounce than family names. The Vietnamese will be most comfortable if you explain what forms of address you prefer.

The Vietnamese use several different forms of greeting, depending on the relationship with the person and the amount of respect they wish to show. The basic word for hello is “Chao”; however, this must be followed with one of the following:

- For an old man – Chao ong
- For an old lady – Chao ba
- For a young man – Chao anh
- For an older lady – Chao chi
- For a child (boy or girl) – Chao em
- For a young lady – Chao co

There are several other forms of address. It takes time to know which are appropriate. Don’t be afraid to ask your friend which form of address is preferred.

Street Activity – As Vietnam’s economy is still developing, one of the first things that will strike you when you walk in the street is that many people regard you as a way to improve their income. Sometimes there is no other way than begging. Young children will persist in trying to sell postcards and T-shirts, often following you down the entire length of the street. Everyone finds their own way to deal with this situation.

As in many other Asian countries, a visitor needs to bargain for almost everything, including cyclo’s, taxis (unless you take the metertaxis), food in markets, handicrafts and art works. You should, of course, be aware of fakes.

The Vietnamese are masterful at faking antiques and art pieces as well as brand name alcohol and medicine. Vietnamese act easily “hurt” when you go on bargaining too long.

Transportation

Cyclo’s (trishaws) – This mode of transportation is one of Vietnam’s treats, unless you don’t like bargaining. If you take cyclo’s outside your hotel or house, it is best to keep them on your good side. Giving them a few thousand Dongs every now and then is simply good public relations. Be careful in what you offer cyclo drivers. No matter what you give them, or how generous you may be, they will usually ask for more.

Cyclo drivers, if provoked, can make your life difficult. Do not get into disagreements with them. However, do not be fooled by their ploys to make you feel guilty every time you walk past and if the price was clear at the start; do not be fooled into paying more money.

There often seems to be confusion about one-way and two-way fares, meaning your driver will try to double it at the slightest hint of confusion. Always negotiate this carefully at the start. Many people feel comfortable using the same cyclo driver and it is possible to arrange daily fees with them, which they will stand by at all times. It is helpful to develop a good relationship with an honest driver (if you can find one; they do exist) in case friends come into town.

Drivers and Cars – Drivers have a tendency to say “Yes, OK!” even if they have no idea where you are asking them to go. Always try to make sure your driver understands before you get in the car, otherwise, you could become well acquainted with the back seat! If your driver shows any hesitation about the address, try to find someone who knows where it is, or can explain clearly. Meter taxi drivers usually know their way around town and some speak English, as well.

Driving habits are quite different in Vietnam. Use of the fourth gear seems to be preferred to save gas money. Driving through streets with busy traffic requires heavy sedation. Your driver will honk all the time – many Vietnamese regard this as a great way to release tension, whilst skilfully building up yours.

Cars without Drivers – In Vietnam, it is almost impossible to drive your own car. The traffic requires an exotic driving style. Most importantly, if you are involved in a traffic accident, the police are prone to pick you up and you don’t want to enjoy the state’s hospitality in Vietnam. Vietnamese have been reported as almost jumping in front of a car in order to blackmail foreigners for money after you can’t avoid hitting him. If something happens, expect a big crowd around you in thirty seconds; they will keep you waiting until the police arrive.

Entertainment

Dining – Many Vietnamese restaurants are small insignificant spots that serve delightful specialties, but visitors often have trouble making themselves understood and may be put off by the modest hygiene. However, the recent economic liberation has spawned a dramatic increase in the number of restaurants, some of which are of excellent quality.

Nightlife in Hanoi is limited to late dinners at the restaurants and glitzy Karaoke bars.

Animals

Pets – Pets are rare species in Vietnam because Vietnamese sometimes like to eat them!! If you bring your dog or cat, make sure it is guarded and cannot escape as if it looks special it will be sold. You will find it hard to buy a pedigree pet in Vietnam. If you get easily upset, and love animals, postpone a visit to the animal and dog market.

Endangered Species – In Vietnam the regulations for wildlife protection are not followed carefully. You can still buy elephant feet (up to 2m high), bay elephant soles, little stuffed bears, stuffed leopards, stuffed lions, BIG turtle shells to hang on the wall or maybe you like the colonial looking yawning lion head-with-skin as a rug. In the unstuffed section you have a large choice of monkeys, (they come in all sizes and varieties), eagles 70cm high, falcons, living snakes for dinner and all the other rare and protected species from the forests.

However, you cannot easily leave the country with a suitcase full of tropical friends. It is recommended that you do not participate in this unethical trade.

Snakes – There are more than 60 known species of snakes, 20 of them poisonous. This includes Cobras, Krait, Vipers and water snakes. Snakes could also be found living in your garden, but normally they will be shy and glad to flee if you come around. If a snake bites you, try to kill it and bring it with you. They will then know, in Singapore or Hong Kong, which antidote they have to use, if you make it in time!

Mosquitoes – Numerous species of mosquitoes reside in Vietnam, many of which transmit diseases such as Malaria, Dengue Fever and Hemorrhagic Fever. If you are in non air-conditioned places, it is best to wear long pants and socks from 1700 onwards. It is wise to travel with a mosquito net throughout Vietnam to ensure adequate protection. Most of the time you will not feel the bite, but it itches badly afterwards. Malarial medication is not required in Vietnam's cities. (It cannot be used for extended periods due to side effects).

Schools

There are International schools for your children in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

General Health

Culture shock, stress, and general difficulties in adjusting to life overseas are not unusual.

Dealing with Vietnamese hospitals requires a reliable assistance company in addition to your insurance company. An assistance company will assist you and fly you out as soon as possible if an emergency arises.

Drugs and Medicines – The pharmaceutical wholesale market is on 338 Hai Ba Trung Street, HCMC, where you will find the biggest store of pharmaceuticals, many of them from France. If you know a brand name or happen to know the pharmaceutical name, you can easily buy anything without a prescription. It is best to know the exact name of the generic drug, as well as appropriate doses.

Always avoid taking antibiotics unless necessary. Building up an immune system is important when living in Vietnam.

Utilities

Tap water – Tap water is not safe to drink, so buy only reputable brands of bottled water.

Electricity – The domestic electricity supply is both 110 and 220 volts AC 50Hz. Be sure to check your appliances and outlets before plugging them in. Replacement power supplies for radios, televisions, video recorders and especially computers are hard to come by. In Vietnam electricity is not grounded. Wiring is often crude and unsafe and should be thoroughly checked before use. There are frequent power cuts and voltage fluctuations so a voltage stabiliser will be required for sensitive electronic equipment.

Desktop computers require a voltage regulator which can be purchased locally for between US\$75 and US\$100 depending on the size.

Laptop computers do not require voltage regulators, but they are recommended to avoid surges, which could damage the power supply. Computer parts are virtually unavailable in Vietnam and replacing a power supply could take weeks.

Power cuts are a regular occurrence and can be long. The better hotels have generators which turn on automatically after a few seconds. Although the generator is often not powerful enough to keep the air-conditioning on.

Gas - Bottled gas or kerosene are often used for cooking.

Water Cuts – Water cuts occur, but the better hotels have spare water reservoirs. Although it is always advisable to keep a bucket of water handy for emergency bathing needs.

Although every care is taken to ensure that all information in the Abels Relocation Guide is accurate and up to date Abels cannot accept liability for any inaccuracy.