

## Vietnam: Country Facts



### General:

The conquest of Vietnam by France began in 1858 and was completed by 1884. It became part of French Indochina in 1887. Independence was declared after World War II, but the French continued to rule until 1954 when they were defeated by Communist forces under Ho Chi MINH, who took control of the North. 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military aid to South Vietnam grew through the 1960s in an attempt to bolster the government, but US armed forces were withdrawn following a cease-fire agreement in 1973.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.

### Capital: Hanoi

Vietnam is a densely-populated, developing country that in the last 30 years has had to recover from the ravages of war, the loss of financial support from the old Soviet Bloc, and the rigidities of a centrally planned economy. Substantial progress was achieved from 1986 to 1997 in moving forward from an extremely low level of development and significantly reducing poverty.

### Area:

*total:* 329,560 sq km  
*land:* 325,360 sq km  
*water:* 4,200 sq km

### Climate:

tropical in south; monsoonal in north with hot, rainy season (mid-May to mid-September) and warm, dry season (mid-October to mid-March)

### Population:

83,535,576 (July 2005 est.)

### Religions:

Buddhist 9.3%, Catholic 6.7%, Hoa Hao 1.5%, Cao Dai 1.1%, Protestant 0.5%, Muslim 0.1%, none 80.8% (1999 census)

### Languages:

Vietnamese (official), English (increasingly favored as a second language), some French, Chinese, and Khmer; mountain area languages (Mon-Khmer and Malayo-Polynesian)