

HANOI



Hoan Kiem Lake

FUN FACT

Legend has it that a magical sword used to fend off a 15th century invasion was returned to the heavens by a giant turtle that may still live in Hoan Kiem Lake.

OUT AND ABOUT
Wide Eyed Tours

(48 Lane 76, Phu Yen St, Tay Ho District, tel: +84 (0)4 221 32950, www.wideeyedtours.com) With close to a decade in the business, this Hanoi-based company can send you nearly anywhere. Full-day and half-day boat trips across the famed Red River are available starting from S\$64/AU\$52.



TOP SHOPS

Hai Ba Trung District

The network of streets in the top half of this area is worth a wander for anyone in the market for clothing and accessories. Quieter side streets like Mai Hac De, Bui Thi Xuan and Trieu Viet Vuong are home to boutiques and outlets selling low-priced Chinese imports.



BEST BITES

Quan An Ngon

(18 Phan Boi Chau St, Hoan Kiem District, tel:

+84 (0)4 3942 8162) For years, this outdoor eatery has remained a people-magnet thanks to a menu consisting largely of street food favourites from the city's top vendors. \$

AFTER DARK
Cuba Café Lounge

(46 Le Duan St, Dong Da District, tel: +84 (0)4 6651 6150) This nightlife newcomer hosts live events and DJ nights and boasts 10 different mojitos along with a varied menu of burgers, burritos and plates of beans and rice topped with char-grilled marinated pork and chicken. Prices for mains are around S\$5/AU\$4.

SLEEPOVER
Sheraton Hanoi (11 Xuan Dieu St, tel:

+84 (0)4 3719 9000, www.starwoodhotels.com) Just a 10-minute drive from the Old Quarter, this five-star hotel is also within easy reach of the expat enclave of West Lake, home to shopping and dining. Room rates start from S\$233/AU\$189. \$\$\$

BY HELEN CLARK
More information:
www.vietnamtourism.com

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Gia Dining Room

HO CHI MINH CITY

FUN FACT

The popularity of Korean TV dramas in Ho Chi Minh City has inspired some parents to name their children after South Korean celebrities.

OUT AND ABOUT
Srithendayutthapani Temple (66 Ton

That Thiep, District 1) Hindu temples aren't the first thing that spring to mind when it comes to Ho Chi Minh City attractions, yet the city houses several. This temple makes for a peaceful respite, with its cool, patterned tiles and kitschy central shrine.



TOP SHOPS

Level 1 @ Saigon

Centre (65 Le Loi, District 1, tel: +84 (0)8 3823 2505) One of the city's more modern shopping centres, Saigon Centre recently turned its first floor into a one-stop fashion destination featuring a mix of international brands and Vietnamese labels like Valenciani, SONG and V by Vo Viet Chung.



BEST BITES

Gia Dining Room

(5A Nguyen Sieu, District 1, tel: +84 (0)8 3827

9399, www.giadiningroom.com) Contemporary décor and an intimate space

are the perfect setting to sample French-influenced Vietnamese food and Asian-accented western dishes. Best of all, the menu is reasonably priced, with mains from S\$10/AU\$8. \$



AFTER DARK

Amber Room (59 Dong Du, District

1, tel: +84 (0)8 6291 3686) Chic Amber Room is the city's hotspot du jour, with its sexy, urban vibe, sleek interior and first-rate drinks list. Cocktails start from S\$7/AU\$6. Try the basil martini for a fresh take on the classic.



SLEEPOVER

Northern Hotel

(11A Thi Sach, District 1, tel: +84 (0)8 3825 1751, www.northernhotel.com.vn) Northern Hotel is one of the city's newest mid-range hotels. It's also just a short walk from its best bars, shops and restaurants. Room rates start from S\$98/AU\$80. \$\$\$

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