

## Hanoi



Temple of Literature

### INSIDER TIP

Flaunting iPhones and laptops could make you a lucrative target in Hanoi, where drive-by thefts are not uncommon. **Protect yourself** by not wearing a purse over your shoulder and by keeping cash in a front pocket.

### SHOP TALK

They're not typical souvenirs, but prescription eyeglasses are a good deal in Vietnam. A favourite for fast, friendly service in English is **Vietnam Optical**, 138B Giang Vo, Ba Dinh, tel: +84 (0)4 3736 5505, www.kinhmatvietnam.com.vn

### JAVA JOLT

**Joma** is coffee with a conscience: Fair-trade coffee and fresh daily baked goods are served by an enthusiastic, well-trained staff of formerly disadvantaged youth and women. 21 Dien Bien Phu, tel: +84 (0)4 3747 3388, www.joma.biz

### CHEAP EATS

Spring rolls, sushi and dim sum are the specialties at **The House of Nem** (aka Nem 'n Nem). It's no secret that the food here is a great value so come prepared for crowds. 43 Mai Hac De, Hoan Kiem, tel: +84 (0)4 3943 3152

### TOP TABLES

Every night, **Brother Café** lays out a sumptuous buffet of bargain-priced barbecued seafood – featuring both Vietnamese and Western favourites. 26 Nguyen Thai Hoc, Ba Dinh, tel: +84 (0)4 733 3866, www.brothercafe.com ☞

### AT YOUR LEISURE

Halong Bay is a UNESCO World Heritage site and the ideal spot for a weekend away from the city. Bask in the beauty of this natural treasure in luxury with first-class tour operator **Bhaya Cruises**. 52 Hang Trong, Hoan Kiem, tel: +84 (0)4 3944 6777, www.bhayacruises.com

### LATE & LIVELY

The recently opened **Apocalypse Now** is a resurrected version of the fabled Hanoi hangout. The new venue is still finding its feet and space is sometimes at a premium, but reasonable prices and attentive service – not to mention the history – make it well worth a visit. 32 Thi Sach, Hai Ba Trung

### OVERNIGHT

A short walk from the lake and Old Quarter, the **Especen Hotel** is a new and inexpensive accommodation in a good neighbourhood. 28 Tho Xuong, Hoan Kiem, tel: +84 (0)4 3824 4401, www.especen.vn ☞

## Ho Chi Minh City



Mausoleum

### INSIDER TIP

Ensure that you catch taxis from reputable companies like **Mai Linh** or **Vinasun** and watch out for "fake" taxi brands sporting similar logos.

### SHOP TALK

The first mall of its calibre to grace the city centre, **Vincom Center** opened its doors to much fanfare in April. It features local and international brands from Pho 24 through to Jimmy Choo. Cnr Dong Khoi & Le Thanh Ton, District 1, tel: +84 (0)8 2220 0220

### JAVA JOLT

**Café Terrace** with its funky red interior and chic crowd is the perfect spot for a Lavazza coffee, mid-shopping expedition. Don't miss the delicious crème caramel. G/F, Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, District 1, tel: +84 (0)8 3829 4888

### CHEAP EATS

For low-priced, authentic and tasty *banh xeo* – a crispy pancake wrapped around pork, prawns and bean sprouts – look no further than **Banh Xeo 46A**, long touted as the city's best. 46A Dinh Cong Trang, District 1, tel: +84 (0)8 3824 1110

### TOP TABLES

The city's newest dining hot spot, **Shri**, offers sweeping city

views from 23 floors up. Japanese and international dishes feature, plus there's a chic bar and terrace. 23/F, Centec Tower, 72–74 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, District 3, tel: +84 (0)8 3827 9631 ☞

### AT YOUR LEISURE

Contemporary art space **Galerie Quynh** showcases emerging local and overseas artists, whose work makes a refreshing change from the cookie-cutter replica art found around town. 65 De Tham, District 1, tel: +84 (0)8 3836 8019, www.galeriequynh.com

### LATE & LIVELY

Excellent wine store **Vino** offers a great selection of imported labels and has an intimate outdoor terrace perfect for imbibing. Keep an eye out for regular wine-tasting events. 74/17 Hai Ba Trung, District 1, tel: +84 (0)8 6299 1315

### OVERNIGHT

The newly opened, four-star **Liberty Central Hotel** is a cut above its peers in the décor stakes. What's more, its rooms feature flat-screen TVs and wi-fi and the rates are competitive. 179 Le Thanh Ton, District 1, tel: +84 (0)8 3823 9269, www.libertycentralhotel.com ☞

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