



A quick guide to  
VIETNAMESE  
NEW YEAR

*Tết*

# WHAT AND WHEN IS TET?

Tet, is the Vietnamese name for the lunar New Year.

It is the largest holiday of the year in Vietnam filled with celebrations, feasts, purity rituals and family time.

To the Vietnamese it's like Christmas, New Years, Birthdays and Bank Holidays all rolled into one.

Vietnam's holidays and festivals work according to the lunar calendar. This means instead of celebrating New Year's Day on January 1st they celebrate it sometime between late January and mid February. This year, Tet officially starts on February 5<sup>th</sup> 2019. A national public holiday has been called to mark the occasion from February 2<sup>nd</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> 2019.



# WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

Expect things to be running at a slower pace than normal.

During Tet, most Vietnamese will rush home to see their families. This means a lot of businesses will be closed and hotels and restaurants may be running on a skeleton crew. Transport hubs will be a lot busier than normal.

## ANY ADVICE?

Check out the rest of this guide. If you do have any problems call your in country travel assistant immediately. They will resolve it for you. Apart from that, stay calm, be prepared for things to work a little slower and enjoy the empty streets and beaches.



# WHAT TO DO IN HANOI DURING TET?

For Vietnamese people Hanoi during Tet can be magical.

For tourists it can be a little dull. Shops are shut, restaurants and hotels are run on a skeleton crew and Hanoi's vibrant street life disappears indoors for a few days. If you are in town for the big holiday, don't panic.

Here are a few things you can do to make your trip more enjoyable.





## CHECK OUT THE FIREWORKS

On the 4<sup>th</sup> February, just before midnight Hanoi will have a huge firework display over Hoan Kiem Lake. Head down to the West side of the lake for the best view at around 11.30 PM. It will be crowded so hold tightly onto your possessions just in case.

Fireworks are also shown at Thong Nhat Park (Hai Ba Trung District), Lac Long Quan square (Tay Ho District), Van Quan Lake (Ha Dong District) and My Dinh Stadium (Nam Tu Liem District).

# WHAT TO DO IN HANOI DURING TET?

## VISIT THE TEMPLES

Hanoi has two temples which hold special significance for the New Year. It's best to visit them from the 5<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> Feb.

### NGOC SON TEMPLE

The Ngoc Son Temple is located on a small island in Hoan Kiem Lake, right at the heart of Hanoi's Old Quarter. It's a place of worship dedicated to Trần Hưng Đạo, a general whose ingenious military tactics saved early Vietnam from multiple Mongol invasions.

### TRAN QUOC PAGODA

The Tran Quoc Pagoda is a 1450 year old pagoda originally built by King Ly Nam De in the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. It's nestled on a little island overlooking West Lake and is a perfect escape from the hustle and bustle of the Old Quarter.



# WHAT TO DO IN HANOI DURING TET?

## GO TO THE FLOWER MARKET

The biggest flower market in Hanoi is located on Au Co street near the expat area of West Lake.

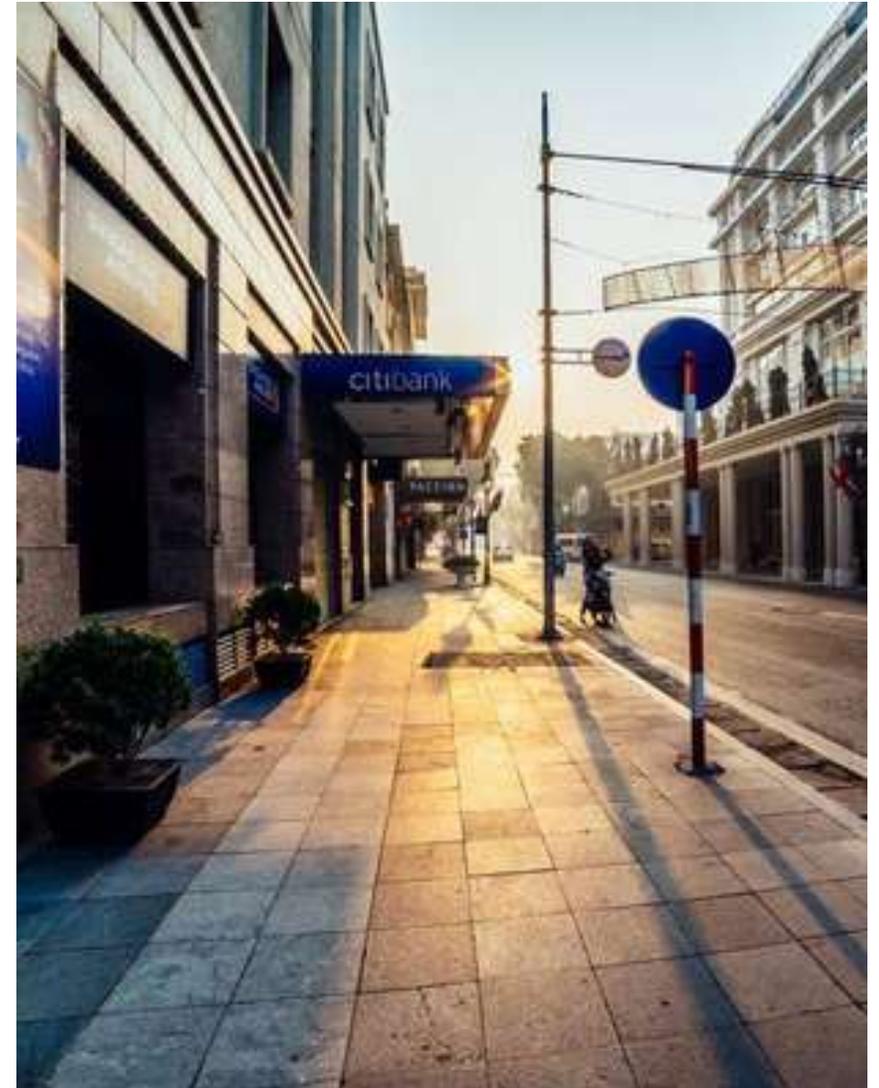
Visiting the market after the New Years Eve Fireworks is quickly becoming a Tet tradition. Families will head to the market shortly after midnight or first thing in the morning to buy fresh flowers for their homes and to soak up the atmosphere.



# WHAT TO DO IN HANOI DURING TET?

## ENJOY THE EMPTY STREETS

If you want to take some awesome photos of Hanoi's old quarter, Tet is the perfect time. Head out onto the streets around 6am and they will be deserted.



# WHAT TO DO IN HOI AN DURING TET?

Lantern Lit Hoi An is a gorgeous place to spend Tet. The best thing to do is simply get lost in its tiny streets.

There should be fireworks on the 4<sup>th</sup> February around midnight (N.B. this hasn't been confirmed by the Hoi An authorities yet). The mornings of the 5<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> will be quieter than normal. Perfect for taking photos and relaxing on An Bang Beach.



# WHAT TO DO IN HOI AN DURING TET?

## VISIT THE TEMPLES

Tet is a very religious time of the year for Vietnamese people. Many of them take the time to visit famous temples and pray for luck. It's well worth visiting temples to see people praying to the gods. Remember though, these are holy sites, so make sure your legs and shoulders are covered and don't take pictures of people without their permission. Be quiet, humble and respectful. Don't leave any rubbish behind and be prepared for some serious crowds.

### VAN DUC PAGODA

Van Duc Pagoda is an ancient monastery nestled on the outskirts of Hoi An, about a 10 minute taxi or 20 minute bike ride from town. Recognised as a national heritage site in 1991 it contains the relics of several infamous Buddhas.



# WHAT TO DO IN HOI AN DURING TET?

## VISIT THE TEMPLES

### LINH UNG PAGODA (The Biggest Lady Buddha of Da Nang)

A 45 minute drive from Hoi An is the modern and developing seaside city of Da Nang. Perched on the side of the Son Tra mountain is a huge statue of a Lady Buddha overlooking the sea. Surrounding the statue are a series of pagodas, temples and statues of infamous Buddhas. It is well worth a look, even just for the stunning views of Da Nang.



# WHAT TO DO IN HOI AN DURING TET?

## GO TO THE NIGHT MARKET

Hoi An's infamous night market is open on most days throughout Tet. Visitors can buy trinkets, jewelry, incense and games. Be warned though, the market tends to get flooded at this time of the year by locals looking for their first lucky purchase of the year.



# WHAT TO DO IN SAIGON DURING TET?



Saigon is much more of a party town than Hanoi and its metropolitan atmosphere doesn't let the biggest holiday of the year ruin the fun.

A lot more bars and restaurants will be open and the fireworks will be even bigger. Here's a couple of things to do.

## CHECK OUT THE FIREWORKS

On the 4<sup>th</sup> February, just before midnight Saigon will also have a huge fireworks display over the Saigon River (Thu Thiem, District 2).

It will be crowded so hold tightly onto your possessions just in case.

# WHAT TO DO IN SAIGON DURING TET?

## ENJOY NGUYEN HUE WALKING STREET

For the whole of Tet, Nguyen Hue walking street will be covered in gorgeous traditional flowers. It's well worth a visit to soak up the atmosphere and on Tet Eve (February 4<sup>th</sup>) this is also the best spot for fireworks. Get here around 11pm to join the crowds and see in the new year.



# WHAT TO DO IN SAIGON DURING TET?

## ENJOY THE EMPTY STREETS

On the first day of Tet the streets will be significantly less crazy busy.

It's the perfect time to take a stroll without the frustration of Saigon's infamous traffic.

We recommend walking around the Notre Dame Cathedral, Saigon Central Post Office, Independence Palace and the City Opera House.



# THE 12 DAYS OF TET

A GUIDE TO ITS CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS



# THE 12 DAYS OF TET

DAY ONE:  
PRAYING TO THE KITCHEN GOD  
(LỄ ÔNG CÔNG ÔNG TÁO)  
28<sup>th</sup> January 2019  
(23<sup>rd</sup> of Lunar December)

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Vietnamese folk law says each house has a god who hides in the kitchen and watches over their behaviour for the whole year. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of the last Lunar month (28<sup>th</sup> January 2019), the Kitchen God returns to heaven on a Carp (fish) to report to the Jade Emperor.

Vietnamese people like to help the kitchen God on his way by releasing goldfish into nearby lakes, ponds and rivers.



## DAY TWO - THREE: SWEEPING OUT THE OLD YEAR

29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> January 2019  
(24-25<sup>th</sup> of Lunar December)



It's really important to start the new lunar year free from bad luck. This means you have to literally sweep it out of your home.

They believe that luck clings to dust and dirt. That's why between the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of the last Lunar month (29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> January 2019), families will start a huge spring clean of their whole house.

During the first 4 days of Tet when the house is pure, it becomes unlucky to sweep any of the new dust out in case you sweep any of the New Year's luck out with it.

## DAY FOUR: BRINGING HOME THE NEW YEAR'S TREE 31<sup>st</sup> January 2019 (26<sup>th</sup> of Lunar December)

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Decorating the house is an important Tet ritual and the most famous decorations are blossoming fruit trees.

Around the 26<sup>th</sup> of the last lunar month Vietnamese cities and markets are flooded with fruit blossom and kumquat trees. You'll see them lining the streets and comically strapped to the back of motorbikes.

It's an old tradition that represents fertility and prosperity and signals a bountiful year ahead.

# THE 12 DAYS OF TET



## DAY FIVE: WRAPPING BANH CHUNG

1<sup>st</sup> February 2019  
(27<sup>th</sup> of Lunar December)

Banh Chung are thick cakes of rice filled with stewed meat or eggs and wrapped in banana leaves. Wrapping and cooking the Banh Chung has become an important part of the Tet holiday. It takes many hours to cook the Chung cakes and a good time for sharing stories and news.





## DAY EIGHT: NEW YEAR'S EVE FIREWORKS, FAMILY TIME & HERBAL BATHS

4<sup>th</sup> February 2019  
(30<sup>th</sup> of Lunar December)

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Lunar New Year's Eve is the real start of Tet for most families. Parents will eagerly await for family members to return from their work or studies in big cities and the streets are throbbing with people hurrying to complete last minute preparations.

Over the next few days shops will be closed and families will spend all their time relaxing with each other and visiting friends and relatives. On New Years Eve most families will take a purifying end of year bath and go and watch the fireworks together.

## DAY NINE: NEW YEAR'S DAY

5<sup>th</sup> February 2019  
(1<sup>st</sup> of Lunar January)

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New Year's Day officially marks the start of Tet. The family have all come home and are catching up with stories of their time away.

The cupboards are fully stocked and the kitchen is full of meats, sweets and soups. All that's standing in the way of quality family time are a few rituals.



DAY NINE:  
NEW YEAR'S DAY  
5<sup>th</sup> February 2019  
(1<sup>st</sup> of Lunar January)

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The first one over the threshold  
Vietnamese people are very cautious about the first person to enter their homes believing what comes to you on New Year's Day sets the tone of the year to come. If someone with an unlucky star sign or of bad character is the first then the rest of the year will be filled with misfortune.

### Lucky Money

Tet isn't just a time for renewal, it's a time for redistribution too. Family members who are earning a wage will put money into little red envelopes and hand them out to younger family members after the main meal of the day.



## DAY NINE: NEW YEAR'S DAY

5<sup>th</sup> February 2019 (1<sup>st</sup> of Lunar January)

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### Inviting the Ancestors to eat

Tet is a time for family, both alive and dead. Most Vietnamese people believe the spirits of their ancestors live alongside the living. Most homes, businesses and offices have a family shrine dedicated to the deceased that are carefully tended to throughout the year with meals being offered, incense lit and special paper offerings burnt. Around Tet this custom becomes more important as the family prepares to invite all of their ancestors to “An Tet” (eat Tet) with them. On New Year’s Day special offerings of elaborately decorated paper, fruit, food and wine are made to the deceased and left on the altar until the 4th day of Tet.

### Feasting

The first family meal of the new year is a hugely important event. The whole family gathers around the table and enjoys plates of boiled meat, Banh Chung cakes, Pickled onions (Hanh Muoi), special soups and sweet sticky rice treats.

# THE 12 DAYS OF TET

## DAY TEN: THE SECOND DAY OF TET

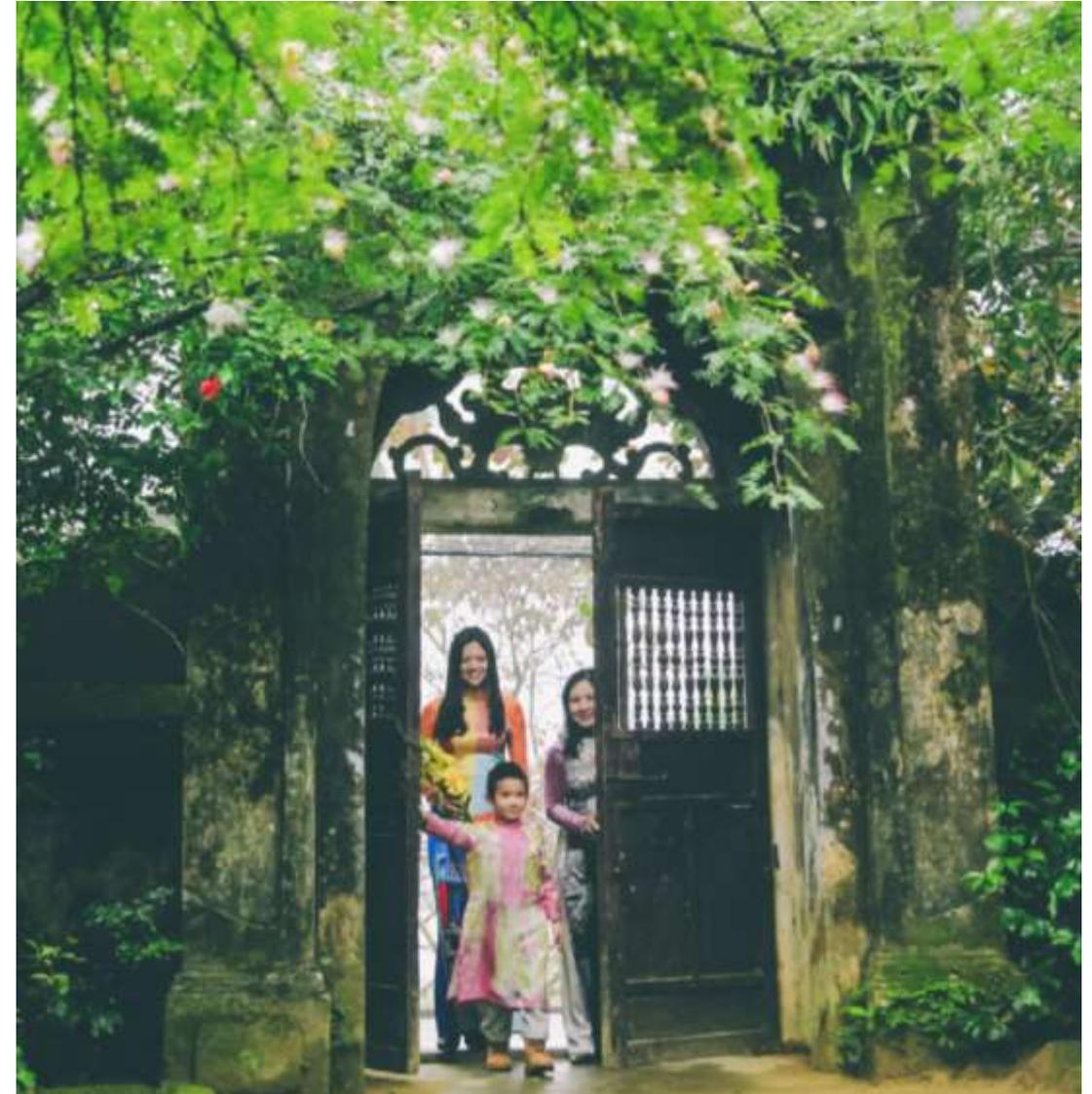
6<sup>th</sup> February 2019  
(2<sup>nd</sup> of Lunar January)

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The second day of Tet for extended family.

The whole family will ride their bikes, cars or bicycles to their auntie's, uncle's, brother's or sister's homes to feast and enjoy a few cheeky drinks and hand out lucky money to the kids.

People are careful to pay homage to the ancestors shrines at their relative's homes and they offer a second round of offerings on their own family shrine.



# THE 12 DAYS OF TET



## DAY ELEVEN: THE THIRD DAY OF TET

7<sup>th</sup> February 2019  
(3<sup>rd</sup> of Lunar January)

The Third Day of Tet is for visiting family, friends and teachers. At the end of the third day the head of the household makes the final offering on the family shrine and everyone gets ready for the biggest meal of the year.

# THE 12 DAYS OF TET



## DAY TWELVE: THE BIGGEST MEAL OF THE YEAR (HÓA VÀNG)

8<sup>th</sup> February 2019  
(4<sup>th</sup> of Lunar January)

The last day of Tet is seen off with a bang. All of the special papers and food placed on the family altar over the past three days are collected in one place. The paper is burned as prayers and wishes are recited, sending the offerings into the other world. The food from the altar is added to a huge feast which can last several hours. Expect to see people setting up shrines outside their homes and parties spilling out of restaurants and homes onto the streets.



CHÚC MỪNG NĂM MỚI

*Happy  
Vietnamese  
New Year*

From all of us at

**Wide Eyed**  
TOURS 