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The links on the website are in affiliation with Amazon Associates worldwide and we earn a small commission for qualifying purchases. Whether you're planning to catch a train from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh city, ride the length of the country on a motorbike, or simply visit the most popular sites in Vietnam, you will find this guide to basic Vietnamese phrases handy during your travels. This is so you can order your Phở without meat if you're veggie, or egg if you're vegan, and to help you to learn some simple sentences that will help you communicate with the locals without having to master the language like a native. As with most places in the world, it's helpful to learn a few basic sentences in the local language before landing in Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh. That's not only so you can find your way out of the airport better, but also so you can score some points and impress with your effort. We'll go through the bare bones of the language before teaching you some basic Vietnamese phrases that should help you throughout your trip, from finding the train station in Hanoi to asking about the price of bánh mì in the market. What language is spoken in Vietnam? Photo by Ruslan Bardash on Unsplash Vietnamese is the official language of Vietnam. It's spoken by the majority of residents of this beautiful country. It's estimated that Vietnamese is the native tongue for over 70 million people, as well as the second language to many of the ethnic minorities across Vietnam. That is also the only country in the world where Vietnamese is officially used. Although Vietnamese isn't a popular second language across the world and most travelers visiting can't say anything beyond a few simple words, you shouldn't have too many communication problems. Over half of the Vietnamese population can speak English to some level, and most people in tourist areas will have fairly decent English skills. Vietnamese belongs to the Austroasiatic group of languages, together with other lingos spoken across the South and Southeast Asia, such as Khmer and Mon. The modern language, though, has been influenced first by the Chinese in the second century BC and later by the French in the late 19th century. Take words like ga (train station) and dame, which come from the French gare and madame. You will also find that pronunciation can slightly vary depending on geography. Some words will sound different in north Vietnam from those down south. Vietnamese alphabet Photo by Tran Phu on Unsplash The Vietnamese language uses the basic Latin alphabet with exception of a few letters. Those not present are f, j, w, and z. In addition to that, there are a couple of variations of different letters that we don't see in any other languages, all of them are vowels. So, that gives us a total of 29 letters in the Vietnamese alphabet in comparison with 26 letters in the English one. Out of all letters in the Vietnamese alphabet, 11 are vowels. That is actually more than double the amount of vowels in English. They are called nguyên âm, whereas consonants are known as phụ âm, which translates to "extra sound". Although you will see different variations of certain letters when you try reading Vietnamese text, most letters are no different from those present in the majority of European languages. Reading signs and menus won't be as challenging as it is in places that use different scripts, such as across the border in China, Laos, or Cambodia, for example. Basic Vietnamese phrases for greeting people, introducing yourself, and saying goodbye Photo by Hung Nguyễn Việt on Unsplash After arriving in either Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh airport, you may find it useful to say a few basic Vietnamese phrases to get by. Those will most likely be things like hello, goodbye, thank you, and so on. It's handy to learn these before you even land, so you can chat with your driver and greet the immigration officer. So, if you want to be able to communicate some simple things in the local language, here are a few of the most common phrases in Vietnamese: Xin chào (sin chow) - Hello. This is probably the thirst thing you'll learn and hear in Vietnam. It's always worth knowing how to say hello in the local language.Chô tôi hời (cho toy hoi) - Excuse me.Bạn tên là gì (ban tain la gi) - What's your name?Tôi tên là... (toy ten la) - My name is...Bạn Khỏe không? (ban kwae kaung) - How are you?Bạn đến từ đâu? (ban den tu dough) - Where are you from?Tôi đến từ...(toi den too) - I'm from...Tạm biệt (tam byet) - Goodbye. Basic Vietnamese phrases for everyday use Photo by Chris Slupski on Unsplash Certain phrases are simply a must-know if you're traveling around Vietnam. You will be able to reply to simple questions and say the most basic things such as yes, no, and thank you. Here are a few that we think every traveler visiting Vietnam should know: Dạ (zah) - Yes.Không (kaung) - No.Cảm ơn (cam uhn) - Thank you.Không, cảm ơn (kaung cam uhn) - No, thank you.Xin lỗi (sin loi) - I'm sorry. It can be used both for apologizing or getting someone's attention by saying excuse me.Làm ơn (lam uhn) - Please.Không sao đâu (kaung sao dou) - You're welcome. Basic Vietnamese phrases for getting around Photo by Matthew Nolan on Unsplash Do you want to travel the length of Vietnam from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City? Are you renting a bike to travel around but can't find your way? Here are a few simple phrases in Vietnamese that you can use to ask for directions and find your way around the narrow streets of Hanoi's Old Quarter and other amazing parts of the country: Làm sao tôi đến được... (lam sao toi den duok) - How do I get to...Sân bay/phi trường (san bay/fee cheu-uhng) - Airport. The first phrase is used in North Vietnam and the second one is used in the south.Nhà ga (nah ga) - Train station.Tram xe buýt (cham seh bweet) - Bus station.Dường (dew-uhng) - street/road.Được trái/phải (queu chái/sei chái) - Turn left. The first one is used in the southern parts of the country and the second is used in the northern regions.Quẹo phải/ rẽ phải (queu fai/sei fai) - Turn right.Trước mắt (chuh mat) - Straight ahead. Basic Vietnamese phrases for travelers Photo by Silver Ringvee on Unsplash Whether you're planning a backpacking adventure around Vietnam or simply a beach holiday on the stunning isle of Phu Quoc, there are a few phrases that could help you during your travels. Here are a few sentences in Vietnamese that should prove useful for travelers: Cứu (tôi) với (gih-oo (thoy) vuh-y) - Help me.Biết nói tiếng Anh không (byet noy tyeng ang kaumng) - Do you speak English?Tôi không hiểu (toi kaung heeyau) - I don't understand.Tôi không biết nói tiếng Việt (toi kaung byet noy tyeng vyet) - I can't speak Vietnamese.Cầu tiêu ở đâu? (koh tee-oh uh doh) - Where is the toilet?Tôi bị lạc (toi bee lack) - I'm lost.Tôi cần một bác sĩ (toy kuhm moht back see) - I need a doctor. Basic Vietnamese Phrases for food Photo by Alice Young on Unsplash Knowing some basic Vietnamese phrases when ordering food can be super handy, especially if you're not one of those travelers that can eat everything that comes their way. Whether you're veggie, vegan, or have any other dietary requirements, your requests can sometimes be misunderstood in English. Here are a few phrases that should solve those communication problems and let enjoy delicious Vietnamese cooking: Tôi ăn chay (toi an chay) - I'm vegetarian.Tôi thuần chay (toi twan chay) - I'm vegan.Tôi không thể ăn... (toi kaung tei an) - I can't eat...(Thịt) gà (teet gah) - Chicken. Thít at the beginning is optional as it means meat.(Thít) bò (teet baw) - Beef.(Thít) lợn/heo (teet lo-on/heu) - Pork.Cá (kah) - fish.Bao nhiêu tiền (bahw ngay tee-uhn) - How much is it?Thanh toán tiền (tain toan tee-uhn) - The check, please.Ngon lắm (ngawn luhm) - It was delicious! Numbers in Vietnamese Photo by Beth Macdonald on Unsplash Whether you want to order a couple of 333 beers or more than one delicious phở it might be handy to know a few numbers in Vietnamese. Rather than showing the numbers with your fingers you could learn how to say them. Here's how you can count up to 10 and beyond in Vietnamese: một (moth) - onehai (high) - twoba (bah) - threebốn (bone) - fournăm (nuhm) - sixbảy (bye) - seventám (tahm) - eightchín (cheen) - ninemười (meui) - tenmốt trăm (moht cham) - 100 Basic Vietnamese phrases - the conclusion This guide to basic Vietnamese phrases is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to learning this Austroasiatic language. That said, you don't need to speak like a native to convey simple messages in Vietnamese that will help you during your travels. From useful sentences for travelers and for getting around to phrases used in day-to-day life, we've introduced 51 Vietnamese phrases with pronunciation guides that will help you impress the locals. Although over 50 percent of Vietnamese people can speak English, it's worth knowing some of the local lingo before touching down in Ho Chi Minh or Hanoi. Not only will you make sure that the food you order is suitable to your dietary requirements, but you will also be able to haggle better rates of tours and taxis on top of other things.

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