

Vietnam (2011-2018)

Jess Gosling: Married, pregnant, and had a child.

Vietnam has a lot going for it, we lived in HCMC and it was a cosmopolitan, affordable, and lively place. There was a huge variety of restaurants offering practically every cuisine. Bars are pretty standard, small affairs. There are residential areas outside of the city, one of them D7, which is quite green with a large park. Flights are readily available to take you to mountains and beaches. Hotels are fantastic and reasonably priced, as the tourist trade is big business here.

The country is pretty safe, as long as you are careful. Carry money concealed and do not carry handbags that can be easily pickpocketed. The people are helpful when they can be, and the level of English in HCMC and the tourist areas is good.

In terms of travel, most people use Uber or taxis. You can hire minibuses to take you to closer destinations such as the beach resort Mui Ne. Flights are abundant for larger distances. There is public transport in terms of buses from the outlying suburbs to the city. Trains are also available but can be slow and basic.

Medical care is good and carried out in hospitals. Some hospitals cater to ex-pats and have English speakers. Pre-natal care is pretty good, although not much advice is given outside of ultrasounds. Friends have used hospitals to give birth and were pretty happy with the experience.

Highlights of the country include Dalat, Sapa, Ha Long Bay, Mui Ne, Phu Quoc Island, Hanoi, Danang, Hoi An, and the Mekong Delta.

Ho Chi Minh City

Housing is pretty good in HCMC, you can not drink tap water so you need to buy water coolers. The apartments have all the modern

conveniences you would expect. The ex-pat districts of D2 and D7 are the most expensive. Teachers usually live in apartments, but houses are quite affordable. Apartments are much more expensive if they are newer, or have conveniences such as a pool or gym.

In terms of restaurants, international food is not particularly expensive, and when I lived there, around half the price or less of the UK.

Shopping is reasonable and there are many western product shops, such as Annam.

Traffic is pretty major. It can take a long time to travel a short distance. Although saying this, I generally felt safer in a taxi in Vietnam as the speeds were so slow, compared to other SE Asian countries. Most ex-pats invest in a motorbike to get around.

It is very possible to save a great deal of your salary here, as shopping and services are cheap. Cleaners, for example, can cost as little as \$3 or \$4 per hour. Any paid activities, such as sports, are also very reasonably priced.

Shopping was getting better by the time I left. There were shops that you would see on the high street in the UK in the malls. However, due to tax, items were around double the price of the UK. The tip here was to shop in the sales, of which there are plenty. Facebook groups often advertise second-hand furniture.

Phone contracts and the internet are easy to get. Most shops selling the phone contracts can speak English. You can set up internet through your landlord.

Most jobs can be done through the landlord. When you sign a deal on your apartment they can charge one- or two months rent, so check their fee. Also, your deposit will usually be two months' rent.

The ex-pat community is medium-sized but very friendly. People come to work here from all kinds of professions. Remote workers can choose here due to the cheap cost of living. There are many international schools in HCMC, mostly in D2.

Work

As a teacher, the children I teach are of primary age and mainly of Vietnamese/Korean families. Like all children, they need routines to support them and they respond well to praise and positive encouragement. Parents are very respectful of teachers so any issues can be quickly sorted by talking with them. Many children go to bed late which can be an issue when they are tired from school.

Some schools carry a clause on their contract that you can not work for another in the city after leaving theirs. You may wish to check this carefully.

Salary is fairly good for the cost of living, depending on which school you chose. Expect around 40,000 USD for 5 years+ experience. You should have housing and medical insurance as part of your package, as well as flights.