



What About Vietnam -S5-E21 – Vietnam's Tet Holiday: Preparation and Tips for Tourists

Kerry Newsome : Xin chào and welcome to the What About Vietnam podcast. My name is Kerry Newsome and I am your host. I added that last bit to include my name as the host as I forget from time to time that you may be listening for the first time and that's kind of important that I make that distinction that I do host this podcast and I have been hosting it for coming up to five years in May 2025. So welcome to the podcast for everyone that's new. I hope you enjoy the shows that I put together over the last four and a bit years and hope to do many more in the future. For those that continue to support and subscribe and follow me through my social pages and through the show, send me feedback. Oh my gosh, I could go on. Just how rewarding it's been to work with you, to help you in your trip planning, inspire you with ideas of things to do, introduce you to places and experiences that I hope will really enrich your trip. And for those that I get to actually manage and put your whole trip together, Another big thank you for, you know, giving me that opportunity to bring that holiday to your experience in life and introduce you to Vietnam.

But today we're talking about Tet and I wanted to put together just a really short and sharp detail on Tet to prepare you in the case that you are traveling to Vietnam during that Tet period. Now, for those of you who understand the Lunar New Year calendar, you're going to know very clearly that it differs from year to year. So, it's important that you have a look at the calendar for each year to differentiate it so that you understand the actual days that it falls, and that'll help you also understand what the lunar New Year's Eve will be and also what the New Year's Day will be. And that's kind of only part of the story. So, I've got eight tips in this show, but I just thought I'd lead with some of the most common questions that come up for people when they're thinking about Tet and, you know, just generally what you need to be prepared for. Firstly, it's kind of important that you get a grip on, it's not just a

day or a couple of days like we have traditionally in the West for our New Year's Eve and our New Year's Day, or our Christmas Day, and that kind of holiday period. It's not like that at all. It is the biggest holiday in Vietnam, bar none. everybody gears up for Tet and for Vietnamese it is so special because they know it is their entitlement to have this holiday and they treat it with such reverence and respect and you know for many the The time they spend with family, the efforts that they go to to reconnect and to connect with people that are special in their lives is just, it's just tantamount to just so special. I've only experienced two Tets in Vietnam, both very different, but I didn't lose the main message, which is it's all about them. It's not about us as a tourist. And I think it's really important you get that firmly placed in your mind that going to Vietnam and traveling around in this period is taking into consideration that for Vietnamese, it is their main holiday and it is a minimum of nine days. So that would start from the day before New Year's Day. So, whatever date it falls on, count back the day before to get your New Year's Eve and then work about nine days.

What you will find is that for some people, they will tend to take an extended break depending on what they can negotiate with their employers. And because employers understand the reverence of this period of time. And they also take into consideration that for many people, they're going to be leaving their city jobs and they're going to be traveling to, you know, possibly regions where they came from, which are far and wide. So, you're going to see lots of movement and I'm going to talk about that in my eight tips coming up. But be aware that there is a lot of movement around this time and gearing up for this time so people can be with their families to celebrate and to enjoy time together. So, work on about nine days from New Year's Eve. Now, the next question that comes up is, is it a good time to travel for a tourist?

For us mere mortals that decide to visit Vietnam in this period of time. Personally, I have found the lead up to Tet more exciting, more vibrant in atmosphere. It's kind of contagious that you can feel that fever, you can see the colors of the flowers everywhere as people are cleaning their homes, preparing their homes, and getting really geared up to celebrate cooking up and doing all that stuff. So that once actually, you know, it hits, it goes very quiet. It just goes very quiet. And there will be very limited places that are open. And those that are open are usually with staff that either couldn't arrange, couldn't afford, just couldn't make it happen to travel. back to their families, so you've got kind of that skeleton staff. Maybe they've negotiated with their employer, you know, to earn some extra money during that time if they stay open. But by and large, in most cities, you're going to find a very fragmented level of openings. And all your major attractions, major restaurants, etc., are going to be closed.

So, back to the question, is it a good time for you as a tourist to visit Vietnam? I think armed with that information, you can make your decision. I have experienced both TETs in two different cities. And yes, I did find the quietness difficult in the sense of unsure about what I could do. But, you know, if you're staying in a hotel, you can take advantage of the hotel facilities and really the best thing to do is to just take a big chill pill, to really chillax, take advantage of that luxury, go for walks on the beach, maybe use it yourself to take some time out to, you know, revisit some things that you'd like to do personally and set up for the year ahead. So I'll leave that one with you now that you're armed with that information. and secondly with my eight tips. The other question that comes up is about what's open and

what's not. I can't really be definitive about that. People ask is Hoi An city closed? Well, the answer to that is no, it's not. There are lots of places within the Hoi An Old Town that will be, probably the majority, and from my experience, that's a bit hit and miss. I've often asked people to maybe check on the establishment's Facebook page to see if they have advertised their opening times. But just be aware that it'll be operating at lesser than normal opening times than what you would normally expect.

Now, for each year also, people ask what the animal is going to be for the year ahead, because that also holds significance for all those that understand and appreciate the Chinese zodiac. So, say for example, 2025 is going to be the year of the snake. And with that comes some aspects of the snake as a zodiac animal, and inferences as what you can expect in the year ahead could be things like, you know, rebirth, intuition, and resilience. So it would be a year ahead for you to, you know, maybe be encouraged to do some deep thinking, maybe work on some personal growth. So there'll be, you know, and you'll be able to search all over Google to find everything to do with what the year ahead and the year ahead's animal dictates for you. So I just wanted to give you just that quick snapshot of just the, you know, the top questions that come up for Ted. As I said, I've got eight really top tips that are generic for every year. And I really encourage you to do your preparation and check those dates every year, especially around January and February, which is usually where the dates will fall. But where they fall each year, you know, there's calendars out there. to show you that for each year coming up. So, enjoy everyone. This is the last show for 2024. I'll be back in 2025, late January. I wanted to take this last opportunity to say a very big thank you for being my wonderful listening audience, for your feedback again. I wish you happiness, I wish you safety, I wish you travels to far and wide places that that bring you happiness and joy and experiences that will last you a lifetime. All the very best and I will see you in 2025.

8 tips for travelers in Vietnam during Tet.

Number one, buy your travel tickets in advance and make sure when you're booking especially with things like flights, et cetera, that you do get your seat numbers and your allocations.

Number two, be early at the airport or bus station or train station. I can't stress enough the need to be a bit of ahead of the game and be prepared for long queues.

Number three, make sure you bring all of your travel documentation with you, confirming all your travel arrangements.

Number four, don't expect too much activity once the day, the New Year's Day falls. There's a lot of lead up. I personally think that the lead up to Tet is the most exciting. There's just such a vibe in the air. There's an atmosphere. You'll see these beautiful kumquat trees, peach blossoms, and they will be lining the streets of your cities and your localities that you visit leading up to Tet.

Number five, I really would like you to make sure that you check in with your hotel or your homestay about what services they are operating, you know, for meals and just, you know, things like laundry or just what eateries are going to be open on those national holidays in

particular. may extend to things like, you know, your spa center, the gyms, anything that is depicted in your booking that is the standard may not be fully operational during the Tet season and in particular on the public holidays. And as I said, be prepared that in each area, in each location, and in each facility or hotel or homestay, they will make their own decisions based on their staff and their ability to accommodate you. They will make their own call on what's available. So be prepared to contact your homestay or contact your hotel ahead of your visit, well ahead of your visit, maybe even two or three weeks or a month ahead to ask them what their plan is during Tet as you will be arriving or you may be staying during that time and ask them to give you some clarification.

Opps I forgot Number six.. Please forgive me.

Number seven is around expectation of restaurants food quality, freshness and the extension of the menus. One thing I did find was a little bit of a warning from people that because of the movement of people that their standard suppliers may not be in full operational capacity. So their ability to get fresh food in and in particular, you know, seafood and things like that. So they sort of cautioned me to be careful about what I selected to see that the restaurants would probably be offering a much condensed menu and it would be built around what they felt they were most confident in offering. In managing this, you're going to have to read the play yourselves when you are out and about. You're going to kind of have to get your confidence from seeing how many people are in the restaurants, just how much staff they look like they're having on board. and use your common sense where you can to decide where to eat. Lastly is to make sure you've got enough cash.

So my number eight tip is understanding that in the element of closures and organizations that close will be banks. Banks that also fill out the teller machines, etc. that are you know, quite prevalent in Vietnam. So making sure that you've got enough cash with you to get around, buy taxis, do whatever, I think is very important. So once again, I'm saying being prepared is the way to go.

So I hope you found these tips helpful. And I'm going to just finish off by talking about what's possible in Vietnam post Tet. So once Tet is finished, there's a time where people are enjoying the opportunity to catch up with friends and family, and even reaching out to teachers and other principal people in their community that they want to pay respects for. I think you'll find that as Tet finishes, you'll see just a rejuvenation of the location that you're in. And, you know, expressing your gratitude to the people that you're meeting and mixing with, sharing with them some of the favorite foods, the Cheung cake in the north, the Tet cake in the south, are making sure that you express the special greetings that come with Chuc Nam Hoi is very appreciative of the Vietnamese. They will love that you have taken the time to understand a little bit about what Tet is about and that you recognize the importance for them, that you're respectful of their time to do this, their dedication to this, and I think you're going to really see a little bit about what the depth of Vietnam is in their cultural traditions and how beautiful they are. I'm going to put a few links in the show notes to help guide you with this. Please feel free to reach out to me directly if you have any further questions and I'm more than happy to help you. If you are trip planning, in the coming years. Please note those dates for Tet. And now that you have this information, I'm

hoping that you'll decide whether or not, you know, it is for you to travel in this time period that it suits you to do so or not.

And as I said, it's really up to the individual to decide how they want to play it. For me, I tend to travel usually before Tet or after Tet so that I give the people their due in having Tet because it's really not about us as tourists, in my opinion. It's really about the Vietnamese themselves and giving respect to them for that time. So take that on board, use it as you can and how you will in the future for your trip planning. And I hope you're going to have a wonderful time. That's all we have for today. I look forward to bringing you more travel stories and insights into traveling to Vietnam in future programs.