



Messengers of Love

Trip Preparation & What to Bring

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Volunteers, for your upcoming trip and to confirm information before you purchase airline ticket:

- Please confirm with MOL what city and airport you will be flying into and the assignment's start and end dates. Do this as soon as possible since airline tickets must be purchased one month prior to travel date.
- Time zone: There is a 12 hours different in time zone. 12 am Saturday Central time in the USA is 12 pm Sunday in Vietnam. Please take this into consideration for depart and arrival times when purchase airline ticket and making phone calls.
- At current time (2019) we are teaching in 2 villages in Thanh Hoa province. For assignment in Thanh Hoa school, you will be flying into Ha Noi city before heading to Thanh Hoa province. We recommend flying in a few days early and spend a couple of days doing sight seeing in Ha Noi. The name of the airport is Noi Bai airport. We will arrange for transportation and pick up from the airport or from your Ha Noi's hotel to Thanh Hoa.
- If you decide to spend time in Ha Noi, the hotel we recommend in Ha Noi is "Ha Noi Panda" hotel, which is at the center of Ha Noi and close to the famous Hoan Kiem Lake. Please arrange for airport pickup by the hotel. It costs \$16 USD for airport transportation to the hotel. When you are ready to leave Ha Noi, we can arrange for pick up or for train to Thanh Hoa from the hotel.

This is the link (or you can search Ha Noi name under www.hotel.com):

<https://www.hotels.com/ho583243/?q-check-out=2018-11-28&tab=description&q-room-0-adults=2&YGF=14&q-check-in=2018-11-24&MGT=4&WOE=3&WOD=6&ZSX=0&SYE=3&q-room-0-children=0>

The hotel offer transportation to/from airport - hotel, but this is extra cost (last year we remember paying about \$16 one way, you can verify with them). The rate per night is currently \$13 a night. It is average 2.5 star rating, but clean and comfortable enough and is conveniently located in the old town. You can walk to "Hoan Kiem" lake and around the old town for food. You can book tours from the hotel also. They are very helpful.

- You maybe meeting a few other volunteer teachers at Panda hotel. We will provide you with their contact information once confirmed.
- It will be hot, so dress light, and travel light, and bring a portable handheld fan (you can buy it at Amazon). You can do laundry there and buy things for very cheap, so don't pack too much. Don't forget to pack some light but professional work clothes for teaching (cotton clothing, casual but professional etc..). Please bring a light jacket in case you want to do some sightseeing at Ha Long bay or Sapa where it is cooler. You can buy a folding handheld paper or silk material fan while there. Do not pay more than 1 USD (or \$22,000 VND) for each.
- Phone & Communication: You need to purchase a sim card and purchase \$10 - \$15 worth of wifi minutes, and install on your phone when you arrive at the Vietnam airport (they are sold at the airport in Vietnam). There are 3 main mobile internet providers in Vietnam: MobiFone, Viettel, and Vinaphone. You can purchase a sim card and load up 4G wifi minutes from any of them. This will give you a local phone number in Vietnam and also wifi, which allows you to make international phone calls back to the USA using Viber or Messenger.
 - You need to unlock your phone before you can use the sim card. Call your phone company to ask them to do this for you. Please do this before leaving the USA.
 - The sim card can also be purchased ahead of time here in the USA on Amazon (search Vietnam sim card on Amazon), or at the Vietnamese grocery stores close to where you live.
 - To make free international phone calls (using wifi), please go ahead and download Viber and/or Messenger on you phone. There will be wifi at the school, but you need it on your phone with the new sim card to make calls while away from the school ground.
 - Once the new sim card is installed, from Vietnam you can use your phone to call our contact(s) in Vietnam or MOL's representative in the USA. We will provide you the contact name and phone numbers closer to the date of travel.
 - Don't bring too much cash. Depending on how long you will be in Vietnam, we recommend bringing no more than \$500 cash and use your credit card and debit card whenever possible. Do bring a credit card and a debit card that does not charge international and oversea transaction fee.
 - Currency exchange: For everyday purchases, food, beer, souvenirs, you use Vietnamese DONG.... For hotels, airlines you can use credit/Debit cards.... However, they usually add 3% to cover bank charges. If you book the hotel or flights online you

won't pay the bank fee but might pay more for the ticket. There are bank and ATM machines in many places. You can exchange money in the bank or use the ATM to withdraw cash. When you put your debit card into an ATM, it offers instructions in English. It delivers the money in the local currency. There is usually a flat charge for withdrawals, so it is best to take out the maximum allowable in one transaction.

In [Vietnam](#), this is not a huge amount of money anyway. Your bank converts that back to your home currency and debits your account, plus some charges. The charges can be significant with some cards, so be aware of this before you go. Somewhere in your bank's website will be information on how much you will be charged for overseas currency transactions. It is often hidden, so search for it. NOTE: You need a debit card to withdraw the money, not a credit card. You can withdraw cash on a credit card, but they start charging interest on it right away.

- When using credit card, the merchant may prompt if you want to use US dollars or Vietnamese Dong, always choose Vietnamese Dong. That way your credit card company will do the conversion, which would be at a better conversion rate than the merchant.
- Always bargain if you are buying things on the street or even in shop. Sometimes you can get an item at 50% off what they initially tell you.

For more information on Vietnam travel, visit:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/Vietnam.html>

If you have any questions for Messengers of Love or need our help, please call 832-647-7233 or email: messengersoflove@gmail.com, or executive.director@messengersoflove.com.

You can also call our representatives in Vietnam using Viber: 1-281-793-4752 to speak to Dr. Hien Tran, or 091-833-9966 to speak to Ms. Angela Nguyen.

For pick up at airport or hotel: call local Thanh Hoa's School representative Sister Hong, phone: 0121 503 1002 or 0163 453 9871