

## Destination Details – Visiting Hanoi



Things to do, places to eat, trips to make when visiting Hanoi

May 11, 2026

### Quick Links

[Best Areas to Stay](#)

[Best Hotels](#)

[Hidden Gem Hotels](#)

[Best Restaurants & Cafes](#)

[Hidden Gem Restaurants & Cafes](#)

[Best Ways to Get Around](#)

[Best Sites to See](#)

[Hidden Gem Sites to See](#)

[Best Day Trips from Hanoi](#)

[River Cruise Guests – Planning a Visit](#)

[Map of Hanoi Sites to See](#)

## **VN** Hanoi Destination Guide for River Cruise Guests

Hanoi is one of Asia's most atmospheric cities: ancient temples, French colonial boulevards, lakeside cafés, street-food alleys, and a deep cultural rhythm that pairs beautifully with a Mekong or Red River cruise extension. The Old Quarter dates back centuries, while today's Hanoi also offers refined hotels, Michelin-recognized dining, galleries, cafés, and excellent day trips into northern Vietnam.

### Best Areas to Stay for Hotels & Airbnbs

#### **Hoan Kiem / Old Quarter — Best for First-Time Visitors**

**Activity level: Easy to Moderate**

Best for guests who want to walk to cafés, street food, Hoan Kiem Lake, markets, temples, and nightlife. It is lively, historic, and very convenient, but traffic and noise can be intense.

**Best for:** short stays, first-timers, food lovers, walkers

**Consider:** boutique hotels over Airbnbs for service, luggage help, and airport transfers.

#### **French Quarter / Opera House Area — Best Upscale Choice**

**Activity level: Easy**

Elegant, quieter, and more refined than the Old Quarter, with grand boulevards, luxury hotels, museums, and better traffic flow.

**Best for:** luxury travelers, pre/post-cruise comfort, couples

**Consider:** fewer “right outside the door” street-food options than the Old Quarter.

#### **West Lake / Tay Ho — Best for Longer Stays**

**Activity level: Easy**

A calmer lakeside district with cafés, villas, expat restaurants, spas, and larger Airbnbs.

**Best for:** longer stays, repeat visitors, families

**Consider:** you will rely more on taxis or Grab rides.

## Ba Dinh — Best for History & Quiet

**Activity level: Easy to Moderate**

Close to Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, the Presidential Palace area, One Pillar Pagoda, and the Temple of Literature.

**Best for:** history lovers, quieter hotel stays

**Consider:** less nightlife and fewer walkable restaurants.




## Best Hotels

### Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi — French Quarter

**Activity level: Easy**

The classic luxury choice in Hanoi, ideal for clients who want heritage, polished service, and a central location near the Opera House.

 **Capella Hanoi — French Quarter**


**Activity level: Easy**

A theatrical, ultra-luxury boutique hotel with dramatic design and outstanding service.

 **Hotel de l'Opera Hanoi — French Quarter**

**Activity level: Easy**

Stylish and centrally located with a boutique atmosphere near the Opera House.

 **Apricot Hotel — Hoan Kiem Lake**

**Activity level: Easy**

Excellent lakefront location with easy access to the Old Quarter.

 **Lotte Hotel Hanoi — Ba Dinh**

**Activity level: Easy**

Modern luxury with panoramic city views and spacious accommodations.

---

## Hidden Gem Hotels

 **La Siesta Classic Ma May — Old Quarter**

**Activity level: Easy to Moderate**

Warm service and one of the best boutique experiences in Hanoi.

 **Aira Boutique Hanoi Hotel & Spa — Ba Dinh**

**Activity level: Easy**

Relaxed boutique atmosphere with excellent spa facilities.

 **Peridot Grand Luxury Boutique Hotel — Old Quarter**

**Activity level: Easy**

Refined boutique property with rooftop pool and excellent dining.

 **The Oriental Jade Hotel — Hoan Kiem**

**Activity level: Easy**

Great rooftop views and a polished boutique experience.



## Maison d'Orient — Old Quarter

### Activity level: Moderate

Charming and intimate with strong local character.

---

## Best Restaurants

### Tâm Vị

#### Activity level: Easy

Traditional northern Vietnamese cuisine in a nostalgic setting.

### Gia

#### Activity level: Easy

Creative fine dining inspired by Vietnamese culinary traditions.

### Hibana by Koki

#### Activity level: Easy

Upscale Japanese teppanyaki experience ideal for luxury travelers.

### Home Hanoi Restaurant

#### Activity level: Easy

Elegant Vietnamese dining in a heritage villa.

### La Verticale

#### Activity level: Easy

French-Vietnamese fine dining in an intimate atmosphere.

---

## Hidden Gem Restaurants & Cafés

### Bún Chả Hương Liên

#### Activity level: Easy

Iconic Hanoi grilled pork and noodle experience.

### **Chả Cá Thăng Long**

**Activity level: Easy**

Excellent place to try Hanoi's famous turmeric fish with dill.

### **Phở Gia Truyền Bát Đàn**

**Activity level: Moderate**

Classic local pho with lines that move quickly.

### **Bánh Cuốn Bà Hoàn**

**Activity level: Easy**

Fantastic steamed rice rolls for breakfast or lunch.

### **Café Giảng**

**Activity level: Moderate**

The legendary home of Hanoi egg coffee.

### **Binh Minh Jazz Club**

**Activity level: Easy**

Classic jazz venue with intimate atmosphere and live performances.

---

## Best Ways to Get Around Hanoi

### **Private Car & Driver**

**Activity level: Easy**

Best overall option for river cruise guests wanting comfort and efficiency.

### **Grab App**

**Activity level: Easy**

Simple and affordable for short rides around town.

### **Metered Taxi**

**Activity level: Easy**

Reliable when arranged through hotels or reputable companies.

### **Walking**

#### **Activity level: Moderate**

Best in Hoan Kiem and the Old Quarter, though sidewalks can be uneven.

### **Cyclo Ride**

#### **Activity level: Easy**

Fun way to experience the Old Quarter at a slower pace.

### **Airport Transfers**

#### **Activity level: Easy**

Pre-arranged hotel transfers are highly recommended for convenience.

---

## Best Sites to See

### **Hoan Kiem Lake & Ngoc Son Temple**

#### **Activity level: Easy**

The cultural heart of Hanoi and ideal for morning or evening walks.

### **Old Quarter**

#### **Activity level: Moderate**

Historic streets packed with food stalls, cafés, markets, and shops.

### **Temple of Literature**

#### **Activity level: Easy to Moderate**

One of Hanoi's most beautiful and important cultural landmarks.

### **VN Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum Complex**

#### **Activity level: Moderate**

Includes historic government buildings, gardens, and pagodas.

### **Vietnam Museum of Ethnology**

#### **Activity level: Easy**

Outstanding museum showcasing Vietnam's cultural diversity.

### **Hanoi Opera House**

**Activity level: Easy**

Beautiful colonial architecture and occasional performances.

### **Hoa Lo Prison Museum**

**Activity level: Easy to Moderate**

Historic museum exploring Vietnam's wartime history.

### **Water Puppet Theater**

**Activity level: Easy**

A uniquely Vietnamese cultural performance perfect for visitors.

---

## Hidden Gem Sights

### **Long Bien Bridge**

**Activity level: Moderate**

Historic bridge with great photography opportunities.

### **Phung Hung Mural Street**

**Activity level: Easy**

Colorful urban art near the Old Quarter.

### **Manzi Art Space**

**Activity level: Easy**

Contemporary art gallery and café loved by locals.

### **Quang Phu Cau Incense Village**

**Activity level: Easy to Moderate**

One of the most photogenic cultural villages near Hanoi.

### **Bat Trang Ceramic Village**

**Activity level: Easy**

Traditional pottery village with workshops and shopping.

### **West Lake Pagodas**

**Activity level: Easy**

Peaceful lakeside temples away from the city bustle.

### **Train Street**

**Activity level: Moderate**

Famous narrow railway café area with limited access at times.

---

## Best Day Trips from Hanoi

### **Ninh Binh / Tam Coc / Trang An**

**Activity level: Moderate**

Known as “Halong Bay on land,” featuring limestone cliffs, rivers, temples, and caves.

**Transportation:** private car or guided tour

**Best for:** scenery, photography, culture

### **Ha Long Bay**

**Activity level: Moderate**

One of Vietnam’s most iconic landscapes with towering limestone islands.

**Transportation:** cruise shuttle or private transfer

**Best for:** bucket-list scenery

### **Bat Trang Ceramic Village**

**Activity level: Easy**

Perfect half-day cultural trip close to Hanoi.

**Transportation:** private car, taxi, or guided tour

### **Perfume Pagoda**

**Activity level: Strenuous**

A spiritual complex reached via road, boat, and uphill walking or cable car.

**Transportation:** guided tour or private transfer

### **Duong Lam Ancient Village**

**Activity level: Moderate**

Historic countryside village with ancient homes and temples.

**Transportation:** private car

### **Quang Phu Cau Incense Village**

**Activity level: Easy to Moderate**

Excellent for photography and cultural immersion.

**Transportation:** private car or guided excursion

---

## Best Hanoi Plans for River Cruise Guests

### **1-Day Stay**

Focus on Hoan Kiem Lake, the Old Quarter, Temple of Literature, local Vietnamese dining, and an evening water puppet performance.

### **2-Day Stay**

Add the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum Complex, Museum of Ethnology, West Lake, and a fine dining experience.

### **3-Day Stay**

Include a full-day excursion to Ninh Binh, Bat Trang Ceramic Village, or Ha Long Bay if time allows.

# Map of Hanoi Sightings to See

## HANOI

— MAP OF SIGHTS TO SEE —

From ancient temples and French colonial landmarks to hidden alleys and riverside villages, Hanoi is a city of contrasts and discovery around every corner.

**MAIN SIGHTS – MUST SEE**

- 1 **Hoan Kiem Lake & Ngoc Son Temple**  
Scenic lake in the heart of Hanoi with a beautiful temple on a small island. EASY  
30-40 MIN
- 2 **Old Quarter (36 Streets)**  
Historic commercial district full of shops, street food, markets & colonial charm. EASY to MODERATE  
1-3 HRS
- 3 **Temple of Literature**  
Hanoi's Confucian temple & Vietnam's first university, set in beautiful gardens. EASY to MODERATE  
40-60 MIN
- 4 **Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum Complex**  
Includes the Mausoleum (exterior), Presidential Palace, stilt house & One Pillar Pagoda. MODERATE
- 5 **Vietnam Museum of Ethnology**  
Excellent museum showcasing the cultures of Vietnam's 54 ethnic groups. EASY  
2 HRS
- 6 **Hanoi Opera House**  
Stunning French colonial building. Catch a show or admire the architecture. EASY  
30 MIN
- 7 **Hoa Lo Prison Museum**  
Powerful museum that tells the story of Vietnam's history through different eras. EASY to MODERATE  
1-1.5 HRS
- 8 **Water Puppet Theater**  
A uniquely Vietnamese art form and a fun cultural experience. EASY  
50 MIN

**HIDDEN GEMS – OFF THE BEATEN PATH**

- 9 **Long Bien Bridge**  
Historic French-era bridge with great views of the Red River and city life. MODERATE  
45-60 MIN
- 10 **Phung Hung Mural Street**  
Colorful murals depicting life in old Hanoi along a charming street. EASY  
30 MIN
- 11 **Train Street (Caution)**  
Famous narrow street where trains pass very close to homes and cafes. MODERATE  
30-45 MIN
- 12 **West Lake & Tran Quoc Pagoda**  
Peaceful lakeside area with Hanoi's oldest pagoda. EASY to MODERATE  
1-2 HRS
- 13 **Quang Phu Cau Incense Village**  
Colorful incense sticks create stunning photo opportunities. EASY to MODERATE  
2-3 HRS
- 14 **Bat Trang Ceramic Village**  
Traditional pottery village where you can visit workshops and shops. EASY to MODERATE  
2-3 HRS
- 15 **Manzi Art Space**  
Contemporary art gallery & cafe in a beautiful historic building. EASY  
45-60 MIN

**HOW TO GET AROUND**

- Walking  
Best in Old Quarter & around lakes
- Cycles  
Fun for short rides in the Old Quarter
- Grab (App)  
Easy & affordable for short & long rides
- Taxi  
Use reputable companies or hotel recommendations
- Private Car & Driver  
Best for comfort & day trips

**TIME FROM OLD QUARTER**

- West Lake 15 min
- Ho Chi Minh Complex 10 min
- Museum of Ethnology 20 min
- Long Bien Bridge 10 min
- Bat Trang Village 30 min
- Incense Village 45 min
- Ninh Binh 90 min

By car/Grab (depending on traffic)

**POPULAR DAY TRIPS FROM HANOI**

Ninh Binh  
(90 min)

Ha Long Bay  
(2-2.5 hrs)

Perfume Pagoda  
(2 hrs)

Duong Lam Ancient Village  
(1.5 hrs)

\*Larger, printable version of map on next page\*

# HANOI

## — MAP OF SIGHTS TO SEE —

From ancient temples and French colonial landmarks to hidden alleys and riverside villages, Hanoi is a city of contrasts and discovery around every corner.

### 📍 MAIN SIGHTS – MUST SEE

- 1 Hoan Kiem Lake & Ngoc Son Temple**  
Scenic lake in the heart of Hanoi with a beautiful temple on a small island.  
EASY  
30-40 MIN
- 2 Old Quarter (36 Streets)**  
Historic commercial district full of shops, street food, markets & colonial charm.  
EASY  
1-3 HRS
- 3 Temple of Literature**  
Hanoi's Confucian temple & Vietnam's first university, set in beautiful gardens.  
EASY  
60-90 MIN
- 4 Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum Complex**  
Includes the Mausoleum (exterior), Presidential Palace, stilt house & One Pillar Pagoda.  
MODERATE  
2-3 HRS
- 5 Vietnam Museum of Ethnology**  
Excellent museum showcasing the cultures of Vietnam's 54 ethnic groups.  
EASY  
2 HRS
- 6 Hanoi Opera House**  
Stunning French colonial building. Catch a show or admire the architecture.  
EASY  
30 MIN
- 7 Hoa Lo Prison Museum**  
Powerful museum that tells the story of Vietnam's history through different eras.  
EASY  
1-1.5 HRS
- 8 Water Puppet Theater**  
A uniquely Vietnamese art form and a fun cultural experience.  
EASY  
50 MIN

### 🏠 HIDDEN GEMS – OFF THE BEATEN PATH

- 9 Long Bien Bridge**  
Historic French-era bridge with great views of the Red River and city life.  
MODERATE  
45-60 MIN
- 10 Phung Hung Mural Street**  
Colorful murals depicting life in old Hanoi along a charming street.  
EASY  
30 MIN
- 11 Train Street (Caution)**  
Famous narrow street where trains pass very close to homes and cafes.  
MODERATE  
30-45 MIN
- 12 West Lake & Tran Quoc Pagoda**  
Peaceful lakeside area with Hanoi's oldest Pagoda.  
EASY  
1-2 HRS
- 13 Quang Phu Cau Incense Village**  
Colorful incense sticks create stunning photo opportunities.  
EASY  
2-3 HRS
- 14 Bat Trang Ceramic Village**  
Traditional pottery village where you can visit workshops and shops.  
MODERATE  
2-3 HRS
- 15 Maizi Art Space**  
Contemporary art gallery & café in a beautiful historic building.  
EASY  
45-60 MIN

### HOW TO GET AROUND

- Walking** Best in Old Quarter & service alleys
- Cycle** Fun for short rides
- Grab (App)** Easy & affordable
- Taxi** Use reputable
- Private Car & Driver** Best for airport & day trips

TIME FROM OLD QUARTER	
West Lake	15 min
Ho Chi Minh Complex	10 min
Museum of Ethnology	20 min
Long Bien Bridge	10 min
Bat Trang Village	30 min
Incense Village	45 min
Ninh Binh	90 min

By car/Grab (depending on traffic)



- ### POPULAR DAY TRIPS FROM HANOI
- Ninh Binh (90 min)**
  - Ha Long Bay (2-2.5 hrs)**
  - Perfume Pagoda (2 hrs)**
  - Duong Lam Ancient Village (1.5 hrs)**

**TRAVEL TIP**  
Early mornings and late afternoons are the best times for sightseeing & photography, especially around Hoan Kiem Lake and the Old Quarter.