

Vietnam

Country name	Vietnam
State title	Socialist Republic of Viet Nam ¹
Name of citizen	Vietnamese
National official language	Vietnamese
Country name in official language	Việt Nam (<i>vie</i>) ²
State title in official language	Cộng hòa Xã hội chủ nghĩa Việt Nam
Writing system	Roman script
Romanization System	Not needed
ISO-3166 code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	VN/VNM
Capital city	Hà Nội (Hanoi)
Population/Area	101.1million ³ / 331, 690km ²

Introduction

The Socialist Republic of Viet Nam was formed on reunification of the country at the conclusion of the Vietnam War, also known as the Second Indochina War, in 1976. It lies in southeast Asia, with coastline on the Gulf of Thailand, Gulf of Tonkin, and South China Sea, and shares land boundaries with China, Laos and Cambodia.

Geographical names policy and recommended sources

PCGN recommends using Vietnamese official sources for geographical names, retaining any diacritical marks employed. Tone marks, which will also appear on Vietnamese sources, may also be shown on HMG products, if desired. For guidance on replication of relevant diacritics and tone marks, see *Inventory of characters* below.

There are various sources of GIS data and mapping in Vietnam, both government and commercial, but not all are freely available online. The [Vietnam Surveying, Mapping and Geographic Information Agency](#) publishes an administrative map of the country, and more administrative maps are available: [Map of Vietnam - Administrative Map of Provinces of Vietnam](#).

¹ Vietnam prefers that the form *Viet Nam* be used, and accordingly PCGN recommends this style in the state title (i.e. the formal name as used in the country itself, as opposed to the country name which reflects the usual form in British English (i.e. Vietnam)). The UN uses the form *Viet Nam* as both long and short form.

² ISO 639 language codes are used in this factfile.

³ Vietnam Statistics Office, 2024 data.

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Official mapping of Vietnam is produced by the General Department of Land Administration (GDLA): <http://www.gdla.gov.vn/> (part of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment) and by the Cartographic Publishing House: <https://bando.com.vn/en/home>.

Additionally, VidaGIS: <https://www.vidagis.com/> is a joint venture between the Cartographic Publishing House and Denmark.

It is understood that there is no specialist body on geographical names, rather the work is undertaken within the GDLA. The importance of standardised geographical names is recognised, however, with Decree No. 45/2015/ND-CP prescribing the accuracy of topographic and cartographic activities, including geographical names.

A Vietnamese commercial company supplying geo data is GeoViet Consulting <https://geoviet.vn/tu-lieu-nguon/en/436/285/baiviet/0/gis-data-and-maps.aspx>.

The US Board on Geographic Names (BGN) [Geographic Names Server](#) (GNS) database is also a good source for geographical names.

It should be noted that, with competing claims across the South China Sea, Vietnamese sources should not be used for geographical features in this area. Please contact PCGN for names as required.

Languages

The sole official language in Vietnam is Vietnamese, which is spoken by almost 85% of the population of Vietnam as a first language (and as a second language by most minority language users).

Additionally, there exist many minority languages, and Vietnam has [presented](#) to the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) that the 53 ethnic minorities of Vietnam have the right to develop their own languages and script. At the time of that presentation (2004), there were reportedly 28 ethnic minorities with an established writing system (of which 15 used the Roman script, and 13 a non-Roman script, though no further specification was given).

The largest ethnic groups (each with their own autochthonous language), with a population of around 1 million each, are Tày (*tyz*), Thai (*tha*), Muong (*mtq*), Hoa (mostly Cantonese, *zhh*), Khmer (*khm*), and Nung (*nut*)⁴. However, minority languages are unlikely to be encountered on official sources, and therefore are not required for most HMG products.

English is increasingly used as a second language, and the knowledge of French, as the former colonial language, has diminished significantly.

⁴ Tày, Thai, and Nung are of the Tai-Thai language group; Muong, as Vietnamese, is of the Viet-Muong group; Khmer is from the Mon-Khmer group.

TOPONYMIC FACTFILE**Inventory of characters (and their Unicode encodings⁵):**

The Roman-script used for **Vietnamese** employs the following letter-diacritic combinations in addition to the unmodified letters of the basic Roman script.

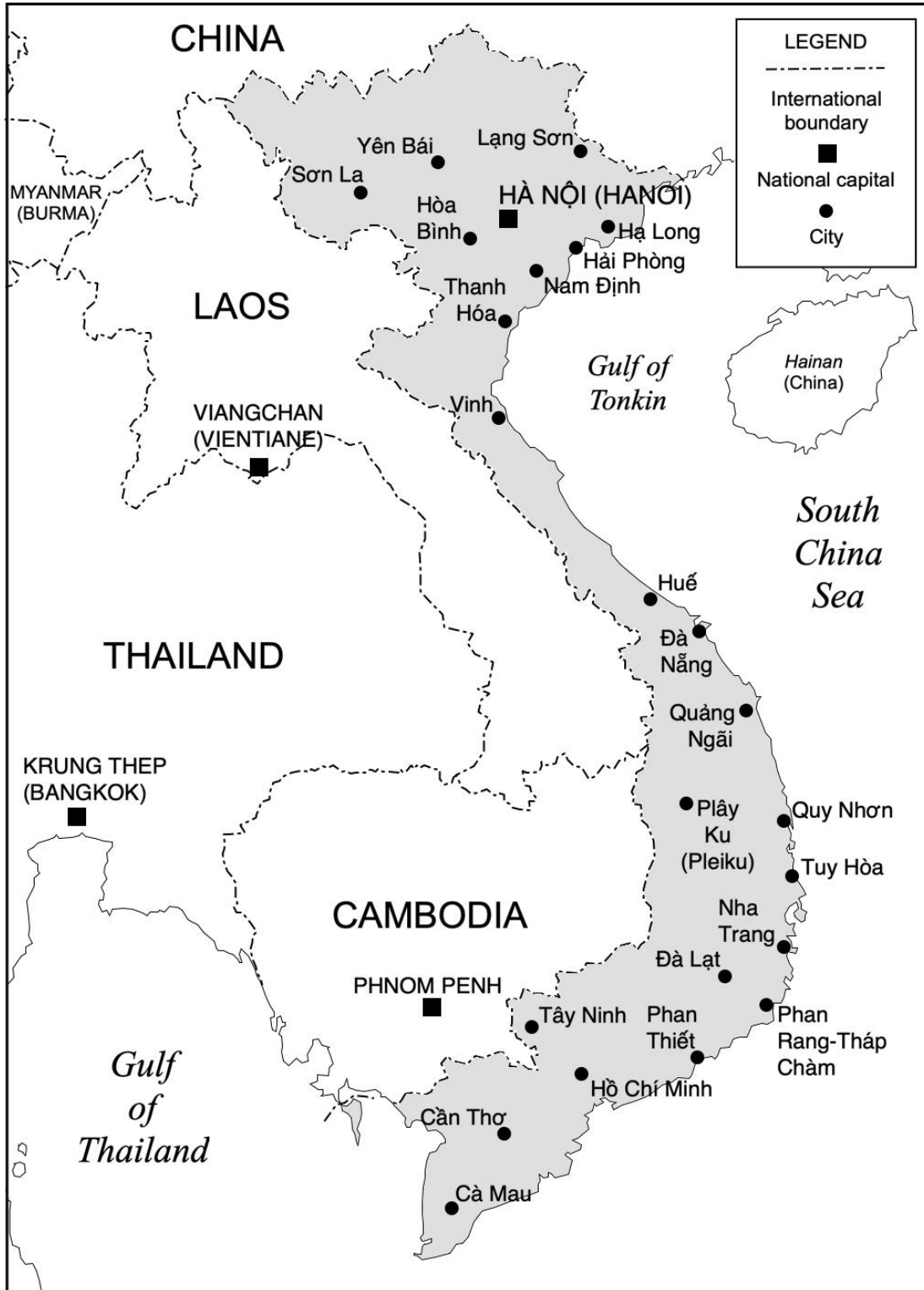
Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Ă	0102	ă	0103
Â	00C2	â	00E2
Ê	00CA	ê	00EA
Ô	00D4	ô	00F4
Ơ	01A0	ơ	01A1
Ư	01AF	ư	01B0
Đ	0110	đ	0111

Tone is also marked in Vietnamese – this is by way of 5 marks that appear on the vowel (e.g. for /a/, these are: /à/, /á/, /â/, /ã/, and /ạ/). Tone marks and diacritics can appear in conjunction, i.e. with two marks on one letter, e.g. /ấ/. These can be found with a single Unicode encoding: ấ (1EA5) or can be created using combining diacritical marks e.g. 00E2 plus 0301: ấ.

⁵ See www.unicode.org

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Map of Vietnam



Map produced by PCGN for illustrative purposes only, and is not to be taken necessarily as representing the views of the UK government on boundaries or political status.

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Administrative structure

In June 2025, Vietnam underwent a change to its administrative structure, replacing the former 63 first-order administrative divisions with a structure comprising 28 provinces (*tỉnh [vie]*) and 6 municipalities (*thành phố [vie]*⁶) at the first-order administrative level. These are shown in the table below in their short forms without the relevant generic term, with the municipalities marked with an asterisk*. A further 2 provinces are slated to become cities in 2030, and a useful image showing the mergers can be seen: [Vietnams-Map-Following-Provincial-Merger-3.jpg \(900×1409\)](#). The first-order divisions are sub-divided into communes.

ADM1	Administrative centre ⁷	Location of administrative centre
An Giang	Rạch Giá	10°01'00"N 105°01'00"E
Bắc Ninh	Bắc Giang	21°16'23"N 106°11'41"E
Cà Mau	Tân Thành	09°11'32"N 105°07'50"E
Cần Thơ*	Cần Thơ ⁸	10°01'57"N 105°47'03"E
Cao Bằng	Thục Phán	22°39'56"N 106°15'28"E
Đà Nẵng*	Đà Nẵng ⁹	16°04'29"N 108°13'26"E
Đắk Lắk	Buôn Ma Thuột	12°40'27"N 108°02'37"E
Điện Biên	Điện Biên Phủ	21°23'07"N 103°00'58"E
Đồng Nai	Trần Biên	10°57'13"N 106°49'20"E
Đồng Tháp	Mỹ Tho	10°21'24"N 106°21'53"E
Gia Lai	Quy Nhơn	13°46'14"N 109°13'57"E
Hà Nội*	Hà Nội	21°00'00"N 105°51'00"E
Hà Tĩnh	Thành Sen	18°20'38"N 105°54'43"E
Hải Phòng*	Hải Phòng	20°51'53"N 106°41'00"E

⁶ Or more fully, *thành phố trực thuộc trung ương* meaning 'city subordinate to the central authority'.

⁷ There is some inconsistency in the representation of administrative centres, and many of the centres have changed in the administrative restructure. For clarity, the table here shows the centres as captured on the Vietnam Publishing House of Natural Resources, Environment and Cartography's *Atlas of 34 provinces and cities*, 2026. The municipalities often have administrative centres that are not the same place as the main city the municipalities are named after e.g. the new map has administrative centre symbols for Ninh Kiều in Cần Thơ, and Thuận Hóa in Huế. Additionally, some sources record Saigon as the centre of Hồ Chí Minh (and see footnote 10), while Hoàn Kiếm is given as the administrative centre of Hà Nội. Sometimes the recorded centre in the *Atlas* used as a source is a ward within the parent city (e.g. Lương Văn Tri is a ward in Lạng Sơn city). Nevertheless, this list reflects the source as it is felt that Vietnam considers these official.

⁸ The municipality seat is within Ninh Kiều district in Cần Thơ

⁹ The municipality seat is within Hải Châu ward in Đà Nẵng

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ADM1	Administrative centre ⁷	Location of administrative centre
Hồ Chí Minh*	Hồ Chí Minh ¹⁰	10°46'36"N 106°42'03"E
Huế* ¹¹	Huế	16°27'43"N 107°35'44"E
Hưng Yên	Phố Hiến	20°38'27"N 106°03'25"E
Khánh Hòa	Nha Trang	12°14'42"N 109°11'30"E
Lai Châu	Tân Phong	22°23'10"N 103°28'13"E
Lâm Đồng	Xuân Hương – Đà Lạt	11°57'08"N 108°26'31"E
Lạng Sơn	Lương Văn Tri	21°51'10"N 106°45'40"E
Lào Cai	Yên Bái	21°43'22"N 104°54'41"E
Nghệ An	Trường Vinh	18°40'24"N 105°41'32"E
Ninh Bình	Hoa Lư	20°15'14"N 105°58'30"E
Phú Thọ	Việt Trì	21°18'44"N 105°23'52"E
Quảng Ngãi	Cẩm Thành	15°07'26"N 108°48'06"E
Quảng Ninh	Hạ Long	20°57'02"N 107°04'24"E
Quảng Trị	Đồng Hới	17°26'53"N 106°35'15"E
Sơn La	Chiềng Cơi	21°18'41"N 103°54'37"E
Tây Ninh	Long An	10°32'34"N 106°24'20"E
Thái Nguyên	Phan Đình Phùng	21°35'03"N 105°50'28"E
Thanh Hóa	Hạc Thành	19°48'26"N 105°47'37"E
Tuyên Quang	Minh Xuân	21°49'35"N 105°12'50"E
Vĩnh Long	Long Châu	10°15'25"N 105°56'57"E

¹⁰ The name Hồ Chí Minh has been in place since 1976, but there is some continuing informal use of the former name Sài Gòn (Saigon) to refer to the city centre area. This former name does not need to appear on HMG products.

¹¹ This became a city in the 2025 restructure, having formerly been a province: Thừa Thiên-Huế

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Territorial disputes

Vietnam has a number of land disputes with its neighbours, as well as an unresolved dispute over sovereignty of offshore islands with Cambodia; in December 2021, Vietnam and Cambodia agreed to complete the remaining border demarcation and the upgrading of border checkpoints.

There are significant maritime disputes over the South China Sea; most significant for Vietnam is the claim of much of the Paracel and Spratly Islands. These claims are contested by neighbouring countries, and care must be taken not to employ inaccurate geographical names in order to avoid assigning sovereignty on HMG products. Please contact PCGN for further details and names guidance.

Other Significant Locations

PCGN Recommended Name ¹²	Other names	Location	Feature Type
Annamite Mountains	Chaîne Annamitique (<i>fra</i>); Phou Louang (<i>lao</i>); Truong Son (<i>vie</i>)	18°35'30"N 103°48'00"E	Mountain range (Laos, Vietnam)
Gulf of Thailand	Ao Thai (<i>tha</i>); Chhung Sâmrôsiêm (<i>khm</i>); Teluk Siam (<i>msa</i>); Vịnh Thái Lan (<i>vie</i>)	39°42'38" N 44°17'35"E	Gulf
Mekong	Lancang jiang (<i>zho</i>); Mae Nam Khong (<i>tha</i>); Mèkaung Myit (<i>mya</i>); Mékôngk (<i>khm</i>); Mekong River (<i>Myanmar</i>); Mènam Khong (<i>lao</i>); Sông Tiền Giang (<i>vie</i>)	41°03'26"N 29°02'36"E	River (Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Vietnam)
Red River	Sông Hồng (<i>vie</i>); Hong he (<i>zho</i>)	20°14'52"N 106°35'14"E	River (Vietnam, China)
Sơn Đoòng	-	17°27'25"N 106°17'15"E	Cave (world's largest cross-sectional area/ largest known cave passage by volume)
South China Sea	West Philippine Sea/Dagat Kanlurang Pilipinas (<i>Philippines</i>); Biển Đông (<i>Vietnam</i>); Nan Hai (<i>China</i>); Laut Cina Selatan, Laut China Selatan (<i>msa</i>); Dagat Timog Tsina (<i>tgl</i>)	15°N 115°E	Sea

¹² PCGN usually recommends use of conventional names for international features where they exist. If there is no conventional name, or if a product requires local forms, then the relevant name can be shown on the appropriate side of the international boundary on cartographic products.

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Useful references

- BBC Country Profile (no longer updated): <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-16567315>
- Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Travel Advice: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Online Browsing Platform (OBP): <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui>
- Languages: <https://www.ethnologue.com/>; www.omniglot.com
- [UNGEEN Working Paper 87, 22nd Session, 2004: Vietnam Country Report](#)
- Unicode Consortium: www.unicode.org
- US Board on Geographic Names Server: [Geographic Names Server](#)
- Vietnam government site: <https://vietnam.gov.vn/>
- Other Vietnamese sources for mapping and geonames: General Department of Land Administration: <http://www.gdla.gov.vn/>; Cartographic Publishing House: <https://bando.com.vn/en/home>; VidaGIS: <https://www.vidagis.com/>; GeoViet Consulting: <https://geoviet.vn/tu-lieu-nguon/en/436/285/baiviet/0/gis-data-and-maps.aspx>; [Vietnam Surveying, Mapping and Geographic Information Agency](#); Vietnam Publishing House of Natural Resources, Environment and Cartography: *Atlas of 34 provinces and cities*, 2026.

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