

GoToLaunch GUIDES

present

DIGITAL NOMAD

guide to

THAILAND, VIETNAM &
INDONESIA



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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THIS GUIDE: WHAT TO EXPECT

The day you wake up to the sound of waves lapping at the sand steps away from your bungalow, a fresh breakfast of eggs and fruit waiting for you next to your laptop, with everything else you own stuffed in a small backpack that has been with you across the world - it might feel like you've made it. In this life, you might have less than 100 items to your name, trading in beautiful clothes, homes, and cars for access to incredible experiences on every continent. Your livelihood will depend on your access to good WiFi. You might think of it like a fundamental human right. Your now twice-extended passport might have more stamps than a post office, or you may have fallen in love with the first place you drop into.

A digital nomad is anyone who uses the advances in communication technology to create value regardless of location, freeing him or herself to work remotely. We use the Internet to scale and automate a business or provide services remotely, creating financial and time freedom to do the things a traditional work-life balance makes impossible to fit in.

The lifestyle of a digital nomad can seem like the stuff of fantasy. Our office is any flat surface. Our home is wherever we set our backpack. Our deepest friendships are sometimes with people we've never met in real life. "Where are you from?" becomes gradually more difficult to answer. But in many cities - from Las Vegas and Berlin, to Bangkok and Bali, and Buenos Aires to Medellin - you'll find us in your cafes, your beaches, your hotel lounges, your coworking spaces doing the hard work to make this lifestyle a continued reality. Becoming a nomad is not leisure. As you just start out, it may feel like you've entered poverty compared to your past life. Your initial work weeks will be 60 or 80 hours, not 4 - and this will last for months or years. But when you've built something that exists beyond you, that provides value to others for which they're happy and willing to pay, and you've cut down on your anchors and expenses to create geographic independence and freedom of time - that is when you have made it, not into a life of idle relaxation, but one of choices.

That said, this is not the book on how to build your first online business. You'll find hundreds of those. It's the book about where to do it, how to make the most of it, and how to make a home for yourself on the road. Compiled from over 400 interviews with entrepreneurs, writers, consultants, and technologists living nomadically or far from home during a 2 year research quest by Derek Sivers' Wood Egg project, the Go to Launch Nomad Guide is compiled from personal stories and expertise of those

who have been in your shoes and have started moving forward on an adventure-rich lifestyle of their own design.

If you're just preparing to explore Southeast Asia, this book will give you a clear impression of the culture, community, and quality of life of each destination. If you know exactly where you're going and just want to know the specific steps for setting up, you'll gain from jumping straight to the relevant country and city guides, described below.

Asia Culture Guide: The mindsets and business of the East are a world apart from North America and Europe. From avoiding bad manners to improving your mindset in business partnerships, the introduction gives a quick baseline for what to expect on the other side of the world.

Country Guides: If you're one to wonder how Thailand became a popular destination, or which of the three countries incubates the most ruthless entrepreneurs, the country guides will give a historical and cultural perspective on Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia. Once you've made your decision, this section also covers the best ways to enter (and remain) in any of these three countries for most Western passport holders.

City Guides: Bangkok and HCMC are hubs for the urban explorer who thrives in chaos and variety, while Chiang Mai and Bali are serene retreats for mind and spirit. After reading the individual city guides, you'll learn even more about the nuances of your potential getaway destination. You'll know which neighborhoods have the best street food and what to order when you get there. You'll have guidance on uncovering the best places to live, work, and play - on all points along the budget scale. We provide a map and transit tips to get you on your way, but this tip we can give now: rent a moped.

ASIA CULTURE GUIDE

While the nuances of these three countries are more forgiving to foreigners, Asia is going to be a big departure from culture in North America or Western Europe. The following descriptions make for a good place from which to get familiar with Eastern ways of thinking, but like any high-level general perspective, such broad perspectives can't possibly apply to every single character you'll meet in Thailand, Indonesia, or Vietnam.

Thailand is home to brilliant individualist artists in the same way Vietnam is becoming a booming startup hub for innovative technical projects, all despite cultural norms that wouldn't normally create the ideal environments for this type of expression. Bali makes for an exceptionally interesting study as the island is nothing like the rest of Indonesia, with a very different system of faith, priorities, and interaction styles.

For every generalization we make here, there are scores of exceptions - but with centuries of culture behind these norms, it's still a good place to start learning.

Cultural Dynamics in Asia

High Power Distance in Asia means there is an expectation of an imbalance of power between members in organizations, be they political, corporate, or familial. This means that people in Indonesia, Vietnam, and Thailand (although to a lesser degree) observe a strict chain of command and clear protocols between them, with privileges earned by those higher in command. Employees, for example, show respect and deference to their superiors in exchange for protection and guidance. There is also a deep respect of elders, especially in positions of authority, who sometimes retain these positions despite lack of qualifications.

Low Individualism creates a more interdependent society, with personal identity coming in the form of "we" from groups one associates with (workplace, friends, family) rather than "I". Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam are collectivist societies, meaning group dynamics aren't just a matter of popularity - they're a way of life that dictates what's normal and expected of each member of society.

Low Masculinity is found in most Asian countries compared to the West, with high masculinity societies being associated with competition, achievement, and success. Meanwhile, feminine societies emphasize interdependence and quality of life, with low value on competition. Thai society ranks lowest in Asia on the masculinity rating, indicating low assertiveness and competitiveness. Vietnam and Indonesia rank slightly higher, but still prioritize community-building and supportive roles rather than aggressive ambition. In all three countries, traditional male-female social roles are reinforced.

All three of these countries have a deep, long-term commitment to their member groups, and their families above all. Social cohesion overrides most social and business rules for these countries of Asia, who may communicate a "yes" in a deal

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with the desire to please and build a bond, but without the ability to deliver on the deal. Confrontation and denial causes embarrassment and loss of the social credit of “Face”, a matter of deep shame in Asian societies. As a result of these forces, behavior in Asia specifically might surprise you.

Face Demystified

Asia’s group-centric culture has another currency besides money: the currency of “Face.”

While Face isn’t much different from Western concepts of social status, respect, and dignity, the Asian concept of Face comes with much more refined hierarchies and ledgers of favors.

As the Thai, Vietnamese, and Indonesians tend to live in regards to social expectations and judgments, breaking too far from the mold or failing in the early stages of building a company can cause a loss of Face that can inhibit individuality or innovative thinking.

Face can be innate, or earned. Innate Face - immediately clear during the normal comprehensive introduction - can be seen in family ties, inherited wealth, a prestigious occupation, or older age. Earned Face comes from honorable behaviors: conspicuous consumption of premium goods, earning the friendship of a respected peer, being knowledgeable about many topics, paying for your guests, and generally elegant manners at dinners and events all earn you credit. Similarly, the opposite behaviors can make you lose respect - like deposits and withdrawals from a bank account of respect.

Face and wealth are unique but often correlating marks of influence and power. Of course, examples exist: the village elder may be deeply revered but penniless while the son of a tycoon might be wealthy and vilified.

Mindsets in Asia

Success: A Southeast Asian business person will prefer to maintain harmonious relationships rather than achieve personal success, which might slow down business or conflict with your own goals. In Asia, your relationships are a sign of success, with the most successful entrepreneurs and salespersons investing heavily in the business of networking.

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Work & Play: In conducting business, deals are discussed in the last portion of the meeting after getting to know one another. Deals are made best after leisure activities, which often include sharing meals, golfing, KTV, and can include meeting one another's families. Locals will speed this up for foreigners, but expect the lines between business and fun to be a little blurred.

Modesty: If business is good, you might meet the most powerful people in the region - but if they were to tell you that themselves, they'd be considered an embarrassment. People in Asia value modesty even among the most successful people, who will often discredit themselves and credit their teams rather than boast. This also makes for less direct professional interactions, demanding one to read between the lines when considering contracts or agreements.

Five Common Mistakes to Avoid

Fight: Spilled drinks and tough words in your favorite UK pub are one thing, but fights in Southeast Asia are ugly. Flirt too warmly with someone's girlfriend, get too drunk and violent, or get involved with the wrong crowds for drugs or sex and you'll asking for trouble. One guy can turn into a viciously armed crew of 12 instantly. They'll have weapons, and it's not a joke that they'll know Muay Thai. Apologize, and get the hell away.

Embarrass: Maybe you're a lovable clown among your friends in the West, but making fun of a weakness or criticizing a friend or coworker openly is terrible karma in any of these countries. Operate on the "make people feel happy" principle and stick to victimless humor. Be especially gracious to your host, who'll most likely cover the full bill. Offer to pay, but never actually fight over it - it's a distinct privilege to be able to cover your meal. During dinner, avoid smoking and don't engage in gossip if avoidable. Last, don't embarrass yourself by being boastful, domineering, or demanding.

Beach to Office: The Thais, Balinese, and Vietnamese get it - it's beautiful here and you're enjoying yourself. But if you show up to a meeting in the same clothes you'd wear on the beach, you're not going to close many partnerships. Most Thais & Vietnamese wear professional attire year-round during the day, and dress neatly when relaxing. Successful Thais & Vietnamese might wear designer suits or traditional garb made of fine fabrics, accessorized with the latest tech gadgets. First-time meetings, introductions to someone's friend or family, or dinners at a reputable restaurant call for mens and womens business casual. For women, spaghetti straps

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are considered revealing and impolite in some settings, along with shorts (men or women) or skirts. For regular get-togethers with known friends or expats, it shouldn't be a problem. When in doubt, overdress. In Indonesia, Muslim religious garb is commonly mixed in with street cloths for work and for prayer, with suits seen mostly in the central business districts of Jakarta and in the service industry of 3-5 star hotels or resorts in Bali.

All Business: On the other side, sticking to all work and no play may give your local partners the impression of stiffness, and in the worst case, lack of trustworthiness. Enjoy dinner together, have a drink if it's offered, meet their friends and associates, and share the occasional outing to golf or karaoke. If invited to a family event like a wedding, funeral, or Buddhist ceremony by a Southeast Asian business partner, treat it as an honor. Go. At the least, your business relationship will improve. At the most, you'll even enjoy it and learn something. Thai and Vietnamese humor tends to be silly, slapstick, and full of innuendo. Sarcasm can be difficult to deliver. Remember the golden rule of business in Southeast Asia: there is no business without friendship.

Taboo Topics: Given the ongoing arguments, politics is already a tricky conversation - but if you really want trouble, criticize the Royal Family of Thailand, or the Communist party of Vietnam. Thailand's King is well-loved by his subjects, and although he doesn't hold much formal power, he is the cultural and religious pillar of the society. He is to be succeeded by his son, but the possible immediacy of this prospect given the King's age isn't a very welcome conversation. If you stumble into the wrong conversation: smile and nod while your opposition fires out, and change the topic. In Vietnam, you'll run into similar trouble if you dive too deep into politics. The Vietnamese governmental situation isn't universally well-loved, but being an argumentative beacon for reform is going to make you even less loved.

COUNTRY GUIDE: THAILAND

Is Thailand Right for You?

It's called the "Land of Smiles" for a reason: Thailand absolutely loves its tourists, and digital nomads are usually no exception. Tourism is the largest percentage of Thailand's GDP, which has shaped the transport and service infrastructure to the convenience of nomads. Still, outside of cities, foreigners are still a novelty in many parts of Thailand.

Retirees, backpackers, sex tourists, and yoga instructors are all part of Thailand's expat scene, with digital nomads reflecting a cowork-dwelling but well-loved minority. Thais welcome foreigners who come to Thailand to work or run businesses, and generally hold successful, ambitious entrepreneurs in especially high esteem. There's no stigma at all for foreigners passing through on business, and Thailand has openly invited location-independent entrepreneurs to run their businesses locally - despite raising the visa difficulty recently.

The only potential downside for foreigners in Thailand is the customer service. While staff are incredibly friendly, expect lower quality of customer service and English proficiency than you're used to, even compared to other countries in Asia.

On the day-to-day, Thais are voracious consumers of social media, chat, multimedia, and mobile games: the average daily smartphone use by a Thai adult is more than 3 hours. 3G became widely available in Thailand in 2013 and data plans are very common. A 2013 survey shows Thais spend 80% of social interaction time online and 20% in face-to-face interaction.

Facebook: 35% of the population uses Facebook, with 13.6M users out of Bangkok alone.

Twitter: 2013 saw 1.73 million Thai users sharing 1.7 billion tweets in Thai. Thai entertainment, political, and religious figures have vast followings.

Climate

Thailand is largely tropical, so it's hot and humid all year around with temperatures in the range of 28-35°C (82-95°F), a degree of relief provided only in the mountains in the far north of Thailand. The careful observer will, however, note three seasons:

- **Cool:** From November to the end of February, it doesn't rain much and temperatures are at their lowest, although you will barely notice the difference in the south and will only need to pack a sweater if hiking in the northern mountains, where temperatures can fall as low as 5°C (41°F). This is the most popular time to visit and, especially around Christmas and New Year's or at Chinese New Year a few weeks later, finding flights and accommodation can be expensive and difficult.
- **Hot:** From March to June, Thailand swelters in temperatures as high as 40°C (104°F). Pleasant enough when sitting on the beach with a drink in hand, but not the best time of year to go temple-tramping in Bangkok.
- **Rainy:** From July to October, although it only really gets under way in September, tropical monsoons hit most of the country. This doesn't mean it rains non-stop, but when it does it pours and flooding is not uncommon.

History, Politics & Economy

Originally known as Siam, Thailand was originally organized in the 14th century, and is now a constitutional monarchy. Thailand is distinct for being the only Southeast Asian country never to be colonized by an European power, which has left Thai culture to blossom. Thailand's business & legal rules are inspired by the French and British systems.

Thais have been experiencing political difficulties since the 1970s, with a string of violent coups, a transition from communism to democracy in the 1980s, and ongoing tensions between political groups commonly called Yellow Shirts (People's Alliance for Democracy) and Red Shirts (supporters of ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, the People's Power Party) that sometimes manifest as large-scale protests. The Royal Thai Army took control of the temporary government in 2014 during a period of massive unrest.

Political upheaval has been detrimental for local business, foreign investment, and the global perceptions of Thailand's society and economy. The Thai economy has historically survived through unrest, though the last 5 years of protests and environmental disaster blunted foreign investment and damaged Thailand's

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manufacturing sector. A booming middle class and role as an international trade hub have sustained Thailand's economy, but the political situation is still developing - and Bangkok is key battleground for the debate. Living in Chiang Mai will remove you from the heat of the debate, but in earnest, the political situation does little to affect the everyday lives of modern Thai citizens.

In the 2000's, Thailand experienced growth in traditional entrepreneurship (e.g. family businesses) and technology startup ventures - as well as tech investment and expansion by foreign companies.

Cities of Interest

Bangkok is a natural home for nomads: relative to New York or London, it's quick and easy to settle into affordable home and work accommodations, take advantage of low cost of daily living and strong Internet speeds, and network readily with talent local developers and marketers as well as other nomads. You'll just have to find a way to squeeze it in between the surfing and massages.

If Bangkok is Thailand's New York City, Paris, or Shanghai - then Chiang Mai is San Francisco or Nanjing. It's quieter and in less of a rush, a little more in touch with its roots, and has a lot to offer to those willing to give it a chance by settling in. Prices and the density of population are drastically lower, making it a favorite destination for entrepreneurs just getting their businesses off the ground. If you're hungry for huge parties and concerts, however, you should grab a quick flight to Bangkok or elsewhere in Asia.

CULTURE GUIDE: THAILAND

Thais are friendly and forgiving for new arrivals who don't quite catch onto the culture, but you'll make much more meaningful local friendships by being conscious of the following cultural dynamics and behaviors. While English is adequate for business, there is no replacement for being able to connect with a local in Thai.

Faith

Thais have religious freedom, but the monarch and, by extension, national culture reflects Buddhist worldviews. While faith is a major influence in daily life, traditional "religious" practices are not. For example, while Thailand is majority Buddhist (with a Muslim minority in south Thailand), Thais happily faith-switch, trying out or incorporating components from Hinduism or Christianity. This practice

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is not only accepted, but encouraged from a Buddhist perspective as exploring your faith and usually done by the Thai as a means of capitalizing on some sort of religious benefit (like community access). Instead of military service, most men temporarily ordain as monks at age 20, with up to 3 months of paid leave from their employer. Monks act as community leaders, advising on domestic problems, administering blessings (even to newly purchased electrical appliances, like dishwashers and refrigerators), and receiving or transmitting offerings of food and goods from faithful Thais. Karma plays a hidden role in daily practice, atypically exemplified: for example, instead of gaining karma by helping a hurt dog, a Thai Buddhist would avoid the dog as its pain is expressive of bad karma.

Technology

Mobile reigns supreme in Thailand. The country has 1.5 times as many mobile subscribers as it has people, and estimates place smartphone penetration at 16 M, set to grow to 22 M by end of 2014. Smartphone concentration in urban areas like Bangkok can be over 50%. Thailand is majority Android supplied by Chinese manufacturers, followed by Blackberry, tailed in third by Apple iOS. Technology spread is being driven by young consumers, with Thais above 50 rarely engaging deeply with the digital world.

Thais are increasingly trusting of the web for day-to-day tasks and are showing willingness to handle service sector roles like travel booking themselves.

- Online banking: Thai banks benefit from a local trust in financial institutions, making web and mobile banking common.
- Instagram: Huge and growing quickly in Thailand. Most photographed location for 2013 was the Siam Paragon Mall, and the BKG airport is also in the top 10. Drama actresses and celebrities have followings exceeding 1 million users.
- Chat: LINE and Viber are Thailand's most popular chat apps, now rising in popularity due to government snooping on Facebook. Payment integration in these platforms has put e-commerce popularity in hyperdrive. Users love in-app vanity features like stickers.
- Travel booking: Wildly popular with tourists, Thais are increasingly willing to book their own hotels and flights online, putting pressure on local travel agencies.
- E-Commerce: Daily purchases are still being done in person, but high-fashion or technical products may be purchased online. Locals are skeptical of products that may be counterfeit for high-value goods when buying online unless

the sale comes from a reputable source. The Thai online payment space is absolutely huge.

- Maps: Very popular in Thailand, often used to look up travel congestion.
- Food discovery: Also very popular, with local app offerings dominating against Yelp/Foursquare, which are still foreigner favorites here.
- Job search: Thais are searching for full-time and part-time employment online. Traditionally, higher-end jobs have appeared in Thai newspapers and attract better talent, while online postings attract massive volumes of applications.

Entrepreneurship

Young Thais, empowered with technology, are getting impatient with the corporate ladder and some are diving into entrepreneurship. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor found Thais do not prioritize innovation in their entrepreneurial ventures, preferring a lower-technology approach to replicating existing businesses rather than taking on risk to attempt a new venture. Thailand's hierarchical system, the danger of losing Face in failure, and an underdeveloped educational system aren't helping. Inexperienced business owners can fall into the "noodle shop" mentality of business development: 50% of profits are kept for personal consumption, and only 50% are reinvested, leading to slow growth and poor staffing.

Still, Thailand is finding some wins in the mobile tech & gaming markets and rising on the world stage for creative, bold design. Thai designers participating in global competitions have inspired the young generation to dive into graphic and digital art (best seen in Chatuchak Market), as well as architecture. The copy culture creates fluctuations in supply and demand until certain businesses cannot maintain profits, at which point they may close or partner into a trust.

Body

Buddhist Thailand considers the body to be a spiritual vessel. The head is the highest and holiest. Patting or even accidentally touching someone's head is not a good move, and even a hairdresser will wai your head before he or she starts cutting. The feet are considered dirty and lowly: don't point them at people, animals, or holy objects when sitting, and don't use them to move objects like chairs.

Thailand is a tactile culture, but not in the way you'd expect. Opposite genders are usually reserved with their affection in public, but long-time friends of the same gender will often hold hands as a sign of trust. Public displays of affection between same-sex couples are not widely accepted.

Mind

In Thailand, be like water: relaxed in your business dealings, accommodating in your social dynamics, and open-minded in adapting to cultural expectations. An ability to compromise is absolutely critical. In Thailand, open disagreement will only serve to embarrass you and your peers. Maintaining an upbeat, enthusiastic attitude will take you far. Face and hierarchy represent social frameworks that demand your respect if you're to bond well with locals. Thais do things differently; they may have methods and arrangements, financial and otherwise, that will not make sense to you. For example, nepotism is considered a healthy and normal mode of business operation. Your suggestions for how to improve the relationship or working process may be received politely but will not alter long-established business practices. By accepting this and not interfering, you send a strong message to your Thai friends that you will not "rock the boat," another essential aspect of building trust.

Thai mindsets differ by generation. Older Thais are typically conservative, value the hard work that has brought their country to the world stage, and have a strong personal foundation of friends, family, and business partners to whom they have a lifetime loyalty. Younger Thais are globalized and flexible, picking up new skills and technologies. Their interests and loyalties are more diverse, leading them to move between work often. In business with either, group unity takes precedence over individual success, which can slow down deals and will burn any foreigner who puts profit before people.

When in doubt, smile. As flexible as the wai, a smile can express joy and gratitude, embarrassment and apology, or agreement and respect. It's even a great cover for confusion. You can't go wrong.

Business

As Thai law protects industries integral to Thai life from foreign business involvement, there is very little sense of unfair competition. It further helps perceptions that entrepreneurs who start their business in Thailand are required to co-found with a Thai local (in most industries) and employ Thai staff.

Thai business is not what you know, but who you know. Close family ties to business have made nepotism not just a problem, but an expected practice - family is often chosen over more qualified employees for leadership positions. In promotions, after family comes seniority, and only then actual skill. Networking will be the most important business function a Thai businessman can undertake once his business is

off the ground - and you, too, will want to connect with local bosses if you hope to do any business with locals. Language will be a barrier to building deep relationships with Thai businesses, so make a trusted local friend - and don't just rely on a romantic partner to close your intros.

Even among digital nomads, an internationally-educated Thai will be your best bet: with strong English skills and a dual cultural perspective, once you develop a strong friendship you'll have a local partner for life. The word of a Thai, when properly understood for its context and undertones, is as good as a contract - but do get it in writing when all agreements are finalized, and expect up to a week of delays.

Greetings: The Wai



The Wai is Thailand's most flexible gesture. Bring your palms together in prayerlike fashion, and bow your head. Hands higher and head lower indicate greater respect. Handshakes are the norm in most business, but in the city you'll most see the Wai. Thais use it to greet and depart, thank and apologize - it's as flexible as the Thai smile, also sometimes used in times of stress. Shake hands or deliver the Wai after an introduction from your host if applicable, exchange business cards if in a business setting, then sit or begin talking.

VISA GUIDE: ENTERING AND STAYING IN THAILAND

Types of Visas

Thailand is relatively generous to Western countries, allowing visitors arriving by plane to get a 30-day visa on arrival. South American citizens can get up to 90-day stays, while Chinese citizens are required to obtain a visa ahead of time for any length of stay.

30 Day Single Entry Arrival Visa

Most foreigners are eligible for the 30-day visa on arrival by air (only 15 days when arriving by land). This includes Citizens of the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia.

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You can extend for 7 days at Thai Immigration for 1,900 THB.

You will not be officially eligible for conducting business in Thailand. You'll need all the basic documents: a valid passport, photos, and the application.

60 Day Single Entry Tourist Visa

This visa will have 90 days of validity from the time you receive it, and takes 3 days to process. Your 60 days start the night you arrive. Additional documents are required for minors under 20.

Bring with you:

- Thai Visa application form, completed with picture.
- Original passport with 2 blank pages & +6 months validity.
- Thailand Itinerary (copy of round trip tickets or confirmed accommodations)
- Bank statement clearly showing applicant's name as account holder, account balance (at least 700 USD/individual), and statement date.
- Visa fee: 40 USD

You can extend for 30 days at Thai Immigration for 1,900 THB up to two times.

Foreigners will not be officially eligible for conducting business in Thailand.

90 Day Single/Multi Entry Business Visa

This visa will have up to 365 days of validity from the time you receive it, and takes 3 days to process. Your 90 days start the night you arrive, and count down even if you are not in the country as you travel. It requires a visa sponsor in Thailand, which is difficult to secure without local employment or a business partner.

The following documents are required for obtaining a visa to Thailand:

- Thai Visa application form, completed with picture.
- Original passport with 2 blank pages and 6+ months of validity.
- Thailand Itinerary (copy of round trip tickets or confirmed accommodations)
- Bank statement clearly showing applicant's name as account holder, account balance (at least 700 USD/individual), and statement date.
- Foreign Business Letter: Originating from the sending, foreign-based company (which can be your own), addressed to the Embassy of Thailand, signed by a senior manager (which can be a co-founder or business relationship with whom you've previously collaborated). Introduce the applicant - that's you - including

status held in the company. Preferably, label as CTO or COO rather than CEO. Discuss the nature of the work to be conducted (meetings, negotiations) and names of involved Thai companies.

- Specify desired length and number of entries for the visa.
- Guarantee sufficient availability of funds for the trip.
- Local Business Invitation: The other side of the invitation comes from a Thai company, addressed to the “Consulate of Thailand, Visa Section,” printed on letterhead, and signed by a senior manager. The contents of the letter should match the above, including your introduction and the work to be done for the company.
- Visa fee: Single-entry visas cost 2,600 THB. Multi-entry visas cost 6,500 THB.

Visa Recommendations

We use Visa HQ [<http://thailand.visahq.com>] to get information on requirements, but other services exist if you'd like a full concierge.

The visa form, unchanged since 2012, is available below:

[<http://www.thaiembassy.org/abudhabi/contents/files/services-20120705-180020-288642.pdf>]

All visas will require a passport with more than 3 months of validity (we suggest at least 6) with at least 2 blank pages remaining. We suggest always keeping with you at least 2 front-view passport photos measuring 3.5 x 4.5cm.

Staying in the Country

Southeast Asia is famous for short-term trips taken to extend the staying capacity of a foreigner in an Asian country. However, In Thailand, visa overstays are not a joke. If your 60 day are almost up, and you've already extended once, you will need to leave Thailand. Thai jails suck, and if you can't cough up 500 THB per day of overstay (up to 20,000 THB, not to mention any extortion along the way) and buy your ticket out of Thailand, you'll end up in a dark hole.

Fortunately, there's relatively rudimentary infrastructure in place to track and enforce the length of your departure. The following are common methods used by travelers to extend stays in the country.

Plan A - Typical Visa Run

Most travelers will typically buy a ticket to Vietnam or Indonesia for a cheap and thrilling week-long trip before returning to Thailand and getting a view visa, thought any country (including home) will work.

These runs, especially ones done on the same day, are seeing a crackdown since 2014. We don't recommend this trick more than once or twice in a year, but it's a fundamental part of doing business in Thailand for anyone hoping to stay beyond 3 months.

For visa runs, we like the following services:

- Kayak [<http://kayak.com>], for estimating price fluctuations by season and location
- Google Flights [<http://flights.google.com>], for checking flight prices in real-time
- SkyScanner [<http://www.skyscanner.com>], for booking flights out of the area

Plan B - Ninja or Language Education Visa

Staying a while and don't like the hassle of visa runs? Our favorite tip: make yourself eligible for an Education visa, valid for a one-year, multi-entry stay. That doesn't have to mean going back to school to be lectured, though. "Students" of the Thai language, Muay Thai martial arts, Thai cooking, or a local massage schools are all eligible for an Education visa. Enrolling is as straightforward as a business visa and costs a few hundred dollars. The Education visa is renewable for up to three years so long as you're able to prove you're attending at least 4 hours of lessons a week.

Plan C - Eventual Relocation

You've done your visa runs to exhaustion and are ready to move to the next place. We recommend Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, lovingly regarded by digital nomads with a price tag under 21 Million VND per month. Bali, Indonesia is a spiritual sanctuary along the same price with an emerging alternative health and nutrition scene, though Internet is less dependable. Cebu, Philippines and Phnom Penh, Cambodia are also rising in popularity slowly.

CITY GUIDE: BANGKOK

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Bangkok is both the busiest and most premium location of them all. You'll be in the heart of culture, commerce, and business. Bangkok also has some of the world's most famous resorts and nightlife, supported by the country's most sophisticated infrastructure and most foreigner-friendly resources from food to events to accommodations.

In Bangkok, quality of life for expats is regarded as excellent overall, with two caveats. First, there is a wide range of lifestyles and salaries, so while price arbitrage works in your favor, you can expect to get what you pay for. Second, your comfort and purchasing power depends on where in Thailand you make your home. The overwhelming influx of foreigners and resultant wealth inequality can rub some Thais in Bangkok the wrong way, but most Thais are very welcoming to foreign consumers and business people.

While many nomads may want a simple lifestyle in tune with local tradition, Bangkok primarily attracts urbanites with a love for the action of a city. Even the cost of an upper-middle quality of life is affordable to most foreigners in Thailand depending on location in the city. The cleanliness of Thai homes, malls, theaters, and indoor public spaces is great, but city streets near canals can be downright dirty.

Bangkok attracts both Thais and foreigners with great business and career opportunities. This has created a strong service sector, including affordable housekeepers who can cook, clean, do laundry, and even mend socks. Housekeeping and private driver services are reasonable enough that you can allow yourself this luxury which would be out of the question at home.

City Highlights

Food

Thai food include the simple and flavorful like beef satay (meat skewers with peanut sauce), the complex and aromatic curries (try yellow curry first), spicy fruit and vegetable salads, and wok or oil fried dishes like cashew chicken or fried fish with noodles or rice. Local dishes combine sour, sweet, salty, and bitter tastes and many are spicy to a foreign palate. Ask for "farang phet" if you'd like things medium, or "mai phet" for milder but still not plain. Thai spicy can have you crying as early as breakfast - beware the little green peppers. For cooling off, coconut drinks and fresh fruit are a regular Thai staple.

Food stall meals usually runs at 50-80 THB from common food stalls, where foreigners and locals normally pay the same prices. Mondays are street-cleaning days, for which most streetside vendors take the day off. You'll see half as many stalls open.

Sit-down Thai restaurant meals usually cost 150-200 THB per person with a beer or coconut to drink and a shared appetizer. International restaurant meals usually cost 200-400 THB per person for a main course and a drink.

These are some nomad favorites:

- Soups: Tom Yum, a clear spicy fish soup with herbs, or Tom Yum Kung, with prawns.
- Salads: Som Tam, a popular spicy papaya salad
- Noodles: Thailand has the world's best Pad Thai available 24/7. Fried noodles with egg, sprouts, a protein, sprinkled with peanuts, chilis, and fish sauce.
- Rice Dishes: Pineapple-fried rice, served with pork in a hollowed-out pineapple. Also try cashew chicken with garlic served over rice.
- Curries: Massaman (yellow) curry is rich and sweet with coconut milk, potatoes, and peanuts. Green curry mixes sweet, sour, and bitter with vegetables and protein - careful of the spicy kick. Red curry is also popular, best with duck to match the salty-sour taste.
- Dessert: Mango sticky rice is long-boiled sweet rice served with mango and coconut milk, sometimes with sweet beans or seeds.

Thai and Western food availability at all price ranges is easily accessible from anywhere in the city, and can be purchased either prepared from a supermarket or fresh from a local day market. You'll find Starbucks, Mark & Spencer, Tesco, and more. Dining options of Italian, Mexican, Japanese, French, and American are all easy to find.

If you love the local food as much as we do, try taking a cooking class. If your favorite restaurant isn't busy, you can even ask the chef directly to set up a lesson the next morning.

Transit

Bangkok is a modern, well-developed city with all the benefits and challenges of modernity one might find in major metropolitan areas like New York City and Tokyo. Bangkok's Skytrain (BTS) and metro systems (MRT) make it easy to get around, especially if you want to avoid traffic jams. Bangkok is bustling: as a very dense city, gridlock traffic and the dominance of skyscrapers over parks and public spaces can be a minus. Cabs are plentiful and cheap, but less so during rush hours and late nights, which can leave you stuck in traffic for hours. For the same distance, a bus might cost 5 THB compared to 80-100 THB for a taxi.

Local transit includes songthaews ("song-tow"), which are multi-passenger pickup trucks, most popular outside of Bangkok. They offer a fair deal and can split the cost of the trip across all passengers, though they are not always the most time-efficient. Tuktuks are motorbike taxis and are slightly quicker than songthaews, but also more expensive. Remember to set a price with the driver for the trip before you agree to the ride. The nomad favorite is a motorbike of your own: they're usually less than 160 BHT to rent per day, provide the most flexible movement across the city, and are fun to drive. Always wear a helmet - motorbikes are definitely not Thailand's safest option. Usually any global driver's license and copy of a passport is enough to secure your rental.

Transit between other parts of Thailand is simple to book via sleeper or daytime bus, but don't rely on the trains: they're typically slower, more expensive, and more difficult to book. You can also take boats to islands off the coast of Thailand. The Eastern island chain islands of Koh Samui, Koh Phangan, and Ko Tao offer world-famous resorts, parties, and diving, respectively. Domestic and international planes are affordable, usually under 2,500 THB to anywhere within Thailand and under 10,000 THB to most locations in Southeast Asia.

Safety

Thailand is safe for foreigners overall, including the whole of Bangkok. As with any big city, acting with common sense, keeping track of your belongings, and avoiding potentially dangerous situations is going to keep you out of trouble. Less savory cities include Pattaya - Thailand's "sin city", and Phuket. However, expats report feeling safer in Thailand than in some of their home countries. Religious skirmishes sometimes break out in Muslim-Buddhist contested areas in the far south of Thailand.

While instances of theft and scams are rare, tourist areas. The following are rules of thumb for staying safe.

- Gut check: Trust your instincts when out at night. If it doesn't feel right, don't drink from of a suspicious cup of liquid to be polite. Leave.
- Keep property safe: Keep bags close to you to prevent any snatches. Sling bags across your chest and beware of thieves with blades who cut the bag.
- Cash on hand: Don't take out more cash than you need from an ATM, and keep spare cash separate from on-person cash.
- Diversify risk: Avoid carrying all your cards at the same time in case of a pickpocket. As always, notify credit card companies immediately upon realizing any cards are missing, and freeze accounts if necessary. If you've been in any violent incident or have been robbed, file a police report. It will be important to file an insurance claim even if the police cannot help.
- Road accidents are frequent in Thailand: opt for safety over budget when you can choose. Get out of the cab if a driver is getting reckless, but do pay the fare and ask to leave politely. And buckle up - though many Thais won't.
- Greasing palms: While rarely enforced, Thai law requires foreigners carry passports at all times. Keep a copy to be safe, as police may hold the true passport in exchange for some money exchanging hands. This is a rare occurrence, and officers are helpful to travelers. Not that we condone it, but if you feel a bribe is appropriate in a situation (corruption runs deep here), never be obvious or you'll risk making your target lose Face. Explain your situation, imply you're not a wealthy traveler (pretend to be a student if you can), and ask if there's any way you could expedite the situation so as not to trouble them any longer. Be calm, cool, and smile.
- Safe sex: As it can be culturally uncommon for Thai men to use sexual protection, prioritize safety and condom use if romantically involved with any Thai local.

Thailand is safe to foreigners for one reason most of all: you're not likely to be of any threat to Thai mafia dealings, so you'll be both unaware and unharassed by their business. It's really ill-advised to dig into this side of Thailand. Mafia activity is often most visible to foreigners through the lens of tourist areas with high concentrations of partying, drinking, sex industry workers, and drug use. Best avoided, Thailand's drug use focuses on methamphetamines ('Yaba' in Thai) and wild-grown marijuana, with some psychedelic use reported in Koh Phangan.

[illegible]

Thailand's districts lead with an expressed purpose like tourism, commerce or residential quarters - but almost all compliment it with incredible food and a unique brand of nightlife. Commercial quarters and tourist quarters tend to offer higher-cost entertainment than residential areas. Similarly, areas popular with foreigners are noticeably more expensive than those frequented by locals. The cover of night transforms even the most professional areas like Silom into nightlife destinations, while weekends turn Ramkhamhaeng and Phahonyothin into family escapes for locals and bustling mixed markets, respectively.

Commercial

Siam Square

The heart of Bangkok's commercial and consumer activity, crammed with high-end malls and hotels accessible easily by Skytrain. The closest thing to Bangkok's modern core, Western-style shopping and dining can be found on Ratchaprasong and Phloen Chit Road. High-end hotels and short-stay serviced apartments are popular here. They are better used for temporary visits rather than as a home base, though.

Pratunam

Home to the Baiyoke Tower II and Victory Monument, Pratunam has a famous giant retail & wholesale fashion market with hundreds of styles and manufacturers. Cozy middle-class apartments abound near Thanon Rangam (road perpendicular to Victory Monument BTS station) and Ratchaprarop Road. They include some nice service apartments in the mix, and all are close to Thai and international restaurants, comfortable cafes, and small relaxed bars.

Tourism

Rattanakosin

A must-see. Between river and sky-scraping downtown, "Old Bangkok" is home to the Grand Palace and Wat Pho - Thailand's deservedly most famous cultural sites. Give yourself at least a day to see them, and stop at the Jade Buddha one of the most revered existing Buddhist relics. It'll always be dressed in gold appropriately for the season.

Khao San Road

A premiere world backpacker mecca, Khao San Road and the surrounding Banglamphu have 24/7 food, drinks, and hostel check-in. Also present here are seedy elements of tourism: drugs, sex, and illegal goods like fake IDs are usually not far from where you're having your beer. Still, if you roll into Thailand with nothing but a ragged backpack, you'll be welcomed by your own here.

Short to medium-stays at local hostels are usually cheap and convenient, but not necessarily comfortable, especially on KS Road directly. Expect a lot of human traffic and long nights of music and festivities if you pick this as a home for a week or three. That said, it's a great way to meet some new friends - thought they may not be there long, either.

Thonburi

Feeling suburban in comparison to central Bangkok's commotion, Thonburi features tourist hot spots including Wat Arun, Royal Barges National Museum, and floating markets accessible by canals alongside bargain apparel and food shopping.

Business & Politics

Silom

Silom Road and Sathorn Road are Thailand's all-business financial trade roads - but don't be fooled, Silom works hard and plays harder. By the cover of night, Silom comes alive as Bangkok's premiere party district and is home to the infamous Patpong street, a capital of Bangkok sex tourism.

Dusit

Trimmed tropical foliage neatly surrounds official-looking European architecture in Dusit, the seat of Thai politics and the monarchy. It is a must-see for its lush garden and impressive palaces - but keep away in times of political unrest, as Dusit and Siam Square are key flash points.

Residential

Sukhumvit

A long road filled with Thailand's local and foreign VIPs - or those on their way - enjoying high-end hotels, restaurants, and nightclubs. The exclusive experience comes with a higher price tag, but includes some of the most well-regarded bars and hosts visiting artists on occasion. After Patpong street, Sukhumvit is second on Bangkok's naughty nightlife list, home to the well-known Soi Cowboy and Nana Entertainment Plaza.

Inhabited by many expats and Thais, Sukhumvit is packed with food and fun, and close to BTS Skytrain transit. Asoke, Thong Lor, and Ekamai are the preferred, premium areas of town and especially near the BTS, but also more expensive. Phara Khanong and On Nut, further from the main avenue, offer many small apartments and condos for long or short-term rent and are also near BTS entrances. Budget apartments are further out towards Udom Suk.

Yaowarat and Phahurat

A melting pot of Asian culture, Yaowarat Road is home to Bangkok's Chinatown while Phahurat Road is Bangkok's Little India. Each attracts Thais and foreigners alike, for a multicultural scene surrounded by temples, shrines, street markets, and restaurants. Seafood is exceptionally fresh here.

Phahonyothin

Just north of the Victory Monument, Phahonyothin & Viphavadi Rangsit roads are large suburb areas in northern Bangkok. A relaxed residential area mostly inhabited by Thai locals, weekends fire the area up with the Chatuchak Weekend Market, host to over 8,000 stalls selling apparel, electronics, food, instruments, gifts, and more.

The area offers plentiful affordable apartment rentals from Sanam Pao to Ari and Saphan Kwai BTS entrances, mostly for longer-term stays. They're joined by a few temporary-stay guest houses near plentiful cheap food and outdoor garden restaurants. The area is a great alternative to those that find central Bangkok to be overwhelming.

Many quiet cafes and restaurants welcome digital nomads with inexpensive tasty food, strong coffee, and decent WiFi away from the main roads

Ratchadaphisek

An entertainment mecca for locals, the sois of "Ratchada" have become popular clubbing destinations for Thais since the completion of the regional metro line. Royal City Avenue (RCA) is a hotbed of nightlife for mostly young Thai men. It's off the beaten path enough so that you'll see fewer foreigners and be able to find better deals on everything from gifts to housing.

Ramkhamhaeng

A vast residential area shared by big shopping malls and amusement parks (check out Safari World if you're curious), the many neighborhoods here each offer their own character. Weekends invite deal-hungry shoppers and vacationing families from Bangkok to malls and theme parks, mixing up the local dynamic.

Ramkhamhaeng is far enough from central Bangkok that it both feels authentically reflective of modern Thai residents, and is appropriately priced for their budgets. Hua Mak and Bang Kapi residences are student-friendly, with mostly +6 month dorm and studio accommodations. As you'll be far from the center, try to find housing near a BTS.

Live

Cost of Living

Since the 2010's, the city has become more popular with tourists and locals in search of opportunity, increasing apartment selling prices from 75,000 THB per square meter to 175,000 THB square meter. These prices are a barometer for the city's living costs, as most hostels and hotels have increased in price. Bangkok has the widest variety of accommodations besides apartments, from hostels to high-end hotels, and the occasional hacker house in the middle price bracket.

A local may only need 20,000 per month to be comfortable. Utilities cost around 200 THB per month for water, 500 for electricity (not including the AC), and 500 for a phone with Internet but not long distance. Meanwhile, a foreigner might spend more on local amenities.

Minimum monthly budget: 30,000 THB

Assumes a low-cost apartment rental, most cooking done at home, and an affordable coworking membership.

Average monthly budget: 50,000 THB

Includes rent, daily costs of living, coworking membership, entertainment, occasional Western meals and purchases of Western goods.

Short Term Stays

For short-term arrivals, we find best prices for Thai bookings on Agoda [<http://agoda.com>]. Housing arrangements on AirBnB.com are also available in Thailand, but more expensive.

A hostel stay starts around 500 THB per day for a shared dorm, or 800 THB per day for private double room.

A monthly 1-bedroom rental in the city runs 7,500 - 20,000 THB, plus utilities, with a lease.

Reasonable & well-reviewed 3 and 4-star hotels/serviced apartments range between 1250 to 2550 THB daily, usually including pool & breakfast.

Long Term Stays

Those staying more than 3 months will save cash by renting an apartment or asking locals, ideally ahead of time, for a place to share with other semi-permanent travelers. Foreigners making their home in Bangkok are frequently on the move, so you're likely to find at least monthly accommodation options by asking via Meetup.com or interest groups on Facebook. Whether renting temporarily or leasing for up to a year, ask other landlords (and ideally friendly locals), as the prices vary widely and foreigners aren't known to get the best offers. We recommend a short-stay or service apartment (rented nightly or monthly) if you're still figuring out how long you'll stay.

When renting, landlords ask for a one-year agreement, a month's rent in advance, and a security deposit equal to one or two months' rent which is returned to you at the conclusion of your lease. When dealing with a real estate company, agent, or apartment complex you may be able to get a 3-month or 6-month contract, but expect this to raise your monthly payments. It may be more financially optimal to sign a one-year lease and break your contract (thereby allowing your landlord to keep your deposit) after the desired length of your stay if you cannot secure a short-term lease on a place you badly want. Always ask about extra fees and average utility costs, and note that any cost expressed as "ground maintenance" is the responsibility of the building owner - not yours. Ask to see bills if possible. Usually, everything is open for negotiation.

We suggest Mr RoomFinder [<http://www.mrroomfinder.com>] and 9Apartments [<http://en.9apartment.com>] for finding an apartment, which allow for searching by area and price. As the cheapest apartments are not usually listed, ask a Thai friend for help in requesting information from specific complexes of interest.

Proximity to Skytrain public transit is a dramatic differentiating factor in housing costs. Those willing to walk a longer distance to Skytrain stations, take busses, or take cabs can save significantly on rent, but will end up paying with time in Bangkok's gridlocked traffic.

- Basic private room (3,000-5,000 THB): Usually single room studios with an ensuite bathroom and balcony, but no kitchen. They're furnished with a bed, table or desk, and sometimes a closet. If you're on a tight budget, look for apartments near university neighborhoods.
- Studio apartment (5,000-15,000 THB): Good location, more space, and nicer amenities with possible swimming pool or gym. We like City Home Ratchada.
- 2 bedroom apartment (15,000-25,000 THB): Fancy studio near the Skytrain or 2 bedroom apartment with kitchen in good location with quality furnishing, including gym or pool. We like the Sathorn Grace Serviced Residence on Sathorn Rd and the Light House Serviced Apartments in Sukhumvit.
- Large 2-3 bedroom apt (25,000-50,000 THB): Ideal location and furnishing, tasteful decoration, spacious rooms, wealthy neighbors. You'd might even attract fellow nomads with a pad like this - this level of housing is often turned into a hacker house for ongoing projects. We like the Nosi Residence at Yannawa, as well as the Monaco Serviced Apartments or Citadines both in Sukhumvit.
- Luxurious 3-5 bedroom apt (+65,000 THB): You might as well open a resort - or at least AirBnB any extra space. A gated community, private pool, trendy furniture and art. Might come with included Internet & utilities, as well as homemaker. We like the Oakwood Residence on Narathiwat Rd (3-bedroom).

Readers should note that even the lowest budget rentals are kept clean and secured, usually with key card entry doors and a night guard. Serviced apartments will be better furnished and come with cleanup staff, but raise the price about 25%.

Utilities & Internet

Thais and foreigners all pay the same utility costs, and are always billed by unit expenditure. They are always billed monthly. Water is usually 17 THB/unit, power is usually 7 THB/unit.

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Water costs average to at 200-300 THB with a single user, and go up 100-200 THB per additional resident.

Power costs average 150 THB for multiple chargers (laptop, phone) and a personal fan - per resident. Using an air conditioner will significantly increase these costs.

Internet costs average at 1,500 THB per month, without installation costs. If you don't have Internet at home, negotiate with your landlord or realtor install it - it's not easy work even for a Thai-speaking local. Set aside at least a day to get it done right.

Air conditioning will increase your electricity bill significantly, but utilities are affordable otherwise. Watch out for condominium owners, who sometimes add their percentage of utilities to the unit price - which sometimes is as much as 50 percent extra.

Work

Getting Connected: WiFi & Mobile

Bangkok has over 20,000 open WiFi access points across the city. The most convenient is labeled 3BB_WiFi, offering 6-12 hours of open Internet access with each login, interrupted by occasionally scheduled public router refreshes before returning online. Cafes, restaurants, hotels, coffee shops, malls, and even many stores all offer their own WiFi connections, available to customers. Speeds range between 2 Mb/s to 10 Mb/s download at public locations. Private net speeds match or exceed 20Mb/s download.

Thai cell phone networks are generally fast and reliable, and as of 2013 provide 3G across most of Thailand. Your options are AIS, DTAC for excellent prepaid service, or True Move for a long-term contract. You can purchase the SIM at any electronics store (SIM cards at airports are not recommended, as the price will be inflated) and recharge available funds at 7-Eleven stores across the country. TrueMove True 3G is our favorite option.

Coworking Spaces

Creatives, developers, and entrepreneurs have spread the coworking trend to Bangkok soon after 2010. New locations open every year. While not exhaustive, the following are favorite work spaces for each of 3 budget ranges.

Hubba - Nomad Favorite



What: Bangkok's first tech/creative-centric coworking space with all the polish of back home. Includes meeting rooms, quick Internet, a great library, free drinks, and on-site events. Hubba is 10 minutes from BTS Ekkamai on Soi Ekkamai 4. 10 rooms and 50 desks, frequented by local and foreign entrepreneurs and remote staff.

Prices: Daily 260 THB | Flexible 20 4,400 THB | Monthly 4,650 THB + Perks

Where: 19 Soi Ekkamai 4, Sukumvit 63 Rd. Prakanong Nua, Wattana Bangkok, Thailand 10110 [<http://goo.gl/maps/S9T7n>]

Web: <http://hubbathailand.com>

BaseCAMP - Value Pick

What: BaseCAMP offers plentiful desks and meeting rooms at the lowest rates in town, all from a central Bangkok location 3 minutes from the Lumphini MRT. Entrepreneurial and tech-focused ventures led by both Thais and locals make their home here. 300sqm with 60 seats & free meeting rooms. Supported by WebMob & AlphaFounders. Office 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM, but 24/7 access for members.

Prices: Daily 199 THB | Weekly 999 THB | Monthly 3,499 THB | Team Packages | Free 1 day for Individuals, 1 week for teams

Where: 1032/1-5 Rama IV Khwaeng Thung Maha Mek, Krungthep Mahanakorn 10120 - Krits Building 2nd floor

Web: <http://www.basecamp-bangkok.com>

Kliquedesk - Premium Package



What: Styled with a flair of futuristic professionalism, Kliquedesk is a full-service shared office (complete with kitchen) in Bangkok's Central Business district (5 minutes from ASOKE BTS/MRT). 50 desks and 14 rooms . Extra perks include free parking, a PO box, and receptionist services. They even offer virtual office services to provide a physical address for needs like registering a business. It's full-service, but also full price. Open 9:00 AM to 7:00 PM, closed Sundays.

Prices: Daily 325 THB | Monthly (Office) 21,000 THB | Virtual 2,300 THB

Where: 94 Soi Sukhumvit 23 (Prasarnmitr), Sukhumvit Rd., Klongtoey Nua, Watthana BKK 10110 TH

Web: <http://kliquedesk.com>

ServCorp - Corporate Cubicles

What: The familiar grey squares will make you feel like you never left home to travel around the world after all! We suggest hotel lobbies or business centers if you'd like to impress a new business partner, but only if you must:

Prices: Monthly +999 THB

Web: <http://servcorp.com/en/locations/worldwide-locations/bangkok>

Relax

Expats tend to cluster together in Thailand. While rural areas will make spotting foreigners a rarity, Bangkok is full of zones almost fully dedicated to travelers. Bangkok is host to Thailand's most thriving expat community, though nomads will most frequently be found in both Bangkok and Chiang Mai. Bangkok's tourist attractions are some of the popular in the world. Retail shopping is world-class on both the premium and bargain ends, though in different parts of the city. From day to night, bars, clubs, affordable massage parlors, and spas are great places to unwind and meet fun foreigners and locals.

Bars

Vertigo Rooftop Bar - Located on Sathorn road, this high-end bar/restaurant resides on top of the Banyan Tree Hotel. As this bar is located above the 60th floor of a five star hotel, you'll need to pull more out of your wallet than at other locations in Bangkok. Visitors, however, admit that the view is worth the extra THB. Keep in mind that in upscale bars such as Vertigo, a more formal dress code will usually be in effect. For 2,600+ THB, you can enjoy a full three course meal in addition to your already upscale evening here.

Park Society - Nestled into the 29th floor of the Sofitel So Bangkok hotel, this rooftop bar hosts a great view of the expansive Lumpini Park. While a guest of Park Society, you can order a selection of tapas that start at a price of 1,000 THB. Drinks are relatively inexpensive compared to other locations (290 THB for a glass of wine) and private alcoves can be purchased for the night at a price of 500 THB.

Sky Bar - This rooftop bar at the Lebua State Tower has been made famous by the film Hangover II. If you're a fan of the movie, order a Hangoverini created in celebration of the film. 63 floors up, this location is a hot spot and always crowded. You'll be hard pressed to find a seat and the staff have a way of herding customers up and away from the most picturesque locations. This is not your destination if you're looking for a relaxing evening with friends.

Hangouts that offer a different atmosphere to the British pub ambiance include the Siam Society, the Foreign Correspondents Club, Alliance Francaise, The British Club and The Goethe Institute. Most nomads meet through mutual interests - for example, The Living Room in the Sheraton Hotel on Sukhumvit attracts jazz fans, while the Hard Rock Cafe in Siam Square draws rock enthusiasts.

Dance Clubs

Levels Club & Lounge - This club hosts two club rooms along with a rooftop lounge area. This location has free entry on most nights and is a popular expat location. Though low on seating, there are many standing tables near the bar. This location has no official dress code, but nonetheless there will be groups arriving with the intention of looking good and being seen. Friday nights will often be burlesque or Playboy Mansion themed.

Demo Nightclub - Built to look like an old factory, (exposed brick walls, graffiti, and exposed piping included) Demo is one of the hippest places for in-the-know expats and wealthy Thais to rock out to dubstep or hardbeat. Beers start at 220 THB and their multi-page cocktail menu begins at 250. For 2,000 THB you can order a top-shelf bottle for your table. Connected to Demo is it's sister club, Funky Villa. Here, unlike in Demo, the crowd is more laid-back and you can expect more R&B and house.

Grease Nightclub - This venue hosts everything you will need for a night on the town in Bangkok. Inside you will find a restaurant, dance venue, live music bar, and a tree-lined rooftop lounge area. Getting to this location can be troublesome, requiring a cab beyond the closest BTS station. If you make the trek, however, you'll get a full night of fun, ending, if you wish, with an open-air, no-shoes hookah retreat on the roof.

Dining

Issaya Siamese Club Restaurant - This location is a perfect place for a couple. Outside of the restaurant, the garden is peppered with comfortable bean bag chairs for guests to relax in with a drink before dinner. With an outdoor porch, an indoor dining room, and an upstairs location with rooms dedicated to small parties, you'll want to take a walk around the place before sitting down to eat. Dishes are authentic Thai, and if you're unsure what to order go with the chef recommendations for something unexpected.

Le Du Restaurant and Wine Bar - Le Du means 'season' in Thai, and has confused more than one foreigner looking for a French restaurant. This restaurant is hard to find, tucked in between Silom and Sathorn road on a thin out-of-the-way soi. It is, however, rising in popularity quickly. With it's unique Thai recipes, combined with an international flair, this location may soon have a beaten path to the front door.

Nahm Restaurant - This location is ranked as one of the most exquisite restaurants in the world. If you're looking for five star Michelin-level cuisine, this restaurant

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is for you. Meals can be ordered a la carte, but the set menu is the best option for experiencing the full range of sweet, sour, and spicy options available at this location. This restaurant can be found on Sathorn Road, very close to a conveniently located BTS station.

Cafes

Library Cafe - It can be challenging to find a good cup of coffee in Bangkok, but this location, conveniently near a Sukhumvit BTS station, is a great place to sit quietly and read a book. Open till 9PM, it's a convenient place to chat with friends all day long.

Kuppa - All day breakfast makes this location a great stop for the late-rising sleeper. With Western favorites such as eggs Benedict and pancakes and more hearty meals such as pizza and pasta, you're able to enjoy this cafe no matter the time of day. This location is a favorite for some hearty food in addition to your much needed coffee.

Greyhound Cafe - One of the most famous cafe's in Bangkok, this cafe is a great location for cheap food in a variety of styles. Chicken wings, salads, and spaghetti are all available. This is a must-visit location in Bangkok to spend a day with friends or people watch from your seat on the couch.

Spas and Massage Parlors

So Thai Spa - Located just off of Sukhumvit, this location has a wide breadth of packages for any budget. Prices ranging from 1,300 THB for a basic foot massage to 5,000 THB for a luxury four-hour couples massage. So close to the rest of the rest of the action in Bangkok, there's no reason to enjoy the city without a stop by this location.

Spa Athenee - Fit with private massage rooms, a beauty salon, a steam bath, and a sauna, this spa is located on the east side of Lumpini park. Close to most main bus routes, this spa is easy to reach and remains open until 10PM every night. Massages start at close to 2,500 THB, and range nearly up to 10,000. Couples massages are available as well as exfoliations, body wraps, and even a haircut!

Spa at Face - This spa will bring you back in time. Nestled in between wooden Thai houses on Sukhumvit, this location uses old-school techniques including body scrubs with traditional Thai herbs and massages focused on specific body regions. After your massage, grab a drink at the Face Bar or eat at the Indian restaurant housed in the same building.

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CITY GUIDE: CHIANG MAI

City Highlights

Chiang Mai is Bangkok's calmer cousin, like San Francisco to New York, with a wide variety of different neighborhoods and many foreigners who are based permanently in the area. Chiang Mai is an unpretentious place with plenty of budget eateries and lodging options, with plenty of ways to invest in comfort and enjoyment. Your purchasing power in Chiang Mai is almost twice as strong than in Bangkok, especially with rent costs being dramatically lower than in the capital. Flights and transit abroad from Chiang Mai are still very reasonable given a local airport and well-connected bus routes, though some international goods and services will be harder to find. Chiang Mai has more to offer than Bangkok in terms of daily spirituality, a more widespread focus on health and wellness, and more immediate proximity to natural beauty.

Visiting Chiang Mai between February and April is not recommended. The climate turns to smoke from surrounding coming from agricultural towns during crop burning. Air quality is so poor that most foreigners leave during this period, while many locals are actually stricken with life-threatening respiratory and heart issues from breathing in the thick smoke covering the city.

Food

Chiang Mai is representative of Northern Thai cooking, which is quite distinctly flavored and prepared compared to Bangkok. The diversity of options both foreign and Thai is secondly only to Bangkok. The range and value of options is absolutely staggering here, even of foreign food. It's a food tourist's paradise!

Food stall meals usually runs at 30-60 THB from common food stalls, where foreigners and locals normally pay the same prices.

Sit-down Thai restaurant meals usually cost 80-150 THB per person with a beer or coconut to drink and a shared appetizer. International restaurant meals usually cost 100-300 THB per person for a main course and a drink.

A Khantoke Dinner & Show, which translates to "small bowl, low table" is a good way to try a variety of food and simultaneously experience some Thai culture.

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We recommend many of the same favorites from our Bangkok city guide, but here are some novel North Thai dishes:

- Khao Soi is a fried yellow wheat noodle served in a curry broth with chicken (gai) or beef (neua), or sometimes with fish or vegetables.
- Hang Ley is a Lanna-style pork curry also very popular with locals.
- Vegetable dishes: There are plenty of vegetarian options available in Chiang Mai, and even raw/vegan diets are well represented.

Thai and Western food availability at all price ranges is easily accessible in the Old City and Night Bazaar areas especially, though the quality in the Night Bazaar is worse in proportion to how catered to tourists it is. Cooking classes in Chiang Mai are really worth doing, as the hosts will even take you to the farm where the goods you'll prepared are growing.

Transit

Chiang Mai's once-popular air condition bus service is no more, but the everyday transport options are similar in fashion to Bangkok.

Songthaew are large communal pickup trucks seating as many as 12 riders going in the same direction. They make regular stops and sometimes also grab passengers on the way. Ask your host for the best ways to get around with these taxis if you don't plan on hiring them outright, as the schedules change frequently. Red songthaew are free agents with whom you'll be able to negotiate a specific destination on the spot (usually 20 THB within the city, +60 outside) depending on the quantity of riders. Prices must be negotiated up front! Specific routes are described in the Map section. Flagging down a driver going in your direction like any other cab, negotiate the per person price, and ring the bell inside the truck to request drop-off when you're at your destination.

Tuk tuks are smaller personal 2-3 wheeled taxis that cost a bit more to rent (especially near tourist zones), but can get you anywhere in the city quickly and conveniently. Prices range 40-100 THB, up to your negotiation. Taxis are around the same price as tuk tuks.

Motorbike rentals continue to be the best way to get around the city. A daily rental runs around 150-200 THB/day, while monthly rentals are reduced to 2,500 THB. Some locations may request a passport to reserve the bike. Under no circumstance should you leave your passport with anyone, unless they're responsible for extending your visa. A better option will be your ID with a cash deposit.

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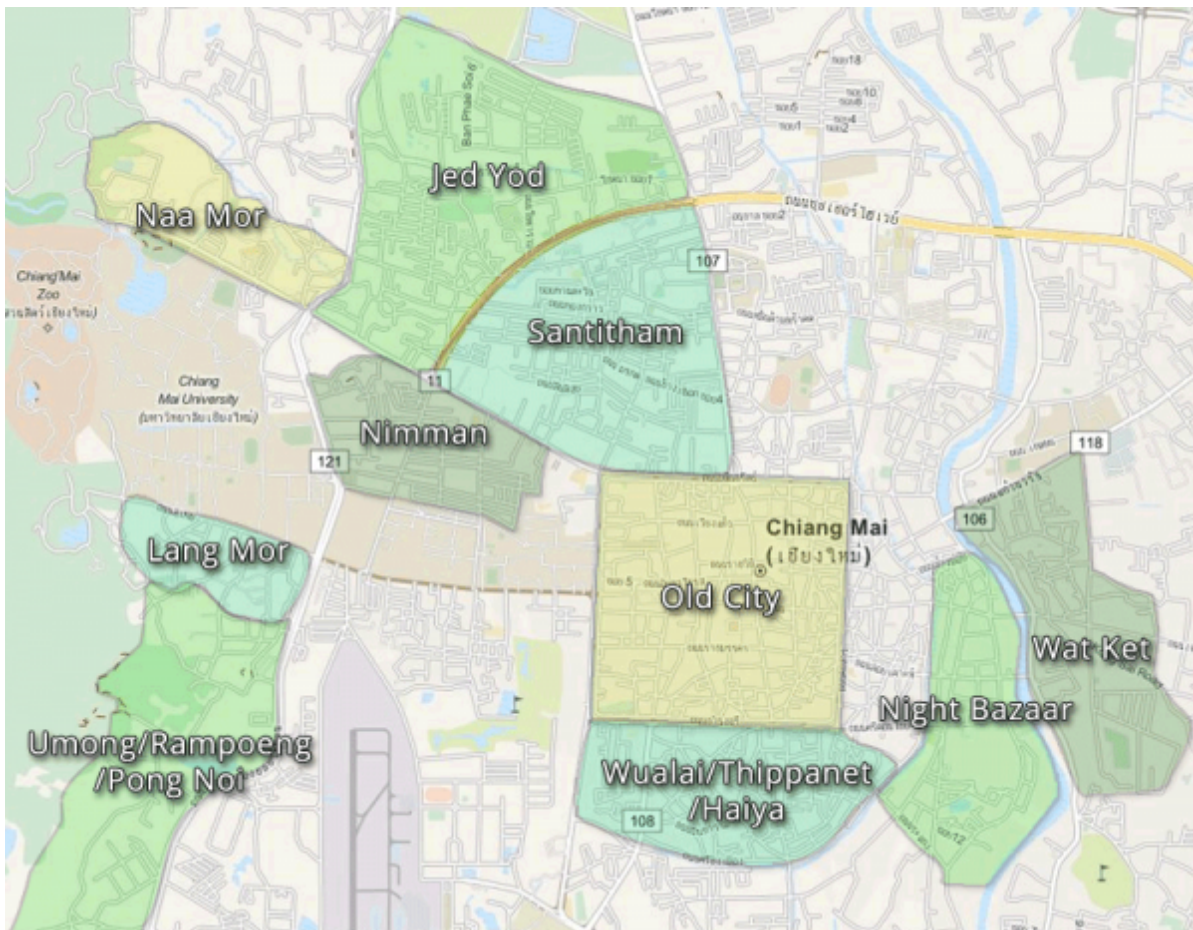
Safety

The Bangkok guide introduces the basics of Southeast Asian safety protocols. Chiang Mai is safer and calmer than Bangkok and Ho Chi Minh City, and experiences very little violent crime. The city is safe, even at night, with plenty of helpful locals and foreigners to keep eyes on one another. Pickpocketing remains the most popular crime in Chiang Mai, so keep eyes on your bags and watch for youth on motorbikes. Be careful about buying souvenirs and always haggle. Haggle at least as aggressively with your drivers about price and know your times in advance.

Two common swindles are seen in Chiang Mai:

- The sale of worthless gems for inflated values at Chiang Mai jewelers.
- The tuktuk scam, during which the driver tells you a tourist destination is closed and takes you to elsewhere that is far from your location. The driver then earns a cut for bringing in customers to the local business at your destination.

Explore the Neighborhoods



Chiang Mai very similar to San Francisco, in that there is not a single “main” downtown area, but rather a diverse range of neighborhoods with vastly different adventures available. The Old City and Night Bazaar tend to be the most active areas of the city, with the Old City especially drawing a lot of foreign tourists and nomads on first arrival.

On exploring the city, you’ll meet many foreigners who have made Chiang Mai their permanent home. The city and nearby surroundings hold some of Thailand’s most famous temples as well as its most comprehensive historical and artistic museums, which any good hostel or landlord can point you towards for a particular curiosity. Enjoying Chiang Mai’s nature also means taking an elephant trek, which will be just a few hours from the city and might include a visit to a hill tribe.

The city has gradually grown out from the core of the Old City east towards the Ping River and collecting around the Night Bazaar, where much of the city’s nightlife and accommodations are. Loi Kroh Rd is considered the core of Chiang Mai’s nightlife, though it’s still not quite on the level of Bangkok.

To truly experience Chiang Mai, locals insist you see the Doi Suthep temple view, eat a bowl of the northern Thai noodle favorite kao soi, and buy yourself a symbolic umbrella from Bo Sang. Of all three of these, Phrathat Doi Suthep is absolutely not to be missed. 18km from town at 1,073m elevation on the slope of Mount Suthep, the temple location was selected by a blessed elephant who died on the very spot on which the temple was founded, marking it as an auspicious location. Get there by climbing the +300 steps and the view as well as the experience will be well-earned.

Urban

The Old City

The Old City is a great place to start your journey, and is kind of a unique ecosystem unto itself. It’s Chiang Mai’s tourist epicenter without being too noisy or overwhelming, while also offering countless lodging and food options. The density of options for food, work, play, and culture will appeal to any backpacker and nomad, especially the East Gate, called Thapae Gate, and the central East to West road, called Rachadamnoen. If that’s a little too much for you, look for some cafes in the winding lanes of the Northern or Southwestern areas of the Old City. The entire district is surrounded by ancient walls and a shallow moat that gives it a sense of being a world unto itself.

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In these clusters, you'll find guest houses and boutique hostels in which to stay, which might be a good idea to explore a little during your first week. It'll let you stay among the greatest concentration of not just restaurants, work-friendly coffee shops, and bars - but also the greatest density of temples and religious sites in all of Thailand. Some of the most famous temples of Chiang Mai will be minutes away from one another walking within the Old City.

There are many temples worth seeing in the Old City, but the following are our favorites:

- Wat Phra Singh (Singharaj & Rajdamnern Rd) is famous in Thailand for its red-gold temple murals, much of which was constructed in the 13th century.
- Wat Chiang Man (Rajpakinai Rd) is the oldest royal temple in Chiang Mai thought to have been constructed in 1296, while the two oldest Buddha images it houses are thought to be 1,800-2,500 years old, with a third made of crystal thought to bring rain.
- Wat Chedi Luang (Prapokklao Rd) isn't as centrally located, but is one of the oldest and most standout temples in Chiang Mai for what it has withstood: built in 1401, damaged by an earthquake in 1545, and just repaired in 1992, it's built in a unique classic style rarely seen in Thailand now.

Wualai

The three neighborhoods - Wualai, Thippanet, and Haiya - are generally called Wualai for short. It's nice to be able to keep the name simple, as the dense streets of the area are truly a maze. Hidden within are great shops and cafes, and on Saturdays the area opens up into a walking street market right on Wulai Road. Rentals here are close to the Night Market and Old City, generally quieter than either of those two areas, and slightly more affordable for month-to-month stays. It'll be difficult to live here without some type of bike or moped transit, so figure out your transport strategy in advance.

The Night Bazaar

The Night Bazaar is more popular and festive than the laid-back Old City, catering more to tourists. Don't waste much time at the Bazaar: popularity with tourists has made the quality of all goods sold in the area worse, while the price much higher. Shopping almost anywhere else in Chiang Mai will be a better bet for good souvenirs - just go for inspiration. It's a pretty noisy and dense area to live in, with all the bars and restaurants surrounding the area not being very good, either. Ratchadamneon

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Rd hosts the main Sunday night walking street market from Tha Phae Gate to the popular Wat Phra Singh. For the best experience though, live anywhere else.

Nearby, you can find the Kalare Boxing Stadium with Muay Thai fights every Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday from 9:00 - 1:00 AM (400-600 THB). It's not necessarily the best Muay Thai arena, but it's easy to drop in and see how you enjoy it.

Nimmanhaemin

Nimmanhaemin, nicknamed "Nimman" is Chiang Mai's trendy spot. Close to Chiang Mai University and easily accessible from the Superhighway, Nimman is a constant parade of new restaurants, cafes, wine bars, art galleries and other upscale venues. Most of the action takes place on the side streets between Nimmanhaemin Rd and Srimangkalajarn Rd to the east. Upscale condominiums are popping up like weeds and real estate prices are some of the highest in the city, but it's still easy to sublet a place for a reasonable rate and there are plenty of boutique hotels around. While Nimman is quite far from the Old City and Night Bazaar (in Chiang Mai terms, anyway), it's always easy to find a songthaew or tuktuk to take you where you want to go.

Santitham

Well-placed between Nimmanhaemin and the Old City, Santitham is an up and coming neighborhood with a lot of young people. It includes Kad Thani, the city's most largest and most trafficked fresh market, as well as many recently opened bars and restaurants. Santitham is a very accessible place to live and has apartments and condos to suit every budget. The main areas along Santitham Rd can get noisy with traffic, but there are plenty of quiet backstreets.

Suburban

Naa Mor

Naa Mor translates directly to "in front of Chiang Mai University," and covers the north side of CMU along Huay Kaew Rd. There are plenty of especially affordable restaurants and food markets in Malin Plaza. Naa Mor also offers shopping, with a heavy focus on apparel and cosmetics. You can find some upscale condo residences on Huay Kaew Rd, with slightly cheaper options further north in Chang Khian. You'll be able to rent a songthaew or tuktuk to make travels easier, though we always recommend a rented moped.

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Lang Mor

Lang Mor translates directly into “behind CMU,” stretching between Suthep Rd to the mountain. You’ll find restaurants, cafes, and bars catered more towards the CMU students rather than visiting foreigners, with dramatically lower prices. The students also get their midnight cravings satisfied with one of the largest nightly food markets along Suthep. Lang Mor is great for budget accommodations with plenty of student apartments for expenses less than 5,000 THB/month. It’s not really the top recommendation if you can afford more than the bare minimum expenses.

Jed Yod

Its name is derived from the largest temple in the neighborhood, Jed Yod is a quiet residential part of the city inhabited mostly by locals with many small streets and individual houses. The supply of housing here is dependable but not as easy to find. Visiting the area in person is the best way to look for rental homes and ask for the owner about terms. Be warned, however, that public transit is not easy to find here and you will require motorized transport like a moped to get around.

Wat Ket

Between the Ping River and the superhighway, Way Ket is home to Chiang Mai’s oldest missionary institutes, with a special cluster of restaurants, bars, and art galleries on Charoenrat Rd. Home rentals here can be nice as well as affordable, but transport is abysmal.

Umong, Rampoeng & Pong Noi

Offering a deeply traditional environment that has largely disappeared from the rest of Chiang Mai, these three neighborhoods offer some restaurants and tasteful housing options through the main and side streets, but to live here you’ll need to have a personal mode of transit.

Live

Cost of Living

Chiang Mai is popular with foreigners but is enough off the international radar that you can lead a marvelous life at as little as half the cost of Bangkok, and maybe even at a quarter at the cost of your home city. Accommodations are cost-effective, even by Thai standards, and you'll be able to find everything from a simple no-frills guesthouse to full-service high-rise hotels and resorts, especially close to the Old City. Proximity to the Old City and Night Bazaar increases rental costs, the two together representing the "core" of the city.

Most foreigners will be comfortable with 22,000 THB per month, which includes rent, daily costs of living, entertainment, occasional Western meals and some type of rented work environment.

By living here on a small budget but still mostly eating away from home, working out of cafes, and cutting down entertainment, it can be possible to live comfortably in Chiang Mai for under 16,000 per month.

Locals typically earn 10,000 THB a month after graduation from a local university, which is enough to live happily.

Minimum monthly budget: 15,000 THB

Assumes a shared or studio home not too far from the Old City & Night Bazaar, maybe near Chiang Mai University. Does include eating out regularly, which will generally be cheaper than cooking for yourself.

Average monthly budget: 25,000 THB

Assumes a nice studio or 2-3 person apartment with friends complete with housekeeping, perks like a pool and potentially gym access, and 3 meals out each day as well as occasional drinks. Includes the rough cost of a coworking space in Chiang Mai, too.

Short Term Stays

A hostel stay starts around 250 THB per day for a shared dorm, or 500 THB per day for a private room. The cheapest are around 150 THB, but may not include hot water. We love Buddy Guest House, at THB 320 per night for shared rooms. It is in the Old City and close to the Night Bazaar. Their private rooms cost about 500 THB.

[\[http://buddyguesthouse.com\]](http://buddyguesthouse.com)

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A monthly 1-bedroom rental in the city with AC, TV, a kitchenette in about a 25 square meter space are priced about 5,000-7,500 THB/month, though WiFi and utilities may be charged separately. On the low end of the budget you'll find accommodations further from the city that may not include hot water.

3 and 4-star hotels and serviced apartments range between 920-2300 THB daily, usually including pool & breakfast as well as some type of resort amenities.

An AirBnB stay can run over 32,500 THB per month for great locations and refined accommodations.

Most searches can be done through the following websites:

- 1StopChiangMai [<http://www.1stopchiangmai.com/hospitality/guesthouses>]
- Airbnb [<https://airbnb.com/s/Chiang-Mai-Thailand>]
- Agoda [<http://agoda.com>]
- HostelBooker [<http://hostelbooker.com>]

Long Term Stays

For long term housing searches, we recommend ThaiApartments [<http://thaiapartments.net>] and ChiangMaiProperties [<http://chiangmaiproperties.co.th>], but as with most Southeast Asian locations, you're likely to find better deals in person or through personal referrals. Out of season (May-October) rates drop by as much as 30-40 per cent.

Many apartments found online demand a minimum stay of three months, though you might be able to negotiate a month-to-month contract if you speak with the owner directly. Apartments also tend to be noticeably more expensive with the addition of a kitchen, which just doesn't break even, when considering the low cost of local food options. We suggest eating out rather than getting a kitchen in Chiang Mai.

Basic Private Room (3,500-12,000 THB): Secured through a local homestay or extended rental of an otherwise by-day location, these rooms will be in shared buildings and might have a shared bathroom on the lower end, but should include WiFi and utilities. Expect the basics: a bed, fan, some basic furniture, and maybe a TV. The higher end would include private long-stay rooms at resorts and vacation rentals, with all the associated benefits. The lowest budget rooms will sacrifice proximity to the city and potentially lack hot water.

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Studio Apartment (5,000-12,000 THB): A medium-sized home with air-conditioning, in-home WiFi, a hot shower, and some kitchen appliances at the low end can be found on a 3-12 month lease. At the higher end, you'll also have security, a central location, housekeeping services, and TV with cable. Higher costs will also have enough room to fit two people in the shared space, with porch or patio, pool, and fitness center. These homes are found in Old Town, the Night Market, and South of the Moat. Many double as a service provider for booking treks into the wilderness, tourist services and even offer cooking courses.

2-3 bedroom apartment (7,000-25,000 THB): On the low end, you'll have air-conditioning, hot water, and some perks like fitness room access if you're in a complex. At the higher end of the price range, your accommodations become much more luxurious, with laundry services, a well-equipped gym, and a pool, maybe with a view. You'll have a stocked full kitchen, and maybe even free breakfast within your housing complex. Expect two bathrooms, a common room, and spacious living space for rent above 15,000 THB/mo. These are plentiful in the Old City and some of the nearby neighborhoods. Furnishing your own home on a 6-month to year-long lease isn't very expensive when buying local furniture.

Luxurious 3 bedroom (45,000-80,000 THB): Furniture from expert local craftsmen will fill a secured spacious villa, with staff on hand to help with cleaning, some cooking, and small requests. Full kitchen, full gym, multiple bathrooms, in-home washing machine, a pool, and additional perks like a sunroof, private garden area, or amazing view make these locations real gems. You'll likely be able to have 3-5 bedrooms and 3-5 bathrooms at this range. The attention to detail at this level can be truly impressive: quality wood flooring, recessed ceilings, a mix of ceramic or marble tile on floors or in bathrooms, solid wood doors, sufficient electrical outlets, hanging light fixtures, quality plumbing fixtures, and the full range of appliances.

Utilities & Internet

Not much is different between Chiang Mai and Bangkok on Internet choices considering international competition between carriers, with SMART continuing to work out for mobile service and your WiFi generally serviced by your landlord. Broadband is widely available in most suburban areas of Chiang Mai from cafes, restaurants, hotels, and malls. You can expect to pay 500 THB or more for internet speeds around 2-4 Mbps on an advertised 10 Mbps each month if you cater your own Internet. Thais and foreigners all pay the same utility costs, and are always billed by unit expenditure. They are always billed monthly. Watch for condominium owners, who sometimes add their percentage of utilities to the unit price - which can be as much as 50% extra!

Basic utilities in Chiang Mai (electricity, heating, water, garbage) for a 85 square meter apt generally run around 2,300 THB each month.

Work

Getting Connected: WiFi & Mobile

Internet speeds in Chiang Mai benefit from Thailand's intense telecom competition, and generally delivers speeds around 10-15Mbps on services that advertise 20Mbps. Free public WiFi is less widespread than in Bangkok, but WiFi-connected coffee shops are in abundance around the city. The coffee is generally not only more affordable, but also of better quality, given that the beans are grown and harvested closer to the source. Mobile speed ranges around 2-10 Mbps with a good provider, though it tend to be spottier and deliver far under advertised speeds.

Chiang Mai has many of the same options available as Bangkok for mobile providers, and we again recommend TrueMove TRUE 3G here.

Coworking Spaces

Punspace



What: Punspace is a quiet, collaborative place to work that historically attracted the majority of Chiang Mai's nomads and entrepreneurs, with a larger skew towards foreigners than most other spaces. You'll find open desks, private booths for calls, large meetings rooms equipped with TVs, and office equipment like a printer and scanner. The office has a branch in Nimman and in Tha Phae Gate. Each location has a small outdoor area that adds a serene natural beauty to the space. Open Mon-Sat 9am-6pm.

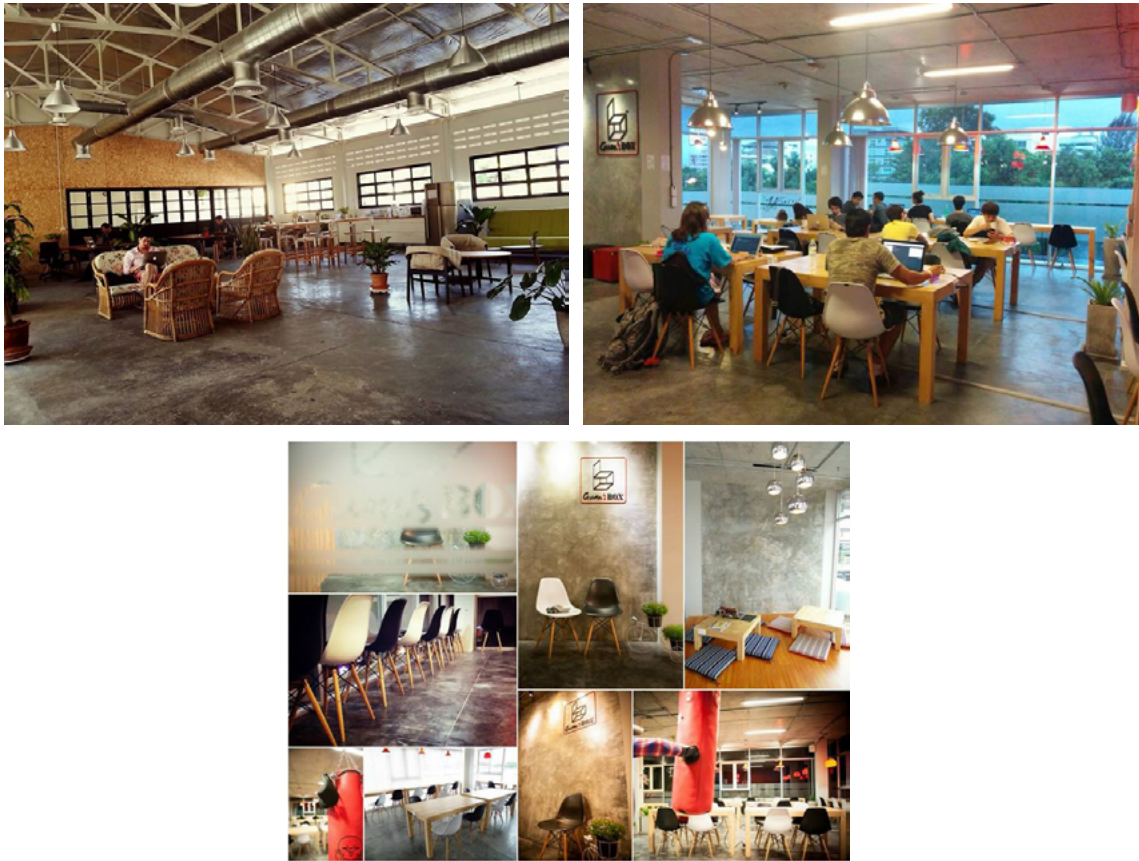
Prices:

- Visitor Pass @ 1 or 10 or 20 Flexible Visits (199 THB | 1899 THB | 3599 THB)
- Monthly - 3499 THB
- Quarterly 8999 THB + 1H Meeting Room & Free Locker
- Yearly - 27999 THB + 4H Meeting Room & Free Locker

Where: Punspace Nimman, 14 Sirimangkalajarn Lane 11, Muang, Chiang Mai 50200, Thailand

Web: www.punspace.com

Guru's Box



What: Spacious and creative, Guru's Box is a popular warehouse-sized coworking space for Chiang Mai's digital workers and often hosts popular events. The hours are very flexible, opening from 10:00 AM to 12:00 AM every day of the week. The majority of the space is open-desk with few offices, though there are some meeting rooms. Guru's Box will be best for solo workers or small teams not against a fair bit of interaction with other members. Perks include free beverages, parking, and lockers for members on contract.

Prices:

- Day 150 THB
- Week 1000 THB
- Month 3500 THB
- Discounta for Students & Longer Reservations

Where: Room 301, Kantary Terrace, Nimman Haemin Soi 12, Chiang Mai, Thailand

Web: <https://www.facebook.com/info.gurubox>

Relax

Chiang Mai is the more spiritual and relaxed counterpart to Bangkok's bustling lifestyle, with many yoga studios, massage studios and spas. The local scene generally appeals to slightly more work-focused or older expats, some who move to launch local lifestyle businesses serving primarily foreign clientele. Because of this, Chiang Mai also tends to be a more common place to start a family relative to the other cities in this book.

The city is also host to a major airport, making global or continental travel much easier, though marginally more expensive than Bangkok.

The Old City is a beautiful central cultural mecca and attracts hordes of foreigners to its bars and hostels - making it a great place from which to start your exploration of Chiang Mai. Live music and art is huge here, both from foreign and local residents: Chiang Mai is generally considered to be the country's artist capital. Some of the greatest local beauties, however, come from the region's natural wonders: Chiang Mai is near pristine mountain ranges, internationally-respected shrines, and hot springs.

Clubs and bars generally close around 1:00 AM, at which point the local nightlife moves to plastic seating at local beer gardens, hostel lobbies, or outdoor locations. The local culture tends to promote greater mixing between foreigners and locals, with a sense of equality and familiarity between cultures that is more rare in Bangkok. In addition, sex tourism tends to be less front-and-center than in Bangkok making it a more family-friendly destination.

Bars

THC Rooftop Bar - This bar is located on top of a tall building just past the Tapae Gate. It's a popular location for backpackers and budget travelers who are interested in kicking their shoes off and socializing to trance music. There is no cover charge to enter this location, and the venue closes at 1:00 AM.

Spicy - This location is one of the few in Chiang Mai that remains open past 1:00 AM. This location has a slightly dark and seedy vibe, but the dance floor fills with travelers from around the world every weekend. Spicy is located just north of the Tapae Gate and with no cover charge it is your best option to dance into the night long after most other venues have shut down.

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Northgate Jazz Co-op - Backpackers and long-time Chiang Mai residents alike love the Northgate Jazz Co-op for its open mic nights, jam sessions, and of course, live jazz. Located on Sri Phoom Road on the north side of Old City just inside the moat that surrounds the district, this location has no cover charge but closes at 1:00 AM every night.

Dance Clubs

Mandalay - This hip dance location charges foreigners a 300 THB cover upon entry. If you have a work permit or a driver's license you may be able to enter for free, but don't expect it to work at all times! Popular among Thais as well as travelers, this is one of the biggest venues in Chiang Mai. It is located on the south end of Moon Muang Road.

Fabrique - Located on the first floor of the President Hotel (located outside the Old City moat on Wichayanont Road) this venue is upscale, expensive, and caters heavily to wealthy Thais. There is a cover charge for foreigners of 300 THB and if you want to enjoy a drink with your disco you will be paying more than at most venues in the city.

Zoe in Yellow - This venue, located just inside the moat on Ratwithi Road, is popular among both Thais and backpackers. There is no cover charge and drinks are relatively cheap. If you find yourself hungry while strolling between their two separate music locations there is food available for you to purchase late into the night.

Dining

The Good View Restaurant - Popular among the local Thais, this location is a great place to enjoy entertainment along with your meal. Be aware, however, that once the bands start playing you'll be hard pressed to hold quality conversation. This riverside venue is located on Charoenrat Road.

The House Restaurant - Located on Moon Muang Road, this venue is well known for its Asian fusion dishes and atmosphere of exclusivity. Settle in for a full dinner or, if you're looking for lighter fare, head to the bar and enjoy the tapas menu with a drink or two. Open until 11:00 PM, this is a good location to visit for a special occasion.

Palaad Tawanron - The location for this restaurant is unbeatable. Nestled among the forest on the low slopes of Suthep Mountain this location boasts some of the best

views in Chiang Mai. Arrive early if possible, as this location fills up quickly and the wait for your food will become longer than appreciated.

Cafés

Librarista - This café feels like an art museum with a barista. This sophisticated location boasts modern décor and many relaxing locations to sit back and surf the web. Their attached library is full of volumes in both English and Thai, so feel free to read a good book (if you didn't bring your own!) while sipping a 75 THB cappuccino.

Café de Thaan Aoan - This location will greet you with mellow music, Wifi, and comfy chairs and couches for relaxing or getting work done. There are indoor locations for seating as well as an outdoor area with both sunny and shaded places to sit. This location has many sweet treats available (try the chocolate rum balls!) if you're looking for something satisfying along with your 50 THB cup of coffee.

Sipping Coffee - Close to Chiang Mai University, this venue features unique decorations along with several caffeinated beverage options. You'll notice the model railway above your head as you walk in but your eyes will soon be drawn to the decorations adorning the walls and shelves of this small café. This location is perfect for getting work done, but if you're looking to relax they have a wide variety of books and magazines available for reading.

Relaxation

Viang Ping Massage & Spa - Providing northern-style Thai massages using pressure points and energy lines, Viang prides itself on a high level of personalized attention and a wide selection of services. Massages use homemade coconut oil and natural facials, body scrubs, and wraps. Prices average 200-250 THB.

Nanthikan Massage - Nanthikan has a great massage shop on the second floor at Somphet Market with a healthy distance from the noise of the street. Professional massages are offered in an air-conditioned enclosed location with quality ambiance and friendly staff. Each massage is completed with tea and dried fruit. Personalized massage courses are also available. Prices generally around +250 THB.

Fah Lanna Massage - Clients start in plush robes with a warm foot bath before settling into a decorated ambiance with soft music for their massage. Ginger tea and a cold towel follows every massage, and the price of the experience is reasonable though still not the cheapest around. Prices average around +200 THB.

Unique Experiences

Camping - Chiang Mai is surrounded by seven national parks. Most of these parks have cabins and huts to rent and it is very easy to purchase a tent for the night upon arrival. With it's beautiful landscape littered with canyons, Ob Luang National Park provides waterfall and cave hikes during the day and beautiful stargazing at night.

Doi Suthep Mountain - Stopping by this iconic location while visiting Chiang Mai is a must. In order to reach the monastery at the mountain peak you will need to climb up the 300 stairs of the Naga staircase. Weather permitting; the view of the city below is well worth the hike. The best time to visit this monastery is early in the morning. You'll miss the crowds and be able to watch the city lights flicker off as the sun rises above Northern Thailand.

Nighttime Markets - While malls are becoming more popular in Thailand, the best place to shop will always be the street markets. Some of the best locations in Chiang Mai are on Chang Klan Road and Wualai Road. In addition to the food, trinkets, and clothing you'll find in these markets, you'll see Thai ladies offering foot massages for as little as 150 THB per hour. Grabbing a massage while sipping a drink after a few hours of strolling through the market is a great way to spend an evening in Chiang Mai.

Hot Springs - If you're traveling to Chiang Mai during the winter, you'll be tempted to dive into some of the hot springs located in the surrounding national parks. The Fang Hot Springs and Pong Duead are two popular locations. Hiking during the day and spending the late evening in one of these locations is a good day plan for one of your weekends in Chiang Mai.

COUNTRY GUIDE: VIETNAM

Is Vietnam Right for You?

When you think of Southeast Asia before ever going, the kind of place you most likely imagine, if not Bangkok, is Vietnam. The city is a beautifully organized chaos, with diverse neighborhoods, each bringing a unique charm and lifestyle shared amicably among the Vietnamese, Chinese, Europeans, Australians, and Americans. Pessimistic tourists will complain about congested streets, smoggy air, and undrinkable water. Experienced travelers and digital nomads will celebrate this city for its range of lifestyles, from budget to 5-star, its diversity of mixed cultures, and the ingenuity Vietnam seems to buzz with.

Although the Vietnamese consumer market is very young in its development, you wouldn't know by the brands and tech most of the population carries. In Vietnam, consumption is expression - and expression is a very competitive business. The Internet is opening society and also introducing new global influences that are changing consumption habits. Social networking - especially Facebook and Twitter - and gaming are huge. Men and women in Vietnam are increasingly attracted to high-priced, trendy fashion items and global tech imports, favoring the globally popular and taking cues from the United States, South Korea, and Japan.

Another trend sweeping Vietnam is health: private gyms, private health insurance, private training, yoga, and independent hospitals are all booming - with huge demand for foreign goods and an international standard of service among rich Vietnamese. This also has an influence on demand for food quality and diversity: Vietnamese are asking for healthy foods with less pesticide use, no hormones, and general cleanliness, sometimes opting for international goods to get their fix. Finally, Vietnam leads most of Asia on the rights of gay, lesbian, and transsexual individuals, allowing parades and open expression of affection.

Climate

The weather of Vietnam is warm year-round, with the only difference in seasons apparent from the differing levels of precipitation. Vietnam has three somewhat distinct climates from North to South, with Ho Chi Minh City as part of the Southern region. The region experiences three distinct seasons:

- March to June: Hot and dry, peaking with April heats above 32°C (90°F).
- June to November: Wet and stormy season, with afternoon downpours and occasion flooding, and wild fluctuations in temperature before and after storms. Mosquitoes and tropical pests thrive in Vietnam during the rainy season, but it also coincides with the time frame during which the air is cleanest.
- December to February: Cool and dry, usually the most comfortable time to visit, with temperatures around 20°C (70°F).

History, Politics & Economy

Vietnam has been historically controlled by Chinese and French powers until a gradual slide into Communism during the time of the Cold War. Vietnam became part of a proxy war between capitalism and communism, with different world powers putting funds and weaponry into Vietnam to prove a political point until 1975. The country was left in shambles, but after independence in 1975 and the economic reforms (called “doi moi”, or renovation) of 1986, everything changed. Although Vietnam retains its centrally controlled Communist government, directed free-market reforms have made private businesses easier to establish, privatized agriculture and industrial sectors, and the inspiration of a very aggressive brand of Vietnamese entrepreneurship.

Vietnam, after a period of intense foreign investment and economic boom after following joining the World Trade Organization and the start of free market reforms, is experiencing slow growth due to systemic economic frailty and corruption. With 92.5 million people, Vietnam is the 15th most populous country in the world. Although the country creates a GDP of 170 billion USD, Vietnamese citizens see just 3,000 USD of it per year by capita - not much money at all especially considering rising base costs.

Vietnam has substantial trade deficits as locally produced goods haven't moved up the value chain, and fiscal deficits due to overspending on social subsidies to bandage rather than cure systemic problems. If things continue as they are, anger

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at food and energy prices may bring Vietnamese to the streets. An example of a politically sensitive opportunity, the renewable energy sector of Vietnam is begging for sophisticated ideas and investment, but the change is being held up by Vietnam's government, which has yet to privatize this specific sector of the energy industry.

Despite government controls, certain projections paint an optimistic picture of Vietnam in the near future. Vietnamese services are beginning to reach global markets, driven by low domestic pay and a desire by the youth to become globally involved. Foreign investment is already starting to reenter the country driven by global excitement about China and the Southeast Asia region as the next great economic powerhouse. The country is set to urbanize 50% of its population by 2040, if not sooner.

Cities of Interest

Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), the main focus of this guide, remains the country's economic and cultural capital, and it may very well become your home in Vietnam. To locals, the city also goes by the name of "Saigon", its pre-Vietnam War name. This is a landing zone for many foreigners, attracting as much interest as Bangkok, with its own growing startup scene, plenty of coworking spaces, and a number of investors and mentors available. It has been a common place from which to bootstrap a growing business, and Vietnamese startups are beginning to make moves onto the world stage. Still, dense cities come with a range of their own problems, from congestion of traffic to low quality air and water such that it shouldn't be drunk from the tap. On the bright side, the increased global attention has created a diversity of lifestyle options, including in terms of food, accommodations, adventures, and potential partners with whom to network.

Ha Noi, the political capital north of HCMC, celebrated its 1000th year anniversary recently, which reignited national ambitions and led to infrastructure improvements. It's another good place to save on living costs while building a business if HCMC is getting distracting, but the social environment and infrastructure is not as well developed. It's a beautiful location to visit and has much to offer in terms of Vietnamese cultural relics, though it is less popular among travelers. The prices tend to be a little lower, though the city has about as much on offer as HCMC.

Third-tier cities like Da Nang and Hoi Ai are also beginning to draw foreign attention, but mostly for tourism or real estate investment.

CULTURE GUIDE: VIETNAM

In a good year, the population can be swept into prosperity by rapid transformation, a growth of wealth across all social classes, and greater access to information and technology in places where previously little existed. In a bad one, the population can become jaded and guarded against a system they are convinced is systematically corrupt, angry at the rates of income inequality despite the growth, and grieve the state of human rights and privileges in Vietnam. The result can seem two-faced: these societies experience celebrated cumulative progress on a social level, but on the individual level it will mean shortcuts are being taken. On the individual scale, if you aren't winning over someone else, you're losing - thought if you're far ahead enough of the pack, you've earned your relaxation.

Mind

In Vietnam, attitudes differ greatly between generation and location. The older generation lives and plans in the future, and builds their lives around their families on the basis of tradition and balance. The younger generation is free-thinking and short-term oriented, placing more emphasis on material goods and status. They push for progressive ideas but when in a bind, resort back to the traditions their parents have passed down.

Most middle-class suburban or urban-dwelling young adults are competitive, equally present and future-oriented, and have a deep focus on family and long-term stability. In general, when the needs that create stability are fulfilled - a good career, a happy family, an honorable namesake - the Vietnamese are casual and relaxed. Until then, life is a battle. For better or worse, competition for resources, products, and services in Vietnam is a pulsating force of societal and personal growth.

Social Rights

Vietnam leads most of Asia on the rights of gay, lesbian, and transsexual individuals, allowing parades and open expression of affection. That said, some parts of the city at certain times of night will not be safe no matter your ethnicity or sexuality, so take precautions like bringing a friend or having a simple way of getting back home.

Political Influence

Vietnam has but one way to advance as a nation, and that's through the political will of its single ruling body, the Communist Party. While Vietnamese entrepreneurs, foreign investors, and the populist masses want to, in varying degrees, see greater local prosperity and international connectedness, the Communist Party has the last word in business. The market is healthy for exports, but unless the Communist Party wills it, there will not be greater market reforms. Without political competition, there's little room for change, not much of a push to foster innovation, and little help for small businesses compared to other regions of Southeast Asia. With the same people in power for often lifelong terms, corruption has worked itself deeply into the system, and the greatest control lies in the hands of wealthy Vietnamese long-time entrepreneurs in traditional industries.

Business

What matters in Vietnam is not how innovative or respected a venture is - it's how many people choose to pay for it. Like Indonesia, the Vietnamese optimize for customer acquisition with every means available. They compete ruthlessly to undercut prices, promote their products, poach talent, and even sabotage business rivals. They approach customers with the same levels of passion as they do their competition, though positively. After attracting a new customer with loud music, parades of employees holding signs, fireworks, flyer every block in a 15 mile radius, and getting some digital promotions in place, the Vietnamese sell hard. They're expert negotiators with centuries of experience as a barter culture, and you buying a single product and never returning again is the local definition of success. Customer retention through quality post-purchase service and loyalty offers is something of a rarity. Business is improving in terms of service now, too, strictly as an extension of competition.

Technology

In the world of the web, Vietnamese companies are very hardy, though it's not very common for a Vietnamese startup to move beyond Southeast Asia. The Vietnamese are positioned for success in franchising, logistics, e-commerce, fashion, scaled outsourcing (or "artificial artificial intelligence" using masses of affordably compensated clever people), and online-to-offline plays. The Vietnamese are more loyal than Indonesians as hires when given a chance to learn with a good team, with some of the best value marketing and development consultancies being run out of Vietnam.

Entrepreneurship

Business in Vietnam isn't necessarily innovative in the way Silicon Valley defines it, but rather in the way it competes: little is off-limits in the pursuit of financial glory and security for the family, which has created expert survivalists out of the local Vietnamese entrepreneurs. Similarly, those living in Ho Chi Minh City have gradually become masters of technology-enabled living, negotiating idyllic living locations, building a local social network, and developing an iron stomach for the delicious Vietnamese street food that will send the untrained foreigner stomach into misery.

VISA GUIDE: ENTERING AND STAYING IN VIETNAM

Types of Visas

Vietnam has a pretty convoluted visa scheme that is gradually being simplified as the country entered the ASEAN trade zone in 2015. Vietnam offers tourist, business, and investment visas, in addition to a "visa on arrival".

Visa On Arrival: Visas on arrival are the easiest way to "try out" life in Ho Chi Minh City, but for longer stays, visas obtained in advance of a trip are a good idea, and are described below.

Tourist Visa: The most common tourist visa comes in four forms: either 30 or 90 day stays, in the form of single-entry or multi-entry. The only difference in requirements between the 30 or 90 day visas and single-entry or multi-entry is cost and luck. You can pay a little extra to request the longest-lasting multi-entry visa, but oftentimes the results of your application are reliant on the humor of the consulate personnel reviewing your papers that day.

Business Visa: The business visa requires a business letter that can withstand consulate scrutiny, though having a local Vietnamese reference is a good start. If you use this visa to work or start a business in Vietnam, you can extend for up to 3 years into a residence card.

Investment Visa: Finally, a visa good for up to 12 months is available for foreigners entering Vietnam with a valid investment certificate to work on projects, though we won't cover the details here.

Visa Recommendation

You best options for spending an extended period of time in Vietnam are the 90 day tourist visas with a multi-entry allowance (considered a B3 Visa, with business allocation) and renewing them with a visa run as needed.

A single-entry visa expires the moment you leave the country, barring your return until you acquire a new visa. A multi-entry, on the other hand, allows for an unlimited number of departures from Vietnam within your 90-day time period. These cost 80 USD more than the cheapest available Vietnamese visa. A visa on arrival is also available for 30-90 days but requires hiring an agent in Vietnam to prepare for your arrival and is only eligible for arrival by air. While you're at the airport, exchange your money, as the rates are more competitive here than in the city.

A select few countries have easy entry into Vietnam, making them exempt from visa requirements for certain periods of time:

Exempt for 15 days: Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Japan, South Korea and Russia.

Exempt for 21 days: Philippines.

Exempt for 30 days: Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Laos.

All visas will require an original passport with at least 6 months of validity, and a passport-sized photo, in addition to the completed visa form linked below: [<http://www.vietnam-evisa.org/apply-visa.html>]

Interestingly, Vietnamese border officials prefer to take US currency above all (regardless of your origin country), but will also accept the local VND.

Below, we outline the specific documents and process required for obtaining each type of visa for entry into Vietnam.

Visa on Arrival

For arrivals getting into HCMC, Hanoi, or Da Neng, a visa on arrival is possible. It will require hiring an agent ahead of time to receive an approval letter. It is not simply a border check, as in countries like Thailand or Indonesia. The visa will be of the exact same validity and type as the tourist visas once approved. The process is simply a little more streamlined, eliminating your need to visit your local consulate. The visa cannot be used on land crossing, but rather, only on arrival into Vietnam by air. This option actually is cheaper than a traditional Vietnamese visa even after agent fees. Your process will work as follows:

1. Visit an VOA agency site and request an approval letter by answering any of the following questions on the site:
 - Full name
 - Nationality
 - Date of birth
 - Occupation
 - Passport Info: Number, Issue Date, Expiry Date
 - Date of arrival
 - Flight info: Flight number, arrival time, arrival airport
 - Visa purpose
2. Pay for the visa agent through the site by debit, credit, or PayPal. Vietnam Visa [<http://www.vietnamsvisa.com/vietnam-visa-fee.html>] is well-reviewed and competitively priced at 16 USD and up. Prices can be found as low as 9 USD or less if booked through a tour package that includes additional trekking or accommodations.
3. Receive your stamped approval letter by email within 2-3 days. It may have been handled in bulk, meaning your passport information will appear next to other applicants during the agent's single visit. Confirm that the dates of entry are correct, as you will not be allowed to enter Vietnam if the dates of your arrival do not correspond with the dates on your visa. Print this letter out and keep it securely with you. Having two copies stored in different parts of your luggage will help assure a smooth process in case you cannot access your baggage or lose a copy.
4. Fill out an Application for Entry and Exit Visa either ahead of time or at the Vietnamese airport on your arrival. Submit it to the desk marked "LANDING VISA," not Immigration Control, along with your passport photo.

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5. Pay for the visa at the airport. You must have this money in cash, preferably in U.S. Dollars or Vietnamese currency. No credit cards are taken, ATMs are not guaranteed, and other currencies are not always accepted (and if it is, no change is given).
Single Entry: 30 Day - 45 USD | 90 Day - 65 USD
Multiple Entry: 30 Day - 65 USD | 90 Day - 95 USD
 6. Receive your visa at the window when your name is called, or your passport is held up showing the photo page. Make sure to check your visa for mistakes while still at the window.

Tourist Visas (30-90 Day)

This visa isn't too difficult to get in your home country at a local Vietnam consulate. You'll wait 5 days to receive your 30-day or 90-day tourist visa, with options to rush at an additional cost. Your visa will have 90 days of validity from the moment you receive it before you need to be in Vietnam actively using your visa. You'll also need your passport, a passport photo, and your complete visa form.

1. Original passport, with 6 months of validity.
2. Passport photograph, 1 should be enough.
3. Visa fee for the appropriate time frame, payable immediately at the consulate.

Single Entry

30 Day: 100 USD for 5-day | 120 USD for next day | 130 USD for same day.

90 Day: 130 USD for 5-day | 150 USD for next day | 160 USD for same day

Multiple Entry

30 Day: 150 USD for 5-day | 170 USD for next day | 180 USD for same day.

90 Day: 180 USD for 5-day | 200 USD for next day | 210 USD for same day.

Business Visa

While the 3-month multi-entry visa is regarded as eligible for business, a visa to work as an agent of a US company in Vietnam or to work with a Vietnamese company directly still requires a traditional business visa. This allowance is made to be especially helpful to business owners, business partners of local Vietnamese entrepreneurs, or expert service providers like consultants or lawyers.

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You'll need the same visa form, passport photo, and eligible passport as for any Vietnamese visa, in addition to:

1. Business letter from a US or Vietnamese company printed on company letterhead addressed to the Vietnam Embassy with a signature from a senior manager. It should introduce you, talk about the business to be conducted, request a specific type and date range of the visa, and guarantee sufficient funds for travel.
2. Visa Fee, by single or multiple entry.

Single Entry

30 Day: 100 USD for 5-day | 120 USD for next day | 130 USD for same day.

90 Day: 130 USD for 5-day | 150 USD for next day | 160 USD for same day.

Multiple Entry

30 Day: 150 USD for 5-day | 170 USD for next day | 180 USD for same day.

90 Day: 180 USD for 5-day | 200 USD for next day | 210 USD for same day.

Arrival to Vietnam & Domestic Flights

For getting in, you'll likely fly into Tan Son Nhat airport, enjoying the brand new international terminal. If you'd like to travel to other destinations in Vietnam, the domestic terminal is much older but still readily used, making flights a great option for domestic transport. Costs can be as low as 640,000 VND for domestic flights.

Departure Tax & Overstays

Visa overstays are not a game. The official fee per day of overstay is 10-25 USD, but things are rarely ever that simple in Vietnam. By overstaying your visa even by a few days, you make yourself a possible target for scams, with stories of costs above 100 USD for 2 extra days over after a lengthy argument with powerful officials in back rooms. Visa extensions are simple and cheap, so do extend if you notice your flight out is even 1-2 days later than your visa expiration date. Most officials will not worry about it, but when you meet one who does catch it, or feels like they might be able to lighten your wallet before you depart, it will get expensive.

Visa Runs

Short-term departures from your home base country in order to renew eligibility for a local visa, also known as “visa runs” by frequent travelers, are a key aspect in Vietnam’s digital nomad scene as they are in Thailand and Indonesia. From Vietnam, you can book 15-minute border crossings or take flights to an “exotic” destination. Our favorite route involves taking the bus from Ho Chi Minh City to Phnom Penh, Cambodia. It is the cheapest option and pretty convenient given the number of daily departures, though the trip will take you 6.5 hours each way. Remember to get a visa directly from Phnom Penh, rather than through the internet, as online visas are not accepted when returning via land crossing.

The place to extend your Vietnam visa in Ho Chi Minh City is in District 1 at the following address:

*Vietnam Department of Immigration
161 Nguyen Du
Ben Thanh Ward
District 1
Ho Chi Minh City*

You’ll be getting your visa started in your own country and finalizing it at the airport, so there won’t be a need to visit this office unless you’d like to attempt extending your stay yourself.

Cheap flights from Vietnam to Bangkok, Singapore, and Kuala Lumpur are affordable via [Vietjet Air](#), [AirAsia](#), and [TigerAir](#).

Book through their sites, or use the following:

- Kayak [<http://kayak.com>], for estimating price fluctuations by season and location
- Google Flights [<http://flights.google.com>], for checking flight prices in real-time
- SkyScanner [<http://www.skyscanner.com>], for booking flights out of the area.

CITY GUIDE: HO CHI MINH CITY (HCMC)

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Vietnam's quality of life comes in a range: comfortable on a budget or extravagant. No matter your spending power, you'll still be subject to smoggy air and crowded streets, though a motorbike or living space close to District 1 will alleviate both pressures, even if only by reducing time of commutes. Air quality eases up a bit during the wet season, but smoke from crop burning during harvest season will make HCMC an uncomfortable place to stay during summer months.

The climate of Vietnam is warm and wet, especially during July-August. Unfortunately, nothing reduces the seemingly endless amount of traffic. Rather, the heat and humidity simply makes it more erratic, so always wear your helmet. Road rules are suggestions at best, right of way is an ongoing negotiation, and some taxi drivers seem like they are out for blood. If you're getting on a moped in HCMC, understand these are some of the most challenging road conditions in the world.

The digital tribe is alive and well in HCMC, with a strong concentration of foreign and local entrepreneurs and technologists working out of apartments, plentiful WiFi cafes, and coworking spaces. The pace of meetups and events in HCMC is plentiful, offering lots of opportunities to jump into the local scene quickly.

City Highlights

Food

The first McDonald's restaurant in HCMC opened in February 2014, next to the already dominant KFC and Lotteria foreign chains. One reason for the late arrival of McDonald's might have been the total dominance in both value and taste currently held by Vietnam's world-famous street vendors, night markets, and buffets. Stalls are scattered all over the city, with a major cluster collected in the Ben Thanh market. Meanwhile, Pho 24 chain restaurants offer good Vietnamese fast food in a more hygienic environment, though at up to twice of the cost of streetside fare. The food options show influence from the times of French colonialism, with fresh bakeries serving baguettes used in Vietnamese sandwiches, which are often filled with cheese, meat, and onions. Street food and local restaurants offer flavorful, exotic, and cheap foods of all types with a fascinating Chinese-influenced interplay of the 5 Tastes: sour, bitter, sweet, spicy, and salty.

To satiate your thirst, HCMC offers a generous selection of drinks: large-batch Saigon and Tiger brand beers, local small-batch brews served streetside on plastic stools, and even 30,000 VND Czech or German brews. For a rush instead of buzz,

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Vietnamese coffee is some of the best in the world, second in popularity only after Brazilian coffee. Vietnamese coffee is served (very) strong, with condensed milk, and occasionally, a whipped egg.

Vietnamese food involves a diverse range of Asian and colonial European influences, with diverse flavors intermingling on a base of noodles or rice. For the truly exotic gourmand, Vietnamese diets include may include canine meat (primarily in the North), snake, blood pudding.

The following are common Vietnamese dishes:

- Banh Mi: A mix of Vietnamese specialties - including meat, vegetables, and varied garnishes - in between a fresh French baguette.
- Pho: Vietnam's most well-known and well-loved dish, starting with a base of rice noodles, peanuts, bean sprouts, and with an infinite amount of recombinations.
- Com Tam: An affordable plate of rice, grilled meat (usually pork), and veggies stir fried with seasoning.
- Banh Xeo: A Vietnamese omlette filled with bamboo, mushrooms, and a protein like pork or shrimp, cooked in a the style of a large crispy crepe.
- Spring Rolls: Filled with vermicelli noodles, a protein like shrimp, veggies, and sometimes thin slice of fruit, Vietnamese spring rolls come fresh and wrapped in rice paper.

With the widespread use of soy, wheat products, fish sauce, animal oils, and nuts, Vietnam is a tricky place for those with allergies. Vegetarians will be able to find meat-free restaurants, though those with strong gluten or nut sensitivity will encounter contamination with great frequency.

While we're huge fans of Vietnam's street pho and satays, it is definitely not the most immediately stomach-friendly option for new arrivals. The handling of cooking utensils, raw food, and cash do not guarantee hygiene standards. Common examples include dropped ingredients still being served and poor sanitation of used utensils. As in Bali, expect a period of adjustment (meaning a stomach virus or two) as your body adapts. Food stalls are present all across the city, though usually not during rush hour as the city descends into gridlock, but with constant service in Ben Thanh market. With some exploration, delicious pho and satays can be found for under 30 THB off the beaten path.

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In HCMC, the only thing growing faster in the food industry than variety is the price: increases in the price of raw goods, wages, and real estate have brought the price of a meal up by 30% each year.

Food stall meals usually cost no more than 50,000 VND for pho and rice dishes.

Sit-down Vietnamese restaurant will cost about 150,000 VND for a nice meal in a local restaurant will cost 215,000 VND per person at most, including drinks. Coffee at a pleasant Vietnamese cafe will generally be priced under 42,700 VND, though high-end cafes will charge as much as 100,000 VND.

International restaurant meals can cost just over 150,000 VND per person, usually exceeding 200,000 VND with a drink. Hotel and resort restaurants charge closer to middle-low Western prices, especially at dinnertime and within District 1.

Transit

The traffic of HCMC is a unique blend of mass chaos and utter gridlock. Mopeds weave between trucks, cars, and groups of pedestrians while four-wheel vehicles trudge along during morning and afternoon commutes. The city falls into an intense standstill between the rush hours of 7:00 AM to 9:00 AM, and 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM, during which using transit is not recommended. The most effective and affordable method of moving around the city tends to be by motorbike and taxi, although the latter is not as effective during rush hour or rain. Vietnam has little in the way of road laws actually observed by drivers, except one: the biggest vehicle typically has the right of way. This has made busses the kings of the road, and sometimes more effective than taxis. The size rule, "One Way" signs, and traffic lights are considered the only real rules of the road by the Vietnamese.

Busses tend to be fast, considering their size. They frequently utilize special right of way zones that skip the worst of traffic. Once you have boarded a bus, you'll be commuting relatively quickly and safely. However, actually getting on the bus is tricky: lateness, skipped stops, and shuttles packed to the edge are common. This makes busses well suited for commuting between city districts, but less useful for getting around within cities. Prices for a commute of any length are usually below 40,000 VND.

Taxis are cheap and easy to find in good weather, and a good way of getting around the city during midday and the evening. Expect to pay around 15,000 VND per

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KM for metered rides. Absolutely make sure to request use of the meter and avoid negotiating prices for locations which you are visiting for the first time. Only once you've become familiar with your commute and know the reasonable cost range for the journey should you attempt to negotiate a price lower than or close to the expected metered trip. Having the address of your location in Vietnamese is imperative, and being able to say it understandably rather than using a hotel business card for reference will give your driver the impression you've spent some time here, making it marginally less likely you will be taken advantage of.

Mopeds are HCMC's most important mode of transit, without which the city would grind to an unproductive halt. Carrying tens of thousands of Vietnamese to and from work each day, HCMC's moped scene is among the most dense in Asia. These motorbikes, typically electric-powered, are fast, readily available for purchase or rental, and relatively safe after some road experience. More than anything, they are simply the only dependable way to get around, especially during traffic congestion. You can rent a moped for about 120,000 VND, though as always, provide a copy of your passport rather than the original whenever possible. Never ride a moped without a helmet, as accidents are regular in Vietnam.

Mopeds can also be rented like cabs from Vietnamese resting on the sides of the road. Functioning much like quicker, more thrilling cabs, the price is always set before you get on the bike. Any negotiation upon arrival will turn either expensive or violent, so make sure you agree and shake on the address and price. The rate tends to be 10,000 VND/km with a minimum price of 20,000 VND.

Bikes are significantly harder to find than mopeds for city transit, and tend to be quite dangerous on the road. Biking in HCMC will generally mean competing for the road against huge motorized crowds zipping past you and literally consuming their exhaust.

Cyclos are rentable human-powered bike taxis that can take you small distances through the city. They are usually radically overpriced and not particularly effective for getting around. We recommend staying away after a single obligatory tourist ride - but expect to overpay for it.

Walking short distances in Vietnam isn't too confusing, but it can be treacherous given the state of traffic. Crossing the street during rush hour is generally something

reserved for the brave or foolish. We recommend renting a moped or flagging a cab for any transit that will take more than 20 minutes of walking.

Safety

Safety in HCMC is generally high, especially in modern areas of the city during daylight, although the dense urban environment and disparities in wealth between most locals and foreigners creates many of the same tensions as in Bangkok. Many of the same threats exist in the different Southeast Asian countries. However, the following are unique to Vietnamese or simply more common in the country.

Grab and Runs: Bags, cameras, and other items held loosely to the body by a single point of failure - a single strap, clip, or zipper - are primed for rapid capture by experience Vietnamese pickpockets. Robberies in Vietnam are rarely violent, but are usually well orchestrated in one of two ways: a quick flurry of action, such as in a moped drive-by, subtly executed in crowded areas, or under false social pretenses, like a group asking for directions or offering a snack while another member takes your wallet. Keep a close eye on your goods at all times, don't take the most valuable goods with you during outings, and don't use your phone in busy areas. Store your most important valuables in a room safe.

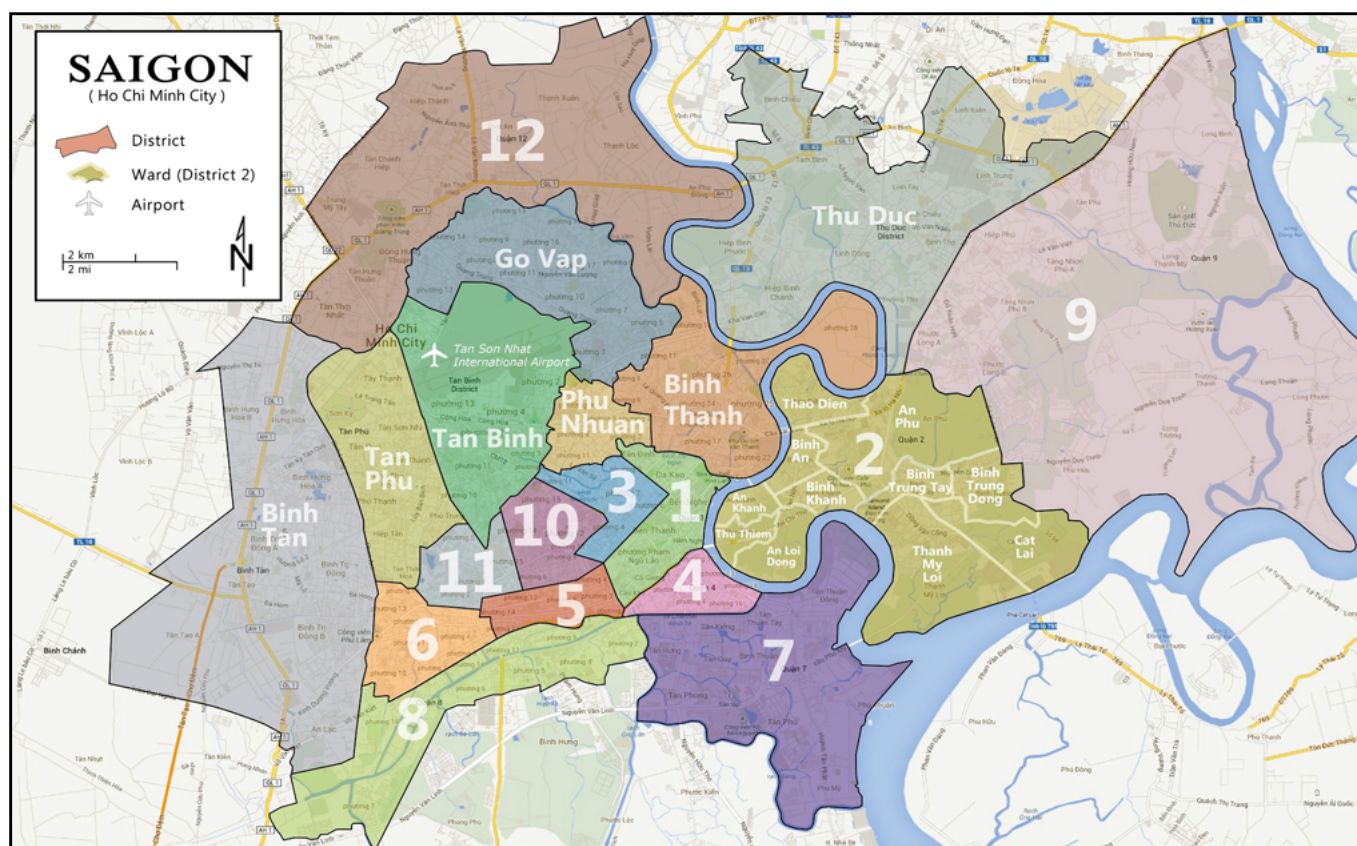
Instant Friends: The Vietnamese are friendly, but they're not usually friendly enough to invite a foreigner from the street to drink and play poker with them. This is usually a rigged high-stakes game in which you are likely to lose much of your money if not your shirt. Examine overly friendly approaches from strangers to family dinners, nightlife outings, or gambling with great suspicion. Bring a (strong) friend along if you feel like you can't miss it but want an out.

Note Switching: Certain currency notes look strikingly similar, such as the 500,000 VND and the 20,000 VND notes, as well as the 200,000 VND and 10,000 VND notes. Get to know them intimately, especially in cab rides. Don't hand over cash without having your driver already handing your change, lest they try to confuse you into thinking you gave over the wrong note. This happens during bartering in stores, as well.

Price Now, Inflate Later: A common tactic of cabs, cyclos, and other services (especially in the nightlife industry) is to give a price that inflates in the time it takes for the check to come. If you and a Vietnamese local come to such a "misunderstanding," extracting yourself from the situation can be very difficult, often

boiling down to arguments or violence in a true “your guys versus our guys” scenario. Avoid this at all cost, and argue only up to the point where you can afford the price of leaving and never coming back. If the threat is from an establishment rather than an individual driver, threatening to report them to the police might be an effective tactic.

Explore the Neighborhoods



[Credit: <https://codiemaps.wordpress.com/2013/07/27/district-map-of-ho-chi-minh-city/>]

HCMC is politically divided into 24 districts, though the chaotic pulse of the city can be felt throughout its entirety. You'll be just a few hours from trekking through the wilderness, but while within HCMC, you'll be hard-pressed to forget you're in a city. The core of the city, in Districts 1-5, is quite packed with foreigners and diversified with places to eat and things to do. More specifically, local nomads commonly make the following suggestions: Districts 2 and 7 for living, Districts 1 and 3 for partying, and District 5 for eating especially well.

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For accommodations immediately upon arrival, your best bet will be District 2 (in the An Phu & Thao Dien wards) or 3. The locations remain very central to the city and has enough space to fit small groups. District 7 is also comfortable with plenty high-end accommodations at relatively affordable prices due to the distance from the city center. With 24 districts, we'll cover some of the best places to live, party, and eat and leave some over for your own exploration.

District 1

Appropriately called District 1, this part of HCMC is at the very heart of the action. It's modern and exciting, serving as HCMC's face to the world. Compacted in this small region of the city are its primary political, international, business, entertainment, commerce, dining districts, and some residential spaces in the form of expensive but luxurious high-rises. There remains a feel of Vietnam in the ongoing chaos of the streets, but much of the district feels quite globalized. Still, you'll be able to find the Ben Thanh Market and The Reunification Palace here, both absolutely worth touring.

D1 is home to many international embassies, making it a convenient place to live for those who travel frequently and need to get visas frequently. However, if you can afford to live in D1, you will likely afford to have an agent handle your visa bookings. The area is also host to HCMC's central business district, including the high-rises of major companies filled with Vietnamese and foreign employees who usually mingle at the bars and restaurants after work if they do not have families locally. Here, you can shop for goods from around the world like Louis Vuitton and Marc Jacobs, dine at restaurants serving well-prepared foreign food, and stay at upscale hotels like the Majestic or Sheraton.

Phan Ngu Lao is a popular street for Western-style restaurants and shops with a greater proportion of skilled English speakers, the high availability of whom is also reflected in the prices.

Living in District 1 is spectacular given the proximity to the best of the city's offerings. It's also spectacularly expensive compared to the rest of the city and general cost of living, as even restaurants and bars here are noticeably more expensive. The district offers the highest living standards in the city, with service furnished apartments, and also hosts plenty of budget backpackers on Pham Ngu Lao and Bui Vien. Expect everything to cost at least 20% more in this district than anywhere else.

District 2

Just over the water from District 1, District 2 is much less crowded and much less expensive. Despite what seems like very nearby proximity, getting from D1 to D2 via Dong Tay Boulevard generally takes 15-20 minutes (10km). Nightlife and entertainment here is less pronounced than in D1, but the quality of air and (rarely found) peace and quiet is the best available in the city. D2 offers great living options in the form of houses and villas in walled compounds with pools or in high-rises near restaurants, shops, grocery stores, and commercial offices. Thu Thiem Tunnel and Thu Thiem Bridge connects D2 with D1 and Binh Thanh (a popular residential district for local Vietnamese), making the area popular with expats and wealthy locals.

Living in D2 lets you have many of the luxuries of D1 - the villas and apartments, food, and proximity to the heart of the city - at a more affordable price and more calm day-to-day routine. The roads are larger and less trafficked, which make it easier for first-time moped drivers to navigate traffic. The Thao Dien and An Phu neighborhoods offer reasonably priced villas and apartments especially appealing to Western families and wealthy Vietnamese looking for a high standard of living without being too close to the action.

District 3

District 3 is great for short-term stays in HCMC, with plenty of coffee shops, movie theaters, restaurants, parks, and shops available for day-to-day adventures and improvised work spaces. It's a popular place for backpackers and nomads on first arrival, as the guest houses and hostels almost always have vacancies. The streets on this side of the river continue to be very dense, with rush hour traffic making even walking in D3 something of a bother. For longer stays, the quality of life from a serviced apartment or French colonial villa can be excellent, and cheaper than District 1. Aside from bars and restaurants, D3 is also host to parks and other recreational activities.

Some Vietnamese consider this area to be the perfect place to live. Living in District 3 is especially popular among young expats who would like to be close to D1 but still sleep well. D3 is well regarded by locals, too, and the prices are similar to D2. The parks space the area out with some breathing room, while the streets are still filled with great bars and restaurants. The streets will be packed here, though, so definitely get a moped.

District 5

The “Chinatown” of HCMC, District 5 is unsurprisingly popular with Chinese Vietnamese, with culture, language, and food to match. People in the area speak primarily Mandarin and Cantonese. Living in District 5 is culturally a little different than in other parts of Vietnam given the majority Chinese population, with costs similar to District 3. It’s surprisingly robust for public transit, with Bus #1 taking you to D1 for just 4,000 VND/ticket in 40 minutes. By motorbike, the trip is 10-20 minutes to D1. It’s also a great place to visit during the Lunar New Year for unique festivities, incredible food, and tons of fireworks. The architecture here is some of the oldest in the city, including dozens of pagodas and temples.

District 7

While D7 isn’t close to the city center, it still attracts many expatriate families and wealthy Vietnamese. It has many great foreign restaurants, fast food joints, coffee shops, and foreign bars. It also has greener, wider streets than much else of HCMC in between a space with residential areas, pools, international schools, and Western grocery stores. Unfortunately, it has very little by way of nightlife, cost more than other areas of the city, and offers poor public transportation options. However, its peaceful atmosphere is popular among wealthy 30-50 year olds with families. Living in D7 is best in one of the high-end apartments of Phu My Hung, which can be bought or rented. Rent is high considering how far it is from the core of the city.

District 10

Close to the college community, the cheap delicious food and affordable rent make District 10 a popular HCMC student spot. It is close to District 1, but the commute is still challenging due to small streets and dense populations. Living here will guarantee rent at rates as low as Vietnamese students, which will be hard to beat anywhere else.

Tan Binh District

A comfortable living area for middle-income Vietnamese residents and local small businesses, with convenient access to public transit for the Vietnamese residents to get around. It’s as crowded as ever during rush hour, has less activity and diversity of D1 or D7, but is truly an affordable location.

Live

Cost of Living

Vietnam is one of the most cost-competitive living locations featured in this guide, in regards to living quarters outside of the heart of the city.

While a monthly budget of 15 Million VND affords a studio located some distance away from the heart of the city, 50 Million VND per month allows for living at large in luxury accommodations, enjoyment of the best entertainment, and close proximity to the heart of the city. This accounts for rent, daily costs of living, entertainment, occasional Western meals and a space to cowork.

Rentals in Ho Chi Minh City are strongly contingent on location, style of housing, and who is negotiating the lease - ideally, a Vietnamese local. Life in District 1 is by far the most expensive, yet also the most exciting, with close access to great dining and entertainment of both local and international varieties. Districts 2 and 7 are also well-regarded for housing. When considering any rental not within the center, a simple estimate can be used to predict the cost of a similar home in D1 - just double the price. In all examples below, housing at the low end of the price range means "less fancy and further from D1," while the expensive housing options will most likely be "very fancy and within or near D1." Unlike other cities, location in HCMC is generally at more of a premium than living standards.

As it is possible for housing costs covered for as little as 8.5M - 12.5M per month, the majority of income can be spent on a nice place to work, hired services to improve your business, or an upgraded quality of life.

Cell phone service ranges between 100,000 - 200,000 VND for high data usage, with transport adding an additional 850,000 - 4.25M VND depending on use of taxis and mopeds. Meals tend to cost less than 85,000 VND per meal, generally with a price floor of 45,000 VND, and a post-meal beer should be no more than 30,000 VND. A nice, consistent workspace with a strong community should cost no more than 2M VND.

Minimum monthly budget: 15M VND

Assumes a low-cost studio or shared apartment outside of the city center with occasional meals beyond the house, as well as transit into the city to a rented workspace.

Average monthly budget: 23.5M VND

Assumes flexible month-to-month AirBnB rental or mid-range apartment with high quality meals outside of home, a coworking membership, and occasional outings with friends, a quick cell phone plan, and a rented moped.

Short Term Stays

For stays lasting less than 3 months, hostels and hotels are the obvious choice. At these venues, you'll always have a mattress, but the Vietnamese preference for firmness means it'll probably be uncomfortably hard for a foreigner.

Shared Hostel Room (107,000-256,800 VND per night): A bed in a shared dorm usually includes AC, a simple free breakfast, and WiFi. NgocThao Guesthouse [<http://www.hostelworld.com/hosteldetails.php/NgocThao-GuestHouse>] is a well-reviewed local hostel with good location in District 1. Within District 1, you can either head east towards Đ Dong Khoi for smarter options close to the city's best restaurants and bars, west towards Đ Pham Ngu Lao for budget accommodation and cheap tours, or somewhere in between – geographically and price-wise.

Private Hostel Room or 2-Star Hotel (256,800-428,000 VND per night): With the same amenities with any hostel, and might include a pool. The Vy Khanh Hostel [<http://www.hostelworld.com/hosteldetails.php/Vy-Khanh-Hostel>] and Town House 50 Saigon [<http://www.hostelworld.com/hosteldetails.php/Town-House-50-Saigon>] are places we enjoyed staying in for their private rooms.

3 and 4-Star Hotels & Serviced Apartments (428,000 to 1.5M VND per night): These will include breakfast, AC, an in-room safe and cable TV, as well as fast free WiFi. The hotels will often have a restaurant, spa, and gym within the premise at the higher end of the price range. The Pham Ngu Lao area in District 1 is the best and most dense for hotel living, though definitely not the cheapest.

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AirBnB Apartments & Homes (+400,000 VND): This is a recommended option for HCMC, because the homes seem to be of equal or higher quality than most hotels, and often come with great hosts who take a major interest in making sure you enjoy yourself. Renting huge villas through AirBnB is also an affordable option for traveling with a group of your employees or friends. The alternative, Agoda [<http://agoda.com>], is dependable but with less competitive prices.

Long Term Stays

Real Estate Agents: When looking for longer-stay accommodations, we recommend arriving in Vietnam with temporary accommodations and hiring a real estate agent recommended to you by friends or locals. Agents are compensated by the landlord, and their skill in negotiating your lease both in terms of price and expectations is invaluable. Be very firm with your price range when working with a real estate agent and once you find one you get along with, give them very specific requests you have for the home through a simple checklist or photos of other homes you like. You can even try bringing in photos of your dream home in Europe or North America, and they might be able to find places that match pretty closely to your specifications. When you do have your home picked out, your price will be quoted in USD or VND, and a deposit of up to three months of advance rent is not uncommon.

Some aspects of living that might take a period of adjustment include: no ovens in the home, no hot water in the kitchen, no AC in the living room, and no clothes drier. That said, any of these can be requested specifically through an agent.

Traditional Vietnamese homes are generally tall but compact, fit in narrowly between other buildings. In terms of modern accommodations designed for Westerners, you'll be able to find everything from spacious studios to extravagant villas. In most Vietnamese homes, you'll find typical beds to be made with wood and bamboo, with reed mats to cover the base.

Most rentals tend to come pre-furnished.

Basic Private Room or Studio (5.35M-9.6M VND): Can be found cheaply in a shared home, or for a little more as a private basic studio. A comparable one-bedroom apartment will cost around 14M-31M VND per month. On the low end, you might live in a nice private room with a shared common area, about 30 minutes or more away from District 1. In the center with a place entirely your own, you'll be paying closer to 9M VND. These locations, when catered to Westerners, typically offer a

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kitchen, quick Internet, air conditioning, complete furnishing, and housekeeping services about 3 times per week. You might also have your own balcony and washing machine.

Luxury Studio Apartment (16M-26M VND): Studios at this rate are located in high-rise buildings with modern features, within a walk of the central business district, and will place you in a community of traveling consultants and Vietnamese businesspeople. These accommodations tend to be spacious and may include a desk and workspace area, in addition to all other modern style furnishings. The WiFi at these locations tends to meet most business needs, and the mattress may even be plush rather than stiff as a board! For the budget-conscious, high-end accommodations of this type can be found in District 3 and 7 for under 13M VND.

2 Bedroom Apartment (15M-48M VND): Cheaper depending on distance but usually outfitted in the same way, 2-bedroom apartments are usually connected by a common area with a TV, kitchen, full-home air-conditioning, laundry, and cleaning services provided by the landlord. Further out from the city center, some nomads have reportedly found multiple bedroom houses for as little as 8.5M VND. The same space on a month-to-month serviced apartment basis in a high-rise building will rent for 21M-61M VND.

Luxury 3-5 Bedroom Apartment (35M to +1.3B VND): These types of spaces are generally contained within a fully-stocked compound with several houses and a security guard for the area. You'll have access to a gym, pool, laundry, housekeeping, and likely be close to restaurants and entertainment, if there isn't enough already within the compound.

For the apartment search, check out the Expat HCMC Facebook Group [<https://www.facebook.com/groups/expatshcmc>]. Additional long-term rentals can be found on TravelMob [<http://www.travelmob.com/vacation-rentals/vietnam/ho-chi-minh/ho-chi-minh-city>].

Utilities & Internet

Water, electricity, and Internet are generally set up at your location, but not always included within the rent. At serviced apartments, your rent will cover all expenses on utilities and internet, but at lower-budget accommodations, you may need to pay them separately.

The basics - including electricity, heating, water, and garbage service - for a 85 square meter studio cost around 1.25M VND. WiFi at speeds of 6-8 Mbps with unlimited usage generally cost 300,000 - 750,000. For 24 Mbps office speeds, expect to pay around 1.25M VND.

Pando Networks credits Vietnam with having the fastest Internet in Southeast Asia, though we would argue that such an evaluation must exclude countries like Singapore and Hong Kong. Locally, CMC provides the fastest services, followed by VNPT and FPT.

Work

Getting Connected: WiFi & Mobile

Vietnam's top three mobile service providers are Viettel, Mobifone, and Vinaphone. Viettel tends to be the most popular service among foreigners, because of the coverage and price. Some also like Mobifone for strong coverage, especially in central provinces, and conveniently fixed pricing.

3G internet in Vietnam is fast, widely available, and cheap. Sometimes it's even faster than the local WiFi. Most people tend to simply buy an SIM card and recharge it every month or so rather than go on a plan. You can easily purchase these prepaid scratch cards throughout Vietnam, in shops and stores, as well as from mobile providers. 200,000 VND is usually enough for calls within Vietnam, SMS, and heavy data usage. Plans are about 100,000 - 200,000 VND for 2-5 GB of usage. WiFi, however, generally provides 20Mbps of speed.

Coworking Spaces

WORK Saigon



What: WORK Saigon is one of the most attractive and successful coworking spaces in HCMC, and for good reason. It offers a quiet space to work, best-of-the-city cafe, swimming pool, and space for unique creativity and marketing workshops with the likes of world leading design/branding agencies like BBDO and TBWA. Your membership will come with a locker, food & drink discount, a reserved seat in the coworking area, and free use of the large open studio room for creative work. The coffee is sourced from Dalat and roasted in-house, while the food dishes are crafted by local chefs. Phuc and Teddy use mostly local ingredients, some of which are from WORK Saigon's organic garden.

Prices:

- Free drop-in with food or drink purchase
- Monthly Unlimited + Events (2M VND/mo)

Where: 267/2 Dien Bien Phu, Ward 7, District 3

Web: <http://www.worksaigon.com>

Saigon Coworking



What: A spacious 24/7 coworking space that has additional business services available to its members, Saigon Coworking is the top stop in HCMC, after WORK Saigon. The space partners with a network of local professionals to help with legal, financial and IT consulting. The local kitchen and green rooftop garden are great for views and tea/coffee (both free). Last, the space can match you with a personal secretary at 2.25M VND for 25 hours of work.

Prices:

- 10 Days/mo (962,000 VND/mo)
- Monthly Unlimited + 6h Secretary Help (2M VND/mo)

Where: 101 Cu Lao, Phu Nhuan, Ho Chi Minh City

Web: <http://saigoncoworking.com>

Start Saigon - Best Value



What: Start Saigon is a startup space specifically designed for technology entrepreneurs and design professionals. It is one of the best values in the city and also hosts workshops and social events for members. It offers individual seat, desk, or office rentals with 24/7 access to the office. Perks include storage lockers, free parking, free drinks, and basic printing/scanning services. It tends to be more popular among local Vietnamese entrepreneurs than established foreign business owners.

Prices:

- Hot Desk (1M VND/mo)
- Dedicated Desk (2M VND/mo)
- Dedicated Office (12M VND/mo)

Where: 18bis/14 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Web: <http://start-saigon.com>

Relax

Ho Chi Minh City is a hotspot for business and entertainment in Southeast Asia, and one of the all-time top hubs for foreigners. The nightlife and entertainment scene is diverse between every district.

If you stay in just District 1, expect to have a blast and get most of the city's best, though you might miss out on some of the more authentic holes in the wall, ancient temples, or galleries which are more prominent in other districts. Again, the common advice is: District 2 and 7 is for living, District 1 and 3 is for parties, and District 5 is for the best food.

HCMC's bars offer simple local watering holes with plastic stools and beers on the street, Western bars with TVs and a pub feel, and even so called "girly" bars which can be best described as tamer strip clubs. Movies and art are very popular among the Vietnamese, with many theaters and galleries in both District 1 and in the city suburbs that serve as home for Vietnamese and foreign families.

Bars

Chill Skybar Restaurant & Lounge – Located on the 26th floor of the AB Tower, this rooftop bar has one of the best outlooks over the city. Spending an evening in the AB Tower will get you the best views, the best service, and the best cocktails. If you are backpacking through the area, please note: you'll need to dress up to visit this location. No shorts or T-shirts allowed!

Broma – For a less expensive drink in Ho Chi Minh, Broma will still give you great views of the city. The open-air lounge on the fourth floor provides views of some of the city's newest skyscrapers and you'll pay little for drinks.

Shri – The restaurant lounge gives way to a comfortable rooftop seating area. This location offers over twenty wines available by the glass for the drink connoisseur. Their cocktail menu hosts a variety of locally and internationally inspired drinks that won't drain your wallet. European food is also served if you are looking to begin your evening with a meal.

Dance Clubs

International Tourist Club – This venue boasts a host of private karaoke rooms and a lounge to relax in between songs. If you're not looking to sing, the in-house casino is open 24 hours a day. Run to the Live Zone to see some of the best professional singers and bands rock out to songs on request from the audience.

Lush – Lush is the place to go to get your hip-hop, electro, and house cravings satisfied. When the dancing becomes too exhausting, head upstairs to a sofa or one of their two garden patios. Here, you'll have access to a quiet outside bar where conversation becomes a possibility.

The Observatory – One of the trendiest places in town, (thanks to some of their big name guests) this is a great location for house and electronic music. When the dance floor gets to hot, head to the balcony for a view of the city and some cool breeze.

Dining

Monsoon Restaurant & Bar Saigon – This restaurant serves a variety of dishes from Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. The menu is split up by country so you can be sure to order a variety of cultural flavors.

Dong Pho Restaurant – This restaurant, as its name suggests, is famous for its 'pho', the classic Vietnamese dish consisting of white noodles in clear broth with either beef or chicken. Prices are exceptionally affordable at this location, which has made it a popular destination among locals as well as foreigners.

The Deck Saigon – Located on the banks of the Saigon River fifteen minutes from the center of the city, this restaurant is one of the most elegant in Vietnam. If you are traveling with a significant other, this venue will provide you with an amorous beginning to your evening. If you're not in the mood for a romantic dinner, this restaurant also has options for lunch and even breakfast.

Cafés

Thuc Café – Though not the most relaxing venue, Thuc is unique in that it is always open. An espresso costs less than 25,000 VND, and you can grab one a 4:00 AM if you feel the late-night urge. Thuc is a good place to head after the rest of the city has shut down, but the loud music will make it challenging to get any late-night work done unless you bring headphones.

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La Tamia Café – The walls of this small local café are decorated with old cassette tape decks that (mostly) function properly. Your music options will be limited to titles before the mid 1990's, when cassette tapes were no longer considered mainstream. The noise from the street can be loud, but the drinks are almost all less than 25,000 VND.

Du Mien Café – Though partially hidden and hard to find, this café has a beautiful pool that you can sit next to while enjoying your coffee. Foreigners infrequently visit this terraced café, which gives the place an exotic, authentically local ambience.

Unique Experiences

Mekong Delta Cruise – Hop in a boat and get a tour of the city and the surrounding area via its waterways. On one of these tours, you will be able to see farmers working on rice paddies, as well as the famous 'floating markets' of Vietnam.

Cu Chi Tunnels – Visit a relic of Vietnam War history and see the Vietnamese perspective on the events that took place in the 1960's. Climb through tunnels built by the Viet Cong and see craters left from B52 bomber runs. You can even shoot 50 year old rifles like the AK 47, M16, and M1 Garand, but note that you'll pay by the bullet.

COUNTRY GUIDE: INDONESIA

Is Indonesia for You?

The local tourism slogan, “Wonderful Indonesia” is quite apt in describing the country. The beaches and jungles of Indonesia, spread out across over 18,000 islands, are some of the most beautiful in the world. They’re also some of the most coveted. The secluded tropical getaways far off the grid are still absolutely possible in Indonesia, but many areas are seeing rapid tourist development and logging activity. The relatively small land mass of Indonesia is home to over 250 million people, making Indonesia the world’s 4th most populous nation.

The value of the Rupiah is currently near an all-time low, making the buying power of currencies like the US Dollar to be especially powerful.

Despite the recent growth and development of the country, the infrastructure is lacking: Indonesian Internet speeds usually clock in at 2-5 Mbps on mobile and web, which makes WiFi speed a top criterion when searching for space to live and work. Additionally, public transportation is rudimentary, especially with distance from main cities. Flights tend to be timely, but the best bet after air will be a rented moped scooter or private driver.

However, the developing infrastructure hasn’t stopped the “digital nomad” scene from growing very quickly in Bali, bringing almost every Asia-based nomad there at least once a year for events, vacation, or a chance to collaborate with other travelers. True coworking spaces are just beginning to pop up, but cafe work culture is alive and well, nestled in between morning yoga and afternoon surfing. Bali generally tends to appeal to entrepreneurs focused on work-life balance, consultants, and professional service providers. A few times a year, large workshops and events take place in Bali focusing on business design, marketing strategies, alternative lifestyles, and workaway camps.

Climate

Indonesia can be a little stuffy. The closer you get to Jakarta, the smoggier and even smoky the air is. Under these conditions, the heat makes the capital city downright unbearable. Go east to Bali, though, and you’ll find yourself in paradise. Bali is beautiful during most of the year and has only a dry season (May-October) and a wet season (November-April), rather than the typical 4 cycles. Temperature varies wildly

between microclimates: by the sea, it is usually always as hot a summer; on the peaks and volcanoes, you'd swear it turned into winter.

Trips off the beaten path in the country can be taken to Baliem Valley for incredible trekking into the land of remote tribes, Bunaken for some of the world's best scuba diving, the Kerinci Seblat National Park for tigers, elephants, and footlong plants, or Komodo National Park to see live komodo dragons in their natural habitats. From Bali, Lombok and the Gili Islands are a great place to take a vacation-from-vacation.

History, Politics & Economy

Early history of Indonesia involves the immigration of Chinese pioneers during the 7th Century and the rise of local Hindu-Buddhism. Islam came to Indonesia during the 13th Century and spread quickly - though it missed Bali. During the 16th Century, Indonesia was a colonization battleground before finally achieving independence on August 17th, 1945 from the Dutch after being juggled between Portugal, Netherlands, Spain, and Britain.

Soon after World War II, Indonesia began self-governance, and has really started figuring it out in the 2000s. Indonesia went through periods of early federalism and liberalism, then became Communist during the Cold War, survived a coup and revolution around 2000, and began generally successful democratic elections in 2004. The presidential election of 2014 put into power Joko Widodo, a populist and reformist candidate who aims to reduce corruption and continue growth for the rapidly rising country of 250 million people.

Foreign investment is flowing into almost every sector of the economy, though manufacturing took a big hit immediately as the ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement went into effect in 2010, flooding Indonesia with Chinese goods.

2015 should see stronger crackdowns on corruption, strengthening the rule of law, continued national growth with efforts made to empower the middle class. Indonesia also plans to redenominate the Indonesian Rupiah to cut away extra zeroes, making 100,000 IDR equal to 100 IDR in the new denomination. It's not clear what this will do to the perceived value of the currency.

Politically, Indonesia is in the most open and progressive political environment it has ever seen following the 2014 election. Indonesians are able to protest and take to the streets to sound off on government decisions, which was previously violently

repressed. The thousands of islands are home to diverse populations, many which don't feel adequately represented, creating some distrust of the government. The Balinese, for example, resent how visa fees are collected for the benefit of the Javanese government rather than for the local population.

Socially, poverty and wealth disparity is one of Indonesia's biggest issues. Endless employee-employer disputes over wages haven't done much to create wealth for the masses. It's not uncommon for an employee to leave a job he or she has had for years for a salary just 60,000 - 120,000 IDR more than their current job. This is equal to only 5-10 USD.

Economics

In the last few years, Indonesia has become one of the largest economies in Southeast Asia mostly due to the size of the population. In 2014, Indonesia brought almost USD 1.3 trillion into the economy (by purchasing power, about USD 850 B unadjusted), making it the 16th largest economy. Unfortunately, the wealth is definitely not evenly distributed: locals generally earn as little as 50,000 Rd each day. The government has created vast subsidy budgets to make the basics of life affordable, including on petrol and health care. While the distance between rich and poor continues to be great, a rising middle class is becoming a major driver of local consumption.

There's an increasing demand for high quality branded goods among the middle class as well as improved international foodstuffs, while the country as a whole imports vast amounts of machinery and chemicals for its still powerful manufacturing sector. Indonesia exports tons of raw goods like rubber, coffee, and lumber, though the country's artists also produce high value works (like carvings, statues, and furniture) that have great international value.

Of course, this means incredibly high earning leverage for the digital nomad using foreign currency: of all the countries in our guide, Bali can be one of the cheapest in which to bootstrap - as well as one of the most rewarding in which to blow through cash for fun adventures.

Cities of Interest

The largest island, Java, is generally a proxy for “Indonesia” as it is home to most of the population, most business activity of the country, and the capital of Jakarta. The capital is generally considered a loosely organized chaos, and a mix of great wealth and great poverty living in close proximity.

In contrast, Bali is home to only 4 million people, but you’ll rarely be far from another local or tourist. Unlike most of the population in Java, the Balinese generally stay on their home island, loving the relaxed life and inimitable culture of Bali.

Bali is a cultural and religious melting pot. While Java is a majority Muslim population, Bali is nothing alike. A combination of Hindu, Buddhist, and animist-naturalist ritual belief systems, the spiritual side of Bali is one of its most interesting and important features. Expect vastly different experiences between each of these two islands.

The Island of Bali, Indonesia

A small island east of the large island of Java, Bali is a small volcanic island of natural beauty and artistic skill. The 60s were a difficult time for Bali with the eruption of Mount Agung which led to a mass exodus, followed by two years of tragic civil war during the 1965 anti-Communist rebellion.

Contrary to popular belief, Bali is not a city: it’s a Indonesian island-state with its own culture and a number of individual small cities like Ubud, Seminyak, and the Balinese capital Denpasar. Due to its size and population (comparable to the New York City metropolitan area), the whole of Bali is presented in our “City Guide”, which covers each of its minor cities as “Neighborhoods”.

Bali became a hot spot during the 1970s, with new telecommunication services, improved education, and a focus on health and well-being. The new Balinese now attracts thousands of tourists regularly, despite dangers of terrorism in 2002 and 2005. Over 2 million tourists visit Bali every year and development is keeping up with the demand, sometimes at the cost of nature. The land has become even more expensive to own than space in Los Angeles, yet the island is host to three times the environmental “holding capacity” population year-round. Feeding and hydrating every visitor requires the import of over half of the goods into Bali from elsewhere in Asia.

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The Balinese culture is becoming more entrepreneurial, if not strictly startup-friendly. Startup Weekend Bali first took place in November 2014, and new coworking spaces open every few months. Over 5,000 expats live in the central Ubud area of Bali, with over 3 million annual visitors, the majority still being comprised of Southeast Asian backpackers.

CULTURE GUIDE: (BALI) INDONESIA

Given the vast differences in culture between Bali and the rest of Indonesia, this culture guide on Indonesia will focus on the cultural dynamics of the island of Bali in particular.

Faith

Indonesia will often put religion before everything else. During the week of Ramadan, Muslim parts of the country like Java effectively shut down. Similarly, in Bali the holy Nyepi Day demands absolute silence from the entire island to fool evil spirits into leaving the Balinese in peace. Police and security actively enforce silence, darkness, and enforces an in-home curfew between 6 AM on Nyepi until 6 AM the following day.

Expect streets to close down at least once a week for a large procession bringing elaborate offerings to the island's hundreds of temples, but don't expect to know about them in advance. Two calendars determine days of celebration: a 210 day Pawukon calendar unique to Bali, and the lunar saka calendar that resembles the Western year. Funerals and temple days are mixed in with regular holidays like the Hindu New Year, called Nyepi, or Galunga, a 10-day Pawukon-calendar year-end celebration that celebrates the triumph of good over evil.

In Bali, everything from a new moped to a new appliance is welcomed into the family with a blessing and ceremony. The Balinese, as well as many of the foreigners who live on the island, see everything as interconnected, focusing less on religious rules (considered to be the job of priests, or "brahmans") and more on traditional rituals and shared energy.

Mind

Bali is called Island of the Gods for good reason: there are few other places in the world where spirituality (but not necessarily religion) is so deeply ingrained into daily life. Faith, health, travel, artistry, nature are core local tenants. In general, three philosophies guide Balinese spirituality.

The first is the principle of **inclusion**, or the acceptance that all aspects of being are inherently influenced by good and evil at all times, and forever will be. That includes humans, who are thought to succumb to evil when they are brash and emotional, and are good when they do their crafts with care and calm. This is also tied deeply to Balinese healing arts, which focus on dispelling evil spirits through ritual, traditional herbology, and massage rather than modern medicines - though hospitals do of course exist on Bali. Maintaining the careful balance between good and evil is thought to be the responsibility of every Balinese, though the island accepts that diverse peoples and professions contribute to this balance (called “the dharma”).

Next, **interconnectedness** is at the core of Balinese Hinduism and spiritualism. Concrete rules and religious dogma is not ingrained into the minds of every Balinese. Expressions of art, culture, dance and action on good intentions is seen as bringing you in deeper connection with the goodness of things, which has made the Balinese master sculptors, painters, and dancers. These ceremonies bring the community together, attract the wealth of tourism, and show glory to the gods and ancestors, which create a very virtuous cycle. The maintenance of close family, community and spiritual bonds is of pivotal importance to the Balinese. Furthermore, it’s thought that keeping these three categories well-addressed will create happiness and wealth in other parts of life.

The last is **traditionalized modernity**, which generally accepts and appreciates the things innovation has brought to Bali, and weaves them into regular tradition. Smartphones or feature phones are common among the Balinese, especially those who work in the relatively well-compensated tourism sector, but it has not caused locals to abandon their traditions or shirk their family responsibilities. Modern technology is generally seen as a way to improve quality of life. As an example, Bali’s urban temples are built to last a single generation, at which point the next generation is tasked with rebuilding them better than they used to be. This has meant going from wood and mud, to clay and stone, and now to brick and cement. This isn’t thought of as a dilapidation of history, but rather an honoring of gods and ancestors by giving them the best currently available. Another illustrative trend the evolution

of women in the workforce: the market for pre-made ritual goods has exploded. Typically, the women of the home would be responsible for creating ritual offerings for the ceremonies in which the family is involved. However, as more women enter the workforce, pre-made fruit headdresses, bamboo weavings, clothes, and more have now become a commodity to be purchased instead of made. A family can now buy fully prepared ritual offerings at most major markets if their full-time jobs keep them busy and create enough revenues to make it a reasonable transaction. In fact, many do. Typically, a family spends 50% of their earnings on ritual offerings and processions - though, of course, they consume the offerings like cakes, fruits, animals, and oils after making a nominal tribute so as not to waste the wealth.

Body

Balinese Hinduism is an intricate amalgamation of rituals and faiths, but the holiness of body areas remains a core tenant here. Balinese Hinduism considers the body to be a spiritual vessel, as does Thailand. The head is the highest and holiest, while the feet are considered lowly and dirty, to be kept away from holy artifacts and never pointed at your companions. Appropriate dress, especially in ceremonial circumstances, is of high priority. Intricate headdresses, colored garbs, and metal bands are all visible on a regular basis, and often account for a not insignificant percentage of the family's spendings. Respecting these traditions is considered a must even for foreigners.

Business

250 million Indonesians are difficult to generalize, but many Indonesians are present-focused, with little by way of detailed plans for the future. Debts among friend and family circles are common, though repayment isn't planned clearly during the borrowing. Indonesian employees talk of hard work and good jobs, especially Javanese, though reality doesn't always reflect these intentions. More pressingly, Indonesians can be heard complaining of no jobs being available, yet may rashly quit jobs when employed.

Technology

The youth of Indonesia, most of whom have grown up with Internet access, long for education and work openings abroad. This may cause "brain drain" across the country as young people chase international opportunities. Given the work culture, current skills, and likelihood of abandonment, Indonesia isn't the best place to hire. The majority of youth and young adults in cities, including Bali, have a smartphone and are frequent users of social media. They typically consider technology a source of

entertainment rather than commerce or education, spending time playing games or watching online media.

The most interesting Indonesian reality is the merger of ancient tradition with modern amenities. It's not uncommon for a group of Balinese friends to arrive at a traditional healer via luxury car and fiddle with their smartphones during the wait while breathing in incense from a nearby temple. The co-existence of technology and tradition is fascinating.

Entrepreneurship

Silicon Valley-style entrepreneurship is still in early stages, with Indonesia rather behind in building an innovation or information economy. The startups that do have local operation have often been started elsewhere, with Indonesia being an expansion market, or are local replicas of Bay Area startups. That said, Indonesia has a well-trained service industry, and small businesses are very common. Indonesians - more so in Java than Bali - are ruthless about profit-seeking and cost reduction, sometimes below safety standards. Confusingly, Indonesian businesses also tend to focus almost entirely on customer acquisition and almost completely ignore customer retention, believing that demand is always higher than supply. For foreigners, this means great local deals on food, lodging, and goods if you know where to look, though it might not be clear how the business is actually profitable. In earnest, it might not be.

The opinions of locals on digital nomads is mixed. After all, the relaxed entrepreneur may appear, from the outside, deceptively similar to a rowdy backpacker. However, everyone is made to feel welcome, and the Balinese generally speak quite serviceable to near-fluent English, and sometimes French, Chinese, or Russian depending on clientele.

Foreigner Communities

In Bali, people are incredibly friendly to foreigners, as there are many of them. Specifically, a few archetypes emerge based on spending habits, peer groups, and lifestyle preferences.

The backpackers are mostly here for a good time on the cheap focused on doing most of the same stuff they'd do at home: hanging with friends, meeting cute dates, and having drinks at bars and clubs. They're not there for long and likely still in school or just on their way towards graduation, though some might stay and get local jobs

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in exchange for room and food if they fall in love with the place. Backpackers are always down for an adventure and can pull you in interesting directions, or trade some good stories.

The vacationers are sometimes true road warriors taking a quick breather who drop more serious cash on plush accommodations, relaxing massages, and incredible dining, maybe with a little entertainment or shopping thrown in. They'll spend most of their time with a partner or some colleagues, or band together with another couple from their hotel. These folks prefer to stick to their own, but could be valuable clients or fun adventure partners while they're around.

The lifestylers live in the area long term, having become a little more immersed into the laid-back culture. Taking full advantage of Bali's natural beauty, they can be spotted on the beach, riding waves, whizzing past on a bike, or leading yoga sessions. Their businesses tend to be in professional services or e-commerce and they begin to dip into digital nomad territory quite well, though many will see Bali as home rather than "home base", and begin families. Their grasp of the local language is improving quickly and they've made some local friends, beginning to find themselves finally at home.

VISA GUIDE: ENTERING AND STAYING IN INDONESIA

While Indonesia's visa policy isn't the most generous in Southeast Asia and is changing constantly. While this is the most relevant information as of 2015, changes are frequent as Indonesia adapts to its growing popularity with tourists and backpackers.

Types of Visas

Visa-on-Arrival (30 Days)

Citizens of most countries can apply for a visa on location. Eligible countries include Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, Taiwan, The Netherlands, UK and the USA.

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You'll be able to get your visa on arrival immediately at the Ngurah Rai International Airport, which is located between Kuta and Jimbaran (not Denpasar). The following documents are required:

- Indonesian Visa application, completely filled out
- Original passport with at least 6 months of validity
- Two 4x6cm passport photos
- Visa fee: 25-35 USD, preferably in the exact cash amount, collected immediately at the airport

Extensions are done at your local visa office and should be started 10 days before the expiration of your visa. They take 3 days to process for 250,000 IDR paid in Indonesian Rupiah immediately. Bring the following:

- Original passport, with 6 months of validity.
- Passport copy, with copy of original visa.
- Original visa-on-arrival, as well as the departure card.
- Letter from host confirming you are a paying guest or staying with a local friend, which must include a copy of their National Indonesian ID
- Complete application form with your sponsor's email and phone number written in.
- Confirmation of departure from Indonesia within 30 days of the extension period.
- Extension fee: 250,000 IDR - payable in cash only, immediately.

Exceptions: Citizens of a select few countries (mostly ASEAN signatories), including Singapore, are eligible for a free 30-day visa upon arrival, which cannot be extended. A 7-day visa may also be available for 10 USD, but isn't the best option unless you're doing a visa run into Bali from elsewhere.

Tourist Visa (30-60 days)

The 60 day tourist visa is rightly coveted by local digital nomads, making it easier to stay for up to a month longer before a visa run. The visa is valid for a single entry, not allowing you to leave and return to Indonesia under the same document. It will be valid for up to 90 days and takes 3 days to process for US citizens. UK citizens may find their visa take 5-6 days to process and may more often require additional information. In the past, this visa could be extended four times for a total of 180 days in the country on a single entry.

- Two Indonesian Visa application, completely filled out and physically (not digitally) signed. We advise bringing an extra copy for a total of three.
- Original passport with at least 6 months of validity.
- Two 4x6cm passport photos
- Government-issued ID, which may include driver's license or a recent utility bill showing your address.
- Proof of Departure in the form of an already-purchased ticket, and possibly including your itinerary (includes hotel reservations)
- May be requested: Proof of Adequate Funds in the form of a bank statement (with name, balance, and date) amounting to at least 1,000 USD for each month you plan to stay.
- May be requested: Employment Letter or business license & tax return if self-employed.
- In some cases, Yellow Fever Vaccination Proof if you've traveled to a yellow fever country in the last 90 days.
- Visa fee: 50-100 USD, depending on country of residence.

If under 18, you'll need a copy of your birth certificate and a signed letter of consent from a legal guardian.

Business Visa, Single & Multi-Entry (60+ days)

The Indonesian business visa is the only obvious way to a multi-entry pass into Bali and the rest of the country. Business visas come in two flavors: short or long-term.

Short term business visas allow a 60-day stay with 90 day validity, and are slightly cheaper, though they allow only one entry into the country.

Long term business visas also allow 60-day stays, but come with 365 days of validity and multi-entry, letting you leave Indonesia and return with ease.

The following are requirements for a business visa:

- Two Indonesian Visa application, completely filled out and physically (not digitally) signed. We advise bringing an extra copy for a total of three.
- Original passport with at least 6 months of validity.
- Two 4x6cm passport photos
- Government-issued ID, which may include driver's license or a recent utility bill showing your address.

- Proof of Departure in the form of an already-purchased ticket, and possibly including your itinerary (includes hotel reservations)
- Business: Letter from home company similar to this one [<https://orders.travisa.com/BusinessLetter/Indonesia>] with the following requirements:
 - Printed on company letterhead with logo, addressed to the Embassy of Indonesia, Visa Section, Washington DC.
 - Signature of senior manager.
 - Description of applicant & specific home employment position.
 - Description of work to be done in Indonesia & names/addresses of the receiving local company.
 - Type and desired validity of the visa (single or multi-entry)
 - Guarantee of sufficient travel funds
- Proof of Adequate Funds in the form of a bank statement (with name, balance, and date) amounting to at least 1,000 USD for each month you plan to stay.
- Employment Letter or business license & tax return if self-employed.
- Yellow Fever Vaccination Proof if you've traveled to a yellow fever country in the last 90 days.
- Visa fee, preferably in USD: Single Entry: 50 USD || Multiple Entry: 110 USD

UK & Australian citizens require additional documentation:

- Written approval from the Indonesian immigration office for multiple-entry visas or stays over 60 days
- Proof of hotel reservation

Visa Recommendations

Most nationalities are eligible for a 30-day visa on arrival which can generally be extended for 30 days more within the country. Applying for a visa ahead of time will give you the chance to stay longer at one time, but given the current ease of visa runs from Bali, a 2-6 month stay can be pulled off with just visa runs and extensions unless you seek local employment.

All visas will require a signed passport with more than 6 months of validity with at least 2 blank pages remaining, and at least 2 front-view passport photos measuring 4x6cm. An onward or return ticket is officially a requirement for a local visa, though it is generally not enforced. Similarly, you may be asked to prove you have sufficient funds to support yourself during your stay, which would mean a minimum of USD 1,000 in cash or check. When you receive your visa card upon arrival or at your local

visa office, keep it with you, as you're expected to give it back when you leave. Keep it safe in your passport, or you'll risk a fine.

The visa form is available here: <http://www.embassyofindonesia.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/visa20form.pdf>

There are multiple Indonesian Immigration Bureaus in Bali in Kuta, Singaraja, and Denpasar.

Also, Bali is rife with agents that can help with visa extensions, who usually charge between 600,000 - 800,000 IDR (between USD 65-45) for the full service. Extensions generally run 250,000 IDR (USD 20) if you handle all paperwork and administration yourself. We refer to VisaHQ [<https://indonesia.visahq.com>] for the most up to date info on entry.

Finally, one fun fact: Indonesia imposes a death penalty on those caught arriving into the country with drugs! Those leaving with drugs are likely to face a similar consequence.

Staying in the Country

Visa overstays can come with heavy penalties, if you are not careful. You'll be slapped with a fine of 200,000 IDR (per day!) of overstay. The maximum penalty is up to 25 million IDR & 5 years of jail time or deportation, for which you will bear all responsibility (not your sponsor). This fee may be slightly negotiable if you have not stayed over 60 days. If you overstay by 60 days, you'll almost absolutely end up in court to be detained and fined, then deported, then blacklisted - as decided by a judge.

In the case of an overstay, it's advised you go to the airport immediately upon realizing it, negotiate to pay the fine at the airport, and leave immediately. Be apologetic and honest, as the officers may check your story based on your locations of stay.

Departure Tax

Every time you leave Bali, you'll need to pay the airport departure tax. This charge would usually be applied to the cost of your ticket in other countries, but in Bali you'll need to hand over a non-negotiable 200,000 IDR for international departures or 40,000 IDR for domestic departures before leaving the airport.

Visa Runs

Trips to “refresh” your visa eligibility in Bali are still very common and not well regulated. Most nomads choose to fly to Singapore from Bali for a few days before returning to Indonesia and requesting a new visa on arrival or tourist visa. If your visa has already been extended and is coming to its next 60 day limit, buy a flight to home, or a nearby country worth exploring. Upon your return to Indonesia, you will have another 30-60 days to stay. Remember that Bali is a part of Indonesia, so taking a trip to Jakarta or another Indonesian island will not refresh your visa and can endanger you to overstaying.

Fortunately, a visa run can be quite an enjoyable adventure in and of itself. Indonesia is in a great location for exploring Southeast Asia. It's close to Malaysia, Philippines, Vietnam, Singapore, and Thailand with regular flights or boats from Jakarta and the island of Bali.

For visa runs, we like the following services:

- Kayak [<http://kayak.com>], for estimating price fluctuations by season and location
- Google Flights [<http://flights.google.com>], for checking flight prices in real-time
- SkyScanner [<http://www.skyscanner.com>], for booking flights out of the area

CITY GUIDE: BALI

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Bali is a world-famous resort and vacation destination, drawing large amounts of travelers from Europe (especially Eastern) and Australia, followed by Asia and North America. New startups, nomads, and coworking spaces are joining the island on almost a monthly basis. While it's also true of Bangkok, it's a safe bet that most of the Asia-based nomad community will end up in Bali for at least a week in the course of a year. Bali also hosts some world-class surfing and diving adventures, drawing experts from around the world. Given the offerings, the islands draw everyone from the 20-something backpacker to the Russian oil tycoon. Expect the unexpected, like the hidden art zoo as you moped around Northeast Bali.

Landscapes in Bali are as stunning as they are varied. The small island varies from one acre to the next, with pristine beaches next to built-out resorts, and craggy coastlines not far from towering mountains into which Bali's famed rice paddies are carved. Bali's towns vary between heavy concentrations of prestigious resorts and nightclubs in the South, to low-key and even mundane local residences in the North, to inspiring mixes of foreign and local small business and art in Central Bali. The island's strikingly blue water, lush greenery, colorfully dressed locals, and intricate temples make it a feast for the eyes. It's seriously gorgeous, and generally 20-32°C (68-90°F) year-round.

Last, Bali is deeply spiritual. Every feature of the island is regarded as holy in a unique way, especially the peak of the tallest volcano, regarded as the holiest point in Bali and home to the island's most holy deity, Siwa. Conversely, the ground is unholy and dirty, serving as the playground for evil spirits. Knowing that evil spirits can only move in straight lines, the Balinese architecture and rituals do a lot to crush, block, or confuse these demons - though it's believed, in the spirit of celestial balance, that good and evil will always be part of life for the Balinese. A sample of the protections used against evil spirits is the *canang sari*, a bundle of snacks, flowers, and incense placed on bamboo leaves on the ground multiple times per day.

Island Highlights

Food

The food of Indonesia is ethnically diverse and differs greatly based on the culture of each Island. The food of Indonesia is deeply inspired by the traditions of India and the Middle East, in addition to some Chinese influences. All meals are served with rice, without which a meal is simply incomplete - to the Balinese, it might as well be a snack or appetizer. Indonesians also tend to eat the same type of food at all times of day, so try a foreign restaurant for your Western-style breakfast cravings. Food is generally eaten with a fork and spoon, and sometimes with the bare right hand - though never the left, as it is the hand reserved for personal hygiene.

Java, being mostly Muslim, serves primarily kosher/halal food and excludes pork products or alcohol from common diets. The local food also tends to be a little sweeter, which doesn't appeal to non-Javanese as much. In Bali, with a Balinese Hindu culture, people absolutely love pork and enjoys an occasional drink of beer (Bintang or Bali Hai are local favorites), wine, or *arak* - a locally produced moonshine fermented from coconut, sugarcane, and sometimes fruit. In both locations, chilis find their way into almost every meal in a paste called *sambal*, though they're not as spicy as you'd find in Vietnam or Thailand. Vegetarianism is well supported in Bali and Ubud especially, although the same can't be said for the rest of Indonesia.

Use very discerning judgment with *arak*, as reports of contaminated production methods have lead to at least three deaths in Bali and the Gili Islands.

Food stall meals usually cost no more than 30,000 IDR for satays and rice. You can get by on 150,000 IDR per day if you're budgeting but eating out 3 times per day. Fast food like KFC and McDonalds will be more expensive than local options but equally easy to find.

A sit-down Balinese restaurant will cost about 80,000 IDR for a main course with a beer at a comfortable location with good service. A coffee at here would probably run about 15,000 IDR and open you up to using the Internet for most of the day for free if the location isn't crowded.

International restaurant meals can cost 150,000 IDR per person, with some of the nicest but still reasonable places at hotels and resorts right on the beach charging usually no more than 225,000 IDR for one of the best meals you could ask for.

Allocate 300,000 IDR per day to food if having most meals at at sit-down Balinese with a drink or at foreign places.

Popular Dishes

The most popular dish in Bali is Babi Guling - a roasted fatty suckling pig, with a single pig being able to feed a family. Ibu Oka in Ubud is considered ground zero for one of the best Babi Guling restaurants in Indonesia, with the blessing of Anthony Bourdain himself, though it'll cost you twice as much as anywhere else.

Rice dishes are at the heart of Balinese meals. Try Nasi Goreng, Indonesia's most common fried rice dish, from your favorite restaurant or a street vendor - it's a safe bet, infinitely remixable, and always delicious. Nasi Campur is a milder mixed rice dish. Both usually include meat, vegetables, and eggs.

Meat dishes like Rendang Sapi, or spicy coconut beef curry, and Bebek Betutu or Ayam Betutu (herb-roasted duck and chicken, respectively) are delicious and use cooking methods hard to imitate outside of Indonesia. Sate, or just meat on sticks, is a hugely popular food of the Indonesian masses available at almost all hours of night. Chicken and beef are common, but Sate Lilit with minced seafood on a lemongrass twing, is a fresh local favorite.

Vegetable dishes are usually called Lawar, which covers a range of salads with minced vegetables, meat, coconut, and spices. Traditional Lawar dishes include animal blood, but you won't come across it as commonly in modern Bali. Vegetarian options are tricky but many of these dishes at least begin with a vegetable base. A better vegetarian option would be to ask for a main dish with tofu or tempeh instead, but asking your chef to avoid using animal oils and byproducts is still not foolproof.

Thai and Western food at all price ranges is easily accessible from anywhere in the city, and can be purchased either prepared from a supermarket or fresh from a local day market. You'll find Starbucks, Mark & Spencer, Tesco, and more. Dining options of Italian, Mexican, Japanese, French, and American are all easy to find.

Transit

Travel in Bali is a generally a simple matter of renting a scooter, moped or motorbike, or hiring a private driver by the hour or day. Public transit, conversely, is almost non-existent on the small island, and personal cars will be both expensive to work and impractical given Balinese street congestion.

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Driving a scooter in Bali has a slight learning curve, but roads are generally bearable if not somewhat crowded. Scooter rentals usually cost 50,000 IDR per day and can often be paid on return if you're not quite sure how long you'll need it for.

Moped rentals legally require an international driving permit, but in practice two things are true: a driving license from your home country should be enough if your renter asks for any identification at all, and secondly, if you are pulled over and even if you do have your permit in order, your local friendly law enforcement is known to find another charge they might be able to levy on you as a way of requesting a small bribe.

Rent or buy? A month of scooter rental, with gas, should cost just under 900,000 IDR if you're using it regularly. If you plan to be in Bali for over three months and commute multiple times a week, it might make sense to buy a bike or moped. Ask the staff at your hostel, or local host for ongoing prices and get a few second opinions: in all likelihood, the last batch of nomads will be trying to sell their gear before they hit their next destination.

Local airlines are suitable for reaching nearby countries and even to other islands in the country. Local flights are commonly served by Garuda and Lion Air, though AirAsia and Tiger Airways are usually more dependable. Be ready for cancellations, delays, some occasional safety glitches. On the bright side, fares run as low as 1.25M IDR for round trip travel even on short notice.

Boats are only a good option when traveling short distances, or when local flights are otherwise unavailable. Boats can be chartered by PELNI [<http://www.pelni.co.id>] but take considerably longer to arrive at their destination. They use European-built boats that can usually comfortably fit 3,000 - though sometimes squeeze in twice that many. Prices are usually similar to the rates of a hotel (400,000 IDR) charged by the day. For your own health and sanity, do not ever go for the "Ekonomi" class. The Kepal Ferry Cepat are much faster ferries. In general, boat bookings can be done from your hotel or hostel, the staff at which will likely do a better job of arranging things and negotiating on price than you would. Scheduled departure and arrival times are mere suggestions, comfort is a low priority, and safety standards are spotty. The moral of the story: book boats with professionals, and go for long-operating large brands.

Safety

Broadly speaking, Bali is a pretty safe and comfortable place that welcomes foreigners. While Indonesia as a whole lacks in quality medical services, Bali is both friendlier and better equipped to deal with foreigner misadventures. Bali has generally adapted to foreign presence and sees little crime compared to larger cities like Jakarta or Bangkok, Thailand. The most common troubles will be a stomach virus (humorously called Bali Belly by local veterans), scrapes and bruises from moped mishaps, or for the careless traveler, petty theft. Local police are unfortunately not of much help in any of these cases and can even make the situation worse, proving more expensive to deal with than is worthwhile, given habits of corruption. The Balinese dependency on community to help and protect one another is pivotal.

Anyone exercising good judgment, keeping an good eye on their property, and making some knowledgeable local friends whom he or she can ask for advice should avoid most major mishaps. Our Bangkok section gives general travel advice, but some of our specific tips for Bali are below:

Don't Drink The Water

The most common cause of "Bali Belly" is often from consuming tap water at restaurants or via ice. Indonesia lacks the resources to purify water for all its residents, and water quality is even more haphazard on Bali. Always buy bottled water, and drink lots of it to keep yourself hydrated against the brutal heat as well as wash through any impurities in your system.

I Got Sick! Now What?

If you're just experiencing a stomach virus - which can be absolutely painful and take you out for three or more days if severe - drink water, consume electrolytes, and try activated charcoal, which can absorb impurities in the body for easier expulsion. Drink coconut water, Gatorade, and water in large quantities, as the worst effects of vomiting and diarrhea is the dehydration. The hospital will not be able to provide much beyond this same prescription, though you might have a saline drip available to flush your body if you're suffering for more than a day. For more serious matters like bike accidents, go to a foreigner-friendly hospital closest to you. These exist in Seminyak, Kuta, and Ubud. If you're suffering from a serious health issue that needs professional assistance, your best bet is a flight to Bangkok or Singapore, where you can find experts that adhere to international standards.

Drive the Bali Way

The streets of Indonesia are a battleground, and the congestion of Jakarta or Bali are the final levels. A moped remains the most effective way to get around, but don't hit eagerly hit the streets if it's your first time motorbiking. Practice in a parking lot or ride with an expert to get a feel for your vehicle and for the road, and go slow to become comfortable once you get into live traffic. The Balinese are expert navigators, weaving through dense traffic with trained speed. This skill will take time to develop, but copy locals to become a good local driver. As a principle: road rules in Bali are considered suggestions.

Watch Your Back and Pack

Your pockets and your home are targets for petty theft if you do not have your wits about you nor a community with which you've grown close that helps watch over your property. Crime in Bali is almost never violent, at least towards foreigners, and thieves might be skilled in sleight of hand as well as quiet entry into homes. Having a camera, or a sign suggesting a security system, will actively lower your risks. Having (strong) friends with you and near your home will be the safest bet to reduce yourself as a target. As police do not treat theft as a very big deal nor will they allocate major resources to getting your things back, the first rule is to carry back-up copies accordingly. The second is to keep a clear head and sharp eyes on your possessions, and the third is to count on your community for help. Women should travel with a friend at very late times of night, more so for safety from Bali's foreigners rather than locals.

Scams Happen

You can suspect a scam if you're being approached by someone who is noticeably too friendly and appear very fluent in English, as it's a good sign they might have rehearsed this particular scheme many times. The most commons scams, however, are small-time extortion. An extra charge for parking beyond the ticket price, a cost for sitting on a beach chair, and subtle demands for bribes to complete basic procedures like visa forms are all things you might encounter. Protecting yourself against them is done first by being aware of how common they are, but it's really part of the cost of doing business in Indonesia as a foreigner. That is, unless you speak some of the local dialect. The most common advice is, honestly, to negotiate until things seem a little bit more reasonable and it seems like both parties understand one another, and then pay the cost - especially if it's a police matter. Going to court for any matter should be avoided.

Learn Some Local Words

This will be one of your best protection methods against being taken advantage of, and will also help you get better prices on goods you buy. You'll find yourself making more local friends and given how easy the basics of the language are to pick up, it's a no-brainer if you plan to stay more than 3 months.

Explore the Neighborhoods



Bali is a small island just 150km long by 70km wide at its highest points, and can be traversed from any point to another by moped in days or hours. Motorcycling away from the commercialism and artistry of South and Central Bali into the North and East is an incredible way of getting a full taste of what the island has to offer, though the greatest density of the expat and nomad communities are found in Ubud, Kuta, and the surrounding areas. The greatest quality and variety of food tends to be in West, Central, and South Bali in terms of diverse global fare and expert local chefs, with North and East Bali delivering more local, home-style cooking that is heavier on rice, pork, and beef. While South Bali is alive by night, the rest of the island is a little sleepier and less eager to rage all night. If you've just arrived and can't decide where to go next, spend a few days having fun in Kuta and Seminyak or surf the coast - then make your way to settle into Ubud.

Southern Bali

The most popular and populous part of Bali, the South is luxurious without being tacky, outside of Denpasar. Here, you'll find the best nightlife, the finest resorts, and some of the best surfing. Food is great across Bali, but the most skilled chefs compete at the hotels and resorts here in Kuta and Seminyak.

Denpasar is the busy administrative center, and likely your first point of entry onto the island by flight, but there won't be much for a tourist or nomad to do. It can be a good place to buy a moped or find a landlord, but only if you're having no luck elsewhere.

Kuta is absolutely pristine and built out with thumping clubs, comfortable resorts, and tons of bars and cafes for work or play. The party scene here is affordable yet top-notch, and the beaches are hard to beat not just in Bali, but anywhere in Southeast Asia. The sand is a little darker than on the peninsula, but the beaches are longer and filled with adventures.

The South Peninsula is beach heaven. The peninsula area has the finest white sand in Indonesia, while Nusa Dua beaches are more pebble-like with shallow lagoon water. Surfers should check out the world famous Uluwatu, Bingin, and Balangan beaches. Diving is a bit better in less congested areas of Bali, however, to the North and East.

Seminyak is chic and upscale, just to the north. The beachside resorts here attract many European travelers to its villas and private beaches, fine restaurants, VIP clubs, and designer bars. The more upscale side of Bali is still quite affordable given the price arbitrage, so it's reasonable to expect one of your best nights out for the price of a trip to your local watering hole back in the US or UK.

Central Bali

The heart of Bali, the Central region is full of life, art, and spirituality. It's a serene place to work, meet fellow travelers and nomads, and get great work done without sacrificing much of the liveliness of South Bali. The clubs and bars are a little tamer, but the wellness and food scene here is top-notch.

Ubud is the place. Generally considered the heart of Bali's digital nomad scene, Ubud is characterized by dense streets of small businesses run by locals and expats, with massive cultural output. Local rituals, temples, and adherence to spirituality

resonates deeply, making it a perfect spot to soak in the culture, meet people who are here for more than a weekend, and work among other expats. You can easily find art, dance, or yoga communities here, too. One of the island's best coworking spaces, Hubud, is right next to the Monkey Forest, so stop by but watch your sunglasses and gadgets around the monkeys. They're grabby.

Mount Batur morning hikes are worth squeezing in at least once, as you'll be near the central mountain range. The sunset after making the ascent might change your life. Motorbiking from here to other parts of the island generally takes no more than a few hours, and a private car can be rented for under 200,000 IDR to most places on the island.

East Bali

A peaceful area with easy transit to the almost always wild Gili Islands, East Bali is home to incredible coral reefs and wild marine life that makes for captivating diving. The incredible and highly revered Mount Agung, the active volcano home to Bali's holiest spirit Siwa, is in this area and makes for the most challenging hike on the island. Besakih is the most holy and hardest to reach (holiness correlates with proximity to the sky) temple, and sometimes draws the whole of Bali for special rituals.

Amed is a traditional fishing village with black sand beaches. For stays in East Bali, Amed will be your best bet.

North Bali

A quieter, more traditional area of Bali home to the old capital city and some top-notch diving. It's a popular dolphin habitat during certain parts of the season, so if you're a lucky diver you may get to swim with a school of them. The sand here is a dark volcanic black, though it's not great for beach bumming. It heats up during the day and leaves tourists scorching with each step. Lovina is typically the starting point of boat trips for dolphin sightings and diving. The area isn't very developed and doesn't attract very many foreigners.

West Bali

The west of Bali is sparsely populated but allows for travel to Java by boat 24 hours per day and is home to the West Bali National Park. The park is kept well preserved but offers 3 hour hikes for 200,000 IDR that allow you to see animals not found anywhere else in Bali. It was the last home of the Bali Tiger, extinct since 1937. Ferries to Java run every 20 minutes on packed boats that take about 30 minutes to make the journey, which costs around 10,000 IDR.

Live

Cost of Living

Bali can be a very comfortable place to live an affordable lifestyle. Housing will be around 200,000 IDR per day for a hotel room or midrange leased apartment, eating out costs as little as 40,000 IDR per meal, local beer is 20,000 IDR per bottle and cocktails are 60,000 IDR.

Bali has the widest range of accommodations in all of Indonesia, from group cots to stunning waterside villas. The cheapest local accommodations can be found for as little as 60,000 IDR per day, though your location may be inconveniently close to a nightclub or out of the way. Reasonable, single-room locations typically run around 200,000-250,000 IDR per night, or 6.5M IDR with a monthly lease.

A one-bedroom apartment in the city center of Ubud will cost about 6M IDR monthly.

Minimum monthly budget: 10M IDR

Assumes a low-cost apartment not very distant from the city, eating out no more than once a day, the occasional party, and coverage for transit and work space.

Average monthly budget: 15M IDR

Assumes flexible month-to-month AirBnB or midrange apartment with all meals outside of home, a coworking membership, and occasional outings with friends. Transit considered.

Budgets above 15M IDR per month are increasingly more luxurious. Each dollar really makes a difference here, starting with better food, more regular outings or travel, and better accommodations.

Short Term Stays

Hostels and Homestays

Both start around 100,000 IDR per day for a shared dorm, or 250,000 IDR per day for a private double room. Most homestays or hostels include decent WiFi and free parking for mopeds, as well as discounts on getaways or rentals. Above the 200,000 IDR bracket, you can also generally find pool access and air conditioning. The technology-savvy ones will be able to provide a quick SpeedTest [<http://www.speedtest.net>] result to show the download and upload speeds. Always ask for it.

We love the following places because of the great adventure suggestions, cool people, and proximity to transportation and bike rentals.

- Indraprastha Home Stay [<http://www.hostelworld.com/hosteldetails.php/Indraprastha-Home-Stay/Ubud/60021>]
- Happy Mango Tree Hostel [<http://www.hostelworld.com/hosteldetails.php/The-Happy-Mango-Tree/Ubud/80808>]

Hotels

3 and 4-star hotels and serviced apartments range between 47,000-100,000 IDR daily. Free breakfast is a definite and a pool is a high probability, if not direct beach access.

We find best prices for Bali bookings on Agoda [<http://www.agoda.com>] or bookings done in-person.

For Bali, we do not recommend AirBnB, although it may be useful for other destinations in SouthEast Asia, because it is noticeably more expensive than local rentals. The processing fee alone might end up being 1/3 the cost of your bed!

Long Term Stays

Considering the savings to be had, working with a landlord on a lease makes sense in three scenarios:

- You will be staying as long as 6-12 months and want to have your own place.
- You travel in a group and would like to share a single living location.
- You are planning to live somewhere quite nice and the savings start to matter.

While in Jakarta, apartments are available in high-rises and finding a place to live is more systematic, Bali is more relational, demanding a little searching, references,

and creativity to find the best place - which may not be listed. Rentals, especially for new places, are difficult to come by in lengths under 1 year, but it wouldn't be hard to sublease your place if you choose to move, and losing your deposit won't be too brutal. In Bali, the smaller the space and the longer it has been available, the easier it will be to find a flexible landlord willing to negotiate on price and length of stay.

Note that landlords are typically hesitant about leasing low-cost housing in the monthly range of 3M - 7.5M IDR to a foreigner, believing them to be wealthy enough to afford higher priced accommodations.

A great strategy for dependable and comfortable monthly accommodations is to negotiate a monthly rate with any hotel or service apartment, which usually charges daily or weekly rates. This can really only be done in-person. Monthly contracts for a length of at least 3 months are common, though a year is much preferred by the landlord. Monthly rentals can be found for one or two bedroom locations without much struggle, but for homes with 3 or more bedrooms, expect to have a lease.

Basic private room (150,000-300,000 Rb): The most affordable long term living arrangement are at Balinese home stays, which pair you with the living space of a local host for an authentic residency. These usually include airport pickup, WiFi that is basic at best, and a ceiling fan instead of air-conditioning. You can also get help with your laundry and can wake up to breakfast most days.

Basic 2 Bedroom (6.2M Rb unfurnished or 7.5M Rb furnished): A good location in Bali a few miles from Ubud or Kuta. The home will be comfortable and may feature extra amenities, such as a swimming pool. There will be air-conditioning, basic kitchen appliances, and housekeeping available.

Luxury Studio (8.7M Rb): Luxurious studios at this price include a spacious personal bedroom and bathroom, full furnishing, a kitchenette, and dependable WiFi. Some locations also offer a shared pool. You'll be close to shops, restaurants, and beaches, making eating a breeze if you're not eager to cook. You'll also have housekeeping to clean the home at least once a week, provided by your landlord.

Furnished 3 Bedroom (19-30M Rb): Usually two floors, these homes start seeing major price breaks for multiple residents. You'll have a big kitchen, living room, 1-2 bathrooms, and a spacious outdoor area. More upscale locations will be finely decorated, come with a pool and regular housekeeping services.

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Luxurious 4-5 Bedroom Villa (50M+ Rb): A private villa with a central location in Bali or Jakarta, you'll have plenty of room to use this space for sleep, work, and play. Furnishing will be artfully chosen and cleanliness maintained with daily housekeeping, probably with the inclusion of breakfast. WiFi should be good, but ask to see the SpeedTest.

Top Luxury Resorts (500M Rb): The stuff of rumors, the finest resorts in Bali can run as high as 50M IDR per day during peak seasons. Your beach will be private. Your every wish - from extravagant dinners, to curated entertainment - is attended to by staff assigned just to you. A trained babysitter, a romance concierge, and even a cultural guide are on staff. You will not have a room, but a full villa with every detail meticulously designed to be a luxurious interpretation of local culture. For this kind of getaway, look to places like:

- The Four Seasons
- The Shangri La
- VIP resorts in Seminyak

For long term rentals, we found great options through:

- RentalHomes [<https://www.rentalhomes.com>]
- FlipKey [<https://www.flipkey.com>]

Utilities & Internet

Simple utilities like water and electricity are very affordable, but with slightly pricey phone and Internet costs your monthly bill may come out to above 2M Rb. Setup of utilities will need to be completed under the name of your landlord, or will already come with your accommodations.

Water for bathing and hand washing is affordable in Bali as a utility and will differ based on your landlord, but water from the tap should never be consumed. Avoid even using it for washing vegetables or boiling for tea. Instead use bottled water, the monthly cost which will run about 300,000 IDR.

Electricity is available at 220 volts AC, frequency of 50 hertz. Cost varies by location. Running the air conditioner will increase your electricity bill significantly, but electricity is affordable otherwise.

Internet is expensive in Bali, at 1.25M IDR per month for speeds up to 2Mbps. BizNet, TelekomSpeedy, and Neuviz are the primary options. Alternatively, you could depend on local cafes or your coworking space to really get work done.

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Work

Getting Connected: WiFi & Mobile

The coworking environment is still young in Bali, but heating up quickly! Before the start of 2015, there were 3-5 coworking spaces open in Bali, though more are sure to come. Unlimited use of the space is usually under 3.2M IDR/month, though shorter plans by the hour are also available. If these are a little pricy, cafes are still a great place to work.

South and Central Bali are packed with WiFi cafes and restaurants, and almost every hotel has a personal connection. Getting a SIM card is easy to do from any mobile shop which are almost as common as 7-11 snack stores.

With all these networks, data prices are affordable. Data prices range between 100,000 IDR to 500,000 IDR per month for 3Gb to 7Gb of data at rates advertised as 7.2Mbps that are more like 2Mbps. However, the term “up to” in advertised claims on internet speed is not to be trusted, as there is likely not a single person in Indonesia who has ever received the promised speed. Also, “unlimited” packages are misleading: your speed will be slowed to a crawl on reaching a certain threshold, which will require adding more credit to return to a usable state.

GSM Networks (Like AT&T)

Telkomsel is Indonesia's largest and most reliable network across the entire country, but is also the most expensive. Indosat is their direct competitor, with slightly faster data speeds and higher quality of calling in some areas, but a much smaller coverage area. For a moderate amount of voice calls, SMS, and Internet use, expect to pay 250,000 IDR per month. WiFi speeds will almost always beat your telecom provider, so use your hotel or cafe when possible. TRUE is popular and dependable in Bali, offering good rates on data usage.

CDMA Networks (Like Verizon)

If your phone isn't able to take a SIM card, Smart is a good mobile provider with a heavy focus on data, though it's less commonly used for phone calls. Flexi offers the inverse, with dependable calling but less competitive data rates.

Coworking Spaces

Hubud - Overall Favorite



What: Bali's first and still best coworking space, Hubud is the go-to place for most nomads who aren't here on their first visit - it's just dependable, convenient, and the location is 5 minutes away from Ubud's Monkey Forest. The space can fit hundreds and currently serves 200 foreign and local creatives, entrepreneurs, and technologists with a 4,000 square foot custom space overlooking a rice paddy. A 20-person conference room, meeting rooms, and private call booths are available. The staff can also help you find accommodations.

Hubud throws regular events and even annual conferences in the space, and even offer an on-site raw food bar (which we've tested to be delicious). Hubud is actually partnered with Hubba, our favorite coworking space in Bangkok, which may let your membership carry over for a trial week. Paid perks include mailing address, storage locker, and 24/7 access.

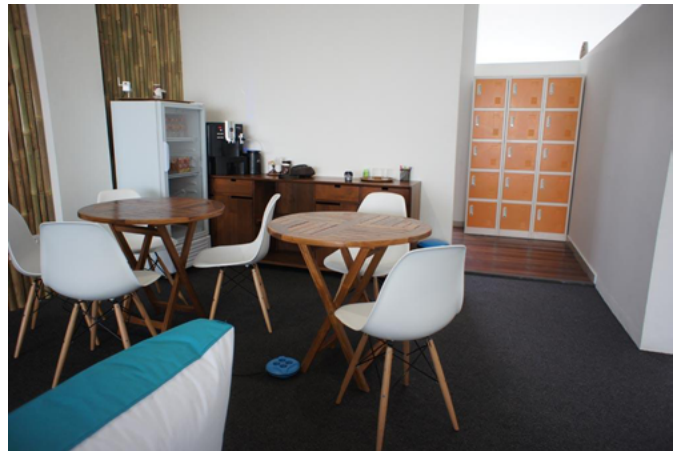
Prices:

- 25hr/mo - 685,000 IDR
- 50hr/mo - 1.25M IDR
- Unlimited with Perks - 3.1M IDR

Where: Monkey Forest Road 88x, Ubud, Gianyar, Bali 80571

Web: <http://www.hubud.org>

Lineup Hub - Value Favorite



What: A popular coworking space close to the waves, bars, and clubs of Seminyak and Kuta, Lineup has a lot of space and modern international facilities good for teams of individuals. It's close to the beach, but not the tourists, so it's not uncommon to take surf breaks during lunch. It's less heavy on events large scale events, but they are solid on what they offer and do it at a very competitive price, counted by days of access during the month. You'll have access to large LEDs, meeting areas, free coffee, and private lockers. A membership comes with ability to use their address and free event admission.

Prices:

- 5 days/mo - 700,000 IDR
- 10 days - 1.2M IDR
- Unlimited - 1.8M IDR

Where: Sunset Permai 3, Jalan Sunset Road, Kuta, Bali

Web: <http://lineuphub.co>

Startup Getaway - Full-Serviced Work-Lifestyle



What: If you have a whole team ready to bootstrap or just want to do a “work vacation”, Startup Getaway is a unique solution - they take care of everything. You rent a villa for 1-6 months with all laundry, food, and cleaning done for you, and your home is set up to function as an effective office with up to 4 friends. They have 6 “power” houses available in Ubud and Denpasar with their own regular staff, with each location coming fully furnished and connected to fast Internet. The locations are listed on AirBnB and available through their main site.

Prices:

- Single Room - Daily 560,000 IDR, or Monthly 15M IDR
- 6 Person Serviced Villa - Daily 1.24M IDR, or Monthly 32M IDR

Where: Perumahan Bumi Santi no. 14, Jalan Pratu Made Rambug, Batubulan, Gianyar, Bali

Web: <http://startupgetaway.co>

Relax

Bali is a mecca for backpackers, surfers, vacationers, and digital nomads. Resort life is front-and-center on most of the island, with massages and spas available island-wide.

More fun is available around the natural beauty and serenity of Bali, and around enjoyment of its artistic offerings like dance and painting, unique cultural festivities, and international-style events and concerts. There's a lot to do.

The Center of the island tends to be home to artists, lifestylers, and backpackers. Finally, the North and some of the East are really only visited by lifestylers or backpackers after surfing or diving thrills, as only nature truly compels a visit to either of the two places. Meanwhile, Kuta and Seminyak in the South offer traditional Western adventures, from thumping nightclubs to bars, shopping, and upscale restaurants.

Bars

Ku De Ta – This beach bar is very popular among expats and tourists. This venue is open all day so it's possible to grab breakfast here in the morning and return for a late cocktail in the lounge bar after dinner. During the day, lie in one of their deck chairs under a red parasol sipping your drink by the sand.

Hu'u – This glamorous location features a swimming pool, candles by the bar, and an open air seating area for viewing the stars. Their poolside bar is a great place to grab a drink and dance the night away to pop and R&B tunes. If you're not sure what drinks to order, go for their well-known lychee martini.

Metis – You'll know you've arrived at Metis when you see the flaming torches lining the pathway to the bar from the street. Sip a cocktail in the sunken bar before entering the main dining area with full views of the surrounding rice paddies. The menu at Metis boasts a multitude of French-influenced cuisine.

Dance Clubs

M Bar Go – Spanning two floors, this club is one of the most popular in Bali. Always crowded, this place blasts hip-hop late into the night thanks to Bali's avoidance of closing-time laws. Stop by on Wednesday nights for a bikini fashion show.

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Sky Garden – This location sports three floors, each with its own unique vibe. Head to the top floor for amazing cocktails and beautiful views. This location is conveniently located in central Kuta, which will allow you to easily find somewhere to end the night after this venue closes at 3:00 AM.

Bacio – This elite venue is the place to go if you’ve happened to stash a suit in your backpack and are looking to mingle with the high-end crowd in Bali. This place will keep you entertained with music and dancing until 5:00 AM.

Dining

Mozaic Restaurant – This award winning garden restaurant and lounge is the brainchild of its chef-owner Chris Salans. It offers French cuisine with a blend of local Balinese ingredients. The lounge serves signature cocktails featuring fine spirits, passion fruit juice, blue Curacao, and other unique ingredients. The menu changes regularly, so try out their “Discovery” options for six courses of Chris Salans’ latest creations.

Mama San Bali – This retro-vintage location features a dimly lit interior with elegant decorations. This venue sports an old fashioned atmosphere and a menu with options that mix eastern and western ingredients with expert presentation. Upstairs, you’ll find an inviting lounge with chandeliers overhanging leather ottomans for relaxing with a cocktail. Try the Prohibition Ice Tea.

Biku Restaurant – Featuring a main dining hall and tea lounge, this venue is decorated with antiques and ancient books. The fare is “tropical comfort food”, with a range of Balinese and Indonesian specialties. They also have a menu of homemade cakes rotated daily. The environment is perfect for large parties, thanks to the long tables, which are perfect for conversation and relaxing after an active day with friends. While here, make sure to take advantage of their tea selections as the restaurant is run partially by a local tea master.

Cafés

Revolver – It may be hard to spot this café as it is quietly hidden down a small lane off of the main road. The dark wooden interior provides a great location for working as Wi-Fi is provided. If you’re able to find this small, out of the way location you’ll be rewarded with some of the highest quality coffee in Bali.

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Potato Head – The architecture of this venue is worth the visit, as the building is shrouded in old-fashioned recycled windows. The prices at Potato Head are a little steeper than at other venues, but you’re paying for the beautiful shoreline view and a seat by the swimming pool. By night, the cafe turns into a full-on party venue complete with pool.

Babar Café – This café has an almost “nightclub” feel, thanks to the use of lighting and the paintings that adorn the walls. In addition to caffeine, you’ll be provided with a selection of alcoholic beverages and sweet snacks from below the counter.

Unique Experiences

ATV Tours – Seeing deep into the natural beauty of Bali is best done on the back of an ATV. Treks are always available along the beautiful beaches and through the inland rice paddies. For a cost of less than 100 USD there is no reason to miss seeing Bali and the surrounding villages on one of the many available tours.

Scuba Diving – Scuba lessons in Bali are exceptionally cheap and provide some of the best diving in the world. One of the best places to dive is directly into the wreck of the U.S.A.T. Liberty. Schools of fish and beautiful corals have made this wreck their home. This trip is well for less than 100 USD, but keep in mind that safety regulations are more lax than in the United States.

Canyoning Tours – If you want the real outdoor experience in Bali canyoning tours are your outlet. If rappelling next to beautiful forest waterfalls isn’t enough for you, the option of unclipping yourself and leaping into the pools below is always available. Most guide companies mark the halfway point of your tour with a lunch brought by your guide and a swim below a waterfall in one of the forests natural pools. If you’re worried by the thought of climbing, you’ll be pleased to know that tours are available for all skill levels.

Gili Islands - For the true party tribe, Bali’s neighboring Gili Islands offer a new place to explore. If the Kuta and Seminyak party scenes are getting a little stale, try taking the boat out to Gili Tralawan for a party or diving. The offerings on these islands tend to be edgier and further from government eyes than the rest of the Bali. For example, Rudy’s Pub is locally infamous for its “secret” menu of psychocybin mushrooms, which are psychedelics treated as legal strictly on the island. Visit and consume at your own risk.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

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Having the chance to see the world and bask in exotic luxury is a great privilege that shouldn't be understated. In building a remote business or consultancy, you unlock a wealth of opportunity that is often imagined among the friends in your home city but experienced for only two weeks of vacation a year. This guide has given you the primer on the culture, lifestyles, and business of the best locations in the world for digital entrepreneurs. Each country is considered excellent for work, play, living cost, and community. In each of these cities, you'll find yourself among thousands of other expatriates and hundreds of foreign entrepreneurs or freelancers with stories strikingly similar to yours - yet you'll be just an hour or two away from uncharted territories and natural vistas.

After adventures to fill a book, friends to blanket the globe, and years on the road, settling down does not mean one ceases to become a nomad: it'll inevitably stay in your blood. When the day comes that a home is paid off or kids are back in college and the old backpack surprises you in the closet, grabbing a ticket and setting off will feel like jumping back on a familiar bike. That's ultimately what living like a "nomad" is about: not the travel, but knowing the taste of freedom.

SUPPORT

As you separate your work from your location, you enter new freedom, new luxury, and a new tribe. From being effective in running a business remotely to hiring the best without ever meeting to finding new clients, digital entrepreneurs deal challenges unique to the lifestyle. We love communities like the [Tropical MBA](#) Dynamite Circle, the [Digital Nomad Global](#) conferences, and [Geeks on a Beach](#). For the day-to-day boost, the [#Nomads](#) community hosts chat and events around the world.

In compiling this book, GoToLaunch spoke with dozens of nomadic consultants and remote entrepreneurs - and our own community and resulting interviews can be found at: <http://GoToLaunch.in/interviews>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

[Michael Gasiorek](#) has studying, living, and working in Europe, North America, and Asia with just a backpack to his name since 2010. Focusing on tech startups, consulting on story, product, and growth tactics, and content development, Michael loves talking to lifehackers and entrepreneurs building cool stuff by Twitter at @GasiorekM. Whether in Bangkok or San Francisco, he loves martial arts and hasn't given up coffee yet - and would love to join you for either.