

Sustainability Guidelines: Vietnam

You are about to embark on a unique and exciting journey to Vietnam. Not only will you visit the historical cities and monuments steeped in rich cultural tradition, but you will also be able to experience the natural beauty that Vietnam has to offer. From the coast to the mountains covered in tropical rainforests, Vietnam is a country with incredible biodiversity. There are over 13,766 botanical species, 544 species of fresh-water fish, and 16 species of marine mammals.

Environmental Issues:

The natural beauty of Vietnam is, however, threatened due to human exploitation of the natural resources, in turn affecting the species that call these ecosystems home. The main environmental issues of Vietnam are as follows:

- Industrial pollution due to fast growth of urban cities and poor outdated industrial technologies
- Land degradation from poor logging practices, drought, and agricultural practices, leading to soil erosion
- Degradation of aquatic systems from over-fishing. Rapid expansion in aquaculture activities has also caused a decline in mangroves, wetlands, and coral reefs
- Decline in biodiversity is evident in the fact that around 700 species are in danger due to rising water temperatures in coral reefs, mangroves, and wetlands.

Environmental Initiatives:

Vietnam values its natural beauty and is taking steps to preserve it. The country has developed initiatives for the maintenance and continued development of widespread protected areas of National Parks, Nature Reserves, and cultural and historical sites. Other projects include training dedicated biologists to record and study Vietnam's biodiversity, and gathering and maintaining basic collections of plants and animals for training and research. In addition, there is a long-term institutional commitment to collaboration with foreign scientific and conservation organizations.

Traditionally, farmers in Vietnam have grown bamboo as their livelihood but they have grown it in an unsustainable manner contributing to land degradation. Now with *International Finance Corporation* (IFC) and a Vietnamese based company that works with IKEA to provide bamboo flooring sold in IKEA stores worldwide, these farmers are learning new techniques of growing, harvesting and planting bamboo. This is taking place in one of the poorest provinces in Vietnam, Thanh Hoa and already 80% of the 500 farmers are trained in sustainable bamboo farming. IFC estimates that 1,600 men, women, and children living in the rural and mountainous regions of Vietnam will be able to improve their incomes as a result of this project.



In 2008, the Quang Nam province announced that it would construct a sustainable dam, specifically in the Vu Gia-Thu Bon river basin. The dam will help the region achieve sustainable hydropower development goals as well as economic development goals. The unique aspect of this dam is that environmental impacts were addressed during the planning of this structure. One reason for applying environmental consideration to the construction of the dam is that it will lead to major savings in the government for the long run and it will help meet the growing needs of the people in the province. The builders of the dam realize that conservation is key for continuing regional growth. The province acknowledges that the river provides incredible biodiversity to an area which must be conserved and not exploited.

As a visitor to this spectacular country you can support Vietnam's environmental initiatives. Fortunately, the eco-lodges that you will be staying in are committed to sustainability and preservation of the natural beauty. As a guest, please be respectful towards the wildlife and the natural habitats that you will encounter--either at your hotel or while visiting national parks. Limit your water consumption and be sure to properly dispose of your waste. If you are fortunate enough to experience the marine wonders of Vietnam, respect the coral reefs and the species that call these reefs home.

Guide to Eco-lodge in Vietnam

Indo-China Junk is a small private cruise company that will take you on a tour of Halong Bay in Vietnam. It is known for practicing 'responsible cruising' and is committed to the preservation of the bay and local culture. The food served on board is food from local communities. The company also sets up community based tourism, which involves many of the local fishermen taking part in touring activities. Indo-China Junk launched a project called "For a Green Halong Bay" in 2008 based in the Vung Vieng fishing village. The campaign encourages locals to pick up litter and protect the ecology of Halong Bay. At the launch of the campaign, 50 rubbish bins were distributed throughout the community to kick start the collection of litter. The mission of the project is to foster education and communication amongst locals to preserve the bay.