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Haven Report



Danang, Vietnam:
More Than Just A Pretty Beach...



More Than Just A Pretty Beach

By Wendy Justice

There's something about Danang that feels different from other places in Southeast Asia, and certainly quite different than any other place we've visited during the years we have spent in Vietnam. It's a big city of nearly a million people, but it has a real small-town feel about it.

Danang (*Đà Nẵng* in Vietnamese) is clean and modern. New skyscrapers give the downtown a decidedly cosmopolitan look, but you won't find the hustle and bustle here that you find in other Vietnamese cities. The Han River runs

right through downtown; the heart of the riverfront is flanked by two new bridges so stunning that they have won architectural awards.

Residents of Hanoi are quick to warn people about traveling to the south, and residents of Ho Chi Minh City will warn people to be very careful when traveling to Hanoi—both are places to be wary of, depending on whom you ask.

Danang affiliates itself with neither the north nor the south. There is no “sibling rivalry” in mellow Danang.

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staff

Kathleen Peddicord
Founding Publisher

Kat Kalashian
Editor in Chief

Charles Conn
Managing Editor

Sophia Titley
Editorial Assistant

Hélène Kletochkina
Design Director

If you have queries relating to your subscription, get in touch at:
CustomerService@OverseasLivingLetter.com

For editorial comments and contributions, reach us at:
Editorial@OverseasLivingLetter.com

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The dialect spoken here is distinctly different from either the north or the south. Food connoisseurs will enjoy sampling cuisines that are hard to find anywhere else in Vietnam.

There are other differences, as well. Danang has an active recycling program, and there is very little litter to be found anywhere in the city; it's rare to find any city in the developing world as clean as Danang. There is a very visible upwardly mobile middle class. This is partially due to a relative lack of corruption. Unlike many cities in Vietnam, good jobs are filled by qualified applicants, rather than being sold (often at a very steep price) to those who can afford to buy one.



The City of Danang from the Son Tra Peninsula

Wide roads make driving quite safe, and wide sidewalks make Danang a pedestrian-friendly city. Other than along the riverfront, there are few, if any, vendors and we saw no beggars during our entire time in Danang. The city has the look and feel of a comfortable, safe, and economically viable place to live.

Then there's the beach... There's a beachside promenade that spans the length of the city along the coast of the South China Sea. Parks and playgrounds can be found along its wide, well-maintained walkway, and popular stretches of the soft and sandy beach are equipped with lifeguards and litter barrels, making the beach one of the cleanest, safest, and most attractive ones that we've seen in Southeast Asia. Yet Danang is not a "beach town." The beaches receive surprisingly little use, and no matter the time of year, it's generally easy to find a deserted stretch of sand.

Danang is located within 160 kilometers (100 miles) of three UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the ancient towns of Hoi An



A well-tended beach garden at My Khe Beach

and Hue, and the Hindu ruins of the Champa Kingdom at *Mỹ Sơn*. This makes Danang a perfect base for the history buff. Its proximity to such major attractions allows residents of Danang the opportunity to enjoy a huge selection of restaurants, spas, golf courses, and other amenities. Yet Danang is not a tourist town.

Like so many foreigners, the first few times we went to Danang, we just passed through on our way to other places. It never quite made it onto our radar screen until recently, when we came to Central Vietnam to do some research for an article about Hoi An. We took some time in Danang during that trip and we liked what we saw. Later, we returned to explore Danang and its expat community in depth, and found that the longer we stayed here, the more we liked it. Danang is more than just a transportation hub, it makes a wonderful destination in its own right. We believe it is a top-pick for expats living in Vietnam.

Danang hasn't totally escaped discovery. Nearly 4,200 foreigners have settled in the city and the beachside developments. People who have moved here love the friendliness of the local people, the high quality of life, and the low cost of living. They say that it's refreshing to not be overcharged just because they're foreigners. They love the weather and the scenery.

The good roads make it easy to explore areas less traveled—high mountains, hidden waterfalls and swimming holes, ancient ruins, and the alluring countryside that extends all the way to the Laotian border. Rather than passing through

Resources And Contacts

Full contact details of every business, government resource, and individual mentioned in this feature is listed in the Danang “Rolodex,” which you can access online [here](#).



Danang's central location makes it a great base for exploring

Danang on your way to someplace else, spend some time here. The longer you stay, the more you'll like Danang. Take a look at [our video tour of Danang](#) to get a visual feel of the city.

The History Of Danang

Heart Of The Champa Kingdom

The area around Danang has been inhabited since at least 192 A.D. It was first settled by the Champa people, descendents of ancient Malayo-Polynesian settlers who most likely reached the Southeast Asian mainland from Borneo. Their territory spread along the coastal and mountainous regions of Vietnam and on into Laos. The Champa were primarily a seafaring people who were dedicated to trade and maintained few permanent settlements of any size away from the coast. The early Champa were Hindu.

At their peak, the Cham ruled most of Central Vietnam, from Hue and Dong Hoi, north of Danang, to Vung Tau, near present-day Ho Chi Minh City—a geographical reach of more than 1,000 kilometers. They built several settlements near Danang, including Indrapura, which was the capital of the ancient Champa Kingdom from about 875 to 1000 A.D., Singapura (the “City of the Lion”), and the temple complex at My Son, which is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



The modern city viewed from the ancient Ling Ung Buddhist Temple

The Dai Viet people, who inhabited northern Vietnam, had begun to move into Champa territory near Danang around 1000 A.D., planting rice fields and establishing homes and villages along the coast. Despite several conflicts with the Dai

Viet, the Champa managed to maintain control of the Danang region until 1471, when the Dai Viet finally conquered the kingdom. By the end of the 15th Century, the Dai Viet had annexed most of the Cham territories and the ancient Champa Kingdom was dissolved.

One of Vietnam's first contacts with Westerners occurred in 1535, when the Portuguese explorer António de Faria made landfall in Danang. He wrote about the area, and more Portuguese ships followed, initially anchoring at Hoi An, about 30 kilometers (18 miles) south of Danang. Over the years, the area was also frequented by French and Spanish missionaries and traders. In 1835, Viet Emperor Minh Mang prohibited European vessels from mooring at Hoi An—a decision that moved trade farther north to Danang. As a result, Danang soon became the largest commercial port on Vietnam's central coast.

French Colonization

The French attacked Danang in 1847, following reports of alleged persecution of Roman Catholic missionaries. In 1858, under the orders of Napoleon III, the French again attacked Danang. They successfully overpowered the Vietnamese, but were forced to retreat in 1860 following a siege by the Vietnamese army. It took the French nearly 30 years to regain control of Danang, but by 1887, the city had fallen under French control. In 1889, Danang's name was changed to Tourane and the city was placed under the administration of the French Governor General of Indochina. Due to its favorable location and deep-water port, it soon became one of Indochina's five major cities. Danang and all of Vietnam remained under French occupation for the next 67 years, including the period during the Second World War when the Japanese allowed the Vichy French government to maintain administrative control of Indochina. It wasn't until 1954 that the Vietnamese successfully drove the French out of Indochina after a lengthy war that culminated with the Vietnamese victory at the battle of Dien Bien Phu.

Welcome Gallant Marines!

On March 8, 1965, Marines from the U.S. Navy ships *Henrico*, *Union*, and *Vancouver* made landfall in Danang—the first American troops to put “boots on the ground” at the start of the Vietnam War. The Marines were met by local South Vietnamese officers, sightseers, and smiling Vietnamese girls

with garlands of flowers, who greeted the U.S. soldiers with a sign that said “Welcome, Gallant Marines.”

Danang quickly became the home of a major South Vietnamese and U.S. air base that eventually averaged almost 2,600 flights daily, making it one of the busiest airports in the world at that time. The airbase was secured by 3,500 U.S. Marines, which freed up the South Vietnamese troops for combat against the North. The airport remained in operation until ground combat operations in Danang ceased on August 13, 1972.

Post-war Progress

Since the Vietnam war, Danang has thrived. It is the third largest deep-water port city in Vietnam and with a population of just under one million people, it is the largest city on the central coast. Served by a modern airport, and right on National Route 1A and the North-South Reunification Railway, Danang is a hub for transportation. It is also a major industrial and educational center.



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Modern and business-friendly downtown Danang

The Danang politician Nguyễn Bá Thanh, is largely credited with turning Danang into one of the most modern and least corrupt cities in Vietnam. Mr. Thanh is highly respected by the Vietnamese people and considered to be one of Vietnam's top leaders. His innovative leadership, as well as the energy and can-do enthusiasm of the residents of Danang, ensure that the city is likely to continue to develop as one of the most modern and livable metropolitan areas in Vietnam.

Stunning Scenery In Every Direction

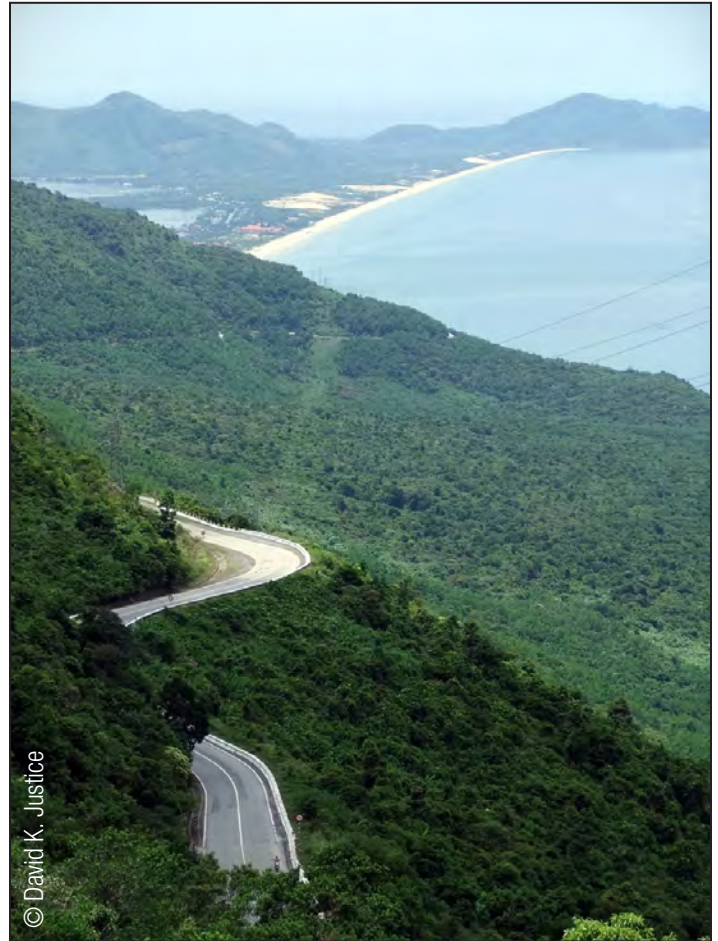
No matter which direction you look, beauty surrounds Danang. The South China Sea's clear, warm waters form the city's eastern boundary. The clean, fine sand beach starts at the northern edge of the city and continues southward all the way to Hoi An. During the autumn months, the normally calm waters will often have waves large enough for surfing.

The city lies 759 kilometers (472 miles) south of Hanoi and 960 kilometers (600 miles) north of Ho Chi Minh City.

The Annamite mountain range lies immediately to the north and northwest of Danang. Hai Van Pass offers stunning views of the mountains and the long and remote coastline far below. The road reaches its summit at Son Tra Mountain, which was known as "Monkey Mountain" during the war. It then continues north to the town of Lang Co and eventually to the city of Hue, 106 kilometers (66 miles) away. Son Tra Mountain acts as a climate divider. The weather to the north of the mountain is much cooler and damper than on the southern side. The Annamite Range reaches altitudes of 1,500 meters (4,900 feet) near here—impressive, considering the sea-level elevation of Danang.

Only a few kilometers south of Danang are the Marble Mountains. These five rocky limestone towers rise almost vertically from the flat coastal terrain. Natural caves in these formations were inhabited for centuries by the Cham people. There are numerous Buddhist and Taoist pagodas and altars placed along the footpaths that lead to the summits of several of the outcrops.

The Laotian border lies less than 160 kilometers (100 miles) due west of Danang. A drive in this direction passes through lushly forested, mountainous land that becomes more and more isolated. Many small roads branch off in every direction, offering plenty of opportunities for exploration.



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Looking north from Hai Van Pass to the beaches of Lang Co

The city of Danang has few hills, making it very easy to navigate on foot or by bicycle. The Han River runs through the city center. Several distinctive modern bridges connect the Hai Chau District and city center with the Son Tra District, the peninsula of land that extends east of the river to the South China Sea coastline.



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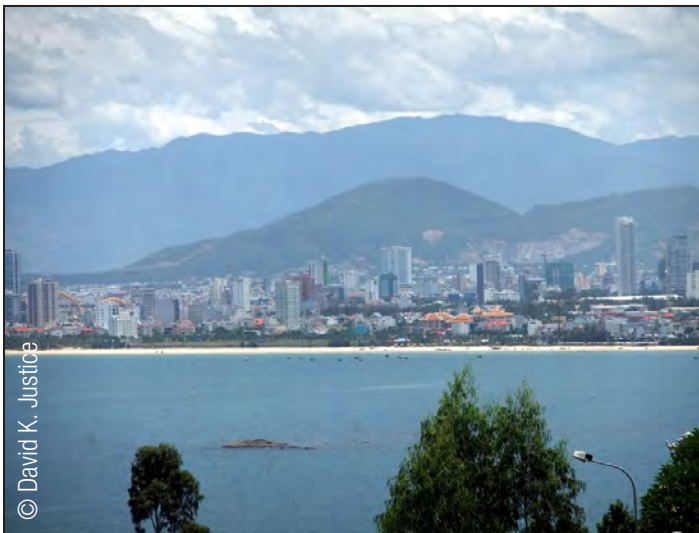
The fishing fleet at the Port of Danang

The busy Port of Danang, at the mouth of the Han River, contributes to the economic viability of the city.

There are a total of seven districts in Danang. Although foreigners are free to live in any of them, most choose to stay in either the Hai Chau or Son Tra districts.

Not Too Hot, Not Too Cold...

Danang boasts one of the nicest climates in Vietnam. Typical days in Danang are partly cloudy, warm but not too hot, and tempered by gentle ocean breezes. The city's location—right on the coast and sheltered by mountains—helps to create an agreeable climate. Depending on the season, temperatures rarely exceed 35°C (95°F) or dip below 17°C (66°F).



The impressive Annamite Mountains rise up directly behind the city

Summer generally lasts from mid-May through August, with June being the hottest month of the year. During this period, high temperatures average 33°C (91°F) to 35°C (95°F). Humidity during the warm season is comfortably low, averaging between 35 to 48 percent. Frequent ocean breezes moderate the temperature even more, which can make the summertime climate quite pleasant. By September, the weather begins to cool, with more rainy days and stronger winds. October is the wettest month of the year.

Winter lasts from mid-November until mid-February. Daily average temperatures range from 19°C (66°F) to 26°C (79°F), though it may get cooler than that on occasion. However, the temperature rarely dips below 17°C (63°F), even on the coldest nights. Winters tend to be fairly wet and humid, though late in the season, precipitation drops markedly.

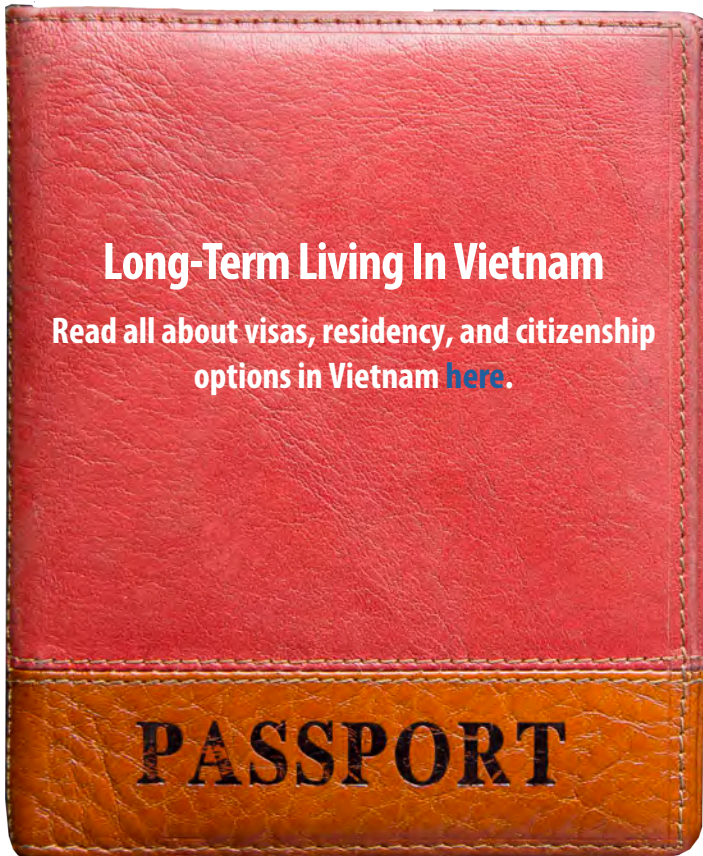
By March and April, rain occurs on an average of just three days per month.

Danang Climate Data							
Month	Record high °C (°F)	Average high °C (°F)	Daily mean °C (°F)	Average low °C (°F)	Record low °C (°F)	Precip. mm (in)	Avg. precip. days
Jan	32 (90)	24.8 (76.6)	21.7 (71.1)	18.5 (65.3)	8 (46)	96.2 (3.8)	13.7
Feb	35 (95)	26.1 (79)	23.0 (73.4)	19.8 (67.6)	7 (45)	33.0 (1.3)	6.9
Mar	37 (99)	28.7 (83.7)	25.1 (77.2)	21.5 (70.7)	11 (52)	22.4 (0.9)	4.8
Apr	41 (106)	31.0 (87.8)	27.2 (81)	23.3 (73.9)	7 (45)	26.9 (1.1)	5.6
May	39 (102)	33.4 (92.1)	29.2 (84.6)	24.9 (76.8)	18 (64)	62.6 (2.5)	8.9
Jun	38 (100)	33.9 (93)	29.7 (85.5)	25.5 (77.9)	20 (68)	87.1 (3.4)	8.0
Jul	38 (100)	34.3 (93.7)	29.8 (85.6)	25.3 (77.5)	17 (63)	85.6 (3.4)	8.6
Aug	38 (100)	33.9 (93)	29.7 (85.5)	25.5 (77.9)	21 (70)	103.0 (4.1)	11.4
Sep	37 (99)	31.5 (88.7)	27.8 (82)	24.1 (75.4)	21 (70)	349.7 (13.8)	15.4
Oct	36 (97)	29.6 (85.3)	26.4 (79.5)	23.2 (73.8)	12 (54)	612.8 (24.1)	21.2
Nov	35 (95)	27.0 (80.6)	24.3 (75.7)	21.6 (70.9)	7 (45)	366.2 (14.4)	20.9
Dec	32 (90)	24.9 (76.8)	22.1 (71.8)	19.3 (66.7)	11 (52)	199.0 (7.8)	18.6
Year	41 (106)	29.93 (85.86)	26.33 (79.41)	22.71 (72.87)	7 (45)	2,044.5 (80.5)	144

Source: Wikipedia

Typhoons are fairly common in Danang, and generally come between September and mid-December. Flooding, when it occurs, affects low-lying areas close to the Han River... something to keep in mind when you are house hunting. Danang rarely gets the heavy floods that are common in Hoi An, as drainage into the ocean occurs quickly, and for the most part, painlessly. It also helps that Danang has one of the most modern urban infrastructures in all of Vietnam. Typhoons rarely pose much inconvenience to most residents of this contemporary city other than strong winds and heavy rains.

Although Danang has not been directly affected by a tsunami, there is a risk of them from earthquakes originating in the Philippines. The government has been proactive, installing 10 tsunami warning devices throughout the city. These will give residents a 30-minute warning in advance of a tsunami.



Domesticated dogs and cats are accepted and loved in Vietnam, as they are anywhere else in the world.

Even though other vaccinations are recommended, the rabies vaccine is the only one required by Vietnamese authorities. Vietnam does not quarantine healthy pets who have met their requirements. If your paperwork is in order, it should only take a few minutes at immigration before you are reunited with your pet. Read more about bringing pets to Vietnam, in "[Pets are welcome here.](#)"

Finding The Right Home

When you first arrive in Danang, you may want to stay in a hotel until you find a place to stay long-term. Hotels are quite



The Sculpture Park on the riverfront promenade



Looking across at the Son Han Bridge

Pets Are Not Eaten Here!

Despite Vietnam's reputation as a place where people will eat animals not normally consumed in Western countries, stories of starving street urchins chasing after house pets are the stuff of urban legend. Pet ownership is becoming increasingly common as the country's standard of living increases.

What's Your Dollar Worth?

We've quoted prices in this article in Vietnamese dong (VND). At the time of publication one U.S. dollar was worth about 21,000 dong.

inexpensive here and most offer very good value. It is often possible to negotiate a discounted weekly or monthly rate.

more about buying property in Vietnam in [“Buying a Home in Vietnam – The Restrictions.”](#)

Don't Buy A Home Just Yet!

Finding A Rental: Now That You Can Do!

Foreigners are not permitted to purchase land or houses in Vietnam. Long-term land leases are available, but only if the property is to be used for business or commercial purposes. Unlike Thailand or the Philippines, you cannot legally lease land and build a personal residence on it. Foreigners have devised ways to work around the existing laws, but the risks involved in doing so are significant.

There are a few property management companies in Danang, and their agents will be happy to show you available rentals. Since agents are paid by the property owners, it is to their advantage to show you places that meet your criteria—they want you to find a place to rent from them. Most agents will speak at least some English, saving you the effort of finding a translator.

Laws are evolving in Vietnam, and it probably won't be long until foreigners will have the opportunity to purchase property with only a minimum of restrictions and red-tape. Existing laws, however, make home ownership next to impossible. Vietnamese property laws are based upon “land use rights,” which essentially stipulate that Vietnamese land belongs collectively to the Vietnamese people, and ultimately, the land belongs to the country—essentially the government—of Vietnam. As a result, few foreigners are able to purchase Vietnamese land use rights and even fewer do so legally. Read

Alternately, you can take a drive around town, looking for signs posted with the words “*Nhà cho thuê*,” which mean “House for rent” in Vietnamese. Unless you know the language, if you want to rent a place that is not listed with a property management company, you'll probably need an interpreter. The majority of properties for rent to foreigners in Danang come fully furnished. Utilities are typically not included in the monthly rent, especially in the case of private homes. However, your rental property agent or the owner of the building can assist you in making the arrangements.



Most expats choose to stay in either the Hai Chau or Son Tra districts



A single-family home for rent

Although rents are often quoted in U.S. dollars, Vietnamese law states that other than for hotels, rent should be paid in Vietnamese dong. A lease, to be legal, should have the rental price listed in dong. However, many landlords prefer to be paid in U.S. dollars and if dong is offered as payment, it may be converted at a less favorable rate than a bank would charge. The preferred currency and rate of exchange are something that can, and should be, negotiated when signing a lease. The dong has been showing a slow but steady trend of depreciation against the dollar. This is a trend that is expected to continue so further devaluation in the dong could, if negotiated correctly, result in a corresponding rent reduction.

Housing units for foreigners must meet a few government-mandated minimum standards. They must be equipped with fire extinguishers and have adequate plumbing and electrical systems. If you use the services of a property management company, this shouldn't be a concern as the house will have met these standards. However, a private owner may first need to certify their house with the government—not all houses for rent are available to foreign tenants.

When renting a place of your own, be certain to clarify who pays the electric bill and how the rate will be calculated. As with most things in Vietnam, prices are often negotiable, even for electricity. It is a good idea to keep your own record of the meter readings each month, as well as keeping a record of any payments that you have made.

If you are bothered by noise, you'll want to take care that your future home is not located near a popular café or bar, a



Apartments for rent

construction project, or right on a busy road. Though things usually quiet down around midnight, parts of the city can be quite noisy in the evenings and any time after dawn.

A one-year lease, with a one-month security deposit, is the standard for long-term rentals. Shorter or longer leases may be available, though monthly rents for leases that are less than 12 months are usually higher. Some landlords may prefer to have the rent paid quarterly or annually, which would require more money up front but could add up to a lower rent overall.

Single-family homes tend to be larger and less expensive to rent than condominiums. Two- or three-bedroom houses in nice areas start at around US\$400 per month and for large, luxury homes, range up to around US\$800 per month. Mid-range and top-end condominiums start at about US\$600 per month, with an upper range of around US\$1,000 per month for condos with an ocean view.

We looked at the top-end Indochina Riverside Tower complex, which is located in a prime location right across the bridge



Luxury living in the Azura Tower serviced apartments

from the riverside promenade in central Danang. A two-bedroom, two-bath condo, on the 13th floor, has great views. It comes fully furnished, and includes access to a gym and outdoor swimming pool. This is luxury living at a very affordable US\$700 per month. A brand new, two-bedroom house located just five minutes' walk from the beach, which is fully furnished and air-conditioned is only US\$600 per month.

Many foreigners like to live near the beach and find housing in Son Tra District. We found a 60-square-meter, one-bedroom villa with a large yard and a garden located just 200 meters from the beach for US\$700 per month. It is fully furnished and includes a washing machine, Wi-Fi/Internet, cable TV, picnic tables, swings, and parasol.

We feature these properties, and more, listed with three of the bigger agencies (Central Vietnam Realty, Danang Renting, and Danang Property Renting) in "[Affordable Luxury—Rental Listings](#)." These three agencies focus on the needs of the expat community and have plenty of properties to offer.

A Recommended Rental Resource

We met Mrs. Dan Sizer, the owner of Danang Renting (www.danangrenting.com), when we were last in the city. She is married to an American and speaks excellent English. She is a great resource for information about Danang.

The Cost Of Living

A couple renting an apartment in Danang could live comfortably on about US\$1,200, and about US\$200 less renting a house. Note that two big-ticket items are not included: health care costs and travel back home. They vary too much, with each person's situation, to make it useful to include here.

Renting An Apartment In Danang

Item	VND	Description
Rent	16,000,000	Furnished 2-bedroom apartments range from US\$600-1,000 per month
HOA Fees	0	N/A
Property Taxes	0	N/A
Transportation	1,200,000	Motorbike rental and gas
Gas	60,000	Used for cooking
Electricity, water, trash	2,000,000	Moderate A/C use
Telephone	60,000	Prepaid cell phone
Internet	200,000	Unlimited access
Cable TV	600,000	Includes English-language channels
Household Help	0	Allow 2,500,000 VND if full-time, live-in maid is required
Groceries	2,500,000	
Entertainment	3,000,000	Eating out, miscellaneous expenses
TOTAL	25,620,000 VND	US\$1,214.90

Getting Settled Is A Breeze

Danang offers all the amenities you'll need to quickly and easily set up your household. Most rentals will be cable and Internet-ready. Banks are plentiful and the area has an abundance of conveniently located ATMs. Cell phone coverage is excellent and rates are very low. Once you have found a place of your own, you'll be surprised at how little effort it takes to get settled.

Internet

Vietnam has some of the least expensive Internet around, and connections tend to be quite reliable. FPT, VNPT, Vinaphone, and Viettel all offer 3G and ADSL Internet packages starting at around 110,000 VND (about US\$5) per month. Once you decide on a provider, it usually takes about three days to activate your service.

Cable TV

The largest provider of cable television in Danang is Song Thu Cable Television (Arico). Plans that include several English-language channels start at around 600,000 VND (about US\$30) per month. They also have Internet and video-on-demand plans available.

Cell Phones And Landlines

Most people in Vietnam use cell phones, though fixed-line phone service is available and is very reasonably priced. Fixed-line service is provided by VNPT and Viettel. Subscribers pay a monthly fee of about 22,000 VND (just over a dollar) and 220 VND per minute for local calls.

Cellular telephones are not "locked" in Vietnam. You are free to use any provider you want and switch at any time. Getting prepaid cell phone service is as easy as buying a SIM card and minutes from practically any convenience store or phone store in Danang. Promotions are offered constantly, making calls extremely affordable. If you buy minutes during a promotion (which are usually displayed on the screen of your mobile phone) and don't make a lot of international calls, you can expect your monthly calls and texts to cost less than US\$3 per month. Prepaid plans including unlimited data can cost as little as 50,000 VND per month—less than US\$2.50. VNPT, Mobifone, Vinaphone, and Viettel are the main cell phone providers. These providers also offer monthly

postpaid plans which often come bundled with data plans for smartphone users.

Utilities

Electricity runs around US\$100 per month for a two- or three-bedroom home during the hot months—more if you use the air conditioner during the day as well as at night. During the winter, you will probably not need to run the air conditioner much, if at all, though you may want to purchase a space heater for particularly cold and wet days. If you are renting a condo, you'll most likely pay the manager for electricity each month. If you have a house, the bill may go directly to the owner, or you may have someone from the electric company come to your house each month and present you with a bill. In either case, the electricity will remain in the owner's name.



You'll love Danang

The water that comes out of the tap is considered potable, though we recommend boiling the water before drinking it or buying purified water. Tap water is charged by units, with one unit being one cubic meter, or 1,000 liters. Each unit costs less than 5,000 VND (about a US quarter). Most people spend less than US\$5 per month for tap water. A five-gallon container of purified drinking water or mineral water delivered to your door costs 30,000 to 50,000 VND.

Cooking stoves usually run on propane gas. Cooking gas is supplied in tanks similar to those used for outdoor barbecue

grills in the West. They are exchanged when empty and cost about 300,000 VND to fill. Unless you do a great deal of cooking at home, you'll find that a tank of gas will last for several months. Since almost all Vietnamese food is prepared on a stove-top or grill, it is very unlikely that your place will come equipped with an oven. Even top-of-the-line luxury homes rarely come with more than a four-burner stove. Furnished homes will usually include a microwave oven and a refrigerator-freezer, and often come equipped with a rice cooker and water boiler.

Banking And Money

The Vietnamese Dong

The U.S. dollar is the de facto currency for many transactions here. In part, this is due to the instability of the Vietnamese dong, which has been devalued several times over the years. Since the dong is loosely fixed to the U.S. dollar, this can be good news if your pension or income is in dollars. The current rate of exchange has varied very little over the past several months, though some economists have suggested that there will be a 2014 devaluation of one to two percent.



Save money by purchasing at the traditional markets

Individuals who want to open a Vietnamese bank account must have a residency card, which is only available to employed foreigners, foreign business owners, or foreigners who are spouses of Vietnamese citizens. However, banks can be helpful when withdrawing cash using a credit or debit card, exchanging currency, or sending money domestically by direct deposit. The majority of ATMs in Danang

(and throughout Vietnam) dispense a maximum of 2,000,000 VND (roughly US\$95), though multiple withdrawals on the same day are allowed. Some ATMs operated by Agribank, Dongba, Techcombank, and ANZ Bank will allow withdrawals of up to 4,000,000 VND per transaction. On rare occasions, you may be able to find an ATM that dispenses up to 10,000,000 VND. If needed, it may be possible to go to a bank teller to make a larger withdrawal. Most banks charge a service fee of between 20,000 and 40,000 VND (about US\$1-US\$2) per transaction. There are no ATMs in Vietnam that dispense U.S. dollars.

Receiving Your Social Security Checks

According to the Social Security Administration, U.S. citizens living in Vietnam are subject to certain restrictions in receiving their social security checks. These restrictions apply to U.S. citizens who reside in most countries that were in the former Soviet Union and Vietnam. Checks will not be sent directly to social security recipients, although exceptions can be made so that a U.S. citizen can receive monthly stipends. To qualify for an exception, the recipient must agree to appear in person at the U.S. Embassy each month to receive benefits. The only U.S. Embassies in Vietnam are located in Hanoi and in Ho Chi Minh City. If you are unable to appear at the embassy each month, you are still entitled to receive all your benefits once you leave Vietnam and go to another country where payments can be mailed.

To avoid all that hassle, have your social security check direct-deposited into your U.S. bank. The American Chamber of Commerce in Ho Chi Minh City (AMCHAM) has more information about this topic on their website. More information can also be read on the US government's Social Security Administration document "Your Payments While You Are Outside of the United States." See the "[Rolodex](#)" for contact information.

Taxes In Vietnam

Income Tax

Currently, Vietnam does not have a double-taxation treaty with the United States, although Canada and the United Kingdom have entered into tax agreements with Vietnam. United States citizens can be taxed on U.S. and Vietnamese income, provided they stay in Vietnam for at least 183 days over the period of a year.

However, the PricewaterhouseCoopers' website states: "In respect of tax residents who have overseas income, PIT [personal income tax] paid in a foreign country is creditable." United States taxpayers can also take advantage of the foreign earned income exclusion, which allows federal tax exemption for all earned income up to US\$99,200.

Income derived from a Vietnamese source is subject to a flat tax rate of 20%, which is applicable to foreigners who spend less than 183 days in a consecutive 12-month period in the country. For foreigners spending greater than 183 days in Vietnam, the tax rate varies from 5 to 35%.

However, if you are living in Vietnam and are neither employed nor operating a business, you will probably not need to be concerned about paying income taxes.



The city blends the traditional and the modern

Vat And Service Taxes

There is sales tax or VAT (Value Added Tax) and a SST (Special Services Tax) in Vietnam. The SST applies to the purchase of

cigarettes (65%), beer (50%), wine (25-50%), gasoline (10%), air conditioners (10%), automobile purchases (10-60%), golf (20%), lottery tickets (15%), and a few other miscellaneous expenses. Despite the SST, Vietnam still enjoys some of the lowest prices in SE Asia. A bottle of imported California wine, for example, costs less in Vietnam than in California, and a pack of imported cigarettes sells for less than US\$1.25.

Read more about Vietnam's taxes in the *ORL* online resource "[Taxes In Vietnam.](#)"

Shopping For Necessities

The produce, meats, and fish at the traditional markets in Danang tend to be fresher and often cost less than at modern supermarkets. The largest traditional market in the city is in a convenient location, diagonally across the street from the Big C. There are smaller markets scattered throughout the city, including one near the north end of the riverfront promenade. Negotiation is often necessary, and knowing a few words in Vietnamese will help you get the best price. Shopping at the traditional markets is a pleasant way to interact with the local community.



Ginger, spices, garlic...the markets are a social place to shop

Alternately, there are several large, modern supermarkets in Danang. Many expats prefer the one-stop shopping and fixed prices at the Big C and Metro, and appreciate the selection of imported foods they carry. The Metro is a large grocery store that also stocks a few household items. The Big C is located in one of Danang's largest malls; you can find everything from groceries to clothing and other household necessities.

If you have a craving for an imported food that isn't carried at either the Big C or the Metro, you may have success finding what you are looking for when you make a trip to the Dingo Deli in Hoi An. This foreign-owned restaurant and minimart has many imported items that are very difficult to find anywhere else in Central Vietnam. They also offer a good selection of salads, sandwiches, and other authentically prepared Western fare. The Dingo Deli is a popular place in the local community, and a good spot to meet other foreigners living in Danang and Hoi An.

A Sample Shopping Cart

Here's an extract from a shopping cart of items we gathered at Big C Shopping Center. Our complete shopping cart can be viewed at the online "[Danang Shopping Cart](#)." Remember: one U.S. dollar is about 21,000 dong, so that liter of orange juice, the equivalent of one U.S. quart, is around two bucks.

Grocery Item	Quantity	Price in VND
Butter, imported	250 grams	71,000
Milk	1 liter	26,000
Orange juice	1 liter	42,300
Pepsi	1.5 liter	14,800
Wine, Jacob Creek Chardonnay	750 ml.	330,000
Bacon	1 kg.	192,000
Chicken quarters	1 kg.	76,500
Beef, strip fillet	1 kg.	241,000
Bananas	1 kg.	10,500
Onions, yellow	1 kg.	20,200
Tomatoes	1 kg.	8,200
Carrots	1 kg.	30,000
Ketchup, local brand	340 grams	19,900
Peanut butter, local brand	500 grams	52,400
Bread, sliced white	1 loaf	17,500
Toothpaste, Colgate	250 grams	53,000
Laundry soap, local brand	2.7 kg.	123,800

Staying Healthy

Healthcare has improved in Vietnam over the past few years, and all but the most serious or complicated conditions can



The Big C—where most items are available under one roof

be treated without having to leave the country. However, the standard of care in Danang and elsewhere in Vietnam is still not up to the level of Thailand, Malaysia, or Singapore. There are no hospitals in Vietnam that have, as yet, received JCI international accreditation. Hospitals here will likely not be as clean as you might expect and trained technicians may be in short supply. Physicians, however, will likely be very educated and will make accurate diagnoses and treatment plans.

Danang offers the highest level of care to be found between Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City and most health problems can be treated locally. Though any hospital in Danang can handle minor emergencies and illnesses, most expats go to Family Medical Practice or Hoan My Hospital Danang for check-ups or any complicated or serious problem. Both facilities offer English-speaking doctors on staff, 24-hour emergency care, and emergency evacuation.

For complex illnesses or surgeries, most foreigners choose to be treated in Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, or elsewhere, where international-standard medical care is routine. If the thought of living in Danang and having a serious medical emergency concerns you, consider purchasing a health insurance policy that covers medical evacuation.

Healthy Smiles

High-quality dental care is easy to find in Danang. The International Dental Company (IDC), East Meets West Dental, Danang Dentist, and Viet Khoung Dentistry Center all come highly recommended and they employ English-speaking staff. Prices are very reasonable, their clinics are spotlessly clean, and expats here speak very highly about the care that they have received. Dental examinations are usually free, cleanings



The stresses of modern living slip away along the quiet coastline

and fillings cost less than US\$15, and porcelain crowns are under US\$200. The non-profit East Meets West Dental Clinic uses the fees that they collect from their patients to provide free dental care to thousands of poor children in Central Vietnam every year.

No Prescription Required

Almost all medications are sold over-the-counter in Vietnam—no prescriptions are required. Many medications are imported from the West and are exactly the same medications you would buy in your home country, although they are sold here for a fraction of the price.

You can often find medications originating from India, China, or even Vietnam that are equivalent to brand-name medications, and these are even less expensive. However, many medications available in North America have not yet made it to this corner of the world. If you require a regular medication, be sure that you have both the generic and chemical name for it. The local pharmacy may either carry that exact medication or may be able to find a suitable substitute.

A Regional Transportation Hub

Danang is served by an international airport, the railroad, and the National Highway.

By Air

Danang International Airport (airport code: DAD), is the third busiest airport in Vietnam. It is located just three kilometers (two miles) outside of the city center. A new terminal opened in 2011, more than quadrupling the airport's passenger capacity and making DAD one of the newest, most modern airports in Vietnam.

International flights originating in many Asian cities fly directly to Danang. However, if you are traveling to Vietnam from overseas, you will likely enter Vietnam via Ho Chi Minh City's Tan Son Nhat Airport (SGN) or Hanoi's Noi Bai International Airport (HAN). Budget carriers VietJet Air and Jetstar Pacific both serve Danang, as well as Vietnam Airlines, Silk Air, Korean Air, and Shanghai Airlines.

By Rail

If you plan to make the journey overland to Danang, you'll find that taking the train is far more comfortable than the bus and well worth the few extra dollars. Several trains stop or originate in Danang daily, offering coaches with various levels of comfort. There are the inexpensive (and undesirable) hard-seats, soft-seat cars which are fine for day trips, hard-sleepers that accommodate six passengers in a dormitory-like setting, and the comparatively spacious, air-conditioned soft-sleepers which accommodate four passengers per cabin.

For longer journeys, choose a soft-sleeper if you can. The difference in price between a soft-sleeper and hard-sleeper is negligible and the difference in comfort and quality is significant.

To help you plan your trip, visit the website of "The Man in Seat Sixty-One" where you can find current schedules and other vital information. This is an invaluable online resource for train travel in Vietnam (or anywhere in the world, for that matter).

By Road

Traveling by bus is the most economical way to get from one city to another in Vietnam; however the trip to Danang is a



Central Vietnam's transportation hub

very long journey from either Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City. Long-distance roads in Vietnam are not up to Western standards. The bus ride can be an arduous and occasionally nerve-racking experience.

Several bus companies make the trip north from Ho Chi Minh City to Danang, as well as the trip south from Hanoi. Most long-distance buses travel at night when there is less traffic and the roads are theoretically safer. Rest stops can be few and far between, and are made for the driver's convenience—not the passengers—so plan accordingly.

Bus companies vary widely in the quality and condition of their buses and drivers. Phuong Trang (based in Ho Chi Minh City) and Mai Linh (from Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City) are reliable choices; their buses are generally clean and well maintained, with assigned seating, courteous staff, and safe drivers. The bus company Sinh Tourist also has a good reputation and is a bit more focused on foreign travelers—rest stops may be announced in English and there is usually a bit more legroom than what is offered on public buses.

Driving in Danang—Yes, You Can!

Danang is one of the wealthier cities in Vietnam; the good roads make this immediately apparent. It's very unusual to have the words “good roads” and “Vietnam” used in the same sentence, but Danang is one of the few places that we've been to in Vietnam where it's a fair statement. Many major roads are wide, with multiple lanes and comparatively light traffic. Besides being wide enough to accommodate the

traffic flow, the roads are generally in good repair and most are even attractively landscaped. Traffic lights are well placed and people tend to drive a bit more slowly and courteously than you would be accustomed to elsewhere in Vietnam.

Driving Legally In Vietnam

If you want to drive legally in Vietnam, you'll need to get a Vietnamese driver's license. It's not legal to use your license from your home country and Vietnam does not recognize international driver's licenses.

If your visa is valid for three months or longer, you can apply for a temporary Vietnamese driver's license. A license costs 30,000 (paper) to 135,000 VND (plastic)—either way less than US\$10—and is available to any qualified foreigner age 18 or older.

Once you assemble the necessary paperwork, your application will be processed in about seven business days. See [“Driving Licenses, Ownership, and Insurance.”](#)

Having your own transportation is a very reasonable way of getting around the city. Traffic-wise, Danang is one of the most drivable big cities in Vietnam. Though there are taxis and public buses, there is little need to use them if you have your own motorbike. There are several places around town that will rent motorbikes with a long-term, month-to-month lease for about 1 million VND (less than US\$50) per month.

Central Danang is easily accessible by foot. The area along the riverfront has wide sidewalks and is about a mile long. However, the city is quite spread out, with a much lower population density than Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City. If you're heading to points beyond the city center, such as the beach or any of the main shopping centers, you'll need to have your own wheels, get a taxi, or use public transportation.

Though Danang is one of the least corrupt cities in the country, taxis seem to be an exception. Even the normally reliable Mai Linh taxis, are prone to overcharge here, especially if you need one at the airport or train station. If you do need to take a taxi, try to catch one away from tourist areas and be sure that the driver uses the meter and takes a direct route to your intended destination.



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It's busy but not too busy to drive yourself

Though buses are not the most comfortable way of getting around, they are reasonably efficient during the daylight hours. Most buses stop running after six in the evening, though.

Recreation And Diversions

Most travel guides will barely mention Danang, other than to say it's the gateway to Hoi An and Hue, and some expats may complain that there isn't much to do here. However, there are plenty of diversions if you look for them.

Activities In Town

Take a stroll along the riverfront in Central Danang. Flanked by the unique Dragon Bridge to the south and the impressive Song Han Bridge to the north, the riverfront promenade features trendy restaurants, bars, and coffee shops on one side and a large sculpture park and recreational area on the other. The park comes alive at night, when people from all walks of life come to stroll along the promenade, visit with their friends

Accidents Do Happen

The Department of Foreign Affairs is responsible for supporting foreigners who are involved in traffic accidents in Danang.

They will go to the accident scene, contact and coordinate with the city police, contact the embassy of the foreign victims if needed, and give support and guidance on the relevant administrative procedures.

and families, flirt with their sweethearts and enjoy the pleasant evening air. The bridges are cleverly illuminated with a colorful ever-changing light show. The six-lane Dragon Bridge, opened in March, 2013, has become a favorite tourist attraction. On weekends and special occasions, crowds of people gather to watch as fire and smoke erupt from the mouth of the dragon. It's a little kitschy, but it's a great excuse to get out and enjoy the evening.



© David K. Justice

The slightly kitsch but entertaining Dragon Bridge lightshow

Danang has a surprising number of outstanding restaurants, from Vietnamese barbecue sidewalk cafes to five-star international bistros. Restaurants serve Vietnamese food specialties from the north and the south, as well as Central Vietnamese fare including dishes from the distinctive Hoi An and Hue cuisines. There are a number of tennis courts around town, as well as a huge sports complex with a distinctive flying saucer-shaped arena.

There are also about half a dozen bowling alleys, including a modern ten-lane complex that recently opened in the Cop Mart Centre. Bicyclists and runners will certainly enjoy the coastal parks and beaches that stretch from one end of Danang to the other.

The March 29 Park is located just a short distance from the city center; it's popular with joggers and bicyclists. Many other activities are available, including water bicycles, an underwater world, and a train that encircles the park's lake. The park also has a botanical garden featuring hundreds of varieties of flowers and trees, ornamental fish, and rare animals.



Danang's tennis courts and the saucer-shaped sport stadium behind

There are two museums in the city: the Cham Museum—with its excellent collection of Cham art and sculpture is considered one of the best museums in Vietnam—and the Ho Chi Minh Museum, which offers visitors insight into the history of Vietnam, from prehistoric times to the present, as well as a collection of tanks, planes, and other military memorabilia.

Cooking classes are offered at several of the hotels and resorts in Danang. The classes held at the Furama Resort Danang and the China Beach Villa are recommended.

The huge Danang Water Park, which covers ten hectares (24.7 acres), is located just three kilometers (two miles) from the city center. It was the first amusement park built in Central Vietnam, and offers plenty of slides and pools, as well as an open-air stage for cultural and musical performances.

Two new amusement parks are currently under construction. The Danang Asian Park will have international-standard

rides and attractions, as well as films, musical and stage performances, and a circus. Ocean Park will feature a water palace, models of famous lighthouses and a cable car that will take visitors to the top of Son Tra Mountain. Both parks are expected to open in late 2014.

The Megastar/CGV Cinema, located in the Big C Shopping center, has several screens, including one 3D theater, and shows local, regional, and new-release Hollywood films. Movies are typically in English with Vietnamese subtitles, though it's a good idea to check first to make sure that the film has not been dubbed in Vietnamese.

There is good shopping along the riverfront as well as in several malls located throughout the city.



My Khe Beach—just you and the South China Sea

Beaches And The Surrounding Area

For many people, the beach is the star attraction in this area. The 30 kilometer (18 mile) shoreline extends from the Son Tra Peninsula, north of Danang, all the way to Cua Dai Beach in Hoi An. In Danang, the beach is known as My Khe. It's a wide expanse of soft, clean sand edged with palm trees. This is one of the very few beaches in Vietnam that has litter baskets and lifeguards, which helps to keep the area clean and safe. A promenade extends the length of the coastline in Danang, with wide sidewalks, playgrounds, manicured landscaping, and the occasional statue or topiary.

You can view our video of My Khe Beach [here](#).

Heading south of Danang, many new hotels, resorts, and gated communities are springing up. The construction stops momentarily at the Marble Mountains, then resumes north of Hoi An. The Marble Mountain's five craggy limestone towers are a scenic stop, though a bit of a tourist trap. There are a number of natural caves here, several of which were first Hindu, and later Buddhist sanctuaries. It is still a popular pilgrimage spot for devotees. This is also a major pilgrimage spot for package tourists who are deposited by the busload in front of the carved stone and trinket shops that surround the base of the sanctuary.



A fishermen's altar on the beach

An Bang Beach, about 30 minutes south of Danang, attracts a mainly expatriate crowd, who come to relax and enjoy the waves and clean sand. An Bang tends to be quite sedate—a perfect spot for rest and relaxation.

Cua Dai, in Hoi An, is the southernmost beach along this stretch. It is very popular with tourists, though some find the constant stream of vendors to be tiring. Swimmers will find that the ocean is calmest from May to July, while surfers can find excellent waves from mid-September to December.

Hoi An is less than an hour's drive south of Danang. The ancient city, with its unique Chinese and Japanese architecture, has been well preserved and is a major international tourist destination. It's also home to a sizeable expatriate community and was featured in the March 2012 edition of the *ORL*. Hoi An has a large selection of restaurants, spas, and other activities geared towards the constant influx of visitors who come here to see the sights.

Is It All About The Beach?

I asked expat Steven Bruce his opinion about Danang's world-class beach:

“The beaches here are some of the prettiest and cleanest that I've seen in Vietnam. Do you see Danang as being a “beach town” (like Nha Trang, for example) or are the beaches mostly enjoyed by the local residents of Danang?”

Steven: “I don't see it becoming like Nha Trang in the near future. The city center is a couple of kilometers from the beach and there isn't a lot to do around the beach, except eat seafood. But that's a plus in my opinion: if you want the beach town vibe, then go to Nha Trang; if you want something a little more peaceful, then Danang is your place. The beach can often be quite crowded with locals in the early morning and late afternoons and there's a charm in that.”

Read Steven's complete interview [here](#).

Just north of Danang on the Son Tra Peninsula is the start of the old national highway that leads to Hai Van Pass. The steep, paved road mainly attracts sightseers and local traffic now, due to the recently constructed highway that tunnels through the mountains immediately west of Hai Van Pass. From the summit, the spectacular panoramic views of endless mountains and a rugged coastline reward those who make this trip.

Hue is the first major city north of Danang. Hue was the site of the imperial court of the Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1945). Many impressive royal buildings, temples, and tombs still exist from this period. The section of town that lies south of the Perfume River holds many fine examples of French colonial architecture that provide insight into the heyday of France's occupation of Indochina. Hue also has a fascinating war history and was a major battlefield during the Tet Offensive of 1968. Fierce fighting practically leveled the historic center of the town. It is well worth a visit to Hue for those interested in the Tay Son Rebellion of the late 18th Century, the French occupation, or the Vietnam War. Although Hue is only about 106 kilometers (66 miles) north of Danang, the climate is much cooler there, especially in the winter. Culturally, historically, and geographically, Hue serves as the gateway to northern Vietnam.

West of Danang, the land rises into the Central Highlands—the rough mountainous area that forms the border between Vietnam and Laos. Empty, winding roads and spectacular views make this portion of the highlands a very popular destination for motorcycle touring and for those seeking out isolated hill-tribe villages. Ba Na Mountain, a former French colonial retreat, and Suoi Mo, with its waterfalls and swimming holes, are two attractions in the remote areas west of the city. This area of the highlands is quite undeveloped, so it is best to inquire locally before setting out on an independent adventure.

Even More Diversions

The Linh Ung Buddhist Temple, on the Son Tra Peninsula, was built in 2010. It features a stunning view of the mountains, the city, the coast, and a 67-meter (220-foot) tall statue of Quan Am, the goddess of compassion and mercy. Take a look at the video of the temple [here](#).



Quan Am, the Goddess of Compassion and Mercy

The Museum of the Fifth Military Zone has a large selection of aircraft, tanks and other war equipment that was captured during the French and the American wars, as well as some interesting photographs and articles documenting both wars.

The Historical Museum displays exhibits detailing Danang's history, told through daily tools, folksongs and words of the Quang people. Most of the museum's exhibits detail the wars against the French and Americans.

The Danang Cathedral is a large church that serves a Catholic community of about 4,000 people. Built by the French in 1923, it is called the Rooster Church (Con Gà in Vietnamese) because of the weathercock on top of its steeple. This distinctive pink church is one of the landmarks of Danang.



The "Rooster" Church

The Cao Dai Church, which was constructed in 1955, offers a look at one of the more unusual religions practiced in Vietnam. Cao daists believe that all religions are ultimately the same, and services honor Buddha, Jesus Christ, Muhammad, Confucius, Joan of Arc, and Julius Caesar.

There are several book stores in the city. The largest one, the Danang Bookshop at 76 Bach Dang Street, has a good selection of English-language books.

Life On The Greens

There are two outstanding golf courses near Danang, both located about 20 minutes south of town on the coastal road to Hoi An.

Montgomerie Links features 18 holes and a driving range designed by European golf great, Colin Montgomerie. The course makes ingenious use of the location's sandy soil, wind-blown dunes, and indigenous coastal vegetation, combining these qualities in a design that creates an impressive golf course. Their website states: "The 2012 Forbes Travel Guide rated Montgomerie Links as one of Asia's ten most elite courses, and it recently won a prestigious Asia Pacific Property Award." The 2014 non-promotional rates for non-members are 1,035,000 VND (about US\$50) for 9 holes and 1,600,000 VND (about US\$75) for 18 holes. Caddie fees are additional.



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Top-notch golf is easily accessible

Just 15km from the center of the city is the Danang Golf Club, designed by golf legend Greg Norman. The Danang Golf Club hosts a collection of rugged, seaside links designed to be reminiscent of the first golf courses in Scotland. In 2012-2013, it was awarded the 'Best Golf Course in Vietnam' and 'Top Ten Golf Courses in Asia Pacific' by *Asian Golf Monthly*, as well as 'Best Golf Course in Vietnam' by *USA Golf Digest*. Non-promotional green fees for non-members start at 1,375,000 VND (about US\$65) for 9 holes and 2,200,000 (about US\$105) VND for 18 holes, including caddie fees.

Both golf courses offer memberships, equipment rental, and frequent promotions.

If You Have A Disability

Although there is little that has been done on a civic level to assist people with physical disabilities, Danang is a relatively easy city to navigate for those with mobility impairments. The streets are quite level and many sidewalks are in good repair and wide enough to walk on. This makes Danang quite unique in this part of the world; in other large Vietnamese cities motorbikes drive and park on the sidewalks and pedestrians are forced to walk in the streets. Most streets in Danang are wide and traffic is generally quite manageable.



The riverfront in the quiet of the day

Unfortunately, there is very little official accommodation for disabled people. However, labor is very inexpensive here and hiring an assistant is affordable for anyone with even a modest budget. Vietnamese people tend to be very helpful and considerate. Disabled foreigners can expect to be treated respectfully and graciously.

Many businesses are accessible directly from the street, requiring no more than one stair. Many apartment and condominium buildings have elevators, making access easy.

However, houses are often multi-level, though there are some single-level homes around town and near the beach in Son Tra District.

There is a deaf community in Danang. Bread of Life, a foreign-owned non-profit restaurant, bakery, and NGO, trains and employs hearing-impaired Vietnamese and also provides other activities and services for the deaf residents of Danang. Not only do they operate a wonderful restaurant, serving huge portions of excellent Western fare, they also welcome community involvement and volunteers.

Danang Is For Lovers

Although Vietnam is not known as a hot spot for LGBT tourism, it has some of the most liberal laws in Asia. Homosexuality has never been illegal in Vietnam, and same-sex couples are generally accepted without prejudice. Vietnam's Minister of Justice recently announced that the government has begun a discussion about legalizing same-sex marriage and repealing the same-sex marriage ban that was enacted last year. If the ban is rescinded, Vietnam would become the first Asian country to legalize same-sex marriage.

Gay-friendly nightspots include the Luna Pub at 9A Tran Phu Street and the Golden Pine Pub, located at 52 Bach Dang Street, both near the river in downtown Danang. The Café Indochine and Club Tourane, which are located in the Furama Resort Danang, advertise that they are gay-friendly. However, LGBT individuals will find almost any establishment in Danang to be accepting and courteous towards same-sex couples.



Classy coffee and welcoming people

Rainbow Tourism has a list of LGBT resources for people living in Danang and throughout the rest of Vietnam.

The legal age of consent is 18 in Vietnam, whether the relationship is homosexual or heterosexual, and prostitution is illegal. Although most Vietnamese are quite romantic, public displays of affection are frowned upon regardless of gender.

Communication Challenges

Đường đi ở miệng —He that speaks well may find his way anywhere.

Less English is spoken in Danang than in many of Vietnam's more popular destinations. Fortunately, it's taught in all elementary, primary, and secondary schools, so many younger and educated people are likely to have at least a working knowledge of English.

Vietnamese is a tonal language, so it can be quite challenging for Westerners to learn. It is also a monosyllabic language—almost every word is six letters or less. One word can often have several meanings, depending on the tone that is used and the context of the sentence. Subtle differences in tone and emphasis can completely change the meaning of a word or make it incomprehensible to the listener. Vietnamese uses a modified Roman alphabet, but words commonly sound much different than the letters might indicate. Diacritics are used over and under the vowels to guide the speaker on the pronunciation of tones.

Although the language is an extremely difficult one to master, the ability to speak at least some basic Vietnamese will be very helpful and will earn you more than a bit of well-deserved respect and goodwill. Most Vietnamese people are aware that their language is challenging and will be quick to compliment people who are brave enough to make an effort to speak. Learning the basics, such as knowing how to say “please,” “thank you,” “hello,” “goodbye,” “yes,” and “no” are not difficult. The next step in learning the language should be mastering numbers—they are not that hard and will come in very useful, especially when negotiating fares and market prices. Make an honest attempt and watch what happens—prices will drop markedly!

Dialects change from north to south and often differ significantly from village to village. The Vietnamese that is spoken in



Strolling the Grounds of the Linh Ung Buddhist Temple

Danang is much different from that spoken in Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City. If you decide to move to Danang and want to learn the language, it's better to wait until you're here, and then take lessons from a local instructor. The College of Foreign Languages, which is affiliated with the University of Danang, offers Vietnamese classes for foreigners. The Academy English Center in Danang also has Vietnamese classes for English speakers. These are also good places to find an experienced private tutor who will be very happy to teach Vietnamese for less than US\$5 per hour.

“Vietnamese people love it if you try to speak their language and they'll complement you a lot if you even manage to say something poorly”, says expat Justin Beghly.

“My Vietnamese is terrible but people complement me on it all the time. You'll learn quickly. Vietnamese people will ask you about three or four of the same questions all the time, so you figure out what key words to listen for are and you learn how to respond in Vietnamese. The most common questions

are: What is your name? Are you married? How old are you? Where are you from? The biggest thing is just keep practicing with locals and they will love you for it.”

Read my [interview with Justin](#) to find out what else he has to say about living in Danang.

Very Few “Warts” In This Seaside Paradise

Since Danang is a middle-class city without a large tourism hub, there is very little risk of becoming the victim of a crime. Keeping your doors locked at night or when you are away, and exercising a reasonable amount of common sense should be all the prevention you need to take.

Motor vehicle accidents are the most common risk that residents are likely to encounter. Though the roads are much better in Danang than you’re likely to find elsewhere in the country and other drivers tend to be less aggressive in Danang, it is still important to drive defensively at all times and wear a helmet. Most accidents are minor ones, but medical care is less than optimal and it’s best to use caution. If you are going to drive, you should consider having a medical insurance policy that provides for emergency evacuation as an added protection.

The most serious dangers in Danang are weather-related. Typhoons can cause flooding and the risk of injury from flying debris. On rare occasions, typhoon winds are strong enough to topple trees or cause structural damage. This is not a yearly occurrence, but it happens often enough that occasionally, the police will issue evacuation orders. Typhoons, when they do occur, are typically in September or October. This is also the time when the ocean has its largest waves and strongest currents, which makes the area a good one for surfing but also poses greater risks for drowning.

An Award-Winning City

UN Habitat Asia awarded Danang the title of “Cityscape Asia 2013,” honoring the city and the various regional projects that have helped to make Danang a success. The award praised Danang’s “harmonious coexistence with the regional environment; safety, convenience, and sustainability; respect for regional culture and history; high artistic quality; contributions to local development [and its] capability of becoming [a] model for other cities.”



Dragon Bridge viewed from the sculpture park

The Dragon Bridge, listed in the Guinness Book of World’s Records as the “largest steel dragon,” has won several awards, including the 2014 Diamond Award from the American Council of Engineering Companies for its structural systems. Both golf courses have won numerous awards, and the Danang Beach Resort, adjacent to the Danang Golf Club, was awarded the title of “Best Golf Development of Asia Pacific” for the past two years. In 2013, Danang’s My Khe Beach was voted one of the six most-attractive beaches in the world by *Forbes Magazine*.



Room to relax at My Khe Beach

Is Danang for You?

There are two international schools in Danang, which help to make the city a good place to live for families with children.

The Skyline School offers kindergarten through 8th grade, and the well-regarded Singapore International School offers classes for children from pre-nursery through high school.


Since Danang is a center for higher education in Central Vietnam, there are many employment opportunities for native English speakers. Many younger expats live and work in Danang as English teachers, or are employed in the fields of information technology or other major industries. Danang also welcomes foreigners who want to open a business. Read my [interview with expat Steven Bruce](#) who confirms that.

There are many opportunities for volunteering, which make Danang a good choice for retirees who want to offer their skills and time to promote a good cause.



My Khe Beach—The Beach Stretches the Length of the City

Outdoor enthusiasts will find more than enough to do. Daytrips might include exploring the beautiful, mountainous countryside or historically rich heritage sites. Bicycling, playing tennis, and other outdoor sports are very popular pastimes. Then there's the beach...

Danang is cosmopolitan enough to offer a wide range of urban activities, but small enough so that getting out of the city takes only a few minutes. Laid-back and friendly, with good roads and pleasant weather, Danang offers something for just about everyone. It's only a matter of time before Danang is discovered and becomes a tourist destination in its own right. In many ways, Danang may be the most livable city in Vietnam. 

Overseas Retirement Letter Online Resources

[Rolodex: A List of Every Contact](#)

[The Cost of Living in Danang: Monthly Budget](#)

[Rental Listings in Danang](#)

[Interview with Expat Justin Beghly](#)

[Interview with Expat Steven Bruce](#)

[A Danang Shopping Cart](#)

[Starting a Business in Danang](#)

[Buying a Home in Vietnam: the Restrictions](#)

[Taxes in Vietnam](#)

[Vehicles: Driving Licenses, Ownership, and Insurance](#)

[Visas & Residency: Living Long-Term in Vietnam](#)

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Videos:

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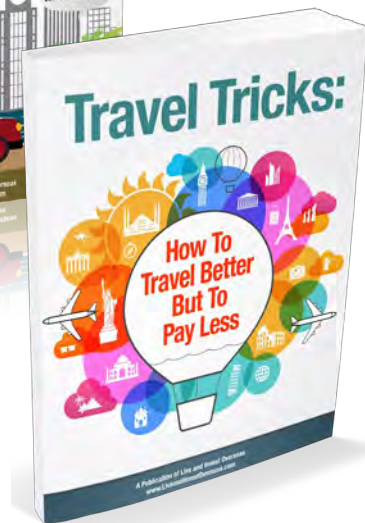


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