

# Vietnam Pre-Arrival Checklist

## Everything You Need to Do Before You Board

By Mary R. Johnson | *Traveling Savvy Seniors*

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Don't let a missing form or forgotten document turn your arrival day into unnecessary stress.

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### Flight & Airline Checks

**Airline name and flight number saved**

You may need this for your arrival form, insurance, or accommodation.

**Transit requirements checked**

If you have a layover in another country, check whether that country has transit rules, health forms, or visa requirements.

**Return or onward travel proof accessible**

Some airlines or immigration officers may ask for proof that you plan to leave Vietnam before your visa expires.

**Checked luggage transfer confirmed for layovers**

If you have a connecting flight or are changing airlines, confirm whether your checked luggage will be automatically transferred to your final destination or if you must collect it and recheck it during your layover. This is especially important when flights are booked separately, involve different airlines, or require you to go through immigration before your next flight.

***Tip:** When you check in for your first flight, ask the agent, "Is my bag checked all the way through to Vietnam?" Then look at the luggage tag to confirm the final airport code.*

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### Entry Documents

**E-Visa confirmed and downloaded.** Apply at [evisa.gov.vn](http://evisa.gov.vn) — valid for up to 90 days, single or multiple entry. Cost: \$25 (single) / \$50 (multiple). Print a copy as a backup.

**Approved entry and exit ports checked on your e-visa**

Make sure the airport or border crossing on your e-visa matches where you are actually arriving and leaving. If your visa says Ho Chi Minh City but you land somewhere else, you may have a problem.

**E-visa printed and saved digitally**

Save the PDF on your phone, email it to yourself, and print at least one paper copy. Do not rely only on your phone.

**Digital Arrival Card completed, if arriving through Ho Chi Minh City / SGN**

**As of April 15, 2026**, foreign passport holders arriving at **Tan Son Nhat Airport in Ho Chi Minh City** must complete the pre-arrival declaration before arrival. Complete it within 72 hours of your flight at the official government site and save your QR code offline

[\(https://prearrival.immigration.gov.vn/\)](https://prearrival.immigration.gov.vn/)

**QR code saved offline.** Take a screenshot of it to your camera roll AND email it to yourself. Do not rely on airport Wi-Fi to pull it up.

**Passport valid for at least 6 months beyond your entry date, with at least one blank visa page**

Vietnam requires a passport to be valid for at least 6 months and at least 1 blank visa page for the entry stamp. If your passport is close to expiring or nearly full, renew it before you go.

**All document details double-checked.** Your name, passport number, and dates must match exactly across your e-visa, arrival card, and passport. One typo can cause delays at the counter.



## **Backup Copies**

**Passport photo page copied and saved**

Keep one paper copy separate from your passport and one digital copy saved offline.

**Visa, insurance, and accommodation confirmations saved offline**

Save PDFs or screenshots in a single folder on your phone so you don't have to search through email at the airport.

**Trusted contact has your travel details**

Send your flight, accommodation, and insurance information to someone you trust before you leave.



## Connectivity

- eSIM or local SIM plan arranged.** You'll want data soon after landing — for Grab, maps, messaging your accommodation, and backup access to your documents. [Airalo is a reliable eSIM](#) option for Vietnam.
  - Be sure to download the Grab app to your phone and set it up.** It's Vietnam's ride-hailing app. Set it up before you arrive so you're not fumbling with it at the airport. Add your payment method in advance, but keep some cash on hand in case your card does not work immediately upon arrival.
  - Accommodation address saved on your phone.** You'll need the full street address (not just the name) for your Digital Arrival Card and to show your Grab driver. Take a screenshot of it or save it in your notes in both English and Vietnamese. You can use [Google Translate](#) on your phone for this.
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## Health & Safety

- Travel insurance active and policy number accessible.** [SafetyWing](#) and Cigna Global are solid options for extended stays. Know your emergency contact number before you board.
- Medications packed in carry-on with documentation**

Bring enough for your full trip plus extra. Keep prescriptions in their original packaging when possible, and carry a doctor's note or prescription list showing the medication names and dosages.
- Backup glasses, hearing aid supplies, or mobility essentials packed**

If you rely on glasses, hearing aids, braces, canes, compression socks, or mobility tools, keep the essentials in your carry-on.
- Emergency contacts written down on paper.** Phone batteries die. Have at least one contact written somewhere you can access without your phone.
- STEP enrollment completed, if you are a U.S. traveler**

Enroll in the free [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) before you leave so you can receive safety alerts and the U.S. Embassy can contact you in an emergency.
- Vietnam emergency numbers saved**

**Police:** 113 | **Fire:** 114 | **Ambulance:** 115. Save these in your phone and write them on your paper emergency contact sheet.

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## Accessibility & Arrival Comfort

**Airport assistance requested in advance**

If you need wheelchair assistance, help with long walks, or support getting through the airport, request it from your airline before departure.

**Mobility aids labeled and photographed**

Take a photo of your cane, walker, wheelchair, scooter, or other mobility equipment before travel. Add your name and contact information where appropriate.

**First-night arrival plan kept simple**

Book your first night in advance and avoid complicated transfers after a long-haul flight. Your first goal is to arrive safely, rest, and reset.

**Comfort items packed in your personal bag**

[Compression socks](#), medication, snacks, a [water bottle](#), a [light sweater](#), reading glasses, and any medical essentials should be easy to reach during the flight.

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## Money

**Wise card or international-friendly debit card set up**

A **Wise** or similar travel card can help reduce currency conversion fees. Load it before you leave and make sure you know your PIN.

**Some US dollars or local currency in your wallet.** Have a small amount of cash for your first hours in-country, before you find an ATM.

**Bank notified of travel dates.** Let your home bank know you're traveling so your card isn't flagged.

**ATM withdrawal plan in place**

Airport exchange counters can be expensive. Plan to use a reputable bank ATM after arrival, and decline dynamic currency conversion if prompted.



## Final Checks the Night Before

Phone fully charged  Portable charger/power bank packed in carry-on  Digital Arrival Card QR code saved and accessible offline  E-visa PDF saved and accessible offline  Hotel confirmation and address saved offline  Have airplane mode / Do Not Disturb set on your phone for the flight.



## Arrival & Daily Life in Vietnam

**Passport, passport card, or copy ready for local check-ins**

In Vietnam, accommodations are commonly required to verify guest identification, so you may be asked to show your passport when checking into hotels, serviced apartments, or short-term rentals. Motorbike rental shops, phone service companies, tour companies, and other local services may also ask for ID. Keep your original passport secure, carry a copy or a passport card when appropriate, and avoid leaving your passport as a deposit unless you fully understand the risks.

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**Remember:** The Digital Arrival Card is separate from your e-visa. **You may need both.** The Digital Arrival Card is free, while **the Vietnam e-visa has a government fee.** Use only official [.gov.vn](http://gov.vn) websites and avoid third-party sites that charge unnecessary service fees.

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### **Planning more than a vacation?**

If Vietnam is part of your broader slow-travel or relocation dream, a [Slow Start Strategy Session](#) can help you think through your timeline, comfort level, budget, and first steps before you make the leap.

Visit [travelingsavvyseniors.com](http://travelingsavvyseniors.com) to learn more.

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**Entry rules can change. Always verify your e-visa, arrival card, passport, airline, and transit requirements through official government or airline sources before your travel date.**

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