



## What About Vietnam – S1 – 8 Tips for Vietnam travellers during TET

**Speaker** – Kerry Newsome

Welcome to the What About Vietnam podcast. Happy New Year everyone. I'm delighted to be back bringing you stories and insights to travel to Vietnam. There is a big year ahead. I have a new program style that I'd like to tell you a little bit more about later in this show. But suffice to say that it's an exciting year ahead and today's program We're going to focus on one very special time in Vietnam, and that's the celebration of Tet. Now, when I talk about Tet, I have eight tips for travelers. Now, these eight tips have been born from my own experience. are actually on the ground. And each time I've gone to Vietnam and found myself in various locations, there's been different things I've learned along the way. And I thought, as much as I could, I'd like to share those with you so that you can, I don't know, respect the tradition for what it is, understand a little bit about what it means for Vietnamese, and plan accordingly. that you don't get disappointed or you misunderstand just what's really going on. But let's kind of just brush over or very kind of very broadly talk about what Tet is all about and what it means to Vietnamese. Largely, I think from my experience, it's about giving, it's about gratitude, it's about paying homage to traditions to a beginning, a new start. It's all about preparing for the new year. It's all about the advent of spring and getting together with people, reaching out to family and preparing your home, preparing your family, clearing off old debts, and really gearing up for a new year. Each year the dates fall on different dates according to the lunar calendar.

So for **2024 it's February 10th** and it is the year of the dragon. If you're planning ahead just a few years For **2025 it is February 29th** and that will be celebrating the year of the snake and in **2026 it's going to be February the 17th** and it's going to be the year of the horse. I've actually gathered a little table together of the future years and the future dates because unless you're aware of how to manage the lunar calendar And because the dates fall differently each year and you want to plan your

trips accordingly, then I think this table will be helpful to you. I think for me, the experience of Tet has been twofold.

I've been in Vietnam before Tet and I've been there during Tet and post Tet. In each of these time periods you kind of witness a different evolution of TET. Some say when you're talking to people before TET and there's some decisions to be made that literally you either make a decision before TET or after: but nothing gets made in big decisions during TET. Because as I said in the beginning TET is really about paying homage to family and spending quality time with the people that are most important in your life and in particularly your family and friends. And that extends also to teachers and people that you respect in the community. You're going to see a great movement of people in that process. And that begins my, or I guess is a good segue into my eight tips for travelers in Vietnam during Tet. So number one is definitely buy your travel tickets if they fall, if the dates fall during the Tet season.

Now, Tet is not just a day. Whilst Tet is about celebrating the advent of spring and all of the things I've just spoken about. It literally can span kind of about eight days minimum, maybe even up to two weeks. And it's very hard to define actually the eight to 14 days as they kind of blur a little bit for people, depending on their jobs, their workplace, their family environment, you know, some people who are Vietnamese who live overseas, they're coming back into the country. So, you know, everybody tries to kind of fit it in a window of time, but it does kind of mishmash, but kind of starting about a week before. So for this year, it's the 10th of February. So about a week before you're going to see some of these preparations happening. and people starting to gear up their travel plans.

So, number one is buy your travel tickets. So, your train, your bus and your flights because they will be chock-a-block. So, if you're wanting to move around, you're going to be moving around with, you know, the population of Vietnam all wanting to try and get to their families to celebrate this event.

**No 1 – Tip** - So number one, buy your travel tickets in advance and make sure when you're booking, especially with things like flights, et cetera, that you do get your seat numbers and your allocations. Number two, be early at the airport or bus station or train station. I can't stress enough the need to be a bit of ahead of the game and be prepared for long queues. In this celebration, because there's that beautiful aspect of giving, you're going to see the Vietnamese travelling with a lot of luggage as they're travelling with a lot of gifts. I mean, traditionally you're seeing the red envelopes that are very much a part of the giving process and part of Tet here and in China and in

most places that celebrate the Tet celebration. However, you'll also see that families are renewing their houses and they're doing a lot of cleaning and throwing out and renewing and reinvigorating because this is to set the platform, the process for their new year. This is to build confidence in a prosperous, healthy and happy house with their family and friends.

**No 2** - So, be early at the airport, bus station or train station, expect long queues, be prepared for it. If you can, especially with flights, I would definitely recommend that you go online and check in online. where you have the advantage of an online process, take it, because any way you can cut down on time is going to benefit you.

**No 3** - Number three, make sure you bring all of your travel documentation with you, confirming all your travel arrangements, your tickets, your accommodation, contacts, and all of that. Now, I say that because depending on what days you're traveling around this Tet season, is that because the staff are generally skeleton staff in a lot of the places, there is less resources on the ground to help you as a traveler to guide your trip in the case that you haven't got this. So I just say to all my travelers, Double, double check you've got all your paperwork, all your documentation, whether it's on your phone, whether it's printed, but you've got access to it easily so that you, I don't know, is it just peace of mind? I think it is. And just knowing that you've got that and you don't need to reach out to people because once again, you might be standing in a long queue to get an answer from somebody to help you through if you haven't got all your documents with you.

**No 4** - Number four. I don't normally stress this when it comes to Vietnam, but in this time and season, especially as Tet and New Year's Day falls, Don't expect too much activity once the day, the New Year's Day falls. There's a lot of lead up. I personally think that the lead up to Tet is the most exciting. There's just such a vibe in the air. There's an atmosphere. There's also so much color. There's traditions and you can read up about them and I've got some links for you in the notes. but you can read up about what some of the colours mean, the yellows, and you know, you'll see these beautiful kumquat trees, peach blossoms, and they will be lining the streets of your cities and your localities that you visit, leading up to Tet, because every household will want to put some symbolism or an offering to their elders, to their ancestors, express their gratitude. So they will be buying in food, they will be out and about, buying new clothes even to dress their children and themselves in to really celebrate this day. So there's a real, I don't know, anticipation. But once it actually arrives, as in New Year's Day is on the 10th of February, New Year's Eve would then be the 9th, you'll get your fireworks and you'll get all that buzz and all of that celebration on the eve, traditionally,

as you would in a New Year's celebration. But once Tet falls that day, in particular in those ensuing days, it's quiet. And one thing I did experience, which I probably would have appreciated if someone had told me about, was that I'm not going to expect a lot of places open. So your hotels and all of your tourist attractions, et cetera, may be closed or may only operate in limited hours. They may even charge extra. And you may find that there's just not a lot of activity in the streets because people are in their homes, they're in their abodes where they can bring together the important people that they love and they can celebrate with. Now, because Vietnam is such an evolving country, not everyone is as old-worldly traditional as each other. And the young, you know, whilst they want to hold on to their traditions, they're probably going to make some adaptations about that. So there will be places open and there will be you know, the chance to get a coffee and things like that, but just not at the usual standard. So once again, for me, when I'm talking to travellers, it's about trying to manage your expectations and not expect on those national holidays in particular, they might not be as much open.

**No – 5** \_ Number five, I really would like you to make sure that you check in with your hotel or your homestay about what services they are operating, you know, for meals and just, you know, things like laundry or just what eateries are going to be open on those national holidays in particular, and may extend to things like, you know, your spa center, the gyms, anything that is depicted in your booking that is the standard may not be fully operational during the Tet season and in particular on the public holidays. And as I said, be prepared that in each area, in each location and in each facility or hotel or homestay, they will make their own decisions based on their staff and their ability to accommodate you, they will make their own call on what's available. So be prepared to contact your homestay or contact your hotel ahead of your visit, well ahead of your visit, maybe even two or three weeks or a month ahead to ask them what their plan is during Tet as you will be arriving or you may be staying during that time. and ask them to give you some clarification. Because once again, you may want to buy some snacks or some extra foods, et cetera, especially if you've got families, because that may not be as available for you during that time. I'm not saying it's going to be zero, but it's just not going to be at its optimum levels.

**No 6** \_ The other thing I found during my TET experience was that some places use Facebook as a way of managing and handling their events, their hotels and their restaurants. So I recommend you to reach out to Facebook or Instagram, but certainly Facebook is very strong in Vietnam. And I know I was kind of a little bit on my own in this time period, The hotel was very quiet while it was all open, but I thought, oh gosh, you know, it'd be great if I could get a massage or, you know, a pedicure or something to fill in my time as I was going to be meeting up with some Vietnamese families in the

ensuing days. So I reached out to a Facebook page of a place that did run massages and all the rest of it. I knew of them well. And I was very grateful that they were operating. They communicated with me back through Facebook Messenger. They even offered, because the taxis weren't as prevalent, once again, this is another sideline kind of effect of Tet, to come and pick me up if I was willing to be a passenger, a pillion passenger on a bike. So one of their lovely girls arrived at the hotel, picked me up, took me there to the place I had a lovely massage, and then they brought me back. So, Facebook can be your communication tool, for want of a better word, to reach out to some of these places. A lot of the younger staff that work for these organizations do have good to reasonable English, so they're going to be able to communicate with you and get you some information. If they don't respond, then you know, of course, that they are not operating. So that is just one other way to help manage your stay during Tet.

**No 7** \_ Number seven is around expectation of restaurants food quality, freshness and the extension of the menus. One thing I did find was a little bit of a warning from people that because of the movement of people that their standard suppliers may not be in full operational capacity. So their ability to get fresh food in and in particular, you know, seafood and things like that. So they sort of cautioned me to be careful about what I selected to see that the restaurants would probably be offering a much condensed menu and it would be built around what they felt they were most confident in offering. I mean, you know, in managing this, you're going to have to read the play yourselves when you are out and about. You're going to kind of have to get your confidence from seeing how many people are in the restaurants, just how much staff they look like they're having on board. And, you know, use your common sense where you can to decide where to eat. If you're staying in a hotel, the hotel's going to be very proactive in this way to let you know what is going to be available and you're going to be able to make some decisions there. I mean, personally, it's a good time in my experience to take advantage of the hotel or take advantage of the opportunity to chill out, to relax, to go for some nice long walks, you know, a chance to do some yoga, some just generally chill out. and try to get into their vibe of being grateful and appreciative of life and what's brought you to Vietnam in the first place. So just being aware of the freshness of food and restaurants is my number seven tip. Lastly is to make sure you've got enough cash

**No 8** \_ So my number eight tip is understanding that in the element of closures and organizations that close will be banks. Banks that also fill out the teller machines, et cetera, that are, you know, quite prevalent in Vietnam. So making sure that you've got enough cash with you to get around, buy taxis, do whatever, I think is very important. So once again, I'm saying being prepared is the way to go.

So I hope you found these tips helpful and I'm going to just finish off by talking about what's possible in Vietnam post Tet.

So once Tet is finished, there's a time where people are enjoying the opportunity to catch up with friends and family and even reaching out to teachers and other principal people in their community that they want to pay respects for. I think you'll find that as Tet finishes, you'll see just a rejuvenation of the location that you're in. And, you know, expressing your gratitude to the people that you're meeting and mixing with, sharing with them some of the favorite foods, the chung cake in the north, the Tet cake in the south, you know, making sure that you express the special greetings that come with Chuc Mung Nam Moi is very appreciative of the Vietnamese. They will love that you have taken the time to understand a little bit about what Tet is about and that you recognize the importance for them, that you're respectful of their time to do this, their dedication to this. And I think you're going to really see a little bit about what the depth of Vietnam is in their cultural traditions and how beautiful they are.

I'm going to put a few links in the show notes to help guide you with this. Please feel free to reach out to me directly if you have any further questions and I'm more than happy to help you. If you are trip planning in 2024 and in the coming years, please note those dates for TET. And now that you have this information, I'm hoping that you'll decide whether or not, you know, it is for you to travel in this time period that it suits you to do so or not. And as I said, it's really up to the individual to decide how they want to play it. For me, I tend to travel usually before Tet or after Tet so that I give the people their due in having Tet because it's really not about us as tourists, in my opinion. It's really about the Vietnamese themselves and giving respect to them for that time. So take that on board, use it as you can and how you will in the future for your trip planning. And I hope you're going to have a wonderful time. That's all we have for today. I look forward to bringing you more travel stories and insights into traveling to Vietnam in future programs.

Handy links:-

<https://nationaltoday.com/tet-holiday/>

<https://www.asiahighlights.com/vietnam/new-year/date>

<https://www.myvietnamvisa.com/vietnamese-new-year-tet-holiday-dates-animals-food-and-traditions.html>

Future years table of dates:

<b>TET New Year 2024</b>	<b>February 10th</b>	<b>Year of the Dragon</b>
TET New Year 2025	January 29th	Year of the Snake
TET New Year 2026	February 17th	Year of the Horse
TET New Year 2027	February 6th	Year of the Goat
TET New Year 2028	January 26th	Year of the Monkey
TET New Year 2029	February 13th	Year of the Chicken