



Know
Before
You
Go

VIETNAM

A Guide to Keep You Safe Abroad

Provided by Sexual Assault Support and
Help for Americans Abroad (SASHAA)

Updated June 2017



SASHAA
Sexual Assault Support &
Help for Americans Abroad

Let's be perfectly clear, the number one way to prevent sexual assault is to **not rape**. While the responsibility of ending sexual gender-based violence is on the perpetrators, this guide will offer general safety tips, country-specific information, and resources to help prevent and prepare travelers for the possibility of sexual assault abroad.

GENERAL SAFETY TIPS:

1. Use the **buddy system** and travel with friends!
2. Be aware of **social and cultural norms**. For example, looking at someone in the eyes when you speak to them is perfectly normal in the U.S., but in another country that could signify you're interested in the person.
3. **Recognize controlling behavior** when entering a relationship. Most rape survivors recall feeling "uncomfortable" about some of their partner's behaviors such as degrading jokes/language or refusal to accept "no" as an answer, whether in a sexual context or otherwise.²
4. **Avoid secluded places** where you could be more vulnerable. Meet new people in public spaces and let a trusted friend know where you'll be beforehand.
5. **Trust your gut**. Many victims have a "bad feeling" right before an assault takes place.



ALCOHOL AND DRUG AWARENESS:

- Always watch your drink being poured and carry it yourself, even to the bathroom.
- "Drug-facilitated sexual assault drugs," also referred to as club drugs or roofies may turn your drink slightly salty, bright blue, or cloudy. Effects such as distorted judgment, lost sense of time, sight, sound, identity, and consciousness can be felt within 15 minutes and may last up to 4 hours.³
- The legal drinking age in Vietnam is 18.⁴ Driving under the influence of alcohol, however, could lead to immediate imprisonment. Note: there are many plain-clothes police in Vietnam⁵

CULTURAL INFORMATION:

Major Religions: Buddhist 7.9%, Catholic 6.6%, Hoa Hoa 1.7%, Cao Dai 0.9%, Protestant 0.9%, Muslim 0.1%, none 81.8%.⁶

Legal System: Vietnam has a two-tier court system composed of courts of first instances and court of appeals.⁷ The court system consists of the Supreme People's Court and local People's Courts and military courts. Culturally, however, Vietnam is not a litigious society and many disputes are resolved outside of court.⁸

Social/Cultural Norms: In Vietnamese culture, there is great emphasis on respecting one's elders. The oldest members of any group should be greeted and served first. When traveling to Vietnam, you should dress respectfully (shorts below the knees and shoulders covered). Public acts of affection and touching a person, both heterosexual and non-heterosexual couples, is frowned upon.⁹

Gender Equality: Vietnam has a strong record of promoting gender equity and women's empowerment. Generally, women have equal access to education and receive similar treatment to men in the legal system. Women occupy 24% of the seats in the National Assembly, however, violence against women is considered a public issue and women continue to face discrimination in wages and job promotion.¹⁰

Sexual Assault and the Law: Vietnamese Context

Article 111 of Vietnam's Penal Code mandates that rapists can be imprisoned for two to seven years. Offenders can receive longer sentences (between seven and fifteen years) if rape is committed more than once and if the victim is raped by multiple offenders.¹¹ Similarly, article 113 condemns forced sexual intercourse, and perpetrators can be imprisoned from 5 months to five years, and between three and ten years if committing forcible sexual interactions more than once or against more than one person.¹²

If You Experience Sexual Assault...

Don't blame yourself! **Sexual assault is never the fault of the victim.** You may be unsure of how to proceed, and that's okay. First, consider taking the following actions:

1. If you are in a safe place, **call someone you trust** to be with you. If you are not safe, call someone you trust to come and get you.
2. Do **self-collection of evidence**. Put all of the clothes you were wearing, bed sheets, and so on in a paper bag. If you have any injuries, **take pictures**. If there is semen present, collect what you can in a hotel glass or cup and put it in the paper bag.
3. **Call a SASHAA advocate** internationally toll free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They can help you through the ordeal, honoring your decisions. (See Resources)

Medical Care and Reporting Sexual Assault in Vietnam

Victims report cases of sexual assault to local police, however, local police are often underfunded, lack training in a number of areas, and interpret the law in a way that suits them.¹⁸ A 2014 survey conducted by ActionAid found that out of 2046 respondents, almost no one expects the authority to respond to sexual assault reports and only 1.9% of female respondents said they would go to police for help. Sexual harassment cases can carry a fine of up to \$75 but criminals can only be charged with sexual assault if a victim has injuries to 11% of their body or more.¹⁹ Travelers should also be aware of the limited medical care available. Hospitals in major metropolitan areas are more likely to be better equipped in helping sexual assault victims, although higher quality medical care can be found in private clinics.

LGBTQ VICTIM CONCERNS



While there is no official ban on same-sex sexual activity in Vietnam, the law does not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.¹³ Same-sex marriage was legalized in 2015, yet lawmakers do not fully recognize the marriages. As a result, LGBTQ couples are not provided the same rights and protections as straight couples.¹⁴ In general, however, Vietnam is a safe place to travel for LGBTQ people and checking into a hotel as a same-sex couple is widely acceptable.

POST EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS, EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION, AND ABORTION

Q. Are post exposure prophylaxis and emergency contraception available?

A: Emergency contraception such as Escapelle and Ponstinor-2 are directly available from local pharmacists without a prescription. According to USAID, post exposure prophylaxis is available at some private clinics such as Family Medical Practice clinics in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.¹⁵

Q: Is abortion legal in Vietnam?

A: Yes, abortion is legal under all circumstances.¹⁶ Abortion services are provided at three levels of the health system: an abortion of 6-22 weeks gestation is provided at central and provincial hospitals, an abortion of 6-12 weeks gestation is provided at district health stations, and abortions up to 6 weeks gestation are provided at community health centers.¹⁷

Resources

SASHAA

SASHAA International Crisis Line:

To call our confidential, toll-free, International Crisis Line first dial the country specific AT&T access code for **Vietnam (1-201-0288)**. Then, at the prompt, enter our phone number: **866-USWOMEN (866-879-6636)**.

Crisis Email:

To reach a SASHAA advocate, you can email us at crisis@866uswomen.org. All crisis emails will be responded to within 24 hours. However, if you need to get in touch with us immediately, please call the international toll-free crisis line.

Live Chat:

SASHAA online chat services are available 24/7 at our website <https://sashaa.org>.

U.S. EMBASSIES/CONSULATES

U.S. Embassy in Hanoi

7 Lang Ha Street, Hanoi, Vietnam

Tel: +84-4-3850-5000

Website: <https://vn.usembassy.gov/>

American Citizens Services

Monday- Friday 8am-5pm

Tel: +84-4-3850-5000

U.S. Consulate - Ho Chi Minh City

4 Le Duan Blvd., District 1

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Tel: +84-8-3520-4200

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Police: 113

Fire department: 114

Ambulance: 115

HOSPITALS

Hanh Phuc International Women & Children Hospital

Binh Duong Blvd., Thuan An District

Tel: (650) 3911 1860

Email: info@hanhphuchospital.com

Website: <http://hanhphuchospital.com>

Hanoi Family Medical Practice

Van Phuc Diplomatic Compound

2981 Kim Ma Street, Hanoi

Tel: 04-3843-0748

24 hr emergency: 0903-401-919

Website: www.vietnammedicalpractice.com

Psychologist: Douglas Holwerta: 0128-347-2454

LEGAL

Phuong Thuan & Bich Law Office

19 Vo Tan Street, Ward 6, District 3, Ho Chi Minh City

Tel: (84-8) 3930-2041/-2535

Lawyers Association of the City of Hanoi, Vietnam

Hanoi Office , Branch No. 1

Address: 35 Nguyen Chi Thanh

Tel: (844) 3835-3548

Email: hoilutgia.hanoi@yahoo.com.vn

NON-GOVERNMENTAL

Information Connecting and Sharing (ICS)

Room 14-B8, Building COPAC, 12 Ton, District 4

Ho City, Vietnam

Tel: +84 8 3940 5140 (ext. 103)

Email: info@isc.org.vn

** ICS is the main organization of LBTQ people in Vietnam which works to build links and protect LGBTQ rights.*

Center for Studies and Applied Sciences in Gender-Family-Women and Adolescent (CSAGA)

A9 –Roundabout Hau Dich Vong, Cau Giay

Hanoi, Vietnam

Tel: (+84 4) 3754 0421

Email: csaga@csaga.org.vn

**CSAGA is an NGO which provides a hotline and provides legal aid and counseling, temporary shelter and referral to government shelter.*

Vietnam Family Planning Association (VINAFFA)

2 Le Duc Tho Street, Mai Dich Commune, Cau Giay

District, Hanoi, Vietnam

Marie Stopes International Vietnam

2nd Floor, 1 Nguyen Dinh Chieu Street

Hai Ba Trung District, Ha Noi, Vietnam

Tel: 00 84 4 9439860

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