

Hanoi

There is not a whole lot to do in Hanoi. However, I managed to easily spend four days there. It may have had a little to do with the place I stayed at, the Hanoi Backpacker's Hostel, run by a couple Australians. It was a nice social atmosphere, dorm beds, roof top barbeques, and steady stream of young Westerners so there was never a shortage of people to go grab some Bia Hoi with. Bia Hoi is fresh beer, beer delivered daily to establishments by the brewery in unpressurized kegs so it has to be drunk that day. At about 12 cents a glass, or 25 cents a liter, it might be the cheapest beer in the world. I occupied my days in Hanoi walking the narrow winding streets of the old city popping into a few museums, among them, the museum of the "Hanoi Hilton," (not called that for obvious reasons) where the American POWs were held during the war. Most of the museum is devoted to the resistance fighters who were held there by the French. It was amusing to see how the conditions were described as terrible and inhumane when it was a French prison but in the brief section devoted to the American POWs everything was great and it looked like Club Med from the photos. I'm sure they spent a lot of time bringing it up to the standards of the Geneva Convention after the French left. I also made the communist pilgrimage to see Ho Chi Minh's body (allegedly, I've seen wax figure that looked more real). In any case, it was a uniquely Vietnamese experience to work your way through the massive hour and a half long line to see uncle Ho. The line does move quickly as there are guards posted inside to literally push you along whether you are lingering or not. I ended up standing next to a High School girl who spoke decent English so I talked during the wait and the time passed pretty quickly. It was interesting to see the reactions of people. Everyone is reverent, they have to be, but the older generation is definitely more so, while it seemed many of the younger people around me were paying there respects because that's just something you have to do.



Woman carrying flowers on the streets of Hanoi



Mask in front of Vietnamese and Communist flags in souvenir shop in Hanoi.



Line of people waiting to get into Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum, Hanoi



Guards in front of Ho Chi Minh's Mausoleum, Hanoi



Woman waiting for customers inside the Confucius Temple of Literacy, Hanoi



Dragon incense holder, Confucius Temple of Literacy, Hanoi.



Artistically displayed fruits by a street vendor in Hanoi.