

## **Vietnam attracts more tourists as travelers bypass Thailand, Cambodia**

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**Dhaka: Vietnam has begun 2026 with a record surge in international tourism, as travelers increasingly choose the Southeast Asian destination over traditional regional hotspots such as Thailand and Cambodia.**

According to the Vietnam National Authority of Tourism (VNAT), the country welcomed nearly 2.5 million foreign visitors in January, marking the highest monthly figure on record. The total represents an 18.5 percent increase compared with the same period a year earlier.

Industry observers say the growth reflects shifting travel preferences in Asia, with tourists opting for destinations perceived as more stable.

Ongoing border tensions between Thailand and Cambodia have discouraged some travelers, prompting many to redirect their itineraries

to Vietnam's major cities, including Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

Officials said the surge is also being driven by a more diverse visitor demographic.

While travelers from other Asian countries continue to dominate arrivals, the number of European tourists is steadily rising. VNAT attributes this trend partly to relaxed visa policies, including a 45-day visa-free stay for German citizens.

The expansion of international air connectivity has also played a key role. More direct long-haul flights are linking Vietnam with Europe and other distant markets, strengthening the country's appeal as a winter escape for international travelers.

Tourism authorities say Vietnam's diverse attractions remain a major factor behind the rising demand.

In northern Vietnam, Ha Long Bay continues to attract visitors with its limestone formations and UNESCO World Heritage status. Nearby, Hanoi's historic Old Quarter offers a dense network of traditional streets, markets, and cafes.

One of the city's most unusual attractions, popularly known as "Train Street," has drawn international attention as trains pass just meters away from local businesses and cafe terraces.

Central Vietnam offers a different experience, combining cultural heritage with coastal tourism.

The former imperial capital of Hue and the lantern-lit streets of Hoi An remain key cultural draws, while Da Nang has become one of the country's leading beach destinations.

However, environmental concerns are also emerging. Increased tourist activity around the Son Tra Peninsula has raised alarms among conservationists, particularly regarding the habitat of the rare red-shanked douc langur.

Further south, destinations such as Nha Trang and Ho Chi Minh City continue to attract visitors seeking coastal leisure and urban experiences.

Meanwhile, Phu Quoc Island, once marketed as a secluded tropical retreat, is rapidly transforming into a major tourism hub.

During the peak season between November and April, the island now faces growing crowds and rapid infrastructure development.

Analysts say Vietnam's tourism boom presents both opportunities and challenges, raising questions about whether infrastructure and ecosystems can sustain the country's accelerating popularity.

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