

# **SANTA FE**TÉT SURVIVAL GUIDE

2018

# **VIETNAMESE LUNAR NEW YEAR**

# By Santa Fe Relocation

As we prepare in Vietnam for Tết (a.k.a Lunar New Year), we would like to share our insights about the holiday so that you, your family and friends can fully enjoy this special time of the year. We hope this will help with the understanding of the history and traditions of Tết, what to be mindful of, how to say a few Tết phrases in Vietnamese, where Tết festivities are taking place and what establishments will be open during the holiday.

Please Enjoy! Chúc Mừng Năm Mới!

## What is Tết?

Tét is the most important festival of the Vietnamese calendar. It marks the beginning of the Lunar New Year and a time for renewal. Festivities occur throughout the country; however, this is a family holiday therefore many of the observances take place at home.

The 2018 TET in Vietnam is "Mau Tuat" and are from Wed, Feb 14 to Tue, Feb 20 2018 inclusive: Tết Lunar New Year's Eve (Feb 15), and The First (Feb 16), Second (Feb 17

), and Third (Feb 18), Fourth (Feb 19), and Fifth (Feb 20) of Tết Nguyên Đán.

Vietnamese traditionally celebrate Tét from the fifteenth day of the twelfth lunar month to the fifteenth day of the first lunar month. And, even today, business slows two weeks before and two weeks after TET.

According to the Zodiac, which consists of 12 animal signs, 2018 is the year of the Dog, the 11th zodiac sign. Each zodiac sign is associated with one of five elements: Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth. It is theorized that a person's characteristics are decided by their birth year's zodiac animal sign and element. 2018 is the year of Earth Dog. Dog is man's good friend who can understand the human's spirit and obey its master, whether he is wealthy or not. Most Vietnamese believe that if a dog happens to come to your house, it symbolizes the coming of fortune, while cat stands for bad luck.

Individuals born in the year of the Dog include 1922, 1934, 1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006, 2018, 2030, 2042.... Dog is the symbol of loyalty and honesty.

#### IN THIS ISSUE

People born in the Year of the Dog possess the best traits of human nature. They are honest, friendly, faithful, loyal, smart, straightforward, venerable and have a strong sense of responsibility. According to Chinese astrology, the year of one's birth sign is not one's most auspicious year in the 12-year cycle. In the year of your sign, fortune in all aspects of your life are believed not to be at its best, and you'll be told to be more careful than in other year.

Preparations for the New Year begin a couple of weeks before the big day. This is a fun time full of anticipation and joy as we get ready for the thrill and excitement of the celebrations.



Tét-tiquette + Gift Giving
The Mysteries of Lucky Money, Do's and Dont's
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Events & Activities
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# Preparations for Tết

Vietnamese families prepare their homes for the coming of the prosperous New Year with a thorough cleaning. Preparations begin about ten days before the New Year. Homes are cleaned out hopes of getting rid of the past year's bad luck. People buy new clothes, which is also considered lucky for Tét. In the days leading up to Tét, streets and markets are busier than usual. As many shops will be closed during Tét, we suggest stocking up on supplies to last at least 1-2 days. To note however that many establishments catering for foreigners nowadays limits their businesses closing.



#### Legend of the Kitchen God

It is during this time that the Vietnamese believe **Ông Táo** comes in to serve as the Kitchen God. As the old year ends, it is believed that he discusses the family's situation with the Jade Emperor, the King of Heaven. Traditionally, Ông Táo returns to heaven on the 23rd day of the 12th month by lunar calendar. His departure is marked by a modest ceremony where offerings such as clothing, shoes, paper money are burned to help on his journey to Heaven.

Due to his status in Vietnamese culture, Ông Táo is a prominent character in many folk plays. He is considered a messenger from heaven, so often writers will depict the living conditions, problems, and solutions that need to be addressed by a family in their work Ông Táo is regarded as a family member, and various prayers and offerings are brought to him at the family altar.

#### **During Tét**

The last day of the old year (15 Feb) and the first three days of the New Year (16 – 18 Feb) are the most important days of the celebration. On New Year's Eve, families gather for dinner, with all members being present. The **Giao Thùa** at midnight, is the most sacred time with the passage from the old to the New Year. Individuals offer personal prayers to honor and thank the God of Heaven and the God of Earth for their blessings. During this time, it is believed that Ông Táo returns to earth after reporting to the Jade Emperor. Each family offers an open-air ceremony to welcome him back to their kitchen.



The first day of Tét is reserved for the immediate family. Children are given red envelopes containing money from their elders referred to as Lì Xì. Usually, children wear new clothes and give their elders the traditional Tét greetings before receiving the money. Since Vietnamese believe that the first visitor a family receives in the year determines their fortune people never enter other's home on the first day without being invited first. During subsequent days, people visit relatives and friends.

#### Food & Flowers of Tết

In Vietnamese language, to celebrate Tết is to *ăn Tết*, literally meaning "eat Tết", showing the importance of food in the celebration. Some of the dishes can be enjoyed all year-round, while other dishes are only served during Tết. It is also believed to be good luck to enjoy vegetarian dishes on Tết. Some of the traditional dishes reflect this.

Popular traditional foods served during Tét are:

**Bánh chưng** and **bánh tét**: tightly packed sticky rice with meat or bean fillings wrapped in Dong (Bánh Chưng in the north) or banana leaves (Bánh Tét in the south). Considered an indispensable dish of Tet, Bánh Chưng or Bánh Tét is placed on the family altars to honor the ancestors and pray for their support in the new year.

Hat Dura: roasted watermelon seeds. Dura Hành: pickled onion and cabbage.

Củ Kiệu: pickled small leeks.

**Mút**: These dried candied fruits are rarely eaten at any time besides Tết.

Thit Kho Tau: "Meat Stewed in Coconut Juice", a traditional dish of pork belly and medium boiled eggs stewed overnight in a broth-like sauce, often eaten with pickled bean sprouts and chives and white rice.



Bánh Chưng and Bánh Tét



Preparing Bánh Chưng



Hạt Dưa, Hat Bí, Hạt Hướng Dương (roasted seeds).



Múrt (dried fruit)



Thit Kho Tàu (meat stewed in coconut juice)



A typical meal offering to ancestors.

Vietnamese families traditionally lay out a tray of 5 fruits at the altar called "Mâm Ngũ Quả". The fruits are colorful and meaningful. Asian mythology, the world is made of five basic elements: metal, wood, water, fire and earth. The plate of fruits on the family alter at New Year is one of the several ways to represent this concept. It also represents the desire for good crops and prosperity.



Fruit offering in the North include kumquats, bananas, oranges and Buddha hands.



Fruit offering in the South include custard apples, coconuts, papayas, mango and goolar fig. In Vietnamese they are "Cầu, Dửa, Đủ, Xoài, Sung" which in the South literally is a prayer to "have enough to use" in the New Year.



Kumquat Trees



Ho Thi Ky Flower Market (open all year)

Similar to the pine tree for Christmas holiday in the West, Vietnamese also use many kinds of flowers and plants to decorate their homes for the holiday. Traditional plants include the **Hoa Đào** (Peach Blossom), **Hoa Mai** (Ochna Integerrima) and **Cây Quất** (Kumquat Tree). These plants represent coziness and prosperity. Other flowers may be displayed too.

# Tết-tiquette

### Share Your Lì Xì

Lì Xì, "Lucky money" is given by the older and superior, to the younger and subordinate. Parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles, give lucky money to children. People give money to their friends' children, teachers give lucky money to students, and Management gives lucky money to employees.



Lì Xì or Lucky Money is given in little red envelopes that you can buy in bookstores or on the streets. It should be given during the first few days of the New Year, but it is also possible to give a little before and after this time. It is traditionally important to give new bank notes, which are considered luckier for the recipients.

The amount of Li Xi can be from VND 50,000 to 500,000. Depending on the

relationship of the giver and receiver, you may wish to give more or less.

For fulltime staff VND 200,000 to 500,000, for other staff (ie. trash collector, shared security, etc) VND 100,000 to 200,000. You may also Li Xi their children, VND 50,000 to 100,000

#### **Bonus Time**

If you have household helpers, drivers, gardeners etc., it is expected at this time to pay their salaries as well as Lì Xì and/or bonus. The bonus is determined by how long they have been working for you and of course if you are happy with their services. Generally, if the employee has been working for you for more than one year the bonus starts from one month's salary and can be 2 or 3 months at your discretion. If the employee has been working for you for under a year you may pro rate the bonus.

Before Tét begins, you give your staff their salary and their bonus (bonus in red envelope) and wish them a happy Tét time with their families. For Employers who have already paid staff bonuses at the end of the calendar or fiscal year then a smaller amount for Lì Xì should be given for good luck.

#### New to Vietnam?

Tét is an exciting time for gift giving and family gatherings. However, if you are a foreigner in Vietnam, you are not obliged to participate and need only do what you prefer. Some may want to enjoy the quiet streets around this time and keep an eye on what shops and restaurants are open. For options and information on what to do in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, read more in our Calendar of Events & Activities and our Opening Time Guide.

#### **Common Wishes for Tết**

- Chúc Mừng Năm Mới (Chook moong numb moi) - Happy New Year
- Sống lâu trăm tuổi (Sowng I-ow chrum th-ui) - Live to be 100 years old - used by children for elders.
- An khang thịnh vượng (Ang khang tinh vuong) - Security, good health, and prosperity
- Vạn sự như ý (Vant su nhu ee) May a myriad of things go according to your will
- Sức khoẻ dồi dào (Suok kewa yoi yao) -Plenty of health
- Cung hi phát tài (Khung he fak th-ai) -(from the Cantonese, Gung hay fat choy) Congratulations and be prosperous
- Tiền vô như nước (Th-ien voh nhu nhuk)
   May money flow in like water used informally
- Nhiều may mắn (nhew maye manh) -Good luck



# Dos and Please Don'ts and a Few Words of Caution

- DO Learn the Vietnamese greetings. If you're going to be around for Tết, join the festivities by wishing other people a Happy New Year in Vietnamese.
- DO Give out Lì Xì. Your children can also be part of the most exciting part of the New Year – give out the red envelopes to them to bring good luck!
- DO Be mindful of your belongings when going out. This is the time of the year when individuals may be under pressure to have money for the holiday and some resort to stealing.
- DO Double-check your doors and windows before leaving your home.
   Make sure that everything is locked.
- DO Put your wallet, hand phone, car keys in safe place. Be extra mindful when near crowds.
- DON'T Set foot in anybody's home on the first day of Tét, unless invited (Fri, 16<sup>th</sup> of Feb this year). In many households, the father (or sometimes the whole family) is the first visitor. Many people and businesses will pick an auspicious date and time to leave their homes and/or start their businesses.
- DON'T Refuse anything others give or wish during Tét.



#### **Local Taboos & Superstitions**

- Vietnamese people extend wishes of good health and fortune to their fellows, and avoid mentioning their ancestors' birth names or past mistakes.
- Fill vessels of rice, water, salt in the home for a prosperous New Year.
- Go to the pagoda to pick young buds from trees or plants and display them in your home to welcome good fortune.
- Sweeping or dusting should not be done on New Year's Day for the fear that good fortune will be swept away.
- All debts should be paid at this time.
- If you cry on New Year's Day, you will cry through the year. Therefore, children are tolerated and are not spanked.
- Shooting off firecrackers on New Year's Eve is a way of sending out the old year and welcoming in the New Year.
- Washing one's hair should not be done on New Year's Day as it will wash away the good luck of the New Year.
- Haircuts should be avoided on New Year's Day as you will be cutting your luck.
- Avoid wearing black as it is associated with bad luck.
- Avoid wearing white as it is associated with death.



Quả Phật Thủ, (Buddah's Hand) fruit, considered good luck.

# Tết Gift Giving

Gift giving is a popular Tét custom and is an important occasion for building and maintaining social ties. Much of the celebration of Tét centers around good luck, and everything is done with this in mind.



#### What to give for Têt?

Giving gifts in Vietnam during the Tét holiday should focus on the Vietnamese symbols of good luck such as new clothes for children, peach branches or anything red.

Wine, tea, cookies, chocolates are widely used as gifts.

Here are among the most popular gifts given:

#### Hoa Mai & Hoa Đào Flowers

Live, blooming flowers symbolize the rebirth that will take place in the coming spring and fruit blossoms symbolize the start of the cycle that will result in a new crop of fruit later in the year. These two distinct flowers are widely sold and purchased during Tết. The spectacular yellow flowers of the **Hoa Mai** (ochna integerrima) make it very popular in southern Vietnam.



Hoa Mai (Ochna Intergerrima)

Hoa Đào (peach blossom) is more common in the North as it can grow in the dry and cold weather. It is used to ward off evil spirits during the Tết celebrations.



Hoa Đào (Peach Blossom)

#### **Kumquat Tree**

Like a "family tree", the Kumquat plant symbolically represents the many generations of a household. The fruits are grandparents, the flowers are parents and the buds and green leaves are children. Kumquat plants should be carefully selected for their symmetrical leaves, color and shape of fruit.



Cây Quất (Kumquat Tree)

Remember, when buying plants, you should purchase them closer to the holiday as the plants should be fresh and bloom for Tết.

#### Wine & Gift Baskets

Historically wine was kept in pottery gourds and was believed to contain the essence of heaven and earth, nowadays; those old gourds are replaced by modern wine bottles. The meaning and tradition of giving wine has remained unchanged. It takes a lot of time for wine to ferment and distil; so wine is highly appreciated by Vietnamese. Nevertheless, drinking wine can make people feel warm and energetic, which are exactly what people wish for their upcoming year.

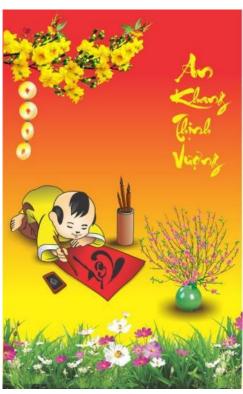


#### **Red Items**

Red symbolizes good luck, prosperity, joyfulness and contentment. During Tết one can see the color red everywhere, from the ornaments, lucky envelopes, to the clothes of the elderly on the first days of the New Year. Whichever gifts you plan to give, place a priority on the red and yellow and avoid dark colors.

#### **Greeting Cards**

Similar to western culture, greeting cards are also given for this holiday. Typically greeting cards are printed in vivid colors like red or yellow and with distinctive images such as apricot and peach blossom, sticky rice cake etc.



#### What NOT to give for Tết?

Several gifts are considered taboo, including watches, clocks (associated with death); knives, scissors, forks (cutting good luck) anything black (ink, coffee), anything related to fire (lighter) and handkerchiefs (as it symbolizes tears and sweat in the New Year).

#### Did you KNOW that?

A long time ago, Dong Ho painting used to be a precious gift for Tet Holiday. Vietnamese people hung Dong Ho painting for a year, and then replaced them by new ones when a new year was coming. Apart from the beauty of lines and layouts, the folk feature of Dong Ho painting also lays on its color and paper; both are handmade and derived from materials available in nature. The paper is made of bark of tree named "do" and powder of seashells and glutinous rice, whilst colors of paint used in Dong Ho pictures are processed from various kinds of natural materials easily found in Vietnamese villages. While seashells bring a sparkling white background, glutinous rice makes the paper more supple and able to conserve colors for a long time. The black color is taken from ash of burned bamboo leaves; the red is from red gravel; the yellow is from flowers. All colors are so striking and lively that you seem to see the whole Vietnamese villages through each line, each color block.

Regarding themes of Dong Ho painting, it should be noted that the folk picture is a fine reflection of daily life, culture values, social philosophies and human aspiration for a better life in years coming; therefore, everyday life, folk allegories, social

commentaries, mythical and historical figures, signs of happiness, luck, prosperity are main subjects of the painting. If you would like to wish your beloveds prosperity, happiness and luck, pictures named "Lon dan", "Ga dan", "Chan trau thoi sao" would be your best choice for a gift.







Source for "Did you know that?": http://www.vietnamonline.com/culture/dongho-paintings.html

#### **Events & Activities**

**Ho Chi Minh City** 



Flower Display on Nguyen Hue Street in Ho Chi Minh City

Tét Flower Markets: located in more than 125 places in Ho Chi Minh city, the biggest ones are at 23/9 Park (Pham Ngu Lao Street near Ben Thanh Market, Dist.1), Gia Dinh Park (corner of Nguyen Kiem Street and Nguyen Thai Son Street, Binh Thanh Dist.) and Le Van Tam Park (corner of Hai Ba Trung Street and Dien Bien Phu Street, Dist.3) from 08 to 15 Feb.

One of the oldest flower markets that are popular with locals is

One of the oldest flower markets that are popular with locals is the Ben Binh Dong Flower Market, District 8. The flowers here are brought from Mekong Delta to HCMC by boat and sold on the riverside.

**Tét Flower Festival**: 10 Feb to 21 Feb, Tao Dan Park (55C Nguyen Thi Minh Khai Street, Dist. 3) will display 4,000 flower exhibits from all over Vietnam with music and traditional martial arts performance.

Lunar New Year's Eve: 15 Feb - outdoor music performances 23/9
Park, Gia Dinh Park, with light art performances on streets in
District 1

**Annual Flower Street**: displays will be up from 7pm, 13 Feb to 10pm, 19 Feb on Nguyen Hue Street. This year's theme is "Aspiration to grow."

Outdoor Entertainment will include lion dances, drum performances – the performances will take place in front of all major hotels in Dist. 1, (ie. Caravelle, Rex, Majestic, Grand, Continental, Kim Đô, Oscar, and Bông Sen, Palace Music, etc..) throughout February

Floating Flower Market: The Crescent Mall, Dist. 7, from 7pm, 8
Feb to 14 Feb Spring" with traditional country Vietnamese food and flower market and Vietnamese traditional music performance every night.



Burning incense in Chinese Temple District 5 (a piece of paper Is attached to the incense, prayer writes name of the deceased or those who they are praying for).

Youth Cultural House: 4 Pham Ngoc Thach – Dist. 1. Popular with locals especially on special occasions/holidays. Open 02 Feb – 15 Feb.

- Vietnamese Calligraphy.
- ⇒ Lion dance, drum performances, music shows and more...

**Book Street Festival**: from Dong Khoi, Mac Thi Buoi and Ngo Duc Ke Street, Dist. 1 from 13 – 19 Feb. Bookstores will display their books outside for viewing and purchase.

Amusement Parks: Dam Sen Park – corner of Hoa Binh Street and Lac Long Quan Street, Dist. 11; Dai Nam Park - Thu Dau Mot Town in Binh Duong Province; Suoi Tien Park – Ha Noi Highway in Dist. 9. All locations will have many special performances.

Cinemas will remain open. Check their web pages for viewing times (www.megastarmedia.net) (www.lottecinemavn.com) (www.galaxycine.vn) (www.cgv.vn/en) (http://bhdstar.vn/en)

Lunar New Year's Eve Fireworks: 6 different locations, starting from 12:00am on the evening of 15 Feb

- Thu Thiem Tunnel (Dist. 2 side)
- Nga Ba Giong Memorial Park (Hoc Mon)
- Dam Sen Park (Dist.11)
- Lang Le- Bau Co History Relic Zone (Binh Chanh Dist.)
- ⇒ Football Field Can Gio (Can Gio)
- Cu Chi Tunnel (Cu Chi)

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#### **Hanoi City**



**Tét Flower Markets**: Hanoi city has organized 63 Spots of Spring flower market for Lunar New Year 2018. It started to operate from January 20<sup>th</sup> and will be on display through 26<sup>th</sup> February. Biggest flower markets are located in Lac Long Quan, Quang Ba, Duong Buoi, Quang Ba, Hoan Kiem, Hang Luoc. Ecopark Compound and Times City.

Lunar New Year 's Eve: there will be varieties of musical performances on New Year's Eve starting from 10:30pm - 12:00am. The largest one being in front of the Hanoi Opera House, other locations for singing performances are Thong Nhat Park and several places around Hoan Kiem Lake

#### **Activities:**

- ✓ Thong Nhat Park: Nhat Park: 354 Le Duan will open throughout the New Year festival and will have a lot of activities and special performances
- Vietnam Museum of Ethnology Tet activities: Introducing visitor to also participate in traditional handicraft performances, folk arts, water puppetry, games folk and to enjoy many types local cuisine
- ✓ Van Mieu (Temple of Literature): Ho Van 58 Quoc Tu Giam Street, Ba Dinh Dist. Spring calligraphy opens for Tét celebration (09 Feb 2018-25 Feb 2018)
- ✓ Hoang Thanh Thang Long: During the Lunar New Year, in Thang Long Royal Citadel, there are many traditional festivals and cultural festivals such as the worshiping ceremony of Ong Cong, Ong Tao. water puppetry, traditional martial arts
- ✓ Water Puppet Thang Long ( 57b Dinh Tien Hoang) : open throughout the Lunar New Year 2018.

#### Performance:

- Baara Land: The most unique Entertainment program "Northern Essence Baara Land- Every night (except Tuesdays)- The most elaborate and ambitious entertainment program in Vietnam (Da Phuc, Sai Son Commune, Quoc Oai)
- ✓ Lim Festival: Lim town, Noi Due commune, Lien Bao Commune, Bac Ninh: 27-28 Feb 2018
- ✓ Perfume Pagoda: Huong Son Commune, My Duc Dist, Hanoi: 21 Feb 2018 till the end of Apr.
- ✓ Yen Tu Pagoda, Quang Ninh: 25 Feb till the end of Apr 2018

**Historical Sight Seeing**: Hanoi Museum, Ngoc Son Temper will be open during Tet

Spring Book Street: 18 Feb 2018- 25 Feb 2018 at 19/02 Street, Hoan Kiem Hanoi

#### **Entertainment:**

Cinemas will remain open. Check their web pages for viewing times (<a href="http://www.bhdstar.vn">http://www.bhdstar.vn</a>); (<a href="https://www.cgv.vn">www.lottecinemavn.com</a>) (<a href="https://www.cgv.vn">https://www.cgv.vn</a>); (<a href="https://chieuphimquocgia.com.vn">https://www.cgv.vn</a>); (<a href="https://betacineplex.vn">https://betacineplex.vn</a>)

#### Lunar New Year's Eve Fireworks:

5 fireworks locations, starting from 12:00am on the evening of 15<sup>th</sup> Feb

- Hoan Kiem Lake
- Thong Nhat Park
- Lac Long Quan Flower Garden
- Van Quan Lake
- My Dinh Stadium



Ông Đồ (CalligraphyArtist)



Each year, 7 days before Tết locals release small carp into fresh water. The carp serve as vehicle for Ông Táo or the Kitchen God to travel to the Jade Emperor.

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# Santa Fe Relocation in the Community

#### John Hopkins Breast Cancer Research Fund

Santa Fe Relocation is proud to be a founding member of the Johns Hopkins Research Fund that supports research and treatment of breast cancer.

Santa Fe Relocation contributes US\$5 to the fund for every international, domestic or office move it performs regionally. To date, Santa Fe Relocation has donated over US\$2 million to the fund.

#### Heartbeat Vietnam

We are proud to support Heartbeat Vietnam. Heartbeat Vietnam funds life-saving hear operations for the most financially disadvantaged children.

Santa Fe Relocation are proud supporters of The D2 Charity Bazaar, BIS Christmas Charity BISzaar, ISHCMC bazaar, several Communities Bazaar, Australia Day of Australia Consulate, 4<sup>th</sup> July picnic day of Amcham.



# Looking for something to do after Tet? Here are some of our picks:

- Saigon Cyclo Challenge
- Red Bull Champion Dash
- Color Me Run
- AmCham US Independence Day Celebration: early Jul in D2
- BBGV Fun Run for Charity: Sep in D7
- Vietnam Mountain Marathon: Sep in Sapa
- Saigon Melbourne Cup: Oct
- Terry Fox Run for Charity: Nov in D7
- Christmas Charity Bazaar
- BIS Christmas BISzaar: Dec at BIS

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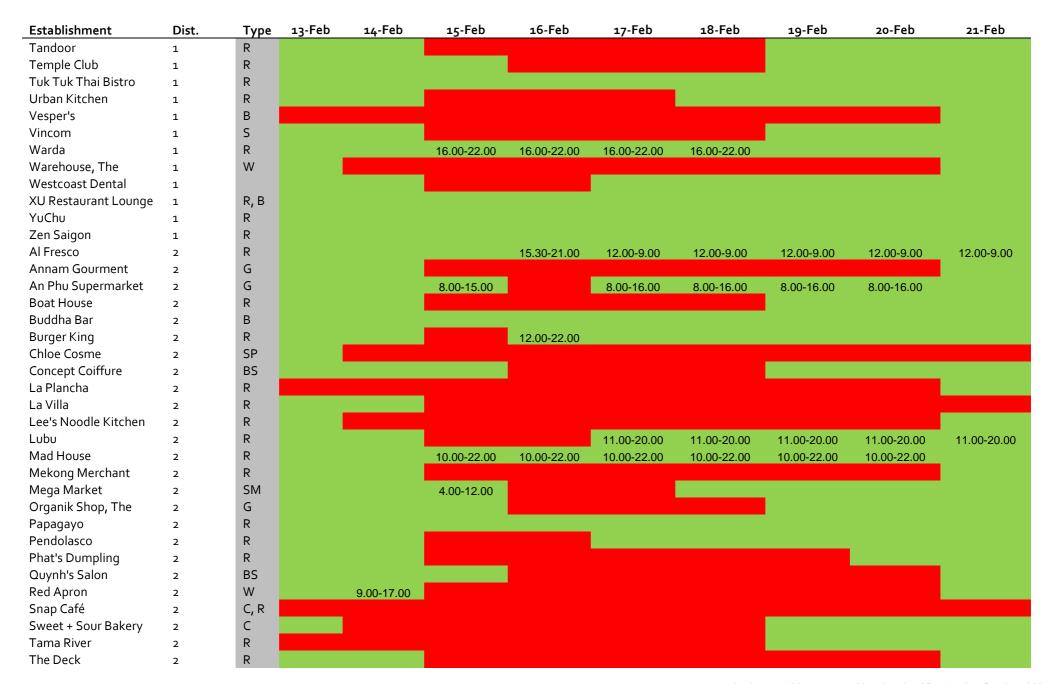
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#### Ho Chi Minh City Opening Hours 2018



We tried our best to include your favorite establishments but we might have missed a few. Please give us your feedback <u>Vietnam@santaferelo.com</u>.







#### **TYPES**

R = Restaurant

B = Bar

G = Grocery Store

S = Shopping

**CLOSED** 

OPEN

SM= Supermarket

C= Cafes

E= Entertainment

BS=Beauty Salon

K = Kids Activities

VET, Medical, Dental

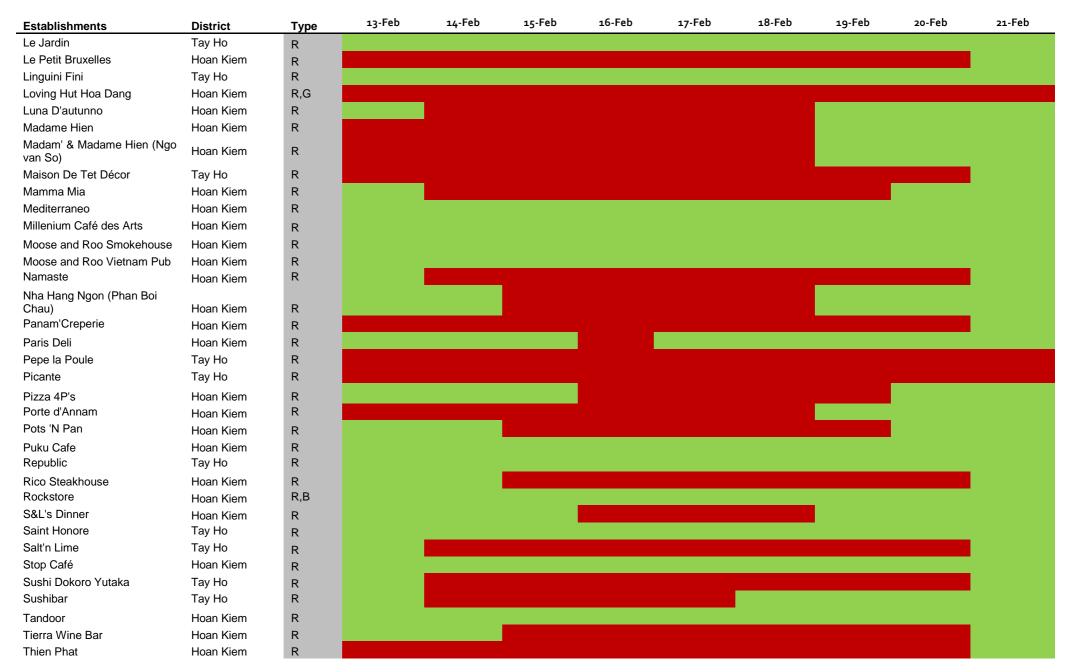
SP = Spa

A = Activity

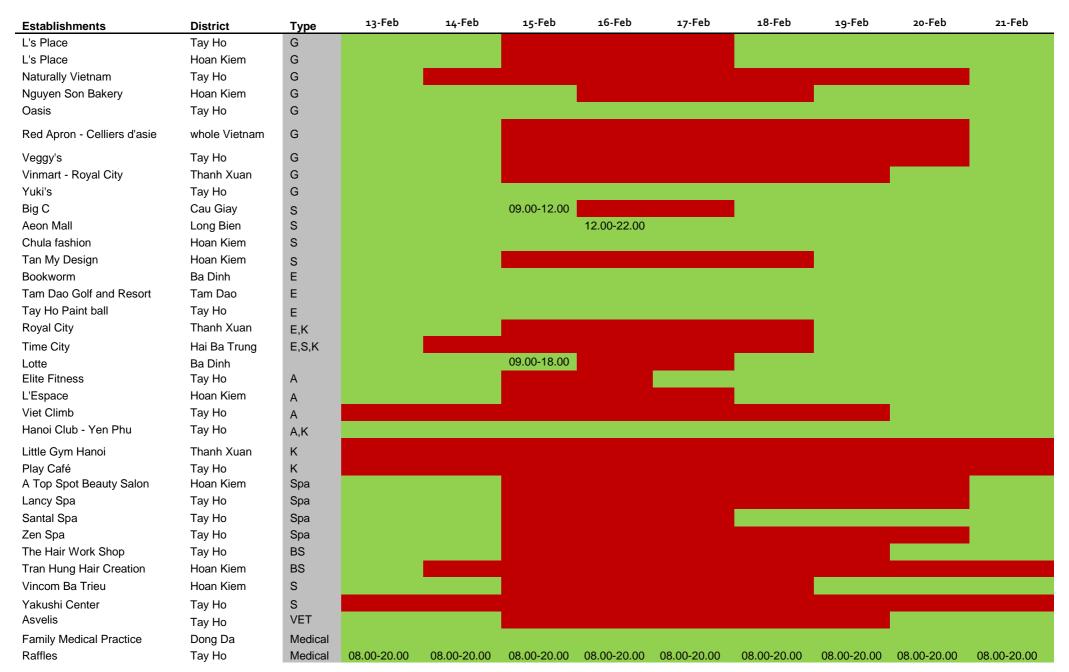
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#### Hanoi City Opening Hours 2018









Establishments	District	Туре	13-Feb	14-Feb	15-Feb	16-Feb	17-Feb	18-Feb	19-Feb	20-Feb	21-Feb
Peace Dental	Chuc Bach	Dental									
Westcoast Dental	Tay Ho	Dental									
TYPES											
R = Restaurant							SM= Supermarket				
B = Bar							C= Cafes				
G = Grocery Store							E= Entertainmer	nt			
S = Shopping							BS=Beauty Salor	1			
SP = Spa							A = Activity				
K = Kids Activities							VET, Medical, De	ental			
CLOSED											
OPEN											

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