

Vietnam



Vietnam is one of the most populated countries in South East Asia, with a rich history and culture. Overall, Vietnam has a young population, with 50% under the age of 30. The Vietnamese people are renowned for having a strong sense of patriotism and maintain their identity, despite many foreign invasions. The country is governed by a single party and is recognised as a communist state.

An introduction to Vietnamese culture

Vietnam is a country located in Asia, on the eastern Indochinese Peninsula. It is a country which is rich in culture and a popular destination for tourist. Unlike other countries where young people may have travelled from, Vietnam is not a war torn state. The young people seeking asylum in the UK are usually doing so as a result of human trafficking and exploitation, often in the sex industry or the drugs trade, or political persecution.

Diet

The Vietnamese diet consists largely of rice, fresh fruit and vegetables, fresh herbs, and seafood. Vietnamese flavours focus on the balance between sweet, sour, bitter and salty. Garlic, chili peppers, onion, lemongrass, soy sauce, and cinema are all common ingredients. The national dish of Vietnam is Pho, which is a soup. It is made by boiling chicken or beef bones with onion and ginger. Other ingredients vary depend on their availability. Bun Cha is another stable dish. This is a dish consisting of grilled meat served over thin rice noodles. Stir-fry is also a popular dish.



Religion

Vietnam is officially registered as an Atheist state, meaning that the majority of people do not practise a religion. All religious institutes must register with the government and it is illegal to perform religious ceremonies without permission



Language

Vietnamese is the official language of Vietnam and is spoken by the majority of the population. Vietnamese uses a Latin Alphabet. There is currently a demand for English teachers due to a government incentive that aims to have all young people leaving secondary school with a second language by 2020. Despite this, the project has struggled to take off and Vietnamese young people often have very limited English.



Education

The education system is made up of 5 tiers; preschool, primary, secondary, high school and further education. Basic education consist of 12 years and pupils attend for half the day. They follow a curriculum of subjects similar to that in the UK. Education is considered to be a priority. There are concerns around secondary education, with limitations to access and quality in some areas of Vietnam, with 37% of young people not enrolled.



Trafficking in Vietnam

Human trafficking in Vietnam is common and many of these children wind up in the UK not knowing where their parents are. Children are often promised better lives by traffickers, sometimes even offered food, water and shelter. Once they have arrived in the desired locations, these young people may then be controlled by the debt that they owe traffickers. These debts force them to work in industries, such as the sex industry or in drug gangs, in order to pay these debts. This can lead to them being exploited further and their safety is further put at risk.

Family life

Family is a central aspect in Vietnamese life and a typical family household consists of both the nuclear and the extended family, with the younger generations caring of the old. It is usually the older generations who are head of the family and take charge of most activities within the household. In Vietnam, the actions of an individual can impact on the family name so protecting the reputation of the family is crucial. Relatives can be ostracised by the family if their actions are considered to bring dishonour on the family name.

Etiquette

Etiquette is considered a key feature of Vietnamese culture, with different etiquettes for different situations. Some common ones include not showing affection when in public, avoiding folding arms and standing with hands on your hips, and gesturing with a hand rather than pointing with a finger. Young people in Vietnam are also expected to adhere to certain etiquettes when being invited to someone else's home, such as bring gifts of fruit, flowers, and incenses. Table manners are another aspect considered to be important in Vietnam and include waiting to be shown where to sit and allowing older people to take their seat first.



Cultural influence

The Vietnamese culture is one of the oldest in Southeast Asia. It is heavily influenced by the Chinese culture. Vietnam has been occupied many times and has incorporated different elements into its own culture; for example, French colonial rule saw the introduction of Western culture and include the adoption of the Latin alphabet in Vietnam. During the communist regime, Vietnam was restricted from accessing Western culture and, instead, began to adopt influences from other communist nations, such as the Soviet Union. Despite this, traditional values, such as family values and devotion to study, have remained.



For more information

The Refugee Council:

<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/>

Migration Yorkshire:

<https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/>

Corman Children's Legal Centre:

<https://www.childrenslegalcentre.com/resources/local-authority-support-uasc/>