



Capturing Your Journey Through The Lens

Dear [name]

Flipping through a photo album from a dream-come-true journey can educe a cache of treasured emotions and memories: the taste of a tangy Indian curry, the soul stirring trumpet from an African elephant or the vivid palette of a Tuscan sunset. We want you to preserve your cherished travel moments in the best possible way. After all, you need something to show off to your family and friends when you return from your journey!

Whether you are using a tablet, a smartphone, a DSLR or a simple point-and-shoot camera, here are some useful tips that will help you relive your trip's magical moments over and over again.

- **Know the culture:** If you are traveling internationally, make sure you are familiar with the local culture and customs. For example, it is sometimes forbidden to take photographs inside churches in Europe. Also, it is always polite to ask permission before taking photographs of people. Usually, a smile and a hello will go a long way. However, if your request is declined, kindly respect their wishes. You are bound to find another interesting subject down the road!
- **Clean your lens:** Body oils, dirt and lint will collect rapidly on your device's surfaces, especially when carried in purses and backpacks. Prevent smudges and lint from overlapping your next photo by gently cleaning your lens with a lint-free cloth on a daily basis.
- **Focus, focus, and focus:** If your subjects are not in focus when looking at the monitor or through the viewfinder, take a few steps forward or backward or adjust the position of your device. Also, try using your device's focus detection setting. In many cameras, half-pressing the shutter before taking your photo will tell your camera which area to focus on. On a smartphone or tablet, you can usually tap the desired focal point on your screen and a yellow box will appear around that section.
- **Consider your lighting:** Avoid using a flash unless absolutely necessary. Yes, really! Instead, rely on natural, environmental lighting. When outdoors, position yourself with your back to the sun to prevent silhouetted subjects. The same rule applies when you are indoors. Also, take advantage of the magical "twilight time." One hour before and one hour after sunset offers a window of incredible lighting. Think fiery orange horizons and subtle blue shadows.
- **Hold your device steady:** When lugging around a tripod isn't an option, you can easily turn yourself into a human tripod. Hold your device with both hands, and pull your arms into your chest and stomach. Keeping your elbows tucked against your body, place the device, or your arms, on a stable horizontal surface such as a bridge or a railing. Another option is to place your shoulder or device against a stable vertical surface such as a wall. Try not to hold your device at arm's length as this will result in blurry photos.
- **Increase your resolution:** If you are able to select picture sizes on your device, remember this handy suggestion: the larger the picture size, the more detail you can capture. From the hairs on an animal's back to the individual brush strokes of a painting, larger photo sizes can display incredible details. A larger photo size will also result in clear, crisp photos if you wish to resize them later.
- **Be unpredictable:** Natural and unpredictable photos can sometimes be your best photos. Candid, spontaneous shots can capture a wealth of emotions that a carefully arranged photo cannot. Be daring and think outside of the box when taking your photos. Trying kneeling to match the height of a shorter subject. Move right up close, or shoot from an odd angle. Experiment with light and shadows. Break the rules of normal photography and get comfortable with making your own rulebook!



A Closer Look at Religion in:

VIETNAM

A FASCINATING WEB OF BELIEFS

Vietnam's religions represent a melting pot of centuries-old beliefs and contemporary Western ideologies. The country's deeply-rooted attitude toward life, death and the afterlife bears a profound imprint on the context of Vietnam's prevalent faiths: Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, a triumvirate that has existed peacefully for centuries. Although around 80% of Vietnam's population identifies themselves as followers of Buddhism, these individuals likely practice principles of Confucianism and Taoism. Many also observe rituals of animism and worship spirits, such as tutelary spirits, house guardians and ancestral spirits. Great importance is placed on pacifying the spirits and appealing to them for protection, good fortune and assistance.

Buddhism: Compassion | Enlightenment

Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, was born to a wealthy family in Nepal five centuries before Christ. After growing bored with material wealth, Siddhartha Gautama dedicated his life toward discovering the path to nirvana, the ultimate state of enlightenment. Following six years of wandering and meditating, Siddhartha Gautama attained a state of highest knowledge and became recognized as Buddha, or the "Enlightened One." The Buddha spent the remainder of his life spreading his teachings of truth and compassion throughout India.

In Buddhism, the root of human suffering lies in man's desires for pleasure, material goods and immortality, cravings that can never be satisfied. Upon deliverance from these desires, and by following a Noble Eightfold Path, man is capable of achieving enlightenment. Among others, the Noble Eightfold Path includes the



following: Right Understanding, Right Action, Right Livelihood and Right Mindfulness.

Following Buddha's death, Buddhism split into two schools, Mahayana Buddhism and Hinayana Buddhism. Today, most of Vietnam's Buddhists are followers of Mahayana Buddhism, and holidays, such as the Perfume Pagoda Festival and Buddha's birthday, are significant days of celebration.

Confucianism: Respect | Intellect

Confucius, or Master Kong, lived during the same era as Buddha and was founder of a school for social and political philosophy. At the heart of Confucius's teachings was an essential code for daily life, including principles for correct behavior, loyalty and obedience, concern for others and value of the community over the individual. Confucius believed that man was essentially good and compassionate at heart. Societal influences were responsible for throwing the universe out of harmony and causing conflict. Therefore, to keep the universe in a constant state of balance, man must practice benevolence, loyalty, reciprocity and intellect. Confucianism was deeply rooted in Vietnamese society during China's occupation in the second century B.C.

Today, the principles of Confucianism remain firm in Vietnam. Strict obedience to teachers, authority figures and parents is observed, and education is highly valued.

Taoism: The Yin | The Yang

Taoism, also referred to as Daoism, is believed to have originated in China around 500 B.C under the influence of Lao Tzu. Like Buddha, Lao Tzu preached the need to resist cravings and the importance of balance between man and nature. Through worship, good deeds, rituals and meditation, Taoists seek to improve their chances of immortality and achieve harmony within themselves and the universe.



Central to Taoist philosophy is the dualistic principle of Yin-Yang, a whole made of complementary opposites. Yin is female, cool and passive, and the breath which formed the heavens. Yang is male, hot and ener-

getic, and the breath which formed the earth. Taoists believe that everything in nature can be expressed through varying combinations of Yin and Yang, such as day and night or hot and cold. This same principle can be applied to all things and phenomena in the natural world, including society, the human body, natural disasters and family relationships. Disturbances, such as a personal illness, are a direct result of an imbalance between the forces of Yin and Yang. Thus, restoring this Yin-Yang harmony will help cure the illness.

Today, many Vietnamese homes use an altar to worship a trio of Taoist gods, or the “Kitchen God,” who protects the family and monitors their moral force. Several Vietnamese festivals are rooted in Taoist tradition, and images of Taoist deities adorn temples and pagodas throughout the country.



Other Religions in Vietnam

Noteworthy religions, such as Catholicism, Protestantism and Caodaism, can be identified in moderate proportions throughout Vietnam. Catholicism is the most widespread Christian faith. After the Roman Catholic Church introduced Catholicism in the 16th century, it was further propagated under French rule. A Canadian missionary, Robert Jaffray, brought Protestantism to Da Nang during the 19th century. Today, it is mostly practiced among the Montagnard and H’mong communities in the South’s central highlands. Caodaism, founded by Ngo Van Chieu, incorporates elements of Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Christianity. Cao Dai saints include William Shakespeare and Winston Churchill, spirits that impart guidance and wisdom through séances and psychic mediums. Cao Dai temples are common in the southern regions, particularly in the Mekong Delta.



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Celebrations around the world!

Dear [name],

This time of year, many cultures around the world are cooking, dancing, decorating, rejoicing and commemorating special celebrations. Ignite your wanderlust in 2018 by learning about some unique and few well-known traditions taking place around the globe.

- **Croatia:** Locals in Zagreb release paper lanterns carrying their wishes and hopes for the coming year.
- **India:** Diwali, the Festival of Lights, is celebrated by lighting small clay lamps and sharing sweets and savory treats.
- **Russia:** Father Frost and his daughter Snow Maiden roam village streets, and families share bowls of kutia, a porridge served with honey.
- **Sweden:** In honor of St. Lucia Day, girls dress up as Lucia brides by donning red sashes and wearing wreaths filled with burning candles.
- **Belarus:** Residents of Martsyanauka gather around a tree to mark the end of Kolyada, an ancient pagan holiday.
- **The Netherlands:** Children place their shoes on windowsills and near fireplaces in hopes that Sinterklaas and his helpers will leave candy and small gifts.
- **Georgia:** In celebration of the Orthodox Christmas, clergy members lead a procession called an Alilo and gather donations along the way.
- **Germany:** Children in Munich are on the lookout for Krampus, a frightening creature who roams the Christmas markets, seeking to punish those on Santa's naughty list.
- **Africa and the United States:** The week-long celebration of Kwanzaa honors African and African American culture and celebrates ideals such as creativity, unity, faith and purpose.
- **Israel:** The eight-day Jewish celebration of Hanukkah includes the lighting of candles on a special menorah and the preparation of latkes and jam-filled donuts.
- **Australia:** In the midst of summer vacation, Australians celebrate Christmas with carols, light displays and a Santa with a set of kangaroos instead of reindeer.
- **United States:** Americans send Christmas greeting cards, open Advent calendars and decorate with Christmas trees, nativity scenes and wreaths of ivy and greenery.