ISSUE 02 · NOVEMBER 2026

UDAIPUR

# Aasha Tours

## TRAVEL BULLETIN

WHAT CHANGED THIS MONTH, AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOUR NEXT TRIP



THIS MONTH

# Vietnam, in *dry season*

Hanoi in the cool, a quiet bay, then the Mekong in full sun. Nine days — and no visa appointment to queue for. Page 2.

WHY USE A TRAVEL AGENT

*No. 2 of a series*

A website sells you the booking and then goes quiet. It does not answer the phone at two in the morning when a flight is cancelled in Hanoi and four people need beds and a new routing by breakfast. We do.

*— Ankit Sisodia*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2 **Know your destination: Vietnam**
Hanoi, a quiet bay, the Mekong and an island. Nine days.

3 **Where to go next**
Dubai and Abu Dhabi, Thailand at its best, Cappadocia at its quietest.

4 **What changed this month**
China moves its visa desk. America adds a form. Malaysia has a date.

5 **Hotels and the corporate desk**
India's number one on a reader vote, and two fairs worth the trip.

# Know your destination: Vietnam



## *A country you can still book for next month. That is not true of most of them.*

Two climates at once in December. Hanoi is cool and dry, the bay is quiet because nobody comes in the cold, and a two-hour flight south puts you in full dry season on the Mekong and Phu Quoc. An e-visa, not an appointment. That is the whole argument.

### WHEN TO GO

December starts the southern dry season — Ho Chi Minh City around 31°C, the Mekong and Phu Quoc about 30°C, and very little rain. The north is cool, Hanoi and the bay near 22°C, which is exactly why the water is quiet. The central coast is the one part still shaking off its rains, so in December we route around it rather than through it. And go before the Christmas fortnight — availability thins badly after that.



### NINE DAYS, IN ORDER

Nine days, two ends of the country, nothing in between to slow it down. Three in and around Hanoi with a night on the water, one internal flight, two days on the Mekong out of Ho Chi Minh City, and three on Phu Quoc. No long drives anywhere.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| DAYS 1–3 | **Hanoi** | The old quarter on foot, cool and grey and much better for it. Eat where the queue is. |
| DAY 4 | **A night on the bay** | Lan Ha rather than Halong proper. The same limestone, far fewer boats. |
| DAY 5 | **Fly south** | Two hours, and you land in dry season. Ho Chi Minh City by the evening. |
| DAYS 6–7 | **The Mekong** | Out to Cai Rang at first light, ahead of the day boats. Back through the backwaters. |
| DAYS 8–9 | **Phu Quoc** | The sun you came for. Home from the island, or back through Saigon. |




### DO NOT MISS

- A night on Lan Ha Bay rather than Halong — the same limestone, a fraction of the boats
- Cai Rang at first light, while it is still a market and not a show
- The Hanoi old quarter at six in the morning, when it belongs to the people who live there
- Phu Quoc in December, which is when its beach season starts again

### YOURS, NOT OFF A SHELF

This is a shape, not a package. Swap Phu Quoc for Con Dao if you want somewhere quieter. Add Hoi An if you will take a wet morning for a beautiful town. Slower with children, shorter if you only have a week. Tell us who is travelling and we will redraw it.

**HOW WE HELP** **Tell us who is travelling and when. We come back with a plan, the hotels to match it, and one price — not a list of things to book yourself.** Connect now

*Monthly temperatures and rainfall per Audley Travel's Vietnam guide, which also advises travelling before the Christmas period.*

# Where to go next, and why



Three places you can still choose for December. **The last is in its quietest, cheapest weeks of the year.**

WHY NOW · THE MONTHS THE CITY IS OUTDOORS

## Dubai and Abu Dhabi



***The short haul you can still book for this month.***

November to March is the whole outdoor season, and December sits in the middle of it. Two cities ninety minutes apart that are not the same trip — one for the restaurants and the retail, the other for the Grand Mosque, the Louvre and a quieter corniche.

**What I'll do:** file the UAE visa in days rather than weeks, and split the nights between the two cities instead of day-tripping one from the other.

Connect now

WHY NOW · THE BEST WEATHER OF ITS YEAR

## Thailand



***Bangkok in December: about 31°C, and effectively no rain.***

The cool dry season runs from November to early April and December is its best month, with good weather across almost the whole country. The exception is Koh Samui, which is still taking heavy rain in December. If somebody has sold you Samui for Christmas, ask the question again.

**What I'll do:** put you on the Andaman side rather than the gulf this month, and get the booking in before the Christmas fortnight closes the good rooms.

Connect now

WHY NOW · LEAN SEASON, HONESTLY

## Cappadocia



***The quietest, cheapest weeks of the year, with snow on the chimneys.***

Winter empties the valleys and takes the room rates with it. The caution is the balloons: flights are cleared morning by morning and in winter a good many mornings are scrubbed, so the trip needs spare days built into it.

**What I'll do:** give you three mornings for one balloon flight, and fill the other two so a cancellation costs you nothing.

Connect now

WANT THE NUMBERS?

Rates move weekly, which is why there are no prices on this page. Send your dates and how many are travelling and we come back with a real costing, not a range. Connect now

*Monthly temperatures and rainfall per Audley Travel's country guides.*



# What changed this month



Three changes worth knowing before you book, and one free check. **Every one of them against a named source this month.**

## China: the visa centres have closed

***The file now goes to the mission, and somebody has to carry it there.***

From 26 October the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi and the Consulate General in Mumbai accept and process visa and consular legalisation applications directly. The visa application service centres no longer do. Applications from the Kolkata district are being handled by Delhi for the time being.

**HOW WE HELP** we prepare the file and lodge it at the right mission, so one trip does not become two.

Connect now

*Notice of the Chinese Embassy in India, 22 October 2026*

## America: a new form before you board

***No form, no boarding. Every passenger on the aircraft, every nationality.***

From 11.59pm Eastern on 3 November, everyone flying to the United States must sign a declaration that they have not been in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the 21 days before boarding. Airlines have to collect it and may refuse boarding without it. It covers passengers merely transiting the US, and it runs to 17 December.

**HOW WE HELP** we send the form with your ticket and tell you who collects it, so you do not meet it at the gate.

Connect now

*CDC order of 22 October 2026, published in the US Federal Register, 27 October*

## Malaysia: the visa-free window has a date on it

***31 December. The 30th needs nothing from you. The 2nd is a different question.***

Malaysia's Home Ministry extended 30-day visa-free entry for Indian passport holders to 31 December 2026 under its visa liberalisation plan. That is the order your January dates have to be read against.

**HOW WE HELP** if the trip lands in January we check the rule as it stands the week you ticket it, not the week you decided.

Connect now

*Malaysia's Home Ministry, reported by Malay Mail, December 2024*

## Been to Europe twice? Stop applying for single entry

***One form. Two years of Europe. Same fee as a single trip.***

Two Schengen visas used within three years qualifies you for a two-year multi-entry, then usually a five-year. Most people never ask.

**FREE CHECK** send us the visa pages of your old passports and we tell you if you qualify. No charge, no obligation.

Connect now

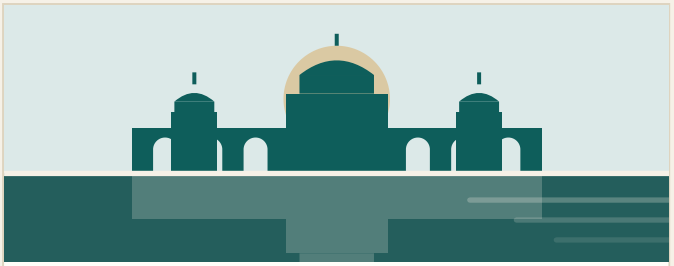
*EU Delegation to India*

**BEFORE YOU FILE**

A refused visa file is the one travel cost nobody budgets for — the application, the appointment, and often the ticket. What a policy does and does not cover is settled before you file, not after. **Send me the certificate and I will read it and tell you what you actually have.** No charge. Connect now

# Two hotels worth the journey

EXCLUSIVE STAYS

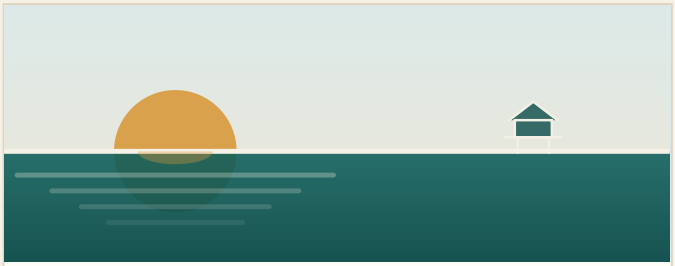


IN INDIA

## The Imperial, New Delhi

**#1 Hotel in India · Readers' Choice Awards 2026**

Condé Nast Traveller's UK readers put it first in the country, out of more than 296,000 responses. A nineteen-thirties hotel on Janpath, never renovated into anonymity.



IN THE WORLD

## InterContinental Danang

**#1 Resort in Asia · Readers' Choice Awards 2026**

First in Asia on the same reader vote, US edition. Built down a forested hillside on the Son Tra peninsula, in tiers from the ridge to the beach.

HOW WE HELP **Say which one, and when. I come back with what is actually open — and what the category above it buys you, which is the part a booking site will not tell you.** Connect now

*Condé Nast Traveller and Condé Nast Traveler Readers' Choice Awards 2026, UK and US editions, voted by readers. Illustrations, not photographs of the properties.*

# For the corporate desk

JANUARY AND FEBRUARY

Two majors, five weeks apart. **One of them is a visa job rather than a ticket job — and that is the one to start now.**

21–27 JANUARY 2027

## IMTEX & Tooltech 2027

**Bangalore International Exhibition Centre · India**

India's machine tool week, run by IMTMA, with the tooling and digital manufacturing halls alongside it. For the engineering and instrumentation side of town — and a week when Bengaluru beds go early.

Connect now

1–4 FEBRUARY 2027

## The International Surface Event

**Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas · USA**

Stone, tile and surfaces together, with StonExpo on the floor: North America's buying week for natural stone. If marble is your trade, this is the room. The visa is the long pole here, not the fare.

Connect now

*Dates as published by the organisers — IMTMA (imtex.in) and Informa Markets (intlsurfaceevent.com).*




## Send us your dates.

A WhatsApp message saying where and when, and we come back with what is actually available and what it costs.

Connect now on WhatsApp

**Ankit Sisodia**

Aasha Tours, Udaipur

+91 99822 06401

ankit@aashatours.com

www.aashatours.com