

Vietnamese: Snapshot

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Xin chào

Vietnamese language and culture

Vietnamese is the official language of Vietnam, a country with a population of over 98 million people. It is the mother tongue of the Viet people, who make up about 86% of the population, and the common language of other ethnic minorities in Vietnam. Vietnamese is also spoken by around 5 million overseas Vietnamese people who migrated to other parts of Asia, North America, Europe and Australia.

In the UK, there are roughly 85,000 Vietnamese people and the largest communities can be found in London (Lewisham, Hackney and Greenwich,) and in Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester.

The Vietnamese language is a tonal language and used to be written in a form of Chinese characters, but in the mid 17th century missionaries introduced a new writing system based on the Roman alphabet known as 'Quoc-ngu' (national language). Religious belief has been shaped by a combination of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, although some have adopted Catholicism.

Word origin: The name *Việt Nam*, (Vietnamese pronunciation: [viət na:m]) literally “Viet south”, means “Viet of the South”.

Vietnam's culture has developed over the centuries from indigenous ancient Đông Sơn culture with wet rice cultivation as its economic base. This is reflected in the traditional dress ('áo dài', the long top; 'nón lá', the cone-shaped hat), in theatre (including water puppetry), in the Vietnamese traditional martial art Vovinam (Võ Việt Nam) and in cuisine. Recently Vietnamese restaurants have become more and more popular in the UK with 'phở' noodle soup a favourite dish.

An important festival takes place at the end of January or early February for the Vietnamese lunar new year, Tết Nguyên Đán. The story of how the Vietnamese community in Deptford celebrate their roots, culture, language and heritage is shown in a film made by the London VietSchool showcasing the 2020 new year festival:

<https://goldsmithsmdst.com/deptford-2020/>

Vietnamese education

Currently, VFP Language and Culture school (VietSchool) is the only supplementary school provided for Vietnamese heritage in the UK. In recognition of its achievements the school has received a British Academy Schools Language Award.

As a result of the pandemic some Vietnamese supplementary schools have found it difficult to continue their activities.

Examinations

There is currently no GCSE or A level qualification available for Vietnamese. VFP is looking to collaborate with organisations/individuals to build up the project.



Supporting Vietnamese speakers in your school

For advice on Vietnamese contact the Vietnamese Family Partnership (Gia Dinh Viet) <https://www.vietfp.org>