



Delicate rice noodles, aromatic broths, and fresh herbs are the mainstays of a cuisine deeply shaped by history.

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*Vietnam's capital city Hanoi offers visitors a veritable smorgasbord of flavours! From hyper-local specialities to popular staples from across the country, each comprising multiple colourful components, eating here is a pure sensory experience. Here are seven definitive dishes you must try in this charming city.*

## Phở

This ubiquitous noodle soup is the country's best-known dish and a breakfast staple, served everywhere, from high-end restaurants to humble street stalls. Every morning, street vendors spring to life, readying their flat rice noodles, hearty broth, sliced meats, slivers of veggies, and a variety of herbs. In Hanoi, you'll find Northern Vietnam's special version of pho, featuring a clear, aromatic stock flavoured with lime and chilli, best enjoyed at a casual eatery on the pavement.

**TRY IT AT** Phở Thìn in Hoàn Kiếm offers hearty pho and the ultimate local experience.



## Bánh Mì

The French brought the baguette to Vietnam, and the banh mi was born. It comprises a warm, crunchy baguette slathered with pâté, roast chicken or pork, carrots and cucumber, chilli sauce, and cilantro leaves, all coming together in a neat parcel of textures and flavours. The loaded sandwich is a shining example of fusion food now ingrained in the country's culinary fabric. Eat it for breakfast or pick it up at a street-side stall for an evening snack—the banh mi is a highly versatile dish, and emblematic of Hanoi's French-colonial history.

**TRY IT AT** Bánh Mì 25 in Hanoi's French Quarter is a cosy sit-down spot to sample this treat.



## Chá Cá

Grilled turmeric-marinated catfish topped with crunchy spring onions and fresh dill leaves—the description is enough to make one's mouth water! In the 1800s, a local family (the Doans) served this to the nation's troops. The dish became so popular that they opened a restaurant; soon, other cha ca eateries sprang up in the area and their street was renamed Cha Ca Street. Grilled at your table in a sizzling hot pan, it's served with rice noodles.

**TRY IT AT** Chá Cá Thăng Long, a traditional restaurant where only grilled fish is served.







### Bún Chả

In 2016, Anthony Bourdain and former USA President Barack Obama made waves when they entered a hole-in-the-wall eatery in Hanoi. The dish they sampled? The *bun cha*. Since that visit, this little-known Hanoi speciality has become a definitive ‘must-try’ in Vietnam. And no wonder. This delicious dish features several delights—patties of charcoal-grilled fatty pork, thin rice vermicelli, a tangy-sweet dipping broth of fish sauce with vinegar and sugar, pickled vegetables like carrots and raw papaya, and fresh herbs. It’s no surprise the celebrity duo tucked into their fully loaded *bun cha* bowls with much relish!

**TRY IT AT** Bún chả Hương Liên, also called ‘Bun Cha Obama’, after the USA President put the tiny eatery on the global food map.



### Bánh Chuối Nướng

Ripe bananas, flour, sugar—the classic ingredients for a gooey, comforting dessert. Vietnam’s version of the banana cake is the *banh chuoi nuong*, featuring condensed milk, sweet plantains, and any leftover bread, baked to a melt-in-the-mouth consistency. Making this sweet, crispy dish is a time-tested way to use up remnants from the fridge! You will also find adaptations using coconut milk and rice flour, as well as varieties that are steamed not baked (*banh chu oi hap*).

**TRY IT AT** Old Town Café, also called Cafe Phố Cổ, is a lush green space to enjoy a typical banana cake with coffee.

### Egg Coffee

What do you get when you combine egg yolks, instant coffee, and condensed milk with butter and cheese? Hanoi’s iconic egg coffee! Creamy and decadent, this brew is more like a dessert. Known as *ca phe trung*, the beverage was born out of necessity during the First Indochina War in 1946, when milk scarcity made Nguyen Van Giang, a bartender at Hotel Metropole Hanoi, use whisked eggs as an alternative to dairy while serving coffee. Try it for an appetising caffeine kick!

**TRY IT AT** Café Giang, a popular outfit run by the family of the original egg coffee creator.



### Bánh Cuốn

These rice paper rolls are the quintessential comfort food! Steamed rice batter is used to make delicate, almost-translucent sheets called *banh cuon*. These are then stuffed with pork and wood ear mushrooms, rolled up, and served with crispy shallots, bean sprouts, Vietnamese sausage, dipping sauce, and herbs like mint and coriander. Traditionally once served as breakfast, it is now sold through the day.

**TRY IT AT** Bánh Cuốn Bà Hoàng is a lively, fuss-free spot to savour this loved dish with the locals.