

# Mỹ Sơn, Vietnam

A COMPLETE TRAVEL GUIDE





## About Mỹ Sơn

Unlike the neighboring cities of [Hoi An](#) and [Danang](#), Mỹ Sơn's unique allure draws from its incredible historic roots, not its immediate visionary delights. As the last remaining ruin complex of the ancient Cham Empire, Mỹ Sơn attracts thousands of visitors each in year to its ancient Hindu temples and mysterious architecture. It remains one of the foremost heritage sites in all of Southeast Asia. Once the site of religious ceremony and burial place of Cham royalty, the valley has since been named a world heritage site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The temple complex can be found in the thick brush of the Vietnamese jungle, beneath the Hon Quap (Cat's Tooth) Mountain. At the base of the mountain lies the source of the Thu Bon river, which is considered to be holy by the local population. As a source of rich history, honored culture, and natural beauty, Mỹ Sơn is the perfect excursion for those who can appreciate the solemn beauty of a relic preserved in time.

## A History of Mỹ Sơn

The first temple of the Mỹ Sơn complex dates back as far as the 4th century AD. It is believed that the temple was first erected during the era of King Fanhuda, who led a great war against Chinese occupation in Vietnam during the latter half of his reign (380 until 413.) Fanhuda went on to dedicate a single hall and the land that would eventually become Mỹ Sơn to Hindu deity Shiva, before warning his successor not to "destroy his gift." His successors obeyed his warning, and Mỹ Sơn was transformed into a religious sanctuary for the Champa empire in the many centuries following its erection.

Upon their rise to rule, it was customary for Champa kings to build their own temple complexes in the valley of Mỹ Sơn. Because the Champa kingdom was loosely based on various tribes of the Cham ethnic group, it was normal for kings to erect halls in service to their own tribes. However, the Champa people were predominantly Hindus; thus, all of the halls erected in the Mỹ Sơn valley are dedicated to Shiva. Over 70 structures were erected between the 4th and 14th centuries, most paying homage to sacred animals like dragons, snakes, and lions, priests, other Hindu deities, and local religious leaders.

Though many wooden halls were erected during the time of Champa rule, many structures were eradicated by natural and manmade disasters, including natural fires and a United States carpet bombing attack during the Vietnam War. in 1969. For this reason, the 18 surviving structures of Mỹ Sơn are almost entirely made of brick.

## When to visit Mỹ Sơn

It is generally best to visit Mỹ Sơn during periods of moderate weather for Vietnam. Spring (February to April) and Autumn (August to October) are ideal because of the warm temperature and light rainfall.

If you prefer to explore Mỹ Sơn in relative peace, opt for starting your journey even as early as 6:30am to avoid bus tours and crowds. It may become hotter in the afternoon and more difficult to trek for as long.





## How to get to Mỹ Sơn from where you are staying

There are approximately 43 kilometers (26 miles) between Hoi An and Mỹ Sơn. Because Mỹ Sơn is in the jungle, it may require multiple trips to enter and leave the valley. Transportation options include:

- **A motorbike taxi:** Tourists can hire a local to escort them on a roundtrip between Hoi An to Mỹ Sơn.
- **A motorbike rental:** Visitors can also rent a motorbike and direct themselves along the marked trails of the Mỹ Sơn valley. Motorbike rentals can cost anywhere from 4-5 USD a day, which covers bike itself and some gas.
- **A car with a driver:** A private driver and car rental will likely be a more expensive - but more enjoyable trip. Depending on the service, a car rental may cost anywhere from 35 to 70 USD per day.
- **Join a tour group:** Tour groups come equipped with their own bus for transportation, and have the added benefit of setting an itinerary for you to visit and explore the restaurants and businesses surrounding the temple complex. Tour groups usually depart from Hoi An at 05:00 and 08:00, and may cost anywhere from 3-5 USD per day.

## Where to stay if you want to visit Mỹ Sơn

Many visitors to Mỹ Sơn opt to find a hotel in the neighboring city of [Hoi An](#). Accommodations and transportation are easier to locate in the city, and tourists receive the added bonus of exploring Hoi An's own historic structures, including the "Old Town of Hoi An."

**Nearby Hoi An hotels include the River Suites Hoi An, the Royal Riverside, and the Essence Hoi An Hotel.**



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## Dining near Mỹ Sơn

There will many authentic Vietnamese road-side restaurants available to tourists on the length from Hoi An to Mỹ Sơn. Drinks and snacks are also available on the temple compound next to the official souvenir shop.

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## How long does it take to tour Mỹ Sơn?

Day tours may take anywhere from one to five hours, depending on how much you'd like to explore Hoi An, Da Nang, or the immediate surrounding sites of Mỹ Sơn. However, visitors may travel to and explore Mỹ Sơn alone, which may account for a much longer touring time to see all of the temple at their own pace.

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## Do I need a guide to tour Mỹ Sơn?

The land of the Mỹ Sơn valley is clearly marked with designated walking trails to make it easier to tour Mỹ Sơn alone. However, a good tour guide or a tour of the on-site museum can have a significant impact on your experience at Mỹ Sơn. The museum is expert in helping visitors identify and understand the temples' rich Hindu symbolism and mythology, and a tour guide may able to alert you to hidden obstructions or variations in the land you are travelling on, as they have likely used the same route before.

Mỹ Sơn's preserved beauty and rich history will likely be a source of intrigue for decades to come. Be sure to consider and book your transportation ahead of time, sample some local Vietnamese cuisine when there, and confirm adequate accommodations nearby when it's ultimately time to return home. As a site for culture and wonder for over ten centuries, Mỹ Sơn has stood the test of time against natural and manmade elements to tell the story of a Vietnam that existed long ago.

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Distance to Hoi An: 23 miles, or about one hour away  
Distance to Da Nang: 38 miles, or about one and a half hours away  
Distance to Go Noi: 20 miles, or about one hour away

## References:

<https://vietnamvisa.govt.vn/brochures/>

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