

Visiting the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long: All you need to know

*The **Imperial Citadel of Thang Long** stands as a testament to Vietnam's rich history, having served as the political center for over 13 centuries. Located in the heart of Hanoi, this UNESCO World Heritage Site offers visitors a unique journey through time, showcasing the nation's cultural and historical evolution.*

1. An overview of Imperial Citadel of Thang Long

1.1. Where is the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long?

The Imperial Citadel of Thang Long is centrally located in Hanoi, Vietnam, at 19C, Hoang Dieu Street, Ba Dinh District. This location places it near other famous landmarks such as Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, One Pillar Pagoda, and the Vietnam Military History Museum, making it an essential stop for those exploring Hanoi's historical sites.

Visiting Information

- **Imperial Citadel of Thang Long Opening Hours:** Daily from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM
- **Imperial Citadel of Thang Long Entrance Fee:**
 - Adults: **100,000 VND (USD 4)** per person, applied for both locals and foreigners
 - Students (with valid ID), elders and the disabled: 50% discount - **50,000 VND (USD 2)** per person.
 - Children under 16 and under 1.3m: **Free of charge**
- **How to Get There:** The site is easily accessible via motorbike, taxi, bus, or on foot if staying nearby.
- **Google Maps:** [Here](#)



The Imperial Citadel of Thang Long covers a large area in the heart of Hanoi (Sources: Internet)

<https://dynamic-media-cdn.tripadvisor.com/media/photo-o/18/c5/b7/6b/the-front-of-doan-mon.jpg?w=1200&h=-1&s=1>

1.2. The long-standing history of Imperial Citadel of Thang Long

Established in 1010 by Emperor Ly Thai To, the Imperial Citadel was built upon the foundations of a former Chinese fortress dating back to the 7th century. Recognizing the strategic and geomantic significance of the location, Emperor Ly Thai To moved the capital from Hoa Lu to this site, naming it Thăng Long, symbolizing a "Rising Dragon". Over the centuries, the citadel underwent numerous expansions and renovations under various dynasties, each contributing to its grandeur and complexity.



Thang Long Imperial Citadel was built in 1010 under the Ly dynasty (Sources: Internet)
<https://disanviet.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/nguon-goc-lich-su-cua-hoang-thanh-thang-long-3.jpg>

For nearly 1,300 years, the Thang Long Imperial Citadel served as the political and cultural heart of Vietnam. It was the residence of emperors, the center of governance, and a site of crucial military strategies. During the French colonial period, the citadel's structures suffered damage and demolition, yet its significance never faded. Today, it remains a symbol of Vietnam's resilience and rich past.

The citadel's archaeological site is among the most significant discoveries in Vietnamese history. Excavations have unearthed foundations of palaces, ancient roads, ceramics, pottery, and royal relics spanning over a thousand years. These findings provide insight into the evolution of Vietnamese architecture, urban planning, and daily life.



The historical significance of Thang Long Imperial Citadel is crucial in Vietnamese and Hanoi history (Sources: Internet)

https://thanhvien.mediacdn.vn/Uploaded/minhnguyet/2022_09_09/hoang-thanh-thang-long-2634.jpg

Beyond its historical and archaeological importance, the Citadel of Thang Long is a cultural treasure. The site is home to annual festivals, traditional ceremonies, and educational programs that celebrate Vietnam's imperial heritage. It serves as a bridge connecting modern visitors to the rich traditions and legends of the past.

2. The highlights of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long

2.1. The Main Gate (Doan Mon)

The Doan Mon is the southern entrance to the imperial palace and one of the best-preserved structures in the complex. This grand gate, constructed from layered stone and brick, served as the principal entryway for the emperor and high-ranking officials. It features five arched entrances, with the central passage reserved exclusively for the monarch.



Doan Mon is one of the main entrances to the Forbidden City (Sources: Internet)

<https://hoangthanhthanglong.vn/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2013/08/doanmon1.jpg>

The upper level contains a watchtower, historically used to monitor access to the royal grounds. The intricate carvings and detailed inscriptions reflect the fusion of Vietnamese and Chinese architectural influences, making this a fascinating gateway into the citadel's past.

2.2. Northern Gate (Cua Bac)

The Cua Bac (Northern Gate) is a historic structure that still bears battle scars from the French invasion in the 19th century. This massive brick and stone gate once served as a critical defensive structure, protecting the citadel from northern invasions. Visitors can still see cannonball marks on its walls, testifying to its resilience.



*The North Gate is the only remaining gate of Hanoi, located on Phan Dinh Phung Street
(Sources: Internet)*

https://statics.vinpearl.com/cua-bac-thumb_1674835720.jpg

Today, it stands as a proud monument to Hanoi's spirit of resistance. Inside, a small museum displays artifacts and historical documents, offering deeper insights into the battles fought here. Climbing to the top of the gate rewards visitors with a breathtaking view of the citadel and its surrounding areas.

2.3. Hanoi Flag Tower

One of Hanoi's most recognizable landmarks, the Hanoi Flag Tower, was constructed in 1812 during the Nguyễn dynasty as a military watchtower. Standing at 33.4 meters high, it comprises three tiers, each progressively smaller, leading up to the octagonal tower where the Vietnamese flag is proudly displayed.

The tower was one of the few structures in Hanoi to survive French colonial destruction, making it a rare and significant relic. Inside, visitors can explore the spiral staircase leading to observation windows that once served as lookout points. The tower is particularly mesmerizing at night, when it is illuminated, creating a majestic sight against the city skyline.



Hanoi Flag Tower still stands proud after 200 years (Sources: Internet)

<https://vcdn1-english.vnecdn.net/2019/02/22/2-7158-1550806021.jpg?w=680&h=0&q=100&dpr=2&fit=crop&s=pHal6CnW8TAxMudCjbplrg>

2.4. Kinh Thien Palace

The Kinh Thien Palace was the political and spiritual heart of the Imperial Citadel, where emperors held court, conducted ceremonies, and managed state affairs. Though the original structure was largely destroyed during the colonial period, the remaining stone foundation and staircase provide a glimpse into its former grandeur. The large dragon-carved steps, adorned with intricate motifs, reflect the royal symbolism and craftsmanship of the Le dynasty.



Kinh Thien Palace is a central monument in the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long (Sources: Internet)

https://statics.vinpearl.com/Kinh-Thien-Palace_1723738516.jpg

The site is considered sacred, and historians believe the palace once housed the imperial throne. Today, it remains a focal point for research and cultural events, offering visitors a sense of the lost magnificence of Vietnam's imperial past.

2.5. Lady Pavilion (Hau Lau)

The Hau Lau, also called the "Princess' Palace," is believed to have housed female members of the royal family. This elegant building showcases classical Vietnamese architecture and exudes a serene atmosphere, making it a peaceful spot to reflect on the lives of past royalty.



*Hau Lau was the whereabouts for living and daily activities of the queen and the princess
(Sources: Internet)*

https://vietnamtour.in/wp-content/uploads/VNIN_Hau-Lau-min.jpg

2.6. D67 Revolutionary House

During the Vietnam War, the D67 House served as the headquarters for the Central Military Commission and General Staff of the Vietnam People's Army. This secretive underground bunker played a crucial role in planning key military campaigns, including the Tet Offensive of 1968.



Inside the D67 Revolutionary House (Sources: Internet)

<https://vnn-imgs-f.vgcloud.vn/2021/04/05/16/house-d67-where-history-is-told-2.jpg?width=0&s=8LLpg2mAIU1Z825wpKcDFw>

The well-preserved rooms inside showcase wartime maps, communication devices, and personal belongings of military leaders, giving visitors a rare glimpse into Vietnam's wartime command structure. The house also features a reinforced concrete ceiling and soundproof walls designed to withstand bombings, highlighting the intense war-era security measures.

2.7. Archaeological sites

The archaeological sites within the Thang Long Citadel complex are among the most fascinating areas to explore. Excavations have uncovered the remnants of ancient royal palaces, roads, and wells, some dating back to the 7th century. Visitors can view ceramic tiles, bronze coins, dragon-shaped roof decorations, and even remains of the grand halls where emperors once held court.



The archaeological sites in the Thang Long Imperial Citadel are the treasures for many history enthusiasts (Sources: Internet)

<https://vietnam.travel/sites/default/files/inline-images/Thang%20Long%20citadel%20archaeological%20site.jpg>

The most striking finds include the large stone foundations of Kinh Thien Palace and intricately carved terracotta phoenixes, showcasing the artistic and architectural sophistication of past dynasties. History enthusiasts and archaeology lovers will find these sites an unmissable part of their visit.

3. 3 ways to get to The Imperial Citadel of Thang Long

Visiting the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long is easy and convenient, with multiple transportation options available to suit different budgets and preferences. Whether you're traveling by taxi, motorbike, or public transport, here's everything you need to know to reach this historic landmark effortlessly:

- **By Taxi:** A quick and hassle-free way to reach the citadel, costing approximately 50,000 - 100,000 VND (USD 2 - USD 4) from the Old Quarter.
- **By Motorbike:** Renting a motorbike costs around 100,000 - 150,000 VND (USD 4 - USD 6) per day. Parking is available near the citadel.
- **By Public Bus:** An affordable option with a ticket price of 7,000 VND (USD 0.3) per

ride. Recommended bus routes: Bus No 22, 16, 32, 09, 34 – Drop off at Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum and walk to the citadel.

4. Special tours you must try in The Imperial Citadel of Thang Long

4.1. The Imperial Citadel of Thang Long night tour

For a truly mesmerizing experience, consider the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long Night Tour. Under the soft glow of lanterns, the ancient structures take on a mystical appearance, offering a different perspective from daytime visits. Guided by historians and archaeologists, you'll learn about the citadel's fascinating past, with a focus on royal ceremonies, court life, and spiritual traditions.



*The Imperial Citadel of Thang Long by night appears to be mystical and magnificent
(Sources: Internet)*

https://image.vietnam.travel/sites/default/files/2022-11/shutterstock_749781001_0.jpg?v=1741756844

One of the highlights of the night tour is the water puppet show, a traditional Vietnamese art form that has been performed for centuries. The performances depict legendary tales and folklore, providing a deeper cultural connection to Vietnam's history. Visitors can also witness

ceremonial drum performances and light displays that add a touch of magic to the ancient ruins.

4.2. The Imperial Citadel of Thang Long Tour for foreign visitors

For international travelers, the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long Tour for Foreign Visitors offers a more immersive and personalized experience. English-speaking guides provide detailed insights into the significance of each site, connecting the history of the citadel to broader regional and global contexts.



*The Tour for Foreign Visitors includes visit to notable destinations around the Citadel
(Sources: Internet)*

<https://www.agoda.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Thang-Long-Hanoi.jpg%20>

This tour often includes a visit to the underground D67 House and Bunker, which played a critical role during the Vietnam War. Here, visitors can see wartime maps, communication equipment, and the command room where crucial military decisions were made. The tour also incorporates stops at key archaeological excavation sites, offering an up-close look at the artifacts and foundations of ancient palaces.

5. Important notes when visiting The Imperial Citadel of Thang Long

1. Best time to visit

The ideal time to visit the Thang Long Imperial Citadel is during the spring (March - April) and autumn (September - November) when the weather is pleasant and cool. Summers can be hot and humid, while winter months are mild but may experience occasional drizzle.

2. Dress code

As the Imperial Citadel is a historic and cultural site, visitors are encouraged to wear modest and respectful attire. Avoid shorts, sleeveless tops, and overly casual clothing. Comfortable walking shoes are recommended as the site covers a large area with uneven terrain.

3. Parking & accessibility

Parking is available near the entrance, with designated spots for motorbikes and cars. For visitors with mobility challenges, wheelchairs are available upon request, though some areas may have limited accessibility due to historical structures.

4. Photography & filming

Visitors are welcome to take photographs, but the use of tripods and drones requires special permission. Certain areas, especially inside historical buildings, may have restrictions on flash photography to preserve artifacts.

5. Visitor etiquette

To ensure a respectful and enjoyable experience, please adhere to the following guidelines:

- **Do not climb on ancient structures** or touch delicate carvings.
- **Keep noise levels low**, especially in sacred areas.
- **Dispose of trash properly** to help preserve the site's cleanliness and integrity.
- **Follow instructions from guides and security personnel** to ensure safety and proper conduct.

With these tips in mind, your visit to the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long will be both enriching and enjoyable. Whether you're delving into its thousand-year history, marveling at its

architectural wonders, or joining a special tour, this UNESCO-listed site promises a memorable journey through Vietnam's imperial heritage.

For a seamless and comfortable journey to Hanoi, fly with Vietnam Airlines - Vietnam's leading carrier offering 4-star world-class services and convenient flight options. Book your ticket today and start your adventure to discover the beauty of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long and beyond!