



## Trains Running Through Vietnam

Vietnam's trains can be broadly divided into two types, long-distance trains and urban-suburban transit. For long-distance travel, the main line is the **North-South Railway, known as the “Reunification Railway”**. Additionally, there are several other single-track, non-electrified lines. A **high-speed railway connecting the North and South** is currently planned, making it one of the most highly anticipated projects.

As for urban railway, Hanoi currently operates **Metro Line 3** and **Metro Line 2A**, while Ho Chi Minh City has been put on **Metro Line 1**. The goal is to connect urban centers with their suburbs. In the long term, Hanoi plans 13 lines and Ho Chi Minh City 11 lines, either under construction or in the planning stage. Both the high-speed railway and urban rail projects are major undertakings, involving not only domestic companies, such as the Vin Group and the Vietnamese government, but also international partners from countries including Japan and France.



Reunification Railway  
※photo by JSI



Hanoi Metro Line 2A  
※Photo by JSI



Ho Chi Minh Metro Line 1  
※photo by JSI

## The 1,726 km Railway Connecting North and South

One of the most important means of long-distance travel in Vietnam, the **“Reunification Railway”**. Running 1,726 km from Hanoi to Saigon, this north-south railway can truly be called one of Vietnam's national symbols. The train runs at a leisurely pace of about 50 km/h, taking nearly 29 hours to travel between the two cities.

The history of the railway dates back to 1881, during the French colonial era, when Vietnam's first railway business was established. The North-South line was completed in 1936. During the Vietnam War, the northern and southern sections were operated by separate companies. However, after national reunification in 1975, the line came under the management of the state-owned **Vietnam Railway Corporation** and has since been affectionately known as the **“Reunification Railway” (Đường sắt Thống Nhất)**.



Trains in Vietnam often pass extremely close to residential houses, and Hanoi's **Train Street** has become a well-known tourist destination for this distinctive feature. ※photo by JSI

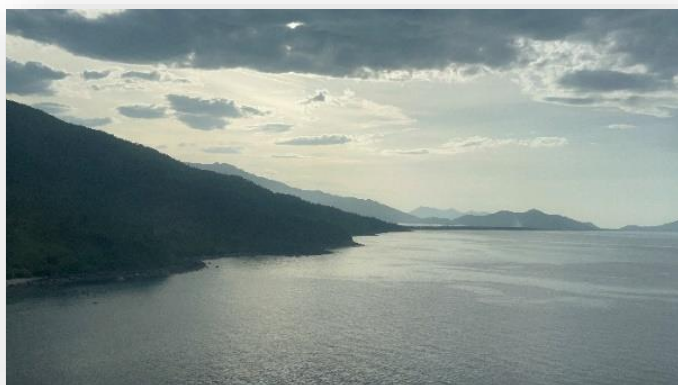


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Today, Vietnam Railways operates 15 railway lines with a total length of 3,143 km across 34 provinces and cities. The corporation is structured around 40 subsidiaries and affiliated companies. In 2025, the company announced that its revenue for fiscal year 2024 reached VND 9 trillion (USD 341 million), marking a record high and an 11% increase year-on-year. However, despite this achievement, the budget in public funds allocated to the railway sector remains limited, resulting in delays in capital investment and infrastructure upgrades. To address issues such as long travel times and aging railway facilities, the government has proposed the “**North–South High-Speed Railway**” project, which will be mentioned later.



**The Heritage Train**, which operates twice daily from Hue to Da Nang in central Vietnam, makes a 10-minute stop at Lang Co Station, where passengers can enjoy taking photos with the train.. ※photo by JSI

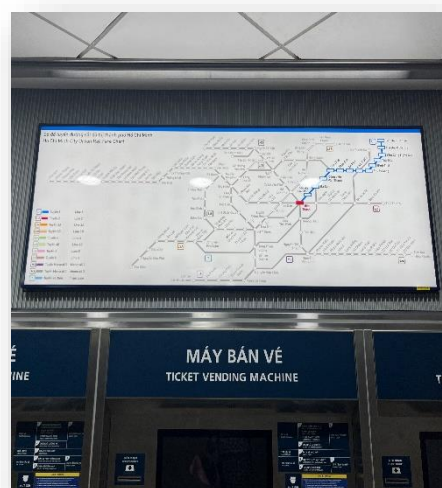


The scenic view of Lang Co Bay from the train window (between Hue and Da Nang). In 2025, the North–South Railway was ranked No.1 on *Lonely Planet*’s list of “**Top 24 Most Incredible Train Journeys in the World.**” ※photo by JSI



## Electric Trains of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City

Urban railways first opened in Hanoi in 2021 and in Ho Chi Minh City in 2024. Although trams had served as a means of public transportation in both cities since the early 1900s, they were discontinued in the 1980s due to aging infrastructure and the rapid rise of motorbikes and cars driven by fast economic growth. However, as the number of vehicles increased, the cities faced serious traffic congestion and air pollution. To address these issues, plans for an urban railway connecting the cities with their suburbs were formulated in 2003.



The Ho Chi Minh City Metro route map shows that several more lines are planned to open in the future, with only Line 1, which has already been completed, highlighted in color. ※Photo by JSI





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Currently, Hanoi Metro operates two lines. **Line 2A**, supported by China and inaugurated in 2021, runs from Cat Linh Station, near the city's main hub, to Yen Nghia Station, 13.1 km to the south, with 12 stations in total. **Line 3**, partially opened in 2024 with support from France, connects Cau Giay Station, about 4 km west of the central place, to Nhon Station further west, covering 8 stations. The remaining section is under construction and scheduled to be completed by 2027.

Both punctuality and customer satisfaction remained at a high level of over 99%. The majority of revenue comes from interest income on loans and deposits, and the company is operating profitably. In the first half of 2025, financial income increased threefold year-on-year to VND 10 billion (USD 378,000), and as of June 30, 2025, the company's deposit balance reached VND 1.2 trillion (USD 45 million).

In Ho Chi Minh City, only **Line 1**, built with Japanese assistance, began operations in 2024. The line connects Ben Thanh Station in the city center with Suoi Tien Bus Terminal Station in the northeast, spanning 19.8 km with a total of 14 stations. It is the first line in Vietnam to run underground. It shows a different form of development from the Hanoi Metro, such as the installation of cashless ticket machines that also accept credit cards. In Ho Chi Minh City, a total of 11 lines, including monorails and trams, are planned. However, the only one currently under construction is **Line 2**, which is scheduled to open in 2030.

Regarding metro construction, repeated delays in both construction and trial operations have occurred. In addition, corruption cases related to ODA and accidents at construction sites have also been reported. Nevertheless, Hanoi aims for the full completion of all lines by 2050, while Ho Chi Minh City is targeting the completion of seven lines by 2035.

With the opening of metro lines, significant improvements are expected in reducing economic losses caused by traffic congestion and air pollution. According to the Center for Rural and Urban Transport, Vietnam suffers an estimated annual economic loss of USD 1.2 billion due to traffic congestion.

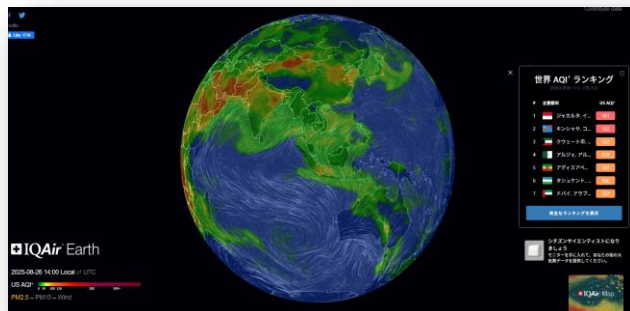
Regarding air pollution, the Vietnamese government is particularly focused on Hanoi, where it plans to ban the use of gasoline motorbikes starting in July 2026 to address exhaust gas issues. On February 13, 2025, Swiss company **IQAir**, which develops air pollution index applications, announced that Hanoi's average city-wide **AQI (Air Quality Index)** was the highest in the world. According to a WHO survey, Vietnam suffers an **economic loss of USD 13 billion** due to air pollution, with about **70,000 annual deaths** related to respiratory diseases. Alongside environmental issues, the development of metro systems is expected to attract even more attention in the future.



Hanoi at 7 a.m. in October 2024, shrouded in smog. ※photo by JSI



The heavy traffic jam happens every day. ※photo by JSI



Global air pollution levels can be checked through the IQAir app or its official website. **The Air Quality Index (AQI)** is measured on a six-tier scale: 0–50: Good, 51–100: Moderate, 101–150: Unhealthy for sensitive groups, 151–200: Unhealthy, 201–300: Very unhealthy, 301–500: Hazardous. On February 13, 2025, Hanoi’s average AQI was 234 (Very Unhealthy). ※ *IQAir official website*

## The 1,541 km North–South High-Speed Railway Project

The “**North–South High-Speed Railway**” project has been attracting attention as a new means of long-distance travel. As mentioned earlier, it currently takes 29 hours to travel between Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City on the existing Reunification Railway. With the completion of this project, the travel time will be drastically reduced to just 5 hours, greatly improving convenience. The high-speed rail plan has existed since 2007 and was repeatedly discussed. Between 2011 and 2014, JICA provided support for the development of a business plan, but the project was suspended due to cost issues. It was restarted in 2016 when Former Deputy Prime Minister **Trịnh Đình Dũng** instructed the Ministry of Transport to revise the plan. At that time, JICA again assisted in preparing the proposal to be submitted to the National Assembly. In 2024, Japan became deeply involved in the project by responding to requests for ODA in construction and technical fields. The plan is estimated to cost USD 6.7 billion. Other countries, including South Korea, France, and several European partners, are also expected to participate.

The current plan makes full use of a public–private partnership model. Leading the project is Vietnam’s major conglomerate, **Vingroup (VIC)**, which in 2025 established a subsidiary, **Vin speed High-Speed Rail Investment and Development**, to oversee the construction of the North–South high-speed railway. Construction is scheduled to begin at the end of 2026, with operations expected to start by 2035.

Vietnam’s automobile manufacturer **Thaco (Truong Hai Group)** is also expected to invest across the entire railway line. In addition, **Hoa Phat Group (HPG)**, the country’s largest steelmaker, will serve as a steel supplier, while construction firms such as **Deo Ca Group JSC (HHV)** and **Fecon JSC (FCN)** are also set to join the project. This initiative is poised to transform Vietnam’s infrastructure landscape.

Vietnam is currently accelerating the development of infrastructure such as roads, airports, and railways. Further expansion is expected to enhance the convenience of daily life, stimulate the flow of people and goods, and improve connectivity. Moreover, improved access is likely to attract more foreign tourists.

Vietnam’s foreign arrivals have been on a steady upward trend, with 10.66 million visitors in the first half of 2025 (YoY +20.7%). The launch of the high-speed railway is anticipated to further boost this growth. However, with regard to the North–South high-speed railway, challenges remain. Since this is an international project involving ODA, Vietnam’s handling of procedures could significantly affect future cooperation. Personally, I hope the nostalgic **Reunification Railway** will continue to operate, but once high-speed rail becomes widespread, the number of traditional train services may gradually decline.



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An AI-generated image of the railway was released by VinSpeed. The rail adopts the standard gauge (1,435 mm), the same as the Shinkansen. The project envisions 23 stations, with trains operating at a maximum speed of 350 km/h. ※ *Vin Group official website*



The stations of the Ho Chi Minh City Metro have an atmosphere similar to Japanese subway stations, likely due to Japan's support in the project. ※photo by JSI



Cashless ticket vending machines at the Ho Chi Minh Metro. ※photo by JSI

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