



## Geographical, Historical, and Cultural Features of Ho Chi Minh City

Ho Chi Minh City is 1,730 km by road south of Ha Noi, contiguous to Binh Duong Province in the north; Tay Ninh Province in the northwest; Dong Nai Province in the east and northeast, Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province in the southeast, Long An and Tien Giang Provinces in the west and southwest; the Eastern Sea in the south with a 15 km long coastline. Stretching from northwest to southeast, Ho Chi Minh City has a total area of 2,093.7 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 5.45 million (in which urban residents make up 83.3%). The city has 17 urban and 5 rural districts comprising 303 sub-district units. The city has moderate climate, rich in sunshine and is less affected by storms and floods. Average temperature is 27°C, with monthly variation less than 5°C.

Ho Chi Minh City takes a special position in the regional and national development strategy. Taking an outward look, Ho Chi Minh City is in the heart of the world's economically fastest-growing region - Asia-Pacific. Taking an inward look, Ho Chi Minh City is located in the middle of an area abundant in natural resources such as agricultural products, industrial crops, for-

ests, minerals, aqua products, and oil products. Ho Chi Minh City is the intersection between the Mekong Delta, the eastern area of Southern Vietnam, the lower part of the Central Vietnam, and the southern area of the Central Highlands. This favorable geographical position, with a fairly developed infrastructure for land, water, and air transportation, and a population rich in dynamism, experience and expertise, has enabled Ho Chi Minh City to become a center of industry, commerce, finance, service, tourism, science, technology, etc. Ho Chi Minh City is indeed a hub for both domestic and international transportation as stated in the Politburo Resolution 01-BCT.

The original strip of land that allows Ho Chi Minh City to acquire its present-day advantageous position is the area of Ben Nghe - Sai Gon, formerly a bushy and swampy area with vast melaleuca forests and water palm bushes. But the soil here was found to be fertile and the rivers and arroyos were quite favorable for transport purposes.

In 1698, Lord Nguyen sent Commander Nguyen Huu Canh on an official mission to the southern frontier zone to set up Gia Dinh Prefecture. This point was recorded in history as the milestone heralding the birth of the city.

In 1856, "Gia Dinh Prefecture" was renamed "Sai Gon." Ever since, the city has become better known in the international arena. It had been described "a bustling trade center with commercial ports favorable for foreign economic exchange." It had been called "Sai Gon - a pearl of the Far East." It was here in the city of Saigon at the Nha Rong Wharf that Uncle Ho had left Vietnam in search of national salvation. Sai Gon was the place where the anti-French resistance began by the heroic struggle on "the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September that Autumn." In the anti-US Resistance War, Sai Gon was taking the lead on every front. The history of Sai Gon was closely associated with the heroic history of the struggles of its workers, laborers, intellectuals, and students which culminated in the great Ho Chi Minh Cam-