

Dien Bien

Điện Biên Province · Vietnam

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Điện Biên Phủ is a town in a wide mountain valley in north-western Vietnam, near the border with Laos. It is the site of the 1954 battle in which Vietnamese forces defeated the French army, ending French rule in Indochina. The battlefield hills, bunkers and a museum are the main reason to visit.

Most visitors spend one or two nights. The town is also a stop on the way between Hanoi, Sơn La and Lai Châu, or on the way to Laos.

When to visit

October to April is the best time, with dry, clear days. Rice fields in the valley are golden in September and October. March and April bring the white blossom of the ban flower. Summer from May to September is hot and wet, with heavy rain and landslides. The anniversary of the victory on 7 May brings events and crowds.

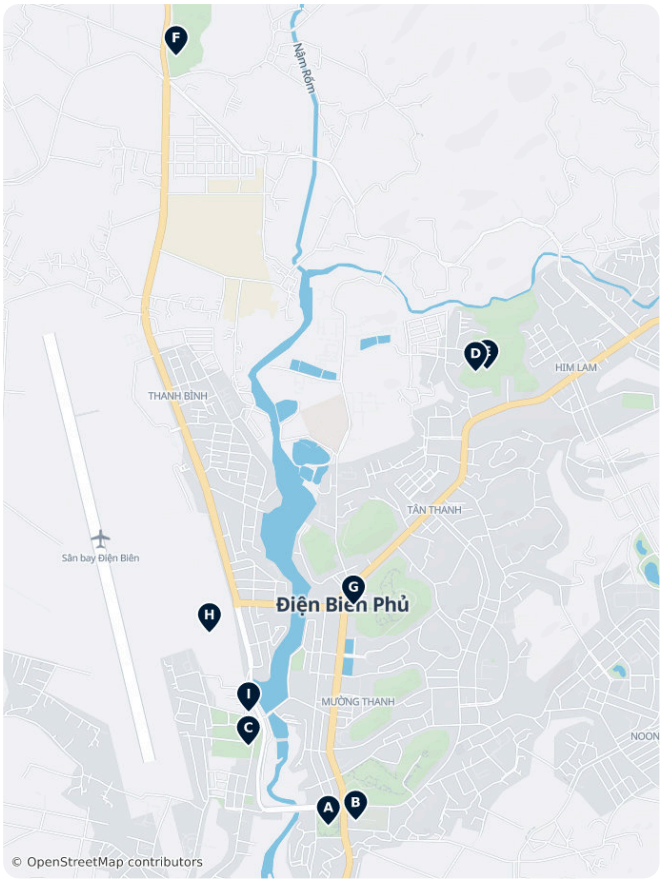
MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Great Great for sightseeing	24° / 29°	12° / 6°	Dry air · Calm winds
February	Great Great for sightseeing	27° / 33°	14° / 8°	Calm winds
March	Fair Fair for sightseeing	31° / 36°	17° / 12°	Humid air · Calm winds
April	Poor Poor for sightseeing	33° / 38°	20° / 16°	16 rainy days · Muggy, humid air · Calm winds · UV 8 (Very high) · Up to 9 days above 35°
May	Poor Poor for sightseeing	33° / 38° Feels like 37°	23° / 19°	21 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · Calm winds · UV 9 (Very high) · Up to 9 days above 35°
June	Poor Poor for sightseeing	32° / 36° Feels like 37°	24° / 22°	25 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · Calm winds
July	Poor Poor for sightseeing	31° / 35° Feels like 36°	24° / 22°	28 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · Calm winds · UV 8 (Very high)
August	Poor Poor for sightseeing	31° / 33° Feels like 36°	23° / 22°	27 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · Calm winds · UV 8 (Very high)
September	Poor Poor for sightseeing	30° / 33° Feels like 35°	22° / 19°	20 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · Calm winds
October	Fair Fair for sightseeing	29° / 32° Feels like 32°	19° / 16°	13 rainy days · Muggy, humid air · Calm winds
November	Great Great for sightseeing	26° / 31°	16° / 11°	Humid air · Calm winds
December	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 29°	12° / 6°	Calm winds

Best months: January, February, November, December

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights

- A Dien Bien Phu Museum holds weapons, maps and photographs from the battle, next to the war memorial.
- B A1 Hill is the hill where the fiercest fighting took place, with a monument, tank and trenches.
- C Commando Bunker is the bunker of the French commander, General de Castries, with a replica of the command room.
- D Him Lam (Beatrice) Hill is a French strongpoint on the north side of the valley, with remains of trenches.
- E Fortress I is a fortification close to Him Lam.
- F Gabrielle Hill is a hill to the north, a strongpoint of the French.
- G D1 Hill is a hill on the east of the valley.
- H French Tank and I French Tank and Aircraft Propellers are French tanks left on the battlefield.



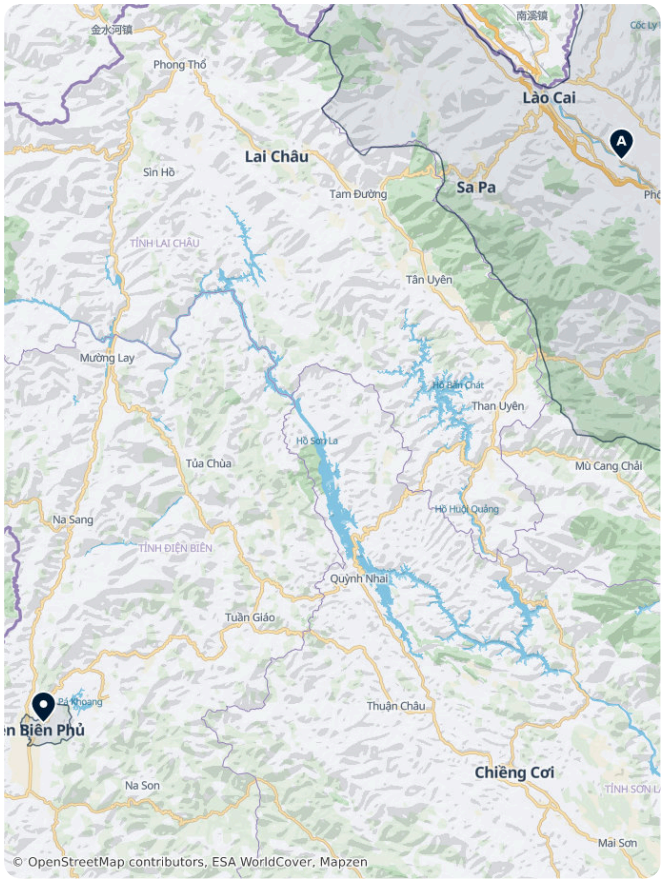
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What to experience

- **Walk the A1 Hill trenches**: The site includes a monument, a tank and a crater from the mine.
- **Enter De Castries' bunker**: A small site beside the Nậm Rốm River.
- **Visit the museum**: Allow about 1 to 2 hours.
- **Cycle through the valley**: Rice fields run along the river.
- **Eat local food**: Grilled meats, river fish and sticky rice are common.

Day trips

- **Pá Khoang Lake**: a large lake north of the town, with islands and homestays.
- **Mường Phăng**: a valley with the Vietnamese command post in the forest.
- **Laos border**: The Tay Trang border crossing is about 30 km away, for travel on to Laos.
- Ⓐ Lao Cai: a long trip east for Sa Pa and Lào Cai.



Where to explore

- **East**: Lao Cai has Sa Pa and Fansipan.
- **South-east**: Hoa Binh lies on the road to Hanoi.
- **Capital**: Hanoi is the main gateway.

Getting there

- **By air**: Điện Biên Phủ Airport (DIN) is about 2 km from the town. Flights run from Hanoi in about 1 hour.
- **By bus**: Buses run from Hanoi in 10 to 12 hours, and from Sơn La in about 4 hours.
- **By road**: Mountain roads from Hanoi pass through Hòa Bình and Mộc Châu.
- **By train**: There is no railway. Vietnam Railways

Getting around

- **Taxi**: A few taxis serve the town and the main sights.
- **Motorbike hire**: Easy to rent, and the best way to reach the hills.
- **Bicycle**: The valley is flat. Cycling is easy between the museum and the hills.
- **Walking**: The museum and A1 Hill are close. Other hills are further.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

The museum and A1 Hill are close, but the other hills are spread over the valley.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

High

The valley floor is flat, so cycling between the sights is easy.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?** For the battlefield and the lake, a car, motorbike or bicycle helps. The sights are spread over the valley.
- **Roads**: Mountain roads are narrow and winding. Landslides are possible in summer.
- **Fuel**: Fill up in town before long drives.

Food & drink

Điện Biên food is from the Thai and Hmong peoples. Try xôi nếp nương, sticky rice, pa pỉnh tộp, grilled flat fish, and grilled meats. Wild vegetables, bamboo shoots and rice wine are common. Eat at small restaurants in the town and near the lake.

What to eat & drink

BREAKFAST

Pho · Phở
Beef or chicken noodle soup with a fragrant broth, fresh herbs, and rice noodles; commonly eaten for breakfast.

LUNCH

Bun Cha · Bún chả
Grilled pork patties and slices served with rice vermicelli, herbs, and a sweet-sour dipping sauce; a Hanoi specialty.

Bun Bo Hue · Bún bò Huế
A spicy, lemongrass-scented beef noodle soup from the city of Hue.

Cao Lau · Cao lầu
A noodle dish unique to Hoi An, with thick chewy noodles, pork, and greens, traditionally made with local well water.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Banh Mi · Bánh mì
A French-influenced baguette sandwich filled with pork, pate, pickled vegetables, and herbs.

Banh Xeo · Bánh xèo
A crispy turmeric rice-flour crepe filled with pork, shrimp, and bean sprouts, wrapped in lettuce and herbs.

Goi Cuon · Gỏi cuốn
Fresh (uncooked) spring rolls filled with shrimp, pork, herbs, and vermicelli, wrapped in rice paper.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Che · Chè
A category of sweet dessert soups or puddings made with beans, fruit, jelly, and coconut milk, served hot or over ice.

DRINKS

Ca Phe Sua Da · Cà phê sữa đá
Strong drip coffee served over ice with sweetened condensed milk; Vietnam's signature drink.

Bia Hoi · Bia hơi
Cheap, light draft beer brewed fresh daily and sold at street-side stalls, especially in Hanoi.

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Safety & health

Điện Biên Phủ is a safe town.

- Stay on marked paths at the battlefield sites.
- Mountain roads are steep and can be slippery in the rainy season.
- Nights are cool in winter. Bring warm clothes.
- Medical care is basic outside the provincial hospital.
- Respect the memorials at the battlefield sites.

History

In 1953 the French army built a fortified base in the Điện Biên Phủ valley to cut Viet Minh supply lines to Laos. Its strongpoints were named with women's names such as Beatrice, Gabrielle and Isabelle.

Viet Minh forces dragged heavy guns onto the surrounding hills and attacked from March 1954. The French surrendered on 7 May 1954. The defeat led to the Geneva Conference and the end of French rule in Indochina. Many of the battlefield sites have been preserved.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Vietnam at a glance:

CURRENCY

VND ₫

ELECTRICITY



Type A / Type C / Type F
220 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES

Vietnamese

TAP WATER

Not safe to drink

Top sights



A Dien Bien Phu Museum

(21.38074, 103.01519)

B A1 Hill

(21.38102, 103.01673)

C Commando Bunker

Nguyễn Hữu Thọ (21.38494, 103.01068)

D Him Lam (Beatrice) Hill

(21.40465, 103.02351)

E Fortress I

(21.40477, 103.02415)

F Gabrielle Hill

(21.42129, 103.00659)

G D1 Hill

(21.39236, 103.01661)

H French Tank

(21.39089, 103.00847)

DATA SOURCES

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