

# Foreword from the British Ambassador to Vietnam, Giles Lever



British Embassy  
Hanoi



Vietnam is a country on the rise. 90 million people, half of them under the age of 30. GDP per capita growth of 350% between 1991-2010 – the second highest rate in the world during that period. The fastest growing middle class in South East Asia, and a strategic commitment to greater integration in the global economy and to free trade: Vietnam has already been hugely successful in attracting foreign investment, and this year, reached agreement in principle on an ambitious and comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the EU, only the second country in South East Asia after Singapore to do so. It is emerging economies like Vietnam which are causing the global centre of economic gravity to shift southwards and eastwards every year.

The UK's relationship with Vietnam is developing rapidly too, on the basis of the Strategic Partnership which the two governments agreed in 2010. Last year, David Cameron became the first ever British Prime Minister to visit. The fact that South East Asia was his first overseas destination outside of Europe after the General Election in May, shows the priority which the British Government attaches to strengthening our ties with this dynamic region.

British companies have achieved some significant commercial successes in Vietnam, but it is clear that there is much more UK plc can do to take advantage of the opportunities on offer. That is why I warmly welcome the Institute of Export's initiative in producing this Guide.

Vietnam is still a developing country, and doing business here is not always straightforward, but I and my team at the Embassy in Hanoi and our Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City, together with our partners in the British Business Group Vietnam, are absolutely committed to the central challenge of growing our trade and investment relationship with Vietnam: identifying strategic opportunities, working with our Vietnamese partners to support further improvements in the business environment, and above all, providing the best possible support and service to British firms coming into the market.

I look forward to seeing many more of you out here in future!

**Giles Lever British Ambassador to Vietnam**  
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