



## Vietnam, Now: A Reporter Returns

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## **Vietnam, Now: A Reporter Returns** David Lamb

When he left war-ravaged Vietnam some thirty years ago, journalist David Lamb averred "I didn't care if I ever saw the wretched country again." But in 1997, he found himself living in Hanoi, in charge of the *Los Angeles Times*'s first peacetime bureau and in the midst of a country on the move, as it progresses toward a free-market economy and divorces itself from the restrictive, isolationist policies established at the end of the war. This was a new country; in *Vietnam, Now*, David Lamb brings it--and us--forward from its dark, distant past.

From the myriad personalities entwined in the dark, distant history of the war to those focused toward the future, Lamb reveals a rich and culturally diverse people as they share their memories of the country's past, and their hopes for a peacetime future. A portrait of a beautiful country and a remarkable, determined people, *Vietnam, Now* is a personal journey that will change the way we think of Vietnam, and perhaps the war as well.

## **Vietnam, Now: A Reporter Returns Details**

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## **From Reader Review Vietnam, Now: A Reporter Returns for online ebook**

### **Erik O'Brien says**

A traveler I met on Koh Phi Phi gave me this book when he overheard me saying I was going to travel in Vietnam in the upcoming month. A traveler had also given him the book and asked that it be continually passed on. I leave for Vietnam tomorrow and all I can say is I am very happy I read this book.

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### **Judithproller says**

This is a very good book to read, especially if you are planning to travel to Vietnam. It is written by a reporter who was a journalist during the Vietnam War, who returned several years ago to live and document the changes since the War.

Since I don't like reading "dry" history, his style was great! He personalizes what happened then and now to the Vietnamese by providing personal stories of triumph and tragedy. In that regard, the reader gets the history with the personal stories contained within the history. It's an easy and informative read!

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### **Chris Witkowski says**

This is an exceptionally lucid, fascinating account of reporter David Lamb's experiences upon his return to Vietnam forty years after he covered the tragic, devastating "American" war. Lamb's accounts take place in 2002, shortly after the US lifted trade embargoes and reinstated relations with the country. What he found was a country excited about moving forward, a people who held no grudge against the US and overall a feeling of optimism and hope for their developing country.

I learned about this book from our tour guide, Hiep, on our recent trip to Vietnam. Hiep had accompanied Lamb on a National Geographic tour and had great respect for the man. Upon reading Lamb's book I felt as though I was hearing an echo and it finally came to me. I suspect that Hiep has used Lamb's book as sort of an outline for his own tour, including many of the same observations and similar phrasing. And why not? The story of Vietnam's struggles and successes is well known and Lamb's telling of it is particularly accessible. I highly recommend the book. And....I highly recommend a visit to this most amazing country.

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### **Helen Noble says**

I'm currently reading for a college history class. Between the inaccuracies, blatant plagiarism, and just out and out total bs I'm completely shocked that this book is mandatory reading for a college class not to mention that it has received good reviews. If I submitted a paper written similar to this book any college professor with a lick of sense would give me an F. Some of the country's historical background presented in the text is almost verbatim that was published in Bernard Fall's book 40 years ago. Correct me if I'm wrong, but if you do that and not cite a source isn't that plagiarism? I'm not even half way through the book and have found too many inaccuracies to list. If this book weren't required, I wouldn't be wasting my time.

## Cindy says

Fire in the Lake is the most informative book I've read about the arrogance and ignorance of the US gov't officials for the abject failure of American policy in Vietnam Nam. The most interesting part of David Lamb's book is his journey from callow young journalist reporting on the war, totally ignorant of the people and history of the country and seeing no necessity to learn about them whether friend or enemy, to his experience of Viet Nameese people as friendly, hospitable and forgiving. I get the sense that Mr. Lamb is not completely convinced that the Americans are forgiven; Vietnam Nam has a long history of occupation by conquering nations and has learned how to survive despite centuries of oppression. But he does find much to admire about the people, their culture and their ambition and is able to express that admiration in genuine fashion. Recommended for a first glimpse at an emerging Viet Nam.

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## Ciara says

This is a really interesting book, I would recommend it for anyone traveling to the area or just interested in the history of Vietnam/US relations. In fact, if you just want to take a break from fiction for a bit this is a great one. Lamb was a reporter during the Vietnam war; he revisits the country and contrasts the current day situation with that of the past. He does a lot of interesting interviews and supplies a lot of information that i was completely unaware of. he made me feel connected to a place and a time i have pretty much nothing to do with.

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## Jo says

My version of this book was published in 2002. The book details here on Goodreads say that it was first published in 1990, but seeing as the book covers the period of the author's stay in Vietnam from 1997-2001, this is clearly an error. Sorry, that is pedantic, but it feels like every decade counts in terms of the role and tone of writing about Vietnam.

I very much enjoyed this book. I first visited Vietnam - the south - in 2012, and I bought this book back then. Distracted as ever, I picked it up only last week, to read in preparation for a trip to Hanoi. It was well worth it. I particularly appreciated the way David Lamb grounded every chapter in interviews with local people, rooting the story of Vietnam's peacetime existence in the personal stories of real people, their words, their lives and losses, their hopes and disappointments, alongside his own. It was inspiring and so very human. It was very helpful having their voices in my mind as I interacted again with present voices over these last few days, and the ever evolving self understanding of this impressive nation.

My main criticism of the book echoes some of those voiced below. The author has a very American standpoint, and a very American political spin on some regional affairs - so his opinions about, say, the Vietnamese liberation of Cambodia from the terrors of Pol Pot, cannot, for me, be justified from a 2015 perspective.

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## Christopher says

This is a journalistic memoir and a personal perspective of Vietnam past and present, told by David Lamb, a reporter who previously covered the Vietnam war for *The Los Angeles Times*. The *Times* appointed Lamb to establish a new bureau in Hanoi in the mid 1990s. As the country slowly opened its doors to a new era, his was one of the first footholds by a major western newspaper in the country post-1975.

As a subscriber to the *Times*, I read many of Lamb's dispatches in the late 90s. I read this book during my second trip to Vietnam, in 2008, and enjoyed many of the insights from the author's experience.

Lamb discusses the many ways Vietnam was changing in the 1990s after the Clinton administration opened the doors to normalized relations with Vietnam. Many of those changes were grudging on the part of the Vietnamese communist government, but Lamb could tell the Vietnamese people were ready for change and enthusiastic about their prospects. That new political and social environment takes up much of the work here, and the contrast of past and present is fascinating. Although it is a work of and about its time, I would say that many of the observations remain valid today, more than twenty years after Vietnam began changing.

I'm a bit surprised by the negative reviews of the book. I think some of those reviewers were expecting the book to be what it really isn't: a work of history or a journalistic document. It is neither. It is observational, more like opening a time capsule, rather than a rigorous work of journalism. It is the work of a journalist revisiting the land of a past part of life, finding out what has changed in a very changed society. So I would suggest that the book be approached with the spirit its author intended it, rather than with preconceived expectations. There are valuable insights to be gained about this emerging Asian nation.

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## Verna Seal says

Being a Political Science buff, this book was well written and provided a good insight into a part of history that I thought I knew a lot about but apparently I didn't. It was slow in parts but the last few chapters were powerful. This has sparked a beautiful conversation with my assistant, Lien, who was born in Hanoi, was moved to Saigon before the rise of Ho Chi Minh and fled Vietnam in 1975 leaving all that she knew behind. Well worth the read.

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## Riley says

I enjoyed this book and its insights on Vietnam, but there are times when David Lamb seems too opinionated. For instance, Lamb several times knocks the Vietnam leadership for invading Cambodia in the late 1970s and embroiling the country in yet another war. The criticism is fine, but it leaves out that Vietnam was overthrowing the Pol Pot regime, which was probably one of the worst in history. I don't mean to be overcritical, however, and in general the book was good.

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## Rory says

Dry reportage, but an interesting approach that's seldom given play in other books about the Vietnam War and its long-reaching aftermath.

## Liam says

This book was surprisingly good- much better than I had anticipated, anyway. I had read Mr. Lamb's work before, specifically the book he wrote on Africa, and although I knew he had been in Viet Nam during the war I had not realised that he spent as much time covering the war as he apparently did. Unlike some of the books that have been written in a similar vein by other journalists, this book paints a significantly better balanced and more nuanced picture of Viet Nam many years after the war, which is most likely due to the fact that the author spent several years living in Hanoi and traveling extensively around the country during the late 1990s. I would personally have liked to have read more about his experience during the war as well, but I realise that the main purpose of this particular book was not to recall past history from decades ago. In addition, most of the books by other journalists which I mentioned above concentrate far too much on the war, and not enough on what has taken place in Viet Nam since then. 'Vietnam, Now: A Reporter Returns' is well-written and informative, and certainly worth reading.

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## Nina says

The premise of this book is: "Vietnam: not like you remember!" I suspect that at 31, I am not the target audience for this book, so an older American might get more value out of this.

If you are too young to remember the Vietnam War, this book is a good reminder that the Vietnam War is still (and will always be) the main lens through which older Americans view the country of Vietnam. It's an easy, mediocre read, but certainly not one of the greats of American Vietnam War literature.

TL;DR: Meh.

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## Sarah says

We had to read it in Vietnam class at Penn State. It was ok. My step father read it too and he really liked it.

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## Jim says

A decent account of economic and social recovery in Vietnam, and the opportunity for emotional closure for Vietnam vets by going back to the land they fought in. The book stridently asserts that the Vietnamese are nearly universally welcoming, but does point out some of the failures and societal troubles. I would love to visit. There were times I felt the reporting was repetitious, but overall I thought it was good.

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