

Hoa Lo Prison in Hanoi was constructed by French colonists in 1886 to keep Vietnamese prisoners, especially political prisoners fighting for the independence of Vietnam. It's one of the top 5 most gruesome destinations in Southeast Asia. A part of Vietnam war can be clearly seen through the display inside. Therefore, Hoa Lo Prison should be in the lists of things to do in Hanoi for international tourists with [Vietnam visa](#).

Hoa Lo prison in Hanoi was constructed by French colonists in 1886 on the land of Phu Khanh village in Tho Xuong District, Hanoi to keep Vietnamese prisoners, especially political prisoners fighting for the independence of Vietnam. Phu Khanh village was also known as Hoa Lo village, where produce earthen home appliances like kettles, teapots and portable stoves.

When French colonist came and occupied Hanoi, they move all villagers, old pagodas, and communal houses in Phu Khanh village to other places. French colonist then built a prison, a courthouse, and the headquarters for their secret police on the land area of Phu Khanh village, forming up a complete autocratic ruling system to aid their domination and oppression against the patriotic movements of Vietnam people. Conveying a total land area of 12,908sq.m, Hoa Lo Prison was one of the biggest and highest security prisons in Indochina at that time. Now, a part of Hoa Lo Prison is used as the historic monument, which show the bloody crime of French colonist in Vietnam.

The main gate of Hoa Lo Prison

The cramped and lack of air detention room, dark room, punishment and death cell. The French colonists attach special importance to choose the construction material. The jailers here were infamous for his cruelty. They were ready to repress and even kill the prisoners. Cruel persecution and hard life in the colonial prison killed thousands of Vietnamese patriots and revolutionaries. Only from 6/30/1920 to 6/30/1921, 87 Vietnamese prisoners died in Hoa Lo Prison.

All door bolt, Lock, door latch and door-hinge of Hoa Lo Prison were brought from France and controlled carefully before operations. "According to regulation, food for prisoners were alternated: a meal with pork meat for Sunday but it was old sow meat or stringy meat. Three meals with boiled old buffalo meat which was so tough, other meals were small chub with its gut which were boiled with soybean jam, mold dry fish, boiled soya curd. Vegetables vary on seasonal basis, which were too bad to eat. Common rice was crushed white rice from the South which were out of date, having parasites and being inspired. Many prisoners had heart oedema caused by eating that kind of rice for a long time. There was a time when up to 40 prisoners died a month..." – Quotation from the memoirs "Unforgettable time" written by female political prisoners in Hoa Lo Prison.

Cachot area used to confine prisoners who broke the regulations of the prison. Cachot in Hoa Lo was "hell of the hell" dungeon was dark and narrow. Prisoners were kept separately, put in stocks, had to eat and relieve themselves on the spot. All prisoners confined here were puffed with oedema, their eyes were clouded over and their bodies were covered with scabies cause by the lack of light and air.

Stockade for female prisoners

In the struggle for the independence of the country, many female revolutionary patriotic soldiers were arrested and imprisoned in Hoa Lo Prison by the French colonialist. In Hoa Lo prison, the stockade for female prisoners was 270 square meters in the area including 4 small stockades, a stockade for female prisoners who had babies, a bathhouse and garden. There was a time that 300 female prisoners were kept here.

The detention room was small with lack of running water, hygiene condition was not safe. Besides, rations of food were always misappropriated. As a result, the life of female political prisoners was extremely horrible. They were also tortured by electric engines or walking stick (to put in the genital area of female prisoners).

The cells were completely isolated from the other cells of Hoa Lo Prison to prevent death row inmates from communicating with the outside. The cell was built solidly with the wall 0.4 meters thick, 3 meters high and the area of each room around 5m². Both interior and exterior walls were painted with black tar which made people feel gloomy and cold. Prisoners here were shackled all day long, not even freed to use their toilet. The cell door was open just twice each day for jail guards to bring meals and water to the death row inmates.

According to the prison regulations, prisoners who were sentenced to death were detained here for a minimum of 10 months from the day of being sentenced at the Criminal Court. During this time, prisoners could lodge an appeal of a claim for the sentence reduction. However, to eliminate some death row inmates, particularly the ones whom the French consider dangerous, these death row inmates were executed in secret after only 2 to 2 days from the day sentence.

Source: [Hotels in Hanoi Vietnam](#)