

The Apartment Viewing Checklist

An hour's work that pays for itself. Chapter 2 told you what rent costs; this list is about what listings don't say. Bring it to every serious viewing — then come back without the agent, at night, on a weekend.

Address: _____ Rent asked: _____ Date viewed: _____

The eight checks

Run every one. The order does not matter; the ninth item on the list is the one you skipped.

- ☐ **Return at 9 pm Saturday.** Karaoke, restaurants, the street's real volume. The single highest-value twenty minutes in this chapter.
- ☐ **Look for the construction.** Empty lot next door? Bamboo scaffolding within earshot? Vietnamese building sites start early and finish late. Ask what's planned; look up; look behind.
- ☐ **Face the window and find west.** A west-facing bedroom in the tropics is an oven with a view. Check orientation, and check whether the aircon units are new enough to fight back.
- ☐ **How is electricity charged?** The question that separates fair landlords from the other kind. The right answer resembles the metered government tariff; the common trick is a marked-up flat rate per unit that can double your bill invisibly. **Get the rate in writing.**
- ☐ **Run the taps, flush, and sniff.** Water pressure on the top floor at evening peak, and the damp-and-mould test your nose performs better than any question.
- ☐ **Speed-test the Wi-Fi and your phone signal in the actual rooms.** Especially if you work remotely. "Has Wi-Fi" is not a speed.
- ☐ **Ask what's included, item by item.** Furnished here means bed, sofa, basic kitchen units — usually not pots, linen, towels, cutlery. Cleaning included or extra? Management fees? Parking for a bike? Get the list.
- ☐ **Meet the neighbours if you can.** One floor's difference in neighbours matters more than one floor's difference in view.

Money, paper and the deal

- ☐ Structure understood: one month's rent in advance + one month's security deposit (sometimes two on nicer places)
- ☐ Contract translated before signing — for the electricity rate, the notice terms and the deposit rules
- ☐ Deposit protected on day one: timestamped video of every existing mark, chip and stain, sent to the landlord that same day
- ☐ Asked up front: what comes out of the deposit at the end? Cleaning? Minor repairs?
- ☐ Negotiated gently: longer term for lower rent; tired mattress replaced or aircon serviced before signing
- ☐ The declaration question asked: **"Will you declare my stay with the police?"**
- ☐ Your ninety-day rhythm mentioned at signing, not at your first re-entry

Red flags — any two together, walk

The market is deep, and the next building has a phone number on the gate.

- ☐ Deposit requested before any viewing
- ☐ Refusal to state the electricity rate

- ☐ The declaration shrug
- ☐ “Special contract for foreigners” pricing
- ☐ Agent countdown pressure
- ☐ A landlord who won't put the included-items list in writing

Notes on this apartment

Electricity rate quoted (get it in writing): _____ per unit

Calibration, from the community. In Vietnam a rental mistake is a lesson priced at one deposit. In Sydney it is priced at a year. This market forgives learners — rent like one.

These checklists are drawn from *Vietnam from Day One — An Honest Relocation Guide*. Facts behind them were verified July 2026 and are maintained at mylifestyle.au/vietnam/updates. General information only — not legal, tax, medical or financial advice.