**Why motorcycles?**

**Part 3**

To the Vietnamese, a motorbike is not just a vehicle it can be a magic carpet, a personal jet pack, able to propel them from their living rooms (where many park their bikes) to any doorstep. Legs and feet are backup forms of transport, used only as a last resort.

The number of motorbikes continues to rise in Vietnam and there are now nearly 20 million of them, according to the [World Bank](http://www.csmonitor.com/tags/topic/The%2BWorld%2BBank%2BGroup). Ho Chi Minh City (formerly [Saigon](http://www.csmonitor.com/tags/topic/Saigon)) has 3 million – about one motorbike for every two people in the city. By far, the largest portion of vehicles on the roads of Vietnam are “motos,” which are small engine – 50cc to 400cc – motorcycles.

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I had my first extended stay in Vietnam more than three years ago. Day after day, I’d watch – through taxi windows – the dizzying theater of street traffic. From my backseat perch, I’d jot notes to myself about the two- and three-wheeled vehicles minnowing around me, heaving with cargo – coconut-laden rickshaws; old bicycles bulging with baskets of raw meat; cyclo drivers pedaling oversized spools of cable wiring; and motorbike after motorbike weighted down with six-foot bookcases, stereos, refrigerators, extension ladders, TVs, bushels of skinned chickens, plastic barrels of live fish, and rings of rubber tires.

These superheroes of delivery would transport items the size of small buildings on nothing bigger than a Vespa. Cars can barely crawl along the clogged city streets, but the river of motos and makeshift vehicles flow speedily around them. From my view inside the taxi, I felt like an onlooker who’d been plopped down into the middle of a parade.

A [US State Department](http://www.csmonitor.com/tags/topic/U.S.%2BDepartment%2Bof%2BState) warning reads like an all points bulletin, cautioning Americans against murderous motorcycles on the loose: “The traffic moves on the right, although drivers often travel against the flow. Horns are used constantly, often for no apparent reason. Outside the cities, livestock compete with vehicles for road space. Drivers do not follow basic traffic principles and there is little adherence to traffic laws ... most Vietnamese ride motorcycles; often an entire family rides on one motorcycle.”

For some people, just wanting a **motorcycle** is reason enough for buying one. However, there are other benefits to owning a motorcycle other than fulfilling a desire. These reasons may help you convince others that buying a motorcycle is more than just getting what you want.

**Affordability**

Whether you are buying new or used, a decent motorcycle costs less than a decent automobile. On average, a motorcycle costs about half of a [car](http://www.doityourself.com/scat/carstrucksandboats/?lc=int_mb_1001) of the equivalent age and quality.

**Better Fuel Efficiency**

With the price of fuel blossoming, driving a motorcycle can save quite a bit of money, while being better for the environment. A mid-sized motorcycle usually burns about 35 to 60 mpg, depending on whether you do most of your driving in town or on an open road.

**Easier Maintenance**

Although maintenance costs can be expensive for a motorcycle, learning how to work on one isn't as daunting as the system is smaller and simpler. Save more money by taking a class to learn how your motorcycle works and how to repair it.

**Parking**

Finding a place to park is much easier on a motorcycle. If a building has special motorcycle parking, it is most likely to be up close.

**Questions**- Answer the below questions, in complete sentences, on the Vietnamese culture handout.

**13. How many motorbikes are there in Vietnam?**

**14. What did the State Department warn Americans about?**

**15. Why do most Vietnamese drive motorbikes than cars?**