

Ho Hoan Kiem (Ho Guom) - Lake of the Restored Sword

Written by Cong Tran

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A beautiful basket of flowers inside Hanoi, a mirror-like green lake, a place of love, etc. are converged in Hoan Kiem Lake – the core of Hanoi!



Ho Hoan Kiem

(or Lake of the Restored Sword) was once part of the Red river (song Hong). Throughout thousands of years of geographical changes, the lake moved eastward to its present position kilometers from the river. Before the famous historical legend of King Le Loi here, Hoan Kiem Lake used to be called Luc Thuy Lake (or Green Water Lake) since the water was green all the year round. In 15th century, it was named Hoan Kiem Lake after the legend of Emperor Le Thai To, which is somehow similar to the story of King Arthur and the Lady of the Lake's.

Now please close your eyes and turn back time to the Le Dynasty 6 centuries ago to witness *the legendary story*

. During the war against the Minh aggressors, King Le Thai To was given a precious fairy Sword by the Golden Turtle God. After 10 years of continuous struggling, the King finally defeated the Chinese and reclaimed the nation's independence. After that, on a nice day, while boating on lake Luc Thuy, a large turtle came towards him.

It immediately grabbed the sword with its mouth and submerged. The king mourned the lost of such a valuable sword, yet could not find either the turtle or the sword. He realized that the God must have lent him the sword to drive back the enemy, but then that his nation was free, the

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sword must be returned. Hence, King Le Thai To named the lake Ho Hoan Kiem or Lake of the Restore Sword after this episode.

Since the reign of King Le Trung Hung (XVI century), every King in the Le dynasty, and Lord Trinh have all contributed to the beauty of the lake. Lord Trinh Giang built Khanh Thuy shrine on Ngoc island on the north end of the lake. He also had the two man made hills built across from *Ngoc son*

Shrine. At the end of the Le Dynasty, Khanh Thuy was toppled by Chieu Thong. A philanthropist named Tin Trai built Ngoc Son pagoda, which was renamed into Ngoc Son shrine during the reign of Thieu Tri III (1843) as it was no longer a Buddhist shrine. Instead, it became a shrine of Van Xuong, a deity, in charge of literature and the various tests required to become a Mandarin. It has also been a shrine of General Tran Hung Dao, a national Hero who secured numerous victories against the Mongols.

Hence, Hoan Kiem Lake is now situated inside a complex of *Ngoc Son Temple, The Huc Bridge, Pen Towe* r in the surroundings, making a sparkling colorful natural picture! Ngoc Son has undergone a lot of renovations, one among which was the addition of Thap But (translated as Pen Tower) on its hill, which was once called Dao Tai. Three words were inscribed on the tower: "Ta Thien Thanh" or "write on blue sky". Inside the gate a pool resembling the shape of an ink well was added. Beyond the ink well is The Huc bridge, which means "where the sun light is absorbed". The bridge leads to Dac Nguyet Lau (or "Moon Light tower") - Ngoc Son shrine. Beyond the gates to the shrine, there are two walls called bang Rong and bang Ho (dragon and tiger slate), where the names of those who passed the national test were inscribed.

What could not be missed in this beautiful complex is the *Turtle Tower*, which lies in the middle of the Lake, so as to remind Vietnamese people of the Turtle God of his great assistance. It was told that King Le Thanh Tong used to fish here. Lord Trinh also built the structure to house his entourage while visiting the lake.

Despite the time's ashes and dust, Hoan Kiem Lake - the popular historical and legendary beauty-spot is eternal for good as an evidence of a fairy & heroic Hanoi during the past wars, and a romantic & charming Hanoi of Today!

Hoan Kiem Lake is considered one of the first things to see in Hanoi when one arrives in this bustling capital city. Visitors are recommended to hire a tour guide or book a Hanoi day tour so that they can learn many interesting stories and legends about the lake and other attractions surrounding it. For day tour information, take a look at this [Hoan Kiem lake](#) tour.

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