

The Saigon Central Post Office and the Notre Dame Cathedral

Two of Saigon's most picturesque colonial buildings are found next to each other, in the center of the city. The Central Post Office (Bưu điện) and the Notre-Dame Cathedral were constructed by the French in the late 19th century, and a visit to both is obligatory during any tour of Saigon.



Of the two, we found the Post Office to be the more interesting. Built between 1886 and 1891 by the French architect Marie-Alfred Foulhoux, the building has a magnificent neo-baroque facade, and looks more like a national museum than something as mundane as a post office.

Inside, you'll find tiled floors and walls adorned with two large painted maps of French Indochina: the "Telegraphic Lines of South Vietnam and Cambodia" and "Saigon and its Surroundings". Telephone booths line the walls (with people actually using them), and the place is buzzing with activity -- mostly with tourists milling about and buying souvenirs, but also with locals actually trying to accomplish regular postal errands.