

To mark 1000 years since the founding of Hanoi in 1010 A.D., the city spruced up official buildings, painted over graffiti, covered crumbling walls, installed one of Asia's longest mosaics, hung banners, held parades, and even opened the historic citadel grounds to visitors for a few months. But the real expression of celebration came from the swarms of people filling the streets. Everyone wanted to show their civic and national pride and take part in the celebrations, which has more than a few overtones of the efforts, just before Hanoi's founding, of the Vietnamese people to vanquish their Chinese rulers after 10 centuries of control. Although it was impossible for most Hanoians to attend the official celebrations due to restricted access or horrific traffic, euphoric crowds of (mostly young) people filled the streets around Hoan Kiem Lake downtown, cheering and singing for several nights. Westerners are no longer an exotic sight on the streets of Hanoi, but that night we were in a lot of photos, mainly taken by young people from surrounding provinces, in the capital city for the celebrations. The red lights in the tree on the left are noisemakers that make popping sounds and flash bright lights – a replacement for strings of fireworks, banned in Vietnam.