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VIETNAM

1/2 2017



HOT TOPIC

Saigon Charlie's is The Next Big Thing in Hot Sauce

PAGE 30

SINCERELY, YOUR DAUGHTER

A Woman's Search for Her Birth Mother in Vietnam

PAGE 47

BELGIUM IN FLAVORS

Belgian Cuisine Takes Center Stage at La Beligique

PAGE 56

KID ME NOT

Vietnamese Women Who Choose Not to Have Children

PAGE 92

FAMILY TIES

A CELEBRATION OF FAMILY AND CUSTOMS



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Connecting Cultures Through Craft Beer

Contents



COVER STORY

FAMILY TIES

Time to celebrate reunions, dinners, traditional decorations, family visits and special rituals practiced on Tet

42

IMAGE BY JAMES PHAM

FEATURES

P10 DATEBOOK

With these events, you'll never have to be bored again

P16 TROI OI

Find out why zero-interest loans, wax figures and road cracks made it into our list

P18 RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

Taking children off the streets and into the kitchen

P20 A WOMAN ABROAD

Building trade, social capital and security through culture in Asia

P23 CORK LOVING

Committed to sustainability, Ekokami makes durable, functional and versatile bags using recycled cork and up-cycled leather

P30 HOT TOPIC

Charlie Page hopes his passion for heritage and quality will see him take his hot sauce to the rest of Asia, and the world

COLUMNS

P26 LEGAL EASE

Make driving legally in Vietnam your New Year's resolution

P29 TELL TAIL SIGNS

A special relationship that started over six years ago on Phu Quoc

P45 RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Cha ca, marinated grilled fish with rice vermicelli, a truly Hanoian dish

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Contents



WINE & DINE

RESTAURANT REVIEWS

From Vietnamese home-cooked cuisine to Belgian food and beer, this month's restaurants not to be missed

52

IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

FEATURES

P36 LACED BE HONEST

Designer Adrian Anh Tuan's new Lacey Girl collection looks romantic, ultra feminine and classic

P40 DIGITALLY CROSSED CULTURAL

The global market presents new challenges for graphic designers to address language barriers and ethnic nuances

P78 ALASKA

Alaska is one of the few remaining wild places where you can experience the power and glory of nature, pristine and untouched

P82 MEKONG DELTA

An opportunity to visit the women and villages behind NGO Mekong Quilt's products

P92 KID ME NOT

More and more Vietnamese women are choosing to be child-free

COLUMNS

P42 CHEERS!

Why you should be drinking organic wine

P44 THE SYLLABUS

How playing outdoors can teach kids life skills



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Datebook

What's on this month...



JANUARY 20

What: Par Grindvik - Stockholm Ltd

Where: The Observatory (5 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4); free before 11pm, VND150,000 after

About: Presented by Heartbeat Saigon, Par Grindvik has been a central figure in the Swedish electronic scene since the 90s as record store owner, label manager and producer. In his artistic career, Par has released music across a plethora of acclaimed electronic labels, including a string of hits on his own Stockholm LTD imprint as well as Drumcode, with frequent collaborator Hardcell. Par's recent output has seen him contribute music to labels such as Semantica, Marbacka, Sinister and Dystopian.

Contact: Visit heartbeatsaigon.com for more info



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JANUARY 25-31

What: Book Street Festival

Where: Nguyen Hue Walking Street

About: Held along the main city streets, including Mac Thi Bui, Nguyen Hue and Ngo Duc Ke, the book fair will be divided into three subjects: "Proud of the city named President Ho Chi Minh", "HCM City—high quality of living, civilization and modernity" and "Inspiration for shining."

The event will present Ho Chi Minh City's achievements; rare and valuable publications on the late President Ho Chi Minh; seven breakthrough programs of the city's 10th Party Congress; and maps, photos, documents and artifacts that affirm Vietnam's sovereignty over Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagoes. The festival will also display thousands of copies of publications of various genres, including politics, culture, history, literature and economics.

Contact: Visit www.eng.hochiminhcity.gov.vn for more info



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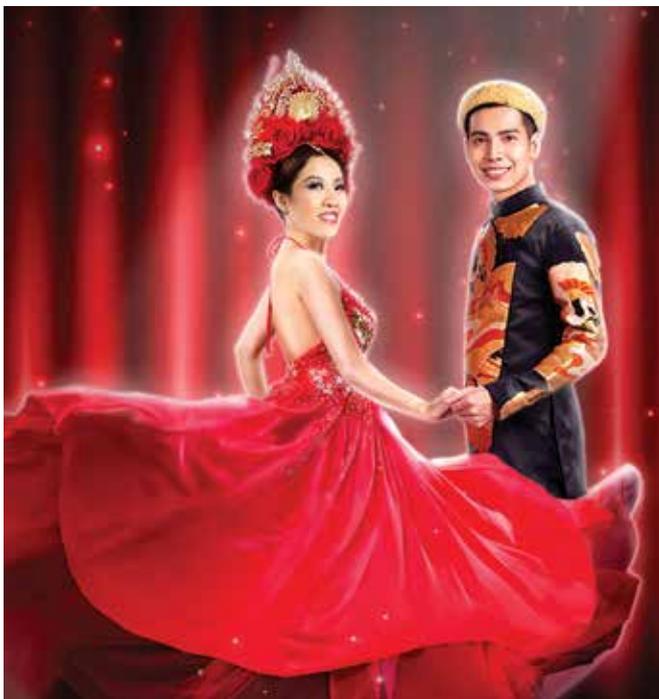
FEBRUARY 3-12

What: Vietnamese Musical *Giang Huong Love Story*

Where: Hoa Binh Theater (240-242 3 Thang 2, D10); VND500,000

About: First released to critical acclaim in October 2016, this Broadway-styled musical is the enchanting story of a legendary Vietnamese fairy who refuses to live a dull life in heaven and follows her true love. Her remarkable journey, adapted onto the stage as a spellbinding musical, breathes new life into the renowned fable of Giang Huong. Expect fine composition bolero songs along with amazing visual effects.

Contact: Visit nhahathoabinh.com.vn for more info



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FEBRUARY 18 & 19

What: Vietnam Tech Conference 2017

Where: Saigon South International School (78 Nguyen Duc Canh, D7); VND2,232,000

About: The Vietnam Tech Conference, a premier event in the Education and Training Industry, will take place at the Saigon South International School in Ho Chi Minh City on February 18-19. The conference, organized by Saigon South International School and United Nations International School of Hanoi, is an event which promises to foster creativity and innovation. The conference will be a venue for educators to inquire and explore how they can effectively integrate technology within the classroom. Its aim is to create a community of educators pushing the boundaries of educational technology. Notable feature presenters include John Burn, Director of Creativity and Innovation at International Schools Services, and Paul Swanson, Tech Co-coordinator at UNIS Hanoi.

Contact: Visit 2017.vietnamtechconference.org for more info



FEBRUARY 19

What: Google Day X Vietnam 2017

Where: RMIT (702 Nguyen Luong Bang, D7); VND150,000 for students, VND300,000 regular

About: GDayX Vietnam is a community-organized conference with the mission of building an ecosystem of top entrepreneurs, businesses, innovators and students. This event has been held in many other countries and this year will be the first ever in Vietnam. The event is supported by Google and powered by Google Business Group, Google Developer Group and Google Student Ambassador Vietnam—a network of professionals and students interested in learning, sharing knowledge and enhancing work efficiency through the tools and products offered by Google.

Contact: Visit googledayx.com for more info

FEBRUARY 22-27

What: Domino Art Fair

Where: Ho Chi Minh City Museum of Fine Arts (97 Pho Duc Chinh, D1)

About: The Domino Art Fair will feature 300 artworks by 160 renowned artists across the nation. The fair will also organize a day dedicated to children, ages 6-18, to experience an art education program known as "School Day." The open-space artists' booths are designed to create direct interaction between artists and the public. The highlight of the fair will be an artwork trading space, creating a secondary market where artworks can be traded, consigned and exchanged. Organized by RealArt, its founder, painter Trinh Minh Tien, hopes to support contemporary art development in Vietnam.

Contact: Visit realart.vn for more info



Happy New Year



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The Bulletin

Promotions and news in HCMC and beyond...

The Right Chord

The Danish design brand WON is expanding its collection once again and now adds a minimalistic shelf called CHORD—a decorative but functional wall shelf unit made of coated steel. Spaces of different sizes arise by vertical, continuous rods and thin boards of varying lengths. Like in a treasure box, every object finds a suitable place. The arrangement of the boards creates a graphic melody, which gives the shelf an interesting and slender appearance. The shelf can be rotated and easily mounted in two directions on the wall. There can be added decorative and personal elements to CHORD whether installed in the living room, the bedroom, in the hallway or the bathroom. CHORD gives an edge to the decor and serves as a mini gallery of the finest bottles of perfume, small works of art or memorable valuables. WON is an independent brand established by the furniture manufacturer Wendelbo Interiors. Visit www.wondesign.dk for more info.

New Wheelchair Travel Series

“10 days. 10 friends. 1 city. 1 wheelchair.” This opening line from the *10 Days in Saigon* trailer lays out the concept for a new video series by Muui—a Seoul-based social venture focused on disability and accessibility. The 10-week web series follows a rotating cast of local residents traveling around Ho Chi Minh City with series creators Kunho Kim (producer) and Samuel R. Mendez (director).

Each day consists of a few episodes where guest hosts tell the audience about their first impressions/memories of popular Saigon sites. The episodes end with a breakdown of wheelchair accessibility (or not) of the sites. “I really want to recommend people in wheelchairs to explore Saigon. And I want to show them it is possible to get around Saigon in a wheelchair,” says Kim.

The series is being released on Muui’s YouTube and Facebook accounts and runs through the end of March.

New Year, New You

This year, don’t just make it a New Year’s resolution. Turn it into a real commitment to be healthy, fit and energized all year round. **Body by Jovie** (Gym Block B, Riverside Residence, Nguyen Luong Bang, D7), a boutique personal training and



yoga studio, provides professional and effective fitness solutions for the entire family. They offer one-on-one personal training and small group classes for maximum results, and personalized care for individuals. This year, they have expanded their services to cater to children, including yoga for kids and outdoor kids fitness camp. Sign up before March 15th to receive a 25 percent discount on their 1 year all access membership or unlimited yoga and fitness membership. Visit Bodybyjovie.com for more info. ■



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MORE TRIPS WILL BE OPERATED on 17 city bus routes between now and the New Year rush. The HCMC Public Passenger Transport and Management Center said that increasing the number of trips would improve passengers' safety and comfort, and instructed bus operators to prepare well, saying if the number of passengers increased sharply, they should be ready to operate more buses. The center will also operate 25 additional inter-provincial buses at the Mien Tay Coach Station.

VND 100 Billion

PROVINCIAL ROAD 537

has started to develop cracks.

The construction of the road was completed just recently, but the section passing through Yen Thanh District's Hop Thanh Commune has already developed huge cracks and has begun caving in. Machines and workers have



been deployed by the road contractor to the site for repairs. In the beginning of December, *Traffic Safety* newspaper had reported that the road, also known as Road No 33, was ready and open to traffic. Within weeks, the section from Village 1 to Village 3 had become severely damaged. Though it is just a half-kilometer stretch, the road has developed numerous cracks and part of the road has sunk below ground level. The worst-affected section is in Village 3, where there are cracks running up to dozens of meters.



17

NEW NATIONAL INTANGIBLE CULTURAL heritage assets in Vietnam have been announced. Recognized by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, these new assets belong in four categories: traditional festivals, social customs and beliefs, folk performing arts and traditional handicrafts. These activities are diversified from north to south, reflecting the rich culture of the Vietnamese. One of them, Trong Quan singing in Hung Yen Province, is a typical response folk song that dates back to the Tran Dynasty (1225-1400). It is often found in festivals and performed by boys and girls who sing call and response songs. Other assets include the traditional Luu Xa Communal House Festival in Hanoi; the traditional festival of Quang Lang village in Thai Binh Province and the ritual of celebrating the longevity of the Nung ethnic people in Na Ri District.

7.3 million

SHARES IN MOBILE WORLD

are set to be given to its employees. The electronic device retailer has asked the State Securities Commission to allow it to issue 7.3 million bonus shares for employees. If the proposal is approved, the value of the bonus shares will be VND1.5 trillion, making total value of bonus shares

that Mobile World has issued to employees since December 2014 VND2.62 trillion. The bonus shares are known as employee stock ownership program shares and employees do not have to pay for them. According to CafeF, the share issuance would make Mobile World the "most generous company to employees in the stock market" compared to other large-cap firms such as dairy producer Vinamilk, private equity firm Masan Group and construction company Coteccons.



INTEREST LOANS ARE SET to be provided for Tet. Hanoi has followed Ho Chi Minh City in ceasing zero-interest loans to enterprises participating in the price stabilization program for the Lunar New Year season. Despite this, markets in both cities will have sufficient food items in stock, authorities say. Nguyen Duc Chung, Chairman of the Hanoi People's Committee, said his administration would facilitate enterprises' access to bank loans for purchasing goods to stock for the festival season. This is the most efficient way to ensure enough goods for Tet and will create good conditions for the enterprises to step up their production and business efficiency, he explained.



50 VIETNAMESE CAR DRIVING TRAINERS have been found using fake high school diplomas in the Central Highlands. These drivers have since had their licenses taken away by transport officials. Do Binh Chinh, deputy director of the Department of Transport in Dak Lak Province, has signed a decision to withdraw the licenses of these trainers. In a document sent to the department, police officers said that using fake diplomas is a blatant violation of the law, adding that the agency should take strict measures to deal properly with the scandal. A list of the 50 trainers provided by police shows eight working for Binh Minh Vocational Center, six for Tay Nguyen Occupational School, eight for the Thanh Luan vocational center, ten for VINASME Tay Nguyen Vocational School, and 18 for Viet My Vocational School, all in Dak Lak.

100 WAX SHAPES OF VIETNAMESE celebrities are set to be unveiled at an exhibition taking place in Hoa Binh Theater in early 2017. The idea was initiated by Nguyen Van Dong and Nguyen Thi Dien, owners of Viet Wax Statue, who have over ten years of experience with wax material and over four years on portrait sculpture. Joining the couple is artisan Thai Ngoc Binh. Binh said that it takes a lot of time and effort to try different materials to create a lifelike statue that reflects the true spirit of any character. A finished statue needs to be 90 percent like the real character, which includes the measurements of body, muscles and skin tone to the wrinkles on the face and body. "We have to remake a statue's head if the hair, eyelashes and eyebrow do not resemble the original model," Binh said. It takes three months or more to complete a statue. During such a length of time, the artisans will consult celebrities and their relatives to ensure the perfect final product.



108,530 VIETNAMESE PEOPLE WENT ABROAD to work in the past 11 months of 2016, exceeding the target set for the period by 8.5 percent, according to the Vietnam Labour Export Association. The figure, however, was down by 0.66 percent from the same period in 2015. In November, 10,120 workers were contracted to work overseas, up 2.88 percent from the same period in 2015. The northeast Asian nations and territories remained among the biggest employers of Vietnamese workers. More workers were sent to Taiwan, Japan, Algeria and Arab Saudi than 2015. In 2015, approximately 116,000 laborers were sent abroad to work.

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

Taking children off the streets and into the kitchen

TEXT BY LORCAN LOVETT
IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

ANOTHER VIETNAMESE RESTAURANT will open in downtown Saigon early this year. That's hardly a story, but beyond the steaming bowls of noodles will be a tourist hotspot in the making, a recruitment mecca for five star hotels, and 18 stories of hope salvaged from desperate lives.

STREETS International (streetsinternational.org), a charity which trains poor youngsters, some orphaned, homeless, trafficked, for careers in the hospitality sector, has expanded its operations from Hoi An to Saigon. Although the group has yet to decide on a downtown address for the restaurant, the trainees are being housed, fed and educated as part of an 18-month program.

"The most important thing we're doing is providing a place for the first time that is safe and secure [for them] to live," says the charity's founder Neal Burmas. "With a staff and a community that says to the kids that they're okay and they can do it, that they're capable just like everyone else."

The expansion is a significant milestone for Neal, a native New Yorker who has owned restaurants, lectured at colleges and worked for hotel groups such as Le Meridien, Sheraton and the Walt Disney Company. On his first visit to Saigon in 1999 he was moved to witness street children begging for food. In his travels across the world he had seen 'street kitchens'—projects that pull youngsters out of social deprivation through restaurant work. While admiring the intentions of these charities, he realized that an even more gutsy approach could see trainees swapping shifts in local eateries for careers in world-class hotels.

After devising a curriculum with



the help of his industry contacts, he launched STREETS International in 2007. The 80-seat restaurant flourishes in the tourist magnet of Hoi An, as do the other facilities, including a 16-computer language lab and 'Oodles of Noodles Center' where trainees teach tourists how to make a variety of the region's famous noodles. Now on its tenth class, and with over 200 alumni landing top jobs after graduating (boasting a 100 percent employment rate), Neal is turning his attention back to the city where he first saw the begging children.

"I always thought that if we could get it right in Hoi An then we should also be in Saigon," he says. "All the kids [trainees] are terribly, terribly poor. Many of them are orphans, some of them have been trafficked. That's true in both places but a big chunk of the kids here really are street kids meaning they're off the streets of Ho Chi Minh City."

Streets received 120 applications for the 18 spaces in Saigon, and this is likely to increase for ensuing programs as the restaurant establishes itself. Trainees are aged between 16 and 22, drafted from a two-month selection process. "The one job I like to give away, for which I've developed a good team," adds Neal. Local NGOs usually suggest potential trainees to Streets, whose staff interview the candidates at least twice, and visit their homes, sometimes in the form of orphanages or alleys.

"We did an outreach to the LGBT community and we have several kids who have come in from referrals. Those kids were really ostracized, living on the streets, getting a little support here and there for a safe night of sleep. I'm just delighted to have them in the program."

"Imagine being a 16-year-old transgender kid in London or New York, and how challenging and frightening

that must be, and now put that kid in the countryside in Vietnam. It's horrifying. I don't think we can even understand just how difficult that must be.

"When we met some of those kids there was no place left [for them] but the streets. At least on the streets in a big city like Saigon they'll find others that are similar. That doesn't mean that they are not getting abused and beat up, but they're not as alone as they might be in a more isolated area."

FEEDING THE STOMACH & SOUL

The students acquire culinary and hospitality skills that are the envy of local colleges. They go on to work with resorts such as the InterContinental Danang and Park Hyatt Saigon. But

from a family of subsistence farmers in the central highlands of Dak Lak. Barely able to survive, his family moved from the countryside to a remote mountainous area and, as conditions worsened, the teenager left to seek work in the city. He was working the odd menial job and sleeping in parks when a local NGO referred him to Streets.

"I wanted to become a cook so badly because that means I will always have some food to eat," he says, according to quotes provided by Streets. "I had so many fears and uncertainty before my first day coming to Streets.

"What will happen to me there? What if the other trainees bully me? How can I study well all the new things? It turned out the other trainees were

charity that gave her housing and education. After finishing high school, the girl's possibilities were bleak until she applied for the program.

"Everything [here] is so wonderful to me," she says. "Only, I am very upset about myself when I cannot remember all the English words that the teacher taught me. I should try harder. I know my future will depend on it."

Organizing the program in Saigon has come with its own unique set of challenges, says Neal, but he's "laughing more now in the third week here than in the third week in Hoi An."

City life presents more of a distraction for the students than the bucolic surroundings of Hoi An, and transporting them from dormitory to restaurant or anywhere else will take much longer on the fume choked roads.

"Probably the single biggest challenge here is the extraordinary expense in comparison to Hoi An." Neal explains that in both locations they rent the same sized housing dormitory, however the property in the city is "easily three times more expensive," while the same staff position has a salary nearly three times higher.

Passing tourists and locals are going to help balance the costs, tasting dishes from trainees whose careers are destined for the best hotels and restaurants in Asia. Employers of previous trainees have told Neal that his 'kids' are better trained and have stronger English than many students from colleges and vocational schools. Vitaly, they are highly motivated having experienced the hard life.

"If you take a person who has never had three meals a day to eat in their life or a safe, clean place to sleep and for the first time they have it at Streets and they recognize if they work hard and continue to do a good job with their work and career they can continue [this lifestyle], that's very motivating to staying at work and doing a good job."

The ambition that Neal aims to instill in the trainees lies at the heart of Streets. Not only will it help trainees in Vietnam, says Neal, but possibly India, even Israel, embracing poor Israelis and Palestinians, although these are all conversations and no contracts have been signed yet.

"I'm so excited that we're really here and doing this. I'm on to the next one. We've proven that we are reputable which was our initial business plan and vision. Then we go beyond Vietnam to help kids in other areas."

For now, Streets's goal is that its recipe of ethical tourism and delicious food will go down as well in Saigon as it has in Hoi An. The diners are treated to authentic cuisine, the trainees are offered brighter futures; even the hotels win, with a pick of the finest hospitality students in Vietnam. Seemingly, the only losers are the nearby restaurants, which will need to up their game. ■



perhaps most importantly their success and income ripples across their families: a young sibling whose education was non-existent can buy books and attend school; an older relative whose health was at a nadir can afford medical care.

A 16-year-old student who is taking part in the inaugural Saigon class comes

quickly more than classmates, they cared for me and helped me with everything. I believe now that I will complete my journey at Streets and be able to do much more with my life in the future."

One of his classmates, an 18-year-old girl from an ethnic minority village near Buon Me Thuot, was pulled out of poverty by a religious

A Woman Abroad

Building trade, social capital and security through culture in Asia

INTERVIEW BY ROISIN MURRAY IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN

Oi MET WITH KAREN Lanyon, the Australian Consul-General, to discuss Vietnamese-Australian relations and the ongoing development of Vietnam. Lanyon was posted to Ho Chi Minh City in January 2016, returning to Southeast Asia following a three-year period spent in Los Angeles as Consul-General. Most of Lanyon's long career, however, has been spent in Southeast Asia where she held positions in both embassies and consulates in Singapore, Cambodia and Indonesia. Lanyon's career in diplomacy has been extensive and varied; her past experience includes working on UN Environmental Sustainable Development issues and heading up the Africa branch of the Public Diplomacy Branch in Canberra. Lanyon has many aspirations that she hopes to achieve during her time as Consul-General in Ho Chi Minh City. She aims to further strengthen both the business relationship and bilateral partnership between Australia and Vietnam, to improve the people to people links between Australians and the Vietnamese, and have Australian produce well-integrated into the Vietnamese market.

"When I was in primary school I told my mother that I wanted to be president of the world."

Had you always wanted to work in government?

Absolutely, when I was in primary school I told my mother that I wanted to be president of the world. I soon found out that wasn't a job. I then decided that I wanted to join the United Nations. Therefore, from a very young age I knew that I wanted to join diplomacy and do this type of job. I was born and raised in Sydney and went to school at the Australian National University in Western Canberra. At the time it was the best international political school in Australia and a good way to get into the Foreign Service in Canberra. International Law and International Politics were my majors. Following that, Foreign Affairs and Trade picked me up and paid for me to finish my law school, which was fantastic. I went from university straight into government working in international trade and then I went into foreign affairs six months after I joined the government. I couldn't imagine doing anything else.

How does working in Vietnam compare to your previous posting in Los Angeles?

It's very different from Los Angeles. But most of my career has been spent in Southeast Asia so coming to Vietnam after being in Los Angeles is like coming home. Los Angeles was a wonderful posting and a fantastic experience. We worked on some very significant things there. One of the biggest promotions in Australia is Good Day USA, and it was a privilege to work on that. California is the world's eighth largest economy, so it's a fairly central spot. But when I was asked what my preferred posting would be after the US, I said Vietnam. There's just so much happening here, it's such an exciting place to be and it's a great partner for Australia. I finished in Los Angeles in November last year and was posted to Vietnam, which was my number one dream job. So I am truly happy and blessed to be here.

Is it difficult to balance your career and your personal life in terms of different postings?

Our Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has been very ahead of the curve in terms of promoting people who are posted together. For decades now, we have posted couples of the same-sex, so we are ahead of the curve in relation to that. Plus, there are a lot of couples who both work in the department. If you are both working in the same area, you understand the pressures and how it works, it is much easier. But when we went to Los Angeles my husband decided that he did not want to work anymore. He's no longer working for the department but he knows the lie of the land. So having a partner that is that supportive works very well. Plus, you see all the people that have taken their children with them to postings around the world. Kids that grow up in an international environment grow up as great world citizens. They have a much better world view, they understand the world more and they are not so insular. So I think it's a good way to bring up kids.

How is the Australian-Vietnamese relationship?

I arrived in January so I'm still very new to the relationship. We've had a very strong bilateral relationship with Vietnam for a very long time now. Australians and Vietnamese get on very well; we have a lot of similarities, such as our sense of humor. There's a lot of good will for Australians in Vietnam. We came in early, recognized the government, and we've been working very hard with our development assistance programs

over the past decades. Every year between 16,000 and 20,000 Vietnamese go through tertiary and secondary education in Australia. They return to Vietnam knowing and understanding Australia well, so our alumni are great assets for us. There's also a large Australian-Vietnamese population. If you count second generation, there's

"Australians and Vietnamese get on very well; we have a lot of similarities, such as our sense of humor."

anywhere up to 500,000 people of Vietnamese descent in Australia. We have also launched the new Colombo plan, in which Australian students come to Vietnam so we get to know one another's cultures and appreciate one another a bit more. So it's in a very good place, our relationship, at the moment.

Are there any gaps in the relationship? And if so, how do you plan to bridge those?

We are working on three main pillars for the next year, for the purpose of our relationship. Broadly they are security, innovation and economic development. Security is very broad, it includes food security, looking after our borders, fighting transnational crime together, etc. And there's always more work you can do in that regard; we are always going to be fighting human and drug trafficking. Our Australian Federal Police are here working with the Vietnamese police, so there is a really good partnership there.

Innovation is a new one and I think we probably haven't done as well as we could have done in the past, but it's a really exciting new area to work together in. Innovation could be, for example, Australian companies coming here and using Australian technology to help Vietnam get to where they want to be in areas like border management and agriculture.

Economic development is important because a strong, secure and economically prosperous Vietnam is very good for Australia. It's a win-win situation. And we're working hard on things like human resource development for human capital and education is a big part of that, but a big focus for us in the next year is gender equity. We need to ensure that the women and girls of Vietnam are not precluded from taking part in the economic development of



Vietnam and that they have equal rights, equal access to education and to business opportunities. So for me as a female consul general, the first one in a while, that is a very important goal for me.

In particular, what do you do to promote women's rights and equality?

We work with the Women's Union and other organizations in Vietnam to encourage women entrepreneurs, helping them to get into business and take part in business. There is a whole raft of programs that we are going to address over the next 12 months or so. I recently went to a wonderful event that was supported by the Australian aid program. The event was a fashion parade celebrating UN's People with Disabilities Day. It was actually organized by a Vietnamese woman with quite a severe disability herself, who went to Flinders University in South Australia on a scholarship. We had 30 models all of various disabilities, modeling clothes from two Vietnamese and one international designer. So this was a great celebration of disabilities.

Women with disabilities in Vietnam have an absolutely terrible time and do not have equal rights. For a very long time, women with disabilities in both Australia and Vietnam have been told that they're not beautiful, that they will never marry, that they won't have the same opportunities in business or personal relationships as anyone else. So the fashion parade was all about accepting beauty as being diversity and difference. It was such a fantastic and moving event. So we're very proud to support that. And that's just one of the examples of what we do.

How important is the role of women in politics? And are women fairly represented in politics in both Australia and Vietnam?

I think that there's always room for improvement in both countries. In Australia, our statistics are not as good as they should be in terms of women leadership. Vietnam does have very strong women in the National Assembly, but also in business. I have found so many female leaders in business in Vietnam who are doing fantastic jobs. But I think in both countries, there is absolutely room for improvement. There should be more women up there as role models for young girls, women as heads of government organizations, in our national assemblies, in our parliaments, etc. The fight is not yet over, but we've come a long way. In terms of equal pay, I'm very lucky that I work in a department that is a meritocracy and we get equal pay with men, but that is not the same in the private sector. I don't think you can sit back and say the job is done—we've still got a long way to go.

What important milestones has Australia made in Vietnam recently?

We have been working on TPP (Trans Pacific Pact), and have been working

a lot with the Vietnamese government in this regard; we're both very pro-free trade. Our development assistance programs in Vietnam are also very broad ranging. We will be investing approximately USD\$3 million this year in development assistance. One of the big projects, which will be completed and launched in around November, is the opening of the Can Tho Bridge. We actually opened a bridge 11 years ago, and we're building another bridge now because it makes such a difference to the economy in the Mekong. People are able to get their goods to market and kids can get to school. It just makes a fundamental change to their lives.

Another big focus for us and Vietnam is APEC, as APEC will be here in Vietnam next year. APEC's visit is an opportunity for the Vietnamese government to showcase what they have to offer. A number of ministers, high level visitors and trade delegations will be coming over. What we would like to do as a consulate is to ensure that we do not waste the opportunity to promote

What we would like to do as a consulate is to ensure that we do not waste the opportunity to promote greater relationships with Vietnam and to create business linkages with Vietnam.

greater relationships with Vietnam and to create business linkages with Vietnam. The other thing we are focusing on from a national point of view is the promotion of Australian food and wine in Vietnam. In April, we hosted an event called "Taste of Australia." Its aim was to promote Australian food and beverages in Vietnam, which are clean, safe and organic; products which the Vietnamese market wants. The Vietnamese want food of which its origin is known, food that is safe for their families but that is also sustainable and healthy. Australia can provide that sort of product.

Luke Nguyen, who is a celebrity chef in Australia of Vietnamese descent, is the face of Taste of Australia. It's a national program, and it's going to be hosted in Hanoi, Danang and Ho Chi Minh City. There will be a whole series of things going on, including culinary competitions where Vietnamese students have a chance to win a scholarship to study in culinary schools in Australia. There will also be wine consumer events introducing the Vietnamese market to Australian wine. This year we are expanding it to include areas other than just food and wine: music, fashion, among others.

How important would you say the private sector is in developing Vietnam? Have any Australian projects

stemmed from this need to engage with the private sector?

I can see the relationship between Vietnam and Australia changing very quickly from one of donor to one of equal economic partners. And I think that really needs to happen. Because as Vietnam gets stronger and has so much potential, they will move out of aid mode. Economic development is going ahead so fast that it will soon be an equal partnership. There are many Australian companies here now in a variety of fields, from IT to the agriculture business, to logistics. There are also many Vietnamese companies looking at Australia, considering more partnerships and investments. So I think that is going to be crucial for the future bilateral relationship; it has to come from the private sector. And we can help with projects like Taste of Australia; we're helping Australian companies to have more access to this market and ensuring that the Vietnamese market understands what Australia has to offer.

What are your thoughts on recent international developments such as BREXIT and president-elect Donald Trump?

I think you have to accept the world for what it is within those parameters. There's no way that Australia should tell any country what they should and should not be doing. But as a diplomat, you have to accept the world that you live in. Things happen that you wouldn't expect to happen, and you just have to adjust and work out how you can move forward from there.

What would you ultimately like to achieve in your time here?

I would like to walk away from the next four years having a stronger business relationship with Vietnam. I would like to leave a legacy of more Australian food and wine in Vietnam, more interaction with the Vietnamese at a people to people level, and the Vietnamese becoming more aware of what Australia has to offer. And I would also like to see the cliché images we have about each other changed. You ask a Vietnamese person about Australia and they say kangaroo, and I'd like it to be a little bit more than kangaroo. And when you ask people in Australia what they think of Vietnam, they say war. And that is not the Vietnam of today. The Vietnam of today is peaceful, prosperous and full of people wanting to work together. I'd like Australians to see Vietnam as a great place to come on holiday, a great place to study and to do business. And I'd like Vietnamese people to see that Australia isn't just about kangaroos, there's a lot more to it. I'd like to walk away with those clichéd views of each other broken down a bit and understand people a bit more. A more layered image of each other would be fantastic, so I'd be very happy if that was the legacy that I left behind. ■



CORK LOVING

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GEARING UP FOR 2017



A member of the Paris Bar, **Antoine Logeay** has been practicing law first in France, mainly in litigation and arbitration, then in Vietnam for three years as an associate of Audier & Partners based at its Hanoi office. Also a member of the Paris Bar, **Caroline de Bellescize** has been practicing mainly business law and real-estate law for three years in a French law firm and is currently an associate at the HCMC office of Audier & Partners. Audier & Partners is an international law firm with presence in Vietnam, Myanmar and Mongolia, providing advice to foreign investors on a broad range of legal issues.

Make driving legally in Vietnam your New Year's resolution

MANY OF OUR FRIENDS and acquaintances have shared their worries about driving a motorbike in Vietnam without a proper license. So, we thought it would be a good idea to remind all foreigners about the basic legal requirements in Vietnam in this field.

Most foreigners wonder if obtaining a driving license in Vietnam is at all necessary. After overcoming the initial fears of the chaotic tide of motorbikes, many of us want to enjoy the thrill of snaking our way through the maze of traffic in the city. And the most ambitious will probably motorbike from north to south, or vice versa, across the country.

However, a lot of these budding bikers arrive without a proper Vietnam driving license, which is required. So, here's an important question: how do I drive legally in Vietnam?

First, you should know that even if you do have a foreign driving license, it is not valid in Vietnam. You have three options to obtain the right to drive in Vietnam:

- 1) Obtain an international driving license.
- 2) Carry out the "replacement" of your home country license into the Vietnamese equivalent (the Vietnamese Road Traffic Law calls this option the "replacement" of a foreign driver's license, but don't worry: you can keep your original one).
- 3) Take the Vietnamese driving license practical test (warning: the practical driving license test is only available in Vietnamese, so if you are thinking of applying for this license you

had better learn Vietnamese first!).

Regarding international driving licenses, Vietnam is a party to the Convention on Road Traffic, signed in Vienna on November 8, 1968 and ratified in 2014 (also called the "Vienna Convention") and so recognizes international driving licenses issued by other States, which are parties to the Vienna Convention. In order to obtain such a license, you only have to apply to the authority in charge of the issuance of this license in your home country before leaving. Most European countries are party to the Vienna Convention, as well as some countries in South America (Brazil, Chile, Mexico, etc.), Africa (South Africa, Tunisia, Morocco) and Asia (Thailand, South Korea, etc.)

Regarding the so-called "replacement," this procedure is conducted by the competent Vietnamese authorities and allows you to convert your foreign driving license into a Vietnamese one (this procedure was detailed in *Oi Vietnam's* June 2015 legal column). It is important to keep in mind that you will not be eligible to replace your foreign driving license if you are in Vietnam with a tourist visa. The only option for a tourist who wishes to drive in Vietnam for a short-term period is to have been issued with an international driving license.

To complete the "replacement" procedure (and the same conditions apply to the third option of the practical test), you have to reside, work or study in Vietnam for at least three months and to be at least 16 to drive a motorbike of less than 50 cc or at least 18 for other motorbikes and cars.

If you meet these conditions, you can ask for the replacement of your home country license, or apply to take the Vietnamese driving test.

To apply for the Vietnamese practical test, you must submit an application to a licensed training institution. The application includes: application form for learning, tests and issuance of driving licenses; copy of unexpired passport; and health certificates issued by a competent medical facility. However, remember that this test is only available in Vietnamese.

Please, note that the validity period of Vietnamese driving licenses issued to foreigners would be in compliance with the validity period specified in their entry visa, temporary residence card or foreign driving license.

All this may seem a little bit complicated considering the ease of renting and driving a motorbike in Vietnam. However, the consequences might prove to be very tough, especially in the worst-case scenario of an accident and you find that your insurance company is reluctant to cover your medical expenses, or your liability toward injured persons, if you drive without a valid driving license in Vietnam.

So, let's think about making some good resolutions for 2017! ■

*Every month, **Antoine and Caroline** answer legal questions from readers. If you have any legal question you want answered, send them to legal@oivietnam.com.*

RESORT TALK

Theo Schuurhuis, General Manager of Boutique Hoi An Resort, on the resort's new expansion and what to expect in 2017

INTERVIEW BY OI VIETNAM

IMAGES PROVIDED BY BOUTIQUE HOI AN RESORT

Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

I came to Hoi An in early 2010 to do the pre-opening of Boutique Hoi An Resort, and have stayed working for the resort as general manager ever since. It was my first visit to Vietnam and Hoi An when I arrived, but saw many similarities with other Asian countries, so I found it not difficult to settle in and felt home right away. Before coming to Vietnam I have worked in properties in the Caribbean, Costa Rica, Europe and Asia, with a long spell in Indonesia of 15 years and then going to China before traveling to Vietnam.

Can you tell us the concept behind Boutique Hoi An Resort?

Boutique Hoi An Resort was designed and built with a concept of space and openness, which truly reflects in our layout, our rooms and the spacious garden and large beach. Even if the resort is fully booked, guests do not get the feeling that it is overcrowded. What is also worth mentioning is the fact that the design is not always the most important aspect of a successful operation. All the other factors like service, price, food and beverage selection, and location can create an equally important image. It is, therefore, important to create strong and unique selling points that are able to "speak" with a clear message and attracts all markets we work with.

Why do you think Hoi An is such a popular destination?

Hoi An is a must-see destination if one travels in Vietnam. The town provides visitors with cultural ambience, which one can see in the houses and building styles. The Old Town is free from cars, and also from motorbikes after the late afternoon so visitors can leisurely stroll around in search of a cultural experience. Then let us not forget My Son and Marble Mountain as nice venues for an out of town visit.

Can you tell us about the new expansion?

In 2015 a start was made with the extension of the resort on the plot of land next to the resort, included in the 30 room, we also have a large Grand Beach Villa with its own swimming pool, and Pool Villa. Besides our new rooms, we also extended our spa facilities with five more treatment rooms, and added a heating swimming pool in this area. The new beach bar has already proven itself



as a popular hangout for our guests.

How does Boutique Hoi An Resort set itself apart from others?

By staying the way we are and to follow the path we choose to go. Looking back to the last 12 months we saw many improvements compared to the year before. We are grateful for that but choose to stay humble and will keep focused on the quality of the service we provide our guests together with the great team we have.

Unique features we have are, first, our staff, the design and layout of the resort, our beautiful large white sandy beach and our spacious pool and garden. We focus on guest recognition, needs and respect. For the coming year, 2017, we feel that we need to be ready to take our quality, service and product to a higher level to meet guest expectations.

What are your plans for Boutique Hoi An Resort in 2017?

We will continue to explore new markets in other continents, and elsewhere in Asia, but will also continue to focus on the domestic market especially during specific

months of the year, such as summer holidays and annual public holidays. Now with our new extension we will operate and market the resort with the full 110 rooms. As Vietnam has seen more visitors in 2016 as in the years before, we trust that the year 2017 will also be a positive year for us.

We are also continue to keep Boutique Hoi An Resort a first class beach venue in Hoi An for our guests from Asia and around the world. ■

For more info on Boutique Hoi An Resort, visit www.boutiquehoianresort.com

WHEN MAN MEETS DOG

A special relationship that started over six years ago on Phu Quoc
IMAGES BY KHANH NGOC



THERE ARE MANY attractions that keep expats living in Vietnam: culture, food, the love of a person, or the simple delight of living in a warm, tropical environment. However, for one German in particular, a surprisingly and unexpected passion and dedication for the rare, native Phu Quoc Ridgeback dog of Vietnam is what's keeping him here.

Rudiger Zabler is an expat breeder, trainer, handler and enthusiastic student of Phu Quoc dogs (specifically Vietnamese Ridgeback dogs). His Zabler Kennels, located in the Cu Chi district of Saigon, currently houses over 50 of these dogs. Rudiger, who has been living in Vietnam for over eight years, has dedicated six (and counting) of them to understanding this specific breed of dog. He remains committed

and wants to be part of the movement in the acceptance and establishment of this breed internationally.

We recently spoke to Rudiger as he was preparing for an upcoming Vietnam Kennel Association-sponsored Vietnam Championship Dog Show in Saigon, where he has participated since 2013, winning various awards from his dogs.

When and where was your first encounter with a Phu Quoc Ridgeback dog and your initial impressions?

It was during my first vacation on Phu Quoc Island in 2007 that I first became aware of this breed of dog. I saw a few of them roaming around the island and was instantly attracted to the unique 'ridge' along their backs, impressed by their agile movement, powerful stance and 'look of intelligence'. My first direct

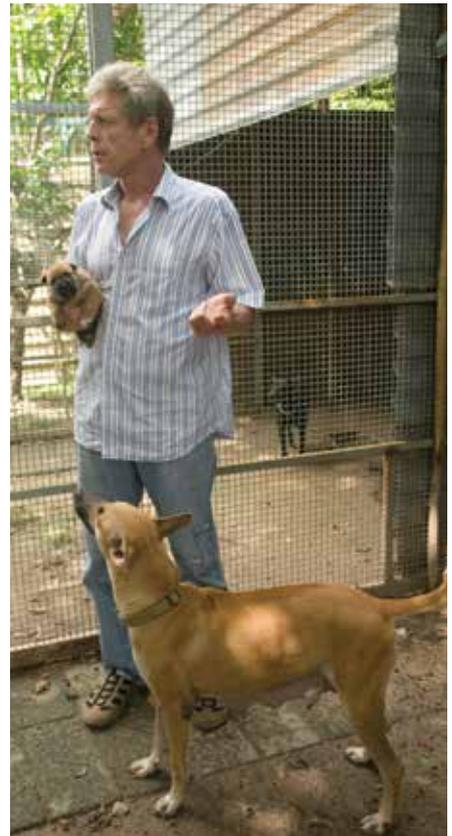
encounter was at my resort, where one particular dog barked furiously at me at first and then slowly acknowledged and identified my smell. Later, when I went down to the beach, and returned to my room this same dog quickly accepted my presence and did not bark anymore. It was then that I knew that this dog possessed unique characteristics that I have never experienced in all my 40 years as a dog breeder.

What is one of the most striking characteristics of a Phu Quoc Ridgeback?

A characteristic of a Phu Quoc dog that was very surprising is the cleanliness and strength of a birthing mother. I witnessed our own Phu Quoc pregnant bitch give birth to six puppies (we source breeding females from Phu



With a family that includes six cats, two dogs and a couple of dozen fish, **Wayne Capriotti** is a zoo curator and, along with his wife, publishes Vietnam's first pet magazine *Me Thu Cung* (www.petmagazine.vn).



Quoc). Within the first weeks, the birthing area was clean of urine and defecation, not a trace of 'puppy odor' whatsoever. The birth of the puppies seem so natural and effortless for the mother. Once the puppies were birthed the mother would lick them completely clean, removing all traces of the birth in the surrounding area. I have never quite seen this attention to detail and efficiency of a birthing female dog.

Briefly describe your breeding techniques for the Phu Quoc Ridgeback?

When breeding any dog you must provide the best living conditions. It is best to build sturdy, secure kennel enclosures and provide a large space where the dogs can run and socialize with a pack. Phu Quoc dogs are

amazingly energetic and need to release that energy in run and play with others. Also, you must provide the best nutrition, including dietary supplements, to keep all dogs feeling and looking healthy for that inner and outer beauty. I cook my own dog food, taste it, maintaining a daily routine of feeding with exact proportions according to each dog's requirements. I coddle and nurture my dogs, spending quality time with my expectant mothers and then with their puppies, not so much different from the care and attention you would provide in raising your own children. The outcome are dogs that are sociable with people and other dogs and able to be quickly accepted by a loving family or individual.

The Phu Quoc dog sounds like an ideal breed of

dog, are there any distinct physical problems?

The Phu Quoc dog is undergoing a selective process to produce an international breed standard, however, the dog does have one inherent genetic disease: Dermoid Sinus. If this disease is not treated it can be lethal. As the prices of these dogs rise, it would be unfortunate for dog owners in Vietnam or abroad to not become aware of this disease after acquisition. More education and awareness of the Phu Quoc dog is required. However, I do recommend that any dog having this disease be sterilized, stopping the spread to the rest of the breed. ■

If you would like read more about the Phu Quoc Ridgeback dogs, visit Rudiger's site: zabler-kennels.com



HOT TOPIC

Charlie Page hopes his passion for heritage and quality will see him take his hot sauce to the rest of Asia, and the world

TEXT BY **SAM SINHA**

IMAGES BY **VAN RAMBO**

THE CHILI BUZZ is a unique phenomenon: the pleasure pain of the intense sensation. Maybe it's the ultimate in Yin Yang balance; the burn of the initial taste, the satisfaction of the peppery warmth left behind. Charlie says, "It's like a drug. Once you've had chili on your food, you can't enjoy food without it."

It's an almost universal addiction and former ad-exec Charlie Page hopes to tap into that global market, but not with just any sauce, his is based on an old Vietnamese family recipe, although he comes from New Zealand.

Like so many entrepreneurs, Charlie traveled the world seeking his calling. He lived for three years in Japan and spent time in Thailand amongst others. He then settled in a job he didn't want. He was a high flying advertising executive, selling disposable products to people without disposable income. "I spent eight years grinding out nasty advertising and reality TV shows with branded content and telling myself I was doing well."

Eventually he couldn't take it anymore and decided to set out on his own, to do what he wanted to do. But how does a Kiwi with a passion for hot sauce become Saigon Charlie (*saigoncharlies.com*), representing Vietnam in the saturated global market for spicy condiments?

His infatuation with all things chili began while working in a restaurant in New Zealand. His boss gave him a taste and he realized how special these peppers could be. Charlie tells me, "She had lived in Mexico in a remote village on a mountain and had learned how to do jalapeños from her mother-in-law. The first time I had one of those bad boys I was hooked. The burn was intoxicating!"

After traveling, Charlie settled in Hanoi and began absorbing the local culture with the help of his Vietnamese born, by way of the US, partner. He started to learn about the rich culinary traditions of the country and the variety of influences that Vietnam has benefited from over the years. "We became a couple and I got more deeply immersed in Vietnamese culture. I learned about traditional food

preparations and, crucially, preservation techniques for food in a tropical climate that suffers damp, cold winters."

"Vietnam has had so many influences. They had China in the north, the Khmers in the south and the French and other European influences, not to mention the 54 ethnic cultures. So there's no definitive flavor that you could say is Vietnam."

There may be no definitive style, but there are years of tradition and the original recipe came from Charlie's wife's grandmother, as authentic a start point as any. "The very first batch of Saigon Charlie's was December 2013. My wife's grandma has a connection to the imperial court and the family farmed on imperial land. They used to grow chilies, onions, garlic and even wine for the imperial family so their recipe for chili sauce is actually a real old family recipe with imperial heritage."

It's a brave thing to take on a country's tradition and modernize, but Charlie believes this could help to preserve the authenticity of the recipe while selling it to a contemporary public. "Of course I'm not Vietnamese; I'm a Kiwi who's playing around with a really old family recipe. Keeping the traditional stuff from days gone by because that's where the traditional value is, but I'm adding to it, with modern techniques, such as using stainless steel and glass whereas they would have used clay pots. But preserving tradition preserves flavor."

The techniques for preserving foods are the backbone of many cuisines, and smoking of the chilies is key to the satisfying flavor in Charlie's sauce. Smoky flavors are universally loved, they take us back to our survival instincts, food roasting on a fire meant the hunt had been successful, it meant safety and freedom from hunger.

By using the traditional techniques to the recipe, the flavor of the sauce matches up to its heritage, giving it something unique and genuine that is hard to find in mass-produced products.

"The smoking aspect is the special thing about this chili sauce. In the countryside, in the hills of Vietnam, people live in stilt houses. My first five



RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS

years here, I spent riding my motorbike around the northern mountains, staying with people who didn't have electricity. They don't have TV, they don't have mobile phones, they didn't have refrigerators but they had a central fire."

"They would hang the food in the rafters and the smoke from the fire would preserve the food after harvest, so they didn't starve in the winter. That preservation technique is millennia old. It's very simple, it's very effective, and it gives a very very good flavor to the chili."

He learned where to find the best chilies in Vietnam and their utility. Sourcing the right chilies is vital and the three main regions of Vietnam are represented in his three sauce varieties. Charlie explains: "We have Hanoi Heat, for the north. It's not too spicy, but has lots of savory flavors with a good sprinkling of pepper, just how the French-influenced north like it. Then there is Hue Way Hot, from the central region, because food from Hue is famously spicy, not sweet like their southern cousins—the Hue flavor is the emperor's standard. Finally there is Saigon Sweet 'n' Spicy for the southerners who like the heat, but with a little bit of honey to sweeten the burn. I don't use sugar; that is too crass. Honey from the forest tempers the sourness from the vinegar."

"I use small producers in the old

imperial city of Hue for the small bird's-eye chili and for the dried, smoked heritage cayenne variety. I source large juicy capsicums from the old French colonial area farms in the highlands of Dalat. The slender fresh cayenne I get from farms all around the south and the same with the onions, garlic, carrots. The black and white pepper I get from Phu Quoc, and the other secret herbs and spices come from similar small producers."

Of course making products in this artisan fashion, and in small batches comes with challenges, and consistency is something that is hard to achieve, but not necessarily always desirable says Charlie.

"As the fruit itself is dryer or more moist its flavor profile changes so no two batches of the sauce are the same; the color, or the sweetness, or the spiciness might be different. I think it's a reassuring thing. There's no e-numbers in there or chemicals or additives keeping it exactly the same. It's relatively consistent, but it's not always the same, I don't see that as a bad thing."

Charlie is always open to improving the recipe but feels he has got to a point where he is happy with it for the time being. "It's as good as I can get it at the moment with current techniques. There was a period of exploring. I think it's still important to explore. The last two months I've been playing



IMAGE PROVIDED BY CHARLIE PAGE

with tamarind and lemongrass. A year and a half ago I was playing around with a lot of different things and then slowly it's been refined. And now there's quite a stable idea of what a north, a south, and a central chili sauce are."

There are other challenges too. Charlie is very aware of the difficulties that lie in taking on the 'big boys' of the industry; the shelf-stable mass-produced brands that are ubiquitous on restaurant and household tables alike. They have the budget, infrastructure and buying power that small producers cannot compete with. Given his past he is all too aware of the power of conglomeration and wealth.

Charlie remarks upon the explosion of popularity of Sriracha sauce four years ago, and the way it glamorized entrepreneurship. "A friend of mine sent me an article that was making fun of these big corporate execs who were abandoning their careers to go and make chili sauce which is very funny because that's exactly what I was doing."

In practical terms, the company is very much a one man show at this stage. Charlie employs an assistant but still takes a hands-on approach. "I grade chili, wash bottles, chop, stir, grind, mash, fill, seal, label, invoice, deliver all myself. I am at the absolute limit of my time and energy at the moment. I can only just do 900 bottles a month."

On the future, Charlie is optimistic about expanding throughout Asia. "I have customers in Singapore, wanting exclusive import and distribution rights, same for UAE and am quietly hopeful of a deal in the Philippines for next year. It is an eclectic mix of customers but they all have one thing in common—they love the product, they like what I am doing and their customers buy the sauce because they also love it."

I wanted to know why he chose the name Saigon Charlie's. His explanation is as simple as the name itself. "If you want people to remember your product, it's best to match the name with the product exactly. Why make things more complicated? It's made in Saigon, my name's Charlie. How simple is that!" This sums Charlie up. ■





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DIGITALLY CROSSED CULTURAL

The global market presents new challenges for graphic designers to address language barriers and ethnic nuances

TEXT AND IMAGES BY JÔNATAS VIEIRA

MOST DESIGNERS ASSUME that designing products for foreign markets only requires a language translation, switching currencies, and potentially updating a few fields. However, cross-cultural design can be much more complex.

Because I'm from Brazil and most of my clients are in the US, I thought I'd already be good at this. However, a Russian client approached me recently, and I quickly realized I had taken cross-cultural design for granted. Not only was I designing a product for a specific cultural condition that I didn't quite understand, but I also found the cultural divide between the client and I to be a significant barrier to my workflow.

Designing for global markets predates digital industry. Cross-cultural design research is rooted in the work of two individuals: Fons Trompenaars and Geert Hofstede. Trompenaars is widely known for *The Seven Dimensions of Culture*, a model he published in *Riding the Waves of Culture*. The model is the result of interviews with more than 46,000 managers in 40 countries. Hofstede also contests conventionally narrow views of language and culture. Everyone knows that our spoken accents develop based on where we grew up. Less spoken about, though, is that how we feel and act is also a type of accent influenced by our locale. Because Hofstede's research was entirely conducted by IBM, Hofstede's research may be more easily translated into market applications.

The cultural dimensions represent cultural tendencies that distinguish countries (rather than individuals) from each other. The country scores on the dimensions are relative, as we are all human and simultaneously we are all unique. In other words, culture can be only used meaningfully by comparison.

How do users respond to authority? Hofstede placed every country somewhere on his power distance index (PDI), which measured how societies accept power inequality. Some cultures expect information to come from an authoritative position, whereas others believe less in expertise and certification.

Thus, the implications of this for digital design are that expressive and authoritative language or imagery may perform well in high power distance locales. Yet, users in low power distance

countries might negatively respond to this and prefer to see a relation to more popular imagery, or daily life.

Do users see themselves as individuals or a part of a group? How might you motivate a user in an individualistic culture versus a collectivist one? Does your product promote individual or collective success? How do you reward users? Some societies place an importance on youth, whereas wisdom and experience is valued elsewhere. Hofstede measures this on the individualism vs. collectivism index (IDV). Countries with high numbers on the index are more individualistic.

How comfortable are users with uncertainty? Cultures that rely less on rules and rationality respond to emotional indicators. But a society that is uncomfortable with uncertainty



prefers clean and distinct choices. How might these different groups respond to rules and restrictions?

For example, Germany scores high on the IDV index; therefore, it typically avoids uncertainty. This means that products designed for Germany must give users a rational sequence of decisions to make. Whereas, countries that are lower on the scale can allow users to find their way, or explore through an interface.

When I was hired by the Russian client I mentioned earlier, the product they wished to create was relatively straightforward. They were in need of an app that could notify contacts when a user came into personal danger. If a user felt that they were being followed, or approached by a dangerous individual, they open the app, press the main button, and if after

to translate it, but also to ensure that all of the nuances were appropriate.

Interface designers will always argue over the Sketch vs. Adobe debate. But all preconceived notions go out the window when you realize that certain languages provide program limitations. For instance, not all fonts work for different alphabets, and each application processes fonts somewhat differently. I learned, during the same project, that some fonts in Photoshop could translate to Russian text, whereas the same font in Sketch would revert to a system font, and disrupt the layout. Whether this is an OS or software issue, I am unsure. There will always be some trial and error when determining which font or program to use. I found myself sticking with Sketch and working to find a font that translated. My first choice though would have been to be able to use the

important elements in an interface, and I particularly like to work on kerning, line breaks and give emphasis to certain words, among other things.

But how do you do it on your own when you don't understand the language? How should you adapt a sentence, or create expressions, without knowing even the basics of a particular language?

This was the one step that still required some heavy back and forth between the client and I to ensure that everything was communicated correctly. We had to be sure of the nuanced metaphors to be communicated, not just grammatical rules.

In hindsight, this wasn't quite ideal, but for the scale of the project it worked. I couldn't have afforded to hire my own copywriter, but if you have the budget, I highly recommend hiring one to increase efficiency.

Demographics

A well-understood principle of interface design is to consider user demographics, as it influences consumer decisions and actions. But, it can be difficult to understand the culture of a remote society.

Demographics are especially important when designing the brand for a new product. Symbols and metaphors are highly dependent on users' perceptions. This part of the process required several rounds of revisions. For example, my client and I had very different perceptions on the use of radar, whether it was for monitoring or locating.

The theme changed to relate to family instead—a concept I've found is shared equally across cultures. If you're not familiar with a particular culture, research and discover what might work. Many symbols hold multiple meanings across cultures. For example, the American OK hand sign is very insulting in Brazil. This project was especially challenging. It made me see beyond conventional notions of demographics, toward broader issues and specific tool changes. Now, I know that languages can create challenges for the use of symbols and themes, not just in speech and writing. I also no longer trust Google Translate for the particular nuances required in UI/UX design. User perceptions change between cultures, as do languages. ■

Jônatas Vieira @ Toptal is a Brazilian designer and digital art director with a focus on UI, UX, visual, and motion design. His passion is to design digital projects and interfaces that make technology simple for everybody. For the past six years, Jônatas has worked on a diverse range of projects and with teams of all sizes. He lives for colors and forms, is obsessed with every tiny detail, and never stops working until the pixels are perfect.

Thus, when changing languages, your graphic intentions may change along with the language.

10 seconds a pin was not entered, the contacts—or bodyguards—would be notified. Fortunately, the client provided wireframes and user flows so my job was entirely focused on UI and visual design.

Alphabets and Tools

Immediately, I was stunned by the Russian alphabet the client provided in the user flow. I simply didn't have a Cyrillic keyboard, and I thought I might have to copy and paste from Google Translate if the necessary text wasn't already in the user flows. I took the time to produce a comprehensive document of all of the phrases the app needed and asked the client to review it, not only

font I initially chose for aesthetics. Sometimes we have to compromise.

Words are Graphics

Legendary Graphic Designer Paul Rand taught us that the form of words creates graphic shapes just like any other element. We communicate with typography using the shape, distribution, weight, and spacing of characters. Thus, when changing languages, your graphic intentions may change along with the language. This becomes quite the challenge when you are unfamiliar with an alphabet.

Good typography plays a big part in the visual design and is one of the most





For many of us, 2017 has been in full swing for almost an entire month, but for the Vietnamese, the festivities have only just begun! January 27, 2017 marks the start of the Lunar New Year and kicks off weeks of celebrating, eating, and spending time with the ones we love.

To celebrate Tet as a family is an essential part of the Vietnamese experience and a way of validating one's place in the most important group - the family. Gathering all of the generations together to celebrate the holiday is so important that many return to their native villages for the celebration — even if it means flying in from across the world. Those who can't make the trip often get together with neighbors and attend local festivities in their area.

Celebrating our family ties, making amends and letting go of grudges are all cherished customs of the Tet holiday. And with that in mind, our family at Oi wish your family "*Chuc Mung Nam Moi!*"

Family Ties

Reset for Tet

As urbanization increases and more people are moving to the cities and abroad, some of the traditions are dying out

TEXT BY MICHAEL ARNOLD

DESPITE THE BROAD-RANGING changes that have occurred in Vietnamese society over the last quarter century, there's a distinct air of reverence for the Tet festival that's hard to miss if you happen to be here during the holiday season. Ho Chi Minh City clears out as the Vietnamese New Year approaches and its migrant population heads back into the rural heartland for the annual homecoming; out there in the countryside, the old ceremonies you read about in overzealous guides to Vietnamese culture do indeed take place. For many modern local families, however, improved lifestyles have weakened the traditional hold of the national holiday, and many wonder if Tet isn't now beginning to unravel on its path toward becoming a commercialized caricature of itself.

This is something that, as an outsider, seems very familiar—Christmas, after all, has been through its own change of character in recent decades. The yuletide season is a tiresome performance for many Westerners; a day when you can't get any work done, when you're obliged to visit your estranged parents, where family get-togethers have devolved into one stressful and largely disappointing gift-unwrapping session before everyone spends the rest of the day staring into their smartphones. Something similar is happening with Tet—the same social forces of modernity that had their way with Christmas are perhaps now an encroaching influence on the fringes of Vietnamese society—the urban and Overseas Vietnamese people in particular—which leaves one to ponder how the festival will be marked a generation from now.

For sales and marketing specialist Pham Tra My, parenthood has presented her with an experience of the Tet holiday that greatly varies from the traditions of her childhood. Despite her intention to recreate some of the magic of Tet for her sons, she feels she has been unsuccessful in delivering the atmosphere she remembers from years past.

"As a child, the Tet holiday was all about having new clothes, seeing all the family members together at our grandparents' house, and cooking together," she remembers. "We had meals together for two or three days, shared what happened in the previous year, and made plans for the new one. So many things are missing now. In the past, on the evening before the Tet holiday came, we would gather during the night to cook and make *banh trung*, the traditional Tet foods and cakes. But now we can get everything in the market, so we just buy it and sleep instead. In the past, we didn't really sleep on the night of the New Year. We waited up together, it was very exciting. The grandparents would tell stories. Now, to be fair, my boys are happy to do some small things with the family, but then they have TV, they have games—they have other things that attract them more."

Local parent Tran Xuan Mai, who now lives in Canada with



Top: *banh trung*; Below: Pham Tra My and her family

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“...we do celebrate Christmas, even though we’re not Christians. We do all the holidays that Germany does. My brother and I also wanted to do the things that other children did. So instead of only sticking to our Vietnamese traditions, our parents were also open to those of Germany.”

Top: Tran Xuan Mai and her family; Bottom: Khan Nguyen and his mother



her Taiwanese husband, has observed similar changes in the way Tet is celebrated. “Every time we would prepare for the Tet holiday, we would buy a lot of flowers, especially *hoa mai*, the flower you can’t miss during Tet,” she recalls. “I remember from my childhood that the Tet holiday was very crowded—we’d light fireworks and everything, but after a few years, that was abandoned. Before, you could buy Roman candles and let them off yourself, it was a lot of fun. Tet isn’t so much fun anymore.”

Born to an ethnic Chinese immigrant family, Mai’s experience of Tet was slightly different to that of the Vietnamese, although her parents very consciously adapted their observance of the Chinese Spring Festival to involve local elements. “It wasn’t exactly the same, but quite similar,” she says. “We followed the Chinese tradition; most of my friends just went home to the countryside to spend time with their family and relatives. Here, because we don’t have any relatives, we would just stay with our own family. Most of the things we ate were similar to the Vietnamese tradition, like *thit kho* and some sweets. My family kept up the tradition of blessing the parents and receiving a red pocket. I’m not sure if the Vietnamese do it exactly like we did.”

Since moving to Canada, where she is not strongly involved in local Vietnamese communities, Mai has almost abandoned the Tet of her childhood. “We don’t have a day off on that day,” she explains. “I just go to a Chinese market and buy some traditional food to cook at home. We still have family, my in-laws, and we do go there to have dinner together. Before when I lived with my parents’ friends, they did celebrate, but after I moved out, I rarely did anything—we’re too busy with our own lives.”

Vietnamese Roots

For Vietnamese people growing up in foreign lands, the traditions of Tet are usually something experienced second-hand. German-raised Jen Nguyen spent a childhood in which her immigrant parents were very mindful of blending in with local habits. “We adapted to the traditions of Germany,” she explains. “For example, we do celebrate Christmas, even though we’re not Christians. We do all the holidays that Germany does. My brother and I also wanted to do the things that other children did. So instead of only sticking to our Vietnamese traditions, our parents were also open to those of Germany.”

Such a cultural compromise wasn’t made easily on the part of Jen’s parents. Her mother Nguyen Thi Yen remembers the difficult early years when Tet was the one celebration that connected the family to their Vietnamese roots. Purchasing traditional foods like the *banh trung* in Asian stores in Germany’s larger cities, they would hold simple ceremonies before their family altar at home, while in the absence of Vietnamese friends living nearby, they would attempt to share the festivities with the German people.

“My parents had a small restaurant,” remembers Jen, “and for the Tet holiday, even though most Germans don’t even know what it is, they would give them some small present. We would give them fortune cookies, or an extra dessert for example, just for my parents to celebrate that day.”

For lawyer/entrepreneur Khanh Nguyen, things were a little more festive during his childhood in the US. His family’s observance of Tet was uniquely significant, as it was the anniversary of when they left Vung Tau by boat back in 1981. Although the Vietnamese community where he grew up in North Carolina wasn’t large, Tet was the time when everyone would gather together at a local community hall for a single night of celebration.

“My earliest memory is maybe six or seven years old,” says Khanh, “of running around, the dragon dancers, you had the fireworks—because back then fireworks weren’t an issue—you had live music. I always remember my dad getting on stage and singing. Food everywhere. I don’t remember the ceremonial side to Tet, I didn’t see the offerings—maybe that was done at home before the big party. All the families would come out there and it’d be buffet, food everywhere, just kids, family, everyone having a good time.”

It was only after returning to Vietnam and taking a local bride that Khanh began to understand the larger implications of the Tet holiday as he began to experience the way it is held

in the motherland. "Being in Vietnam, it's almost unavoidable to be a part of it," he smiles, "and it's cool, because I like it. Everybody's always in a happy mood. There's a lot of feeding, a lot of gambling, a lot of new friends. It takes on more significance because you start realizing that this is Vietnam's equivalent of Thanksgiving and Christmas in the US. The feeling that a spring is coming, the buying of new clothes, the giving of money to little kids, presents, photos, family gatherings, friends' gatherings. It's the exact same feeling from Thanksgiving to Christmas in the US, where once the holiday comes around, everybody is in that festive mood. So I understand the concept of having an ending and a beginning, a new year, and spending that time with close people, friends and family, and the drinking and the partying and the eating. Plus the buying of new stuff. Almost like a new beginning."

"I don't have any cynicism towards it," he says, pondering observations that the holiday has lost some of its authenticity. "It's part of the Vietnamese culture, the thinking, the way they grew up. It's almost as though it's something for people to look forward to, so that they can get their mindset right about what happened during the past year, and was it good or bad; what is going to happen in this new year, and is it going to be good or bad? That being said, I know a lot of Overseas Vietnamese do have issues with it, because even though it has no bearing on anything else other than as a holiday to celebrate, they associate it with being Vietnamese, and that's not who they are anymore."

Family Matters

The Tet holiday may continue to evolve and mean different things to different Vietnamese communities, but the roles of both Christmas and Tet as a focus for family sentiment remains consistent. "If it weren't for my wife's family or even being in Vietnam, I would view Tet as just another day where people take off and celebrate," admits Khanh. "I guess being an entrepreneur, all my days run together anyway. That being said, when Christmas rolls around, when Thanksgiving rolls around, that feeling like, "where are my friends, where is my family" comes back, and I'm missing those guys, missing the turkey, the food, the football, the cold weather."

Jen Nguyen's mother in Germany had a similar sense of nostalgia as her family began to make the transition over to Christmas. "My mother said that Christmas was almost the same feeling for her," tells Jen, "but Christmas did not replace Tet, because tradition was not at the center. Those old Tet holidays when she would call her parents before dressing very nicely and going out on the streets to watch the fireworks or go to the temple, all these things she was missing, which cannot be replaced by the Christmas holidays."

Xuan Mai is philosophical about the difficulties in holding a traditional Tet in Canada. "Before when I lived in Saigon, my parents did everything," she says, "but now I live apart from them, I don't know exactly how to prepare for Tet. At home we still keep up the traditions, but overseas it's hard. If you live with the older generation, they always try to preserve it, but for younger people it's not so easy. Now that I have a son, I want him to know more about the Vietnamese traditions, but it's hard because life has changed, people change. A lot of Vietnamese still do go back during Tet to spend time with the family—but it all depends on the family culture you grew up in."

For Tra My, however, the old traditional Tet has largely faded away, its meaning revised in the light of adulthood in general as well as Vietnam's exposure to international ideas. "It's more like just the holidays than Tet," she sighs. "I see a lot of families now in HCMC, they spend the first day here and then on the second day they will go travel somewhere. It's not about Tet anymore."

While she feels the old traditions she remembers from childhood are important, she does acknowledge that modern life has made the whole rigmarole a little cumbersome. "It's a hassle, definitely," she admits. "We just worry about, will our kids be the same in the next 20 years? Will Tet be the same? At that time, we'll be old, and we, like our parents now, will expect the children to come back during the Tet holidays and spend some time with us. But I don't think they will, and honestly, I understand how hard it is. I just want them to enjoy life—I'm traditional, but if it makes them tired, then what is the point?" ■



Above: Jen Nguyen and her mother

"Those old Tet holidays when she would call her parents before dressing very nicely and going out on the streets to watch the fireworks or go to the temple, all these things she was missing, which cannot be replaced by the Christmas holidays."

Sincerely, Your Daughter

The story of Denise Sandquist
and the search for her birth mother in Vietnam

TEXT BY NICK PIGGOTT



IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN

ON FIRST MEETING HER, Denise Sandquist looks every part the Swedish Millennial. Tall, with platinum blonde hair, immaculate make-up and stylish nails, she greets me with a confident handshake and invites me into a meeting room. She is a business development intern at Top Mot, a Swedish-owned fashion brand in Saigon, a position she boldly secured by pitching herself to Eric, the founder and CEO, in a 150 word LinkedIn connection request. Like most Scandinavians her age, she speaks fluent English, is confident and friendly, and is already widely traveled. However, what sets Denise apart from most of her peers is not knowing who her birth parents are.

“I was adopted from northern Vietnam when I was three weeks old, by a family in Stockholm, Sweden,” Denise explains. “And I’ve decided to come back to Vietnam to see if I can find my biological mother.” Armed with her mother’s full name (Nguyen Thi Diep), age (22) and hometown in Ha Son Binh Province outside of Hanoi, as well as her own birth name (Tran Thanh Huong), she is quietly confident that the process will be straightforward.

“Since talking about my search, I realize that I have a lot more information about my parents than most people in my position. As well as having my mother’s full name, I know that she was a college graduate from either the University of Finance & Economics or the University of Foreign Trade, graduating in 1990 or 1991. My father worked for a private bank dealing with credit in Hanoi, which went bankrupt in 1990/1991. I don’t have any information about him, except that his surname must be Tran, as my birth name was Tran Thanh Huong. And thanks to the information from the Swedish Adoptions Centrum, I even know that the adoption decision was signed by the Deputy Director of the Maternity Hospital, Nguyen Thu Hien, and Nguyen Cong Tuong from the People’s Committee in Hanoi. That’s a comparatively huge amount of information, but it’s still been really tough.”

Talking about her childhood in Stockholm, Denise admits there wasn’t a big Vietnamese influence. “My parents adopted my sister Louise, who is two years younger than me, when she was two months old, also from northern Vietnam. We have two sets of family friends elsewhere in Sweden who had also adopted Vietnamese children, but before I came here backpacking in 2013 I had probably only met three Vietnamese people in my life!”

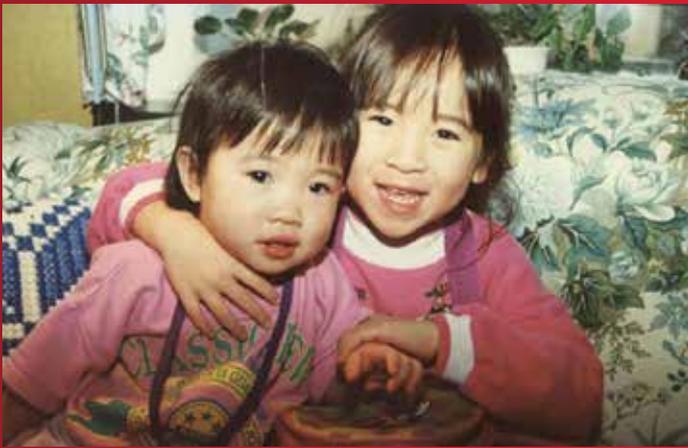
At 25, Denise already has a CV that looks more like a top diplomat’s than a second year Bachelor’s student at the Stockholm School of Economics. She graduated from the Swedish Armed Forces Interpreter Academy, an institute which fast tracks bright young minds into the Swedish intelligence and diplomatic services, and is now fluent in five languages. Straight after graduation she spent two years in military service, then slotted straight into a job at the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Moscow. After completing her posting in 2013, she decided to go backpacking.

Doing the usual Southeast Asia tour, Denise had quite a shock when she landed in Vietnam. “I already had in my mind that I might try to find my birth mother while I was here. Suddenly I realized that I was looking at everyone like they might be my siblings. It was so weird!”

Later that year she decided to move to Nanning, just three hours from the China-Vietnam border. “I realized I have a knack for learning languages, so I decided to try Chinese. And because it’s so close to Vietnam, I thought I could continue my search from there. I didn’t see much of China though, Nanning is one of the ‘green cities,’ where they have e-bikes, but the air was still so dirty.”

Returning home to Sweden in 2015, she discussed the idea of finding her birth parents with her adopted-Vietnamese friends, but they weren’t at keen as she was. She realized that, although she has a wonderful family and felt 100 percent Swedish, there were parts of Vietnamese culture that she identified with: the family-style meals, the warm welcomes and the sense of community. So her motivation was simple. “I live an incredibly happy, stable life, with an amazing family, friends and opportunities. It would just make my life more complete to finally be able to meet my birth mother.”

In one of her earlier breakthroughs, the Swedish Adoptions



"My biggest hope is that my Vietnamese mother is happy and has a good life. I want to tell her that I'm not anything but proud of her, that she was strong enough to keep me and then decided to give me away, to have a better life,"

Centrum gave Denise the name and address of Mrs. Chau, the woman who arranged the adoption from the hospital. Luckily, and not usually common, Mrs. Chau stayed in touch with Denise's mother after the adoption, so could provide a key piece of the puzzle. But, as with the rest of this story, it wasn't that simple. "I wrote to her a couple of times, because I had an address but no phone number. When she didn't write back I decided to go and visit her, but when I got there she wasn't in. So I just stood outside her house and waited for her. I had to, she's such a crucial part of this story, and she could be the key to unlocking the whole thing."

"My biggest hope is that my Vietnamese mother is happy and has a good life. I want to tell her that I'm not anything but proud of her, that she was strong enough to keep me and then decided to give me away, to have a better life," says Denise.

Epilogue

Since our first interview in early December 2016, and just 18 days after her search went public (www.facebook.com/giupdenise, shared almost 2,000 times), Denise has been reunited with her biological

mother. "I'm so grateful to everyone who shared the page, the media who wrote about my search, and everyone who has been so supportive. It was actually through one of the articles in the Vietnamese newspaper *Thanh Nien* that my mother realized that it was her who I was searching for."

But even then it wasn't easy for Denise. As the story spread across the internet, Denise was focused on replying to all of the messages on Facebook and missed the email that her mother had sent her... and the three subsequent messages. When she didn't receive a reply, Denise's mother booked a plane ticket to Saigon to visit the Thanh Nien office to get Denise's contact information, assuming it had been misprinted in the paper. Before the flight, she was able to get Denise's number through the Facebook page and called Denise that evening.

"It was very unreal when she called me. No one had called me before and told me that they were my mother... the only calls were from the media. Other people sent Facebook or email messages, and no one had claimed before that they were my mother. I was thrilled, but I also did not want to celebrate too early. Even though it was convincing that she already bought flight tickets, later that evening I found her e-mails, which persuaded me even more, but I did not feel 100 percent sure yet."

During the emotional call, although the telephone conversation was difficult, their communication felt totally natural. "My mother told me that she loved me a lot and that she was very moved. Since I speak quite limited Vietnamese and she was crying a lot during the conversation, it was mostly I who spoke," says Denise. Refusing her mother's apologies, Denise tried to explain that she has a wonderful life and that her mother had made the right decision to give her daughter away.

The first time they met in person was around Christmas, and with the help of two of Denise's friends, they spent hours catching up. "My mother really wanted to answer all my questions and to explain everything for me. I got to know a lot about the situation when I was born, that she really wanted to keep me, but that she didn't have the opportunity to do it. She decided to give me away for adoption when I was two days old, and even though she was not allowed to, she was sneaking into the hospital to breastfeed me after I was born. She could choose to give me to Vietnamese parents, and in that case they would give her some money. She knew that if she gave me to Vietnamese parents, they would want to cut all the contact with her and not want me to meet her. She could also choose to give me to foreigners, but then she had to sign an agreement that she would never contact me. She could only give information and details about herself, and then I could contact her in the future if I wanted to."

When I ask about her father, Denise's reply is casually neutral. "Apparently my father was very ambitious. He wanted to run his own company; he went abroad to work. My mother describes him as 'smart, handsome, charming and talented.' But he advised my mother to have an abortion, and didn't bother to stay in touch. He doesn't know if he had a boy or a girl. My father is definitely another small chapter in my life, even though it's not a very important one. In the future, I will try to find him. I feel satisfied to know that he was/is smart, talented, well-educated and highly ambitious—not satisfied to know about how he ran away from responsibility, but not surprised to know this."

So is this "happily ever after" for Denise and her mother? "My mother has a new family who doesn't know about me yet. She intends to tell them when the children are more grown up and can understand the situation better. She says she wants me to be a part of the family in the future, and offered to take care of my children if I ever live in Vietnam. She simply wants to be my mother."

Promising to return to Vietnam regularly, Denise is confident that when the time is ready, she will be introduced to her extended family, and that she will also be able to speak fluently with them. "My life is very busy, always, and I have my career to think about, and also a very fulfilling life in Sweden with amazing parents. I'm not pushing anything to go faster with my mother and I'm feeling very happy that I have found her." ■

Two Families Apart

The one that went and the one left behind

TEXT AND IMAGES BY JAMES PHAM

FEW WORDS ENGENDER FEELINGS of warmth, safety and belonging like “family.” Especially this time of the year, when Vietnamese families the world over gather for a few precious days of merrymaking, overeating and good-natured gossip. For some, it’s literally the only respite from an unforgiving work schedule, time to revel in the embrace of family.

I was born in Vietnam. Growing up in the US since the age of two, I was blissfully unaware of the world I was born into, a country which no longer exists. In fact, I was perfectly happy being a ‘banana,’ yellowy Asian on the outside, more white than anything else on the inside, living in suburban Virginia, going to the best, predominantly White schools, hanging out with my conspicuously pale, homogeneous group of friends with little thought to where I came from.

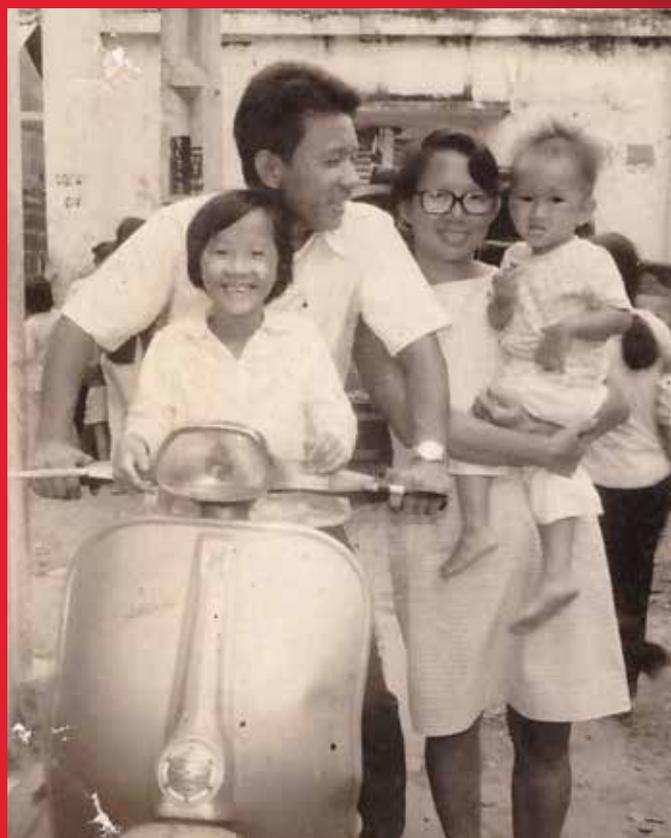
But the story of my childhood, and now, of my present, is a tale of two families. One that went and the one that was left behind.

My father’s family came from Thai Binh, 100 km south of Hanoi. Part of the *Bac 54* movement (Northerners who moved to the South in 1954 as France lost its grip on Vietnam), they settled in Saigon. My grandfather was a civil servant and old family photos tell a tale of carefree children with good teeth, fashionably dressed, posing in front of a landscaped garden with an automobile in the background, servants to help around the house.

Even then, my father’s family was open-minded, sophisticated, well-traveled. My own parents got married in Germany while away on scholarship, my father also studied in France and Morocco. One uncle met his Australian wife on a cruise. Another aunt met her Swiss husband while hanging out in a *kibbutz* in Israel. Yet another uncle was stationed as a diplomat in Paris, London and New York. Photos show graduations all around the US. To this day, I find it surreal that I have sets of cousins who look nothing like me, including some with the blondest of hair.

My baby book, a surprising recent find after being safeguarded for decades, shows glimpses of a comfortable life. A smiling family of four, perched on a shiny new Vespa, which I’m told was quite the status symbol in the day. My mother, dusting sand off my one-year-old feet on a visit to Cap Saint Jacques, the French coastal playground now known as Vung Tau.

The only person in my family to go to war was my Uncle Giap. He came home uninjured but no longer whole. A few



Top: My grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts and uncles in 1953

Middle: My family in 1974

Bottom: A family reunion in California, 2005

years later, and three years before I was born, Uncle Giap took his own life. I still hear the heartbreaking wistfulness in my father's voice on the rare occasion he speaks of his brother, younger by four years, the one uncle I never knew. In old photos, I see kind eyes looking back at me. How much did his suicide have to do with the things he experienced as a soldier?

Now the war was no longer just on the fringes of consciousness. It was inexorably moving towards Saigon. In those final moments, my parents tell me they spent every waking minute listening to the radio in a torturous, helpless exercise of tracking exactly how close the front lines had become. The end of life as they knew it was measured in days and hours, not weeks and years.

One of my aunts, who had by then returned from a study tour in the US and gained citizenship, went to the US Embassy in Saigon to arrange evacuation. She was told there was no space. Undeterred, she went directly to the airport and was able to sign herself up along with our family for evacuation. My mother recalls they had less than one day's notice. What do you take when you have just a few hours to liquidate your entire life? Even though my maternal grandparents lived only 15 minutes away, in the confusion and panic, there was not even time enough for good-byes. We left five days before what is now called the "liberation" of Vietnam, before the infamous scenes of people desperately clinging to the last few helicopters. My mom tells me that the night we left, I asked my parents why we were still outside at night despite the curfew.

The word "curfew" should not be in any two-year-old child's vocabulary.

The Weight of History

Safely in the US, though, our family photo albums depict a happy kid who rode ponies and hugged Disney characters, as always, shielded from the past. But over the years, small chinks appeared in the armor.

I vividly recall one late afternoon in 1977. I would've been four. My mom was drying her hair with one of those old fashioned contraptions that included a light green plastic bonnet, a hose and a very loud fan. The phone rang. In an instant, my mother was doubled over, sobbing inconsolably over the news that my grandmother had died in a land far away. The one there was no time to say good-bye to. A kind woman who I had no memory of. Part of the family left behind.

Then came the war on Iraq during my teen years. Again, there was 24/7 coverage of war, but this time with live images. My father was transfixed. Not only did he watch the news when he was home, he taped it when he wasn't. Even after all those years, he had an intense visceral reaction to what he was seeing, the final crack in the floodgates of his memory, a trigger which led to more serious issues

"The young are rarely burdened by the weight of history. It's usually when we see our lives as history mostly written that we start looking back. My parents have since come back to Vietnam on many occasions. They marvel at how much everything has changed. I tell them of new 50 story buildings going up and mega cities being planned."

that carry on until this day. I have never asked him what terrible things he must have seen in those country provinces long before I was born. I'm not sure I want to know.

The young are rarely burdened by the weight of history. It's usually when we see our lives as history mostly written that we start looking back. My parents have since come back to Vietnam on many occasions. They marvel at how much everything has changed. I tell them of new 50 story



buildings going up and mega cities being planned.

This is actually one of the reasons I've decided to come back to the land of my birth. I'm no longer happy being a 'banana'. I want to know the country that shaped my parents, even though that country, on paper at least, does not exist anymore. Later on, most of the family left behind did manage to come to America. But by then, my maternal grandfather was wizened and shriveled, a toothless shadow of what he once was.

Even if I wanted to forget my childhood connection to this country, I can't. It's everywhere I turn, even now, almost 40 years later. It's in the mural that I pass by three times a week on the way to my tennis courts, defiant faces ripping foreign flags as fires rage in the distance.

It's in the landscape of the city, previously known as the Pearl of the Far East. Where are the slick monorails of Bangkok or the impressive skylines of Hong Kong?

It's in the missing tip of the right forefinger of the security guard who scans my parking pass, an all too common sign among men of a certain age who voluntarily amputated their trigger finger to avoid a soldier's life.

It's in the gaunt face of a woman I randomly met who happened to have been in the same graduating class as my mother and taught at the same all girls' school as she did. I came back to show her a recent photo of our family and she stared at my mother's now aged face for a long time. "I hardly recognize her," she told me quietly of a friend she hadn't seen in nearly four decades. "I remember your mother as a very pretty girl with a round face." I don't know if the years have been kind to her either. Or whether this was the life she envisioned for herself.

It's in my childhood home that I drive past in District 3, strangers now living in it, squatters who had their pick of homes abandoned by the fortunate / desperate. Whenever relatives come to visit, they always ask me to drive them by there, though never entering, as if to try and cling to a dream in those ethereal moments between sleep and wake. I wonder whether it still looks anything like the neat, cheerful home in my baby photos, filled with toys and books?

All I know is that the past has shaped my present. Then and now. Empty and complete. East and West. While I straddle both worlds, I'm not sure I can say I truly belong in either. But I know my family will always be there to help me figure it out, both the family that went and the one that got left behind. ■



Top: My grandparents as I remember them
Middle: Extended family, late 1930s
Bottom: My mother and me, Vung Tau, 1974

Top: My aunt Thu, 50 years apart
Middle: Sitting on my grandfather's lap, 1974
Bottom: Happier times, late 1940s

Wine & Dine

LA BELGIQUE



IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN



THE TASTE OF OLD SAIGON

A charming restaurant with food inspired by tradition and Vietnamese moms

TEXT BY ROISIN MURRAY IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN



NESTLED DOWN AN inconspicuous side street off Le Thanh Ton sits **Quan Bui** (17A Ngo Van Nam, D1; quanbui.vn), a culinary haven, which also happens to shelter us from an uncharacteristic downpours this time of year. Danh Tran, owner of the five Quan Bui restaurants in Ho Chi Minh City, defines his brand as “traditional Vietnamese dining. The food is for those who miss Vietnamese cuisine. People want a restaurant that reminds them of something from the past, like the food that their mothers and grandmothers used to cook for them.”

Quan Bui is an authentically Vietnamese restaurant, and the aesthetic of the restaurant is a testament to this. Upon arrival, the first thing that strikes

us is the décor, which is reminiscent of Vietnam’s days as part of French Indochina. The walls are covered in art deco posters depicting images from colonial Vietnam, a stark reminder of the relevance of Vietnam’s history. “Our signature is the past. It is the symbol of our restaurants,” he says. Even the rustic clay pots that are used to serve the food reinforce this theme. “I really like the 1950s and 1960s, which you can see in the tableware. It’s a reminder of Old Saigon.”

We are seated at a table looking onto the bustling street outside, and we are pleased to see that the wine list is extensive, boasting grapes from across the globe. We settle on a glass of red and white wine each. The sauvignon blanc

is crisp, with refreshing citrus flavors. The authenticity of the restaurant is further confirmed by the fact that the New Zealand merlot is served cold, in distinctive Vietnamese style. Following only a short waiting time, our starter arrives. Our meal begins with the Quan Bui salad with seafood and pomelo (VND139,000). This dish is unique because of the combination of both crunchy and chewy textures, a delight on the senses, and offset by a very clean dressing. The starter is placed in the center of the table, with the intention of sharing. Danh explains the logic behind this serving style, “It’s a family style of dining, and it has been going on for decades. When the family dine at the table, they have to share. We’re not used



to having to divide into portions. I grew up in a big family and we always fought over our food. And we always had these clay pots—this is a reminder of that.”

With the appetizer well and truly devoured, the deep fried Saigon style spring rolls with minced pork and prawns (VND99,000) mark the beginning of the main course. Beautifully presented on a bed of mint leaves, the rolls are cooked well with surf and turf flavors that greatly complement each other. As I am not a great honey lover, I am reluctant to sample the sautéed chicken with local honey sauce (VND89,000), but I am pleasantly surprised. The honey taste is subtle, and just strong enough to bring out the dulcet notes of the dish. Understated but far from simplistic, the next dish

is the stir fried Tonkin jasmine flowers and garlic (VND79,000). The jasmine flowers are fresh, crispy, and seasoned with just the right amount of garlic for an explosion of flavors. The tangy soup, with chopped tomatoes and dill (VND119,000), is decadently zesty, with its strong flavor demonstrating the importance of herbs and spices in Vietnamese cuisine. The entire meal is brought together by the stir fried brown rice with chicken and cashew nuts (VND99,000), with the nuts creating a deliciously textured finish.

So whether you are Vietnamese and looking to revisit the nostalgia of the past, or a foreigner who wishes to become acquainted with the traditional elements of Vietnam, find both at Quan Bui. ■

QUAN BUI GARDEN

in District 2 (55 Ngo Quang Huy, Thao Dien, pictured above), with its spacious garden area, can be hired out for functions. It is ideal for weddings, birthday parties and private events. The indoor and alfresco restaurant features elegant soft walls, gorgeous tiled flooring, plenty of flora for shade, organic lighting and floor-to-ceiling windows.

BELGIUM IN FLAVORS



Saucy, satisfying and sometimes deep-fried, Belgian cuisine isn't for those on a diet

TEXT BY **SONIA GREGOR** AND **MARTIN ZORRILLA**

IMAGES BY **NGOC TRAN**

TUCKED INTO A BUSY side street across from Tan Dinh Market, **La Belgique** (17 Tran Quoc Toan, D3) is small and welcoming, with checked tablecloths and faux-brick wallpaper. The beer is from Belgium, the meat is perfectly cooked, and the portions are big.

We arrived at La Belgique during the holidays, and cheery fairy lights greeted us from the window. We started with drinks: a glass of crisp French rosé (VND90,000) and a Belgian Chimay Tripel beer (VND180,000). We had not been initiated in Chimay beer before and were bowled over by the floral flavors of

the brew, the work of dedicated Trappist monks. It was not easy to decide which appetizing dishes to order. The menu contains sections dedicated to classic French dishes, Belgian specialties and an inviting selection of international foods like pasta and couscous. To tempt us further, there were weekly specials written on the chalkboard.

For starters, we chose the limed salmon tartare (VND185,000)—perfectly cubed salmon marinated in olive oil and lime. The deftly knife work of dicing the salmon, red onion and chives was worthy of a sashimi chef. The presentation of this dish was not to be outdone by the

flavors. It was at once creamy and light, the olive oil ideally balanced with the lime. Next, we embraced the French-Vietnamese setting by ordering frog legs with parsley butter (VND175,000). The generously-portioned frog legs were fried in butter with a hint of flour and lots of garlic. Frog meat is a pleasant halfway point between chicken and fish. Think of pan-fried white fish in the shape of a chicken wing, and you can understand why we quickly polished off the heaping plate. We sopped up the leftover garlic butter with crusty home-made bread.

Our first main was the aptly named couscous royal (VND285,000), a



Clockwise from top: couscous royal, ham hock with honey sauce, tarte tatin; Opposite page top: frog legs with parsley butter, salmon tartare

steaming plate of couscous with grilled chicken, merguez sausage, lamb meatball and lamb chop. A result of North African influence, couscous ranks in the top three favorite national dishes in France. It may not be the first dish visitors associate with France, but a glance at our fellow patrons as the couscous royal was brought to the table, told us that this was true French comfort food. The fluffy couscous was accompanied by a rich spicy vegetable stew. In each spoonful, you get a mix of flavors and textures from the stewed eggplant and carrot, grilled meat and mild nutty couscous.

Next up was a true showstopper:

the ham hock with honey sauce (VND255,000). A sizeable chunk of pork leg, the braised hock shone gold in the light. Nestled on a bed of lettuce and crispy bacon potatoes, and with a side of honey sauce, the dish looked like something a medieval king would eat on his throne. The hock was crisp on the outside and tenderly flaked off the bone, made all the more succulent with generous pours of honey sauce.

Far too stuffed to manage two desserts, we settled on splitting a tarte tatin (VND85,000, seasonal) to end our meal. The caramelized apple tart is one of our favorite desserts, and the

kitchen at La Belgique truly did it justice. With plenty of butter (of course) and caramelized apples, the latter maintained their integrity while absorbing the sugar from the caramelization process. Complemented by crème anglaise and ice cream, the dessert almost made us forget how full we were.

After our dinner we lingered awhile longer at La Belgique. From classic Belgian and French comfort food to the soft music, the small restaurant has an invitingly homey feel. It is one of those few places that feeds the soul as well as the stomach. ■

WELCOME TO AUNT MAI'S

A modern celebration of Vietnam's culinary diversity and past

TEXT BY SONIA GREGOR AND MARTIN ZORRILLA IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN



Left: Di Mai's *rau cang cua*. Right: minced pork and betel leaves and *bahn hoi*

AS ANYONE WHO LIVES here knows, Vietnamese people are serious about good food. Whether it's the street vendor rolling spring rolls or your aunt making noodles, they carefully blend different flavors and textures to make each bite amazing. This is the inspiration for **Di Mai** (translated as "Aunt Mai", 136 - 138 Le Thi Hong Gam, D1; *nhahangdimai.com*), a new restaurant that celebrates the best of Vietnamese food, from all regions of the country. Traditional street food and family recipes are cooked with the freshest ingredients, and with contemporary flair, by talented chefs. The restaurant's relaxed yet refined atmosphere invites you to stop in for a quick lunch, or tuck into several dishes as you catch up with family and friends.

The decor effortlessly blends vintage memorabilia into a modern restaurant design. Shelves lined with teapots, bottles of soy sauce and cookbooks bring to mind a family kitchen, or perhaps a general store from 60 years ago. Vibrant blue tiles and warm red lampshades echo the dominant colors of the room. In the center, next to one long table is a sky-blue *xe lam*, a three-wheeled taxi with the words "Made

in Vietnam" painted on its side. This pride in Vietnamese inventiveness and culture is carried through in the design of the open kitchen. Through a large window, you can watch the cooks chop and sauté your food with effortless precision. As a diner, you are surrounded by food being prepared. On one side is a *banh mi* and spring rolls station; on the other, a refrigerated case of Vietnamese desserts. Another refrigerator holds fresh fruit for juices, while over by the windows single-origin coffee is brewed through metal filters.

We selected fresh juices to accompany our dinner. The Detox (VND68,000) is made with beetroot, carrot, apple, pineapple and ginger. It is a lovely purple color, without being overwhelmingly beet-y. The sweetness of the fruit and the spiciness of the ginger balance out each sip. Feeling properly detoxed, we started drinking the Happy Time (VND68,000). This pale green juice is a blend of guava, kumquat, apple and honey. The light floral and citrus flavor was enough to bring a smile to anyone's lips.

The first dish to arrive was the crab claw herb salad (VND95,000). Crab claw herb, or *rau cang cua*, is a delicate

leafy green perfect for salad. Here, it was tossed with strips of tender beef and a cool kumquat dressing. Sauces of chili satay and fish sauce were served on the side for extra kick. Next we admired the grilled rounds of minced pork and betel leaves (VND88,000). With our waiter's advice, we cut the meat into small pieces, before wrapping it in fresh herbs and pillowy white *banh hoi*. *Banh hoi* is a sheet made of rice vermicelli, so it absorbs plenty of the spicy-sweet fish sauce that you dunk each morsel in before eating.

We loved the crispy duck fried spring rolls (VND78,000). Inside the fried shell, slices of duck breast mingled with finely diced wood ear mushroom. Wrapped in herbs and dipped in fish sauce, this is like a bullet of umami flavors: small but powerful. Transitioning to the meaty main dishes, we started with Di Mai fried rice (VND88,000). Nuggets of Chinese sausage and shrimp studded the rice, while chili satay and spring onions livened it up. Best of all, it was served in a clay pot with crispy browned rice on the bottom.

The Di Mai spicy grilled chicken (VND195,000) arrived on a platter. Glorious gleaming slices of glazed and grilled chicken greeted our goggling gaze. This is the Vietnamese answer to

chicken wings. Eating the tender meat off the bone, you are surrounded by the scents of barbecue and spice. Next up was a beautiful grilled sea bass fillet (VND95,000). Coated with a rich spice rub of galangal, lemon leaves and chili, the white fish flaked into chunks that quickly disappeared along with the rice.

We couldn't leave without trying a few bites of Di Mai's take on *mi quang* (VND 78,000). One of the first dishes we tasted after arriving in Vietnam, these noodles are hard to miss in HCMC. Although cheaper restaurants may use food coloring to make their noodles yellow, Di Mai uses turmeric, as is tradition in Quang Nam Province. The meaty broth and quail eggs, shrimp and chicken are complemented by fresh herbs and bean sprouts, and crunchy peanuts and rice crackers. Each bite runs the full gamut of flavors and textures, leaving you hungry for more—insuring our return. ■

Asif Mehrudeen, with 20 years of experience in Australia, Japan, Bali and India, established Di-Concepts in Vietnam - a food and beverage company that focuses on design, location, high quality cuisine and hygiene. Along with Di Mai, he also owns San Fu Lou and Sorae in District 1.



Clockwise from top: Di Mai's sea bass fillet, spicy grilled chicken; fried rice; mi quang; crispy fried duck spring rolls



CHA CA

The restaurant that transformed *cha ca la vong* (marinated grilled fish with rice vermicelli) into a national phenomenon began its operations in the 19th century with the Doan family. During the French colonization period, at 14 Hang Son Street, lived the Doans, who often made delicious grilled fish for their guests and neighbors. Through word-of-mouth, the dish became famous and was specifically requested by De Tham's army during the insurgency.



Ingredients

Serves 4

- Catfish - 1kg
(can also use snakehead or sturgeon)
- Green onions – 100g
- Dill – 100g
- Fermented rice – 4tbsp
- Shrimp paste – 1tbsp
- Turmeric powder – ½ tbsp
- Galangal - 1
- Salt, fish sauce, sugar, seasoning - enough
- Cooking oil – 3tbsp



Galangal

Serve With

- Rice vermicelli – 1kg
- Roasted peanuts – hand full
- Herbs – 300g
- Shrimp paste – 4tbsp
- Lime - 2
- Chili – 2



With an eye for visual beauty as well as a discerning palate, Ngoc Tran has undertaken to collect and present *Easy To Cook: 40 Delicious Vietnamese Dishes As Listed By CNN*. Ngoc has personally traveled around her native Vietnam in search of the most outstanding variety of every recipe featured in her book. Find her book at all Phuong Nam bookstores (nhasachphuongnam.com) or on Kindle at Amazon.

Marinated Grilled Fish with Rice Vermicelli

This is a truly Hanoian dish featuring fresh, flavorsome fish cooked with extreme delicacy that is sure to captivate the hearts of food lovers all over Vietnam and the world.



1. Squeeze fermented rice and shrimp paste through a fine cloth and reserve the liquid.



2. Cut dill into 3cm-long pieces. Pound galangal into pieces.



3. Wash the fish, patting dry with a clean cloth. Cut fish into medium pieces. Keep the fat.



4. Marinate fish with turmeric powder, galangal, dill, salt, fish sauce, sugar, seasoning and the juice from the fermented rice and shrimp paste for 2h.



5. Grill marinated fish over hot charcoal. You can also fry fish in a frying pan.



6. Put the fat from the fish into a pot and cook until it melts. Add the grilled/fried fish along with the green onion and dill into the pot and stir until the fish is well-cooked. Enjoy immediately with roasted peanuts, rice vermicelli, and shrimp paste mixed with lime juice.

ORGANIC MATTER

WHY YOU SHOULD BE DRINKING ORGANIC WINE



Alfredo de la Casa has been organizing wine tastings for over 20 years and has published three wine books, including the Gourmand award winner for best wine education book. You can reach him at www.wineinvietnam.com.



OVER THE RECENT YEARS, organic and ecological wines have been gaining in popularity all over the world. More and more wineries are producing them, yet they still remain a minority, and it's not easy to find good ones.

There are different usage and regulations for the term "organic," which vary depending on the country you consult, which makes it difficult to understand what organic and biodynamic wines are all about. In a nutshell, for a wine to be labelled "organic" it has to be made from at least 95 percent organically grown grapes; both US and the European Union require that just 95 percent of the product is organic in order to award it organic status.

But what does organic mean? It means that the ingredients used to produce the wines are grown without the use of artificial pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, genetically-modified organisms or ionizing radiation. If you believe that organic means chemical free, you are incorrect. Some chemicals are allowed, albeit in small quantities, if there are no acceptable substitutes and if the chemical is considered safe.

Likewise, organic wine may not have been produced using sustainable techniques, which are methods of producing wine that respect nature and leave the vineyards in the same state or in better condition for future generations.

Biodynamic/ecological viticulture is essentially organic viticulture with the addition of some practices that look specifically at the ecosystem. Some of these techniques include surveying the alignment of the planets and the phases of the moon for planting, harvesting, etc.

There are nine special preparations that are fundamental to biodynamic viticulture, including treating plants, animals and crops as a single interconnected system. Disease and insect control are addressed through botanical species diversity, predator habitat, balanced crop nutrition, and attention to light penetration and airflow. Weed control emphasizes prevention, which includes timing of planting, mulching, plus identifying and avoiding the spread of invasive weed species.

Either of these practices, which are similar but different, have the

common goal of respecting the environment and delivering a wine as natural and free of chemicals as possible. But how does this matter to you and the taste of the wine?

If you have not tried organic wines for a while, (admittedly, in the past they used to be dreadful), I encourage you to give them another try. Nowadays, they are gorgeous and obviously healthy. A good example of this is Aroa Jauna, from Bodegas Aroa in the North of Spain, a tiny winery producing only organic wines, winners of many accolades and offering great value for money.

Avoiding pesticides and working naturally with pests makes a huge difference: Hacienda Lopez de Haro wines in Rioja plant roses at the front and back of each row of vines as they know that pests will attack roses first. This is just one example of a more delicate, natural way to work around problems, rather than simply spraying with chemicals to "prevent."

But perhaps the best reason to try organic wines is that due to the almost complete lack of chemicals and reduced use of sulphites, you can drink more with less powerful hangovers! ■



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Wine & Dine

BARS



Acoustic Bar

As the name suggests, the Acoustic Bar is the ideal place to catch some high-quality live music in a lively atmosphere. Plus, the frequent rotation of performers means that even the most regular of patrons are kept on their toes.

El Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3
83930 7627



Aperitivo

Italian cocktail and wine bar Aperitivo has quickly established itself as a favourite in Thao Dien's bar scene. Cosy, friendly, and chic, with a quality cocktail and wine list, delicious deli sandwiches by day and night, Aperitivo is a great place to relax and unwind after work.

80b/c Xuan Thuy, Thao Dien, D2.
9am - late, closed on Mondays



BiaCraft

Located in the heart of District 2, BiaCraft is renowned for its extensive selection of craft beers. The back to basics décor only serves to enhance the laidback ambience which BiaCraft prides itself on.

90 Xuan Thuy, D2
8374 46863
www.biacraft.com



Chu Bar

At this laid back venue, tourists and locals alike can sit around Chu's large oval bar or on luxurious padded benches. It has a full cocktail menu as well as a short menu of snacks and sandwiches.

158 Dong Khoi, D1



Malt

Hailed for its shuffleboard table and its smoke-free environment, this American-style bar has quickly established itself as a favorite amongst the expat community. The many local IPAs on tap are not to be missed, either.

46-48 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
9184 84763.



The Tavern

With its reasonably priced drinks and famously friendly staff, it is no wonder that expats refer to this British bar and restaurant as a 'home away from home.' You can even purchase a British-style Sunday roast to accompany your cold beer.

R2-24, Hung Gia 3, Bui Bang Doan, PMH, D7.
www.thetavernpmh.com

Also Try...

Broma Saigon Bar

Famously known for 'not being a bar' Broma is one of Ho Chi Minh City's most popular hangouts with prices ranging from VND30,000 - VND500,000. Broma is a more upscale option for those wishing to escape the cheap drinks in The Pham.

41 Nguyen Hue, D1

Donkey Bar

An open air, but well cooled bar in the heart of Bui Vien on the site of the once popular Stellar cafe. A cut above the regular backpacker haunts in style and offer. Downstairs is a modern bar with flat screen TVs showing sports, a huge circular bar and tables, and outdoor seating for people watching. Upstairs are air conditioned rooms, pool table and outdoor deck.

119 Bui Vien, D1

Game On

Game On is one of Saigon's biggest sports bar, serving breakfast, lunch and dinner. The bar also has an extensive drinks menu including coffees, juices, beers, wines, vodkas, and more. Game On also boasts a function room for corporate meetings or private parties.

115 Ho Tung Mau, D1

onTop Bar

Located on the 20th floor of Novotel Saigon Center, onTop Bar provides views over Saigon from an expansive outdoor terrace. The venue offers a menu with over 20 cheeses, cured meats and both Vietnamese and international-inspired tapas.

167 Hai Ba Trung, D3
3822 4866

Purple Jade

Lively and cosmopolitan, Purple Jade is a must on any nightlife agenda. The lounge offers an innovative menu of tasty snacks and signature cocktails in a sleek and chic aesthetic to complement the chilled-out vibe.

1st Floor, InterContinental Asiana Saigon
dine@icasianasaiagon.com
6pm until late

Saigon Saigon Bar

This iconic bar is a great place to watch the sun go down over the lights of the city and relax with friends. Live entertainment nightly: resident band Living Cuba from 9pm, Tuesday to Sunday, Carnival Party on every first Wednesday of the month.

Rooftop, 9th floor,
19-23 Lam Son Square, D1
3823 4999
www.caravellehotel.com
11am till late

Xu Bar

A cocktail hot spot with Coconut Martinis, Cranelo Sparkles and Passion Fruit Capriosa on offer along with a variety of tapas with DJs and drink specials throughout the week.

71-75 Hai Ba Trung, D1
www.xusaigon.com





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 140 Yersin, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

CAFÉS



Bach Dang

An institute that's been around for over 30 years, Kem Bach Dang is a short walking distance from The Opera House and is a favorite dessert and cafe spot among locals and tourists. They have two locations directly across from each other serving juices, smoothies, shakes, beer and ice cream, with air conditioning on the upper levels.

26-28 Le Loi, D1



Café RuNam

No disappointments from this earnest local cafe consistently serving exceptional international standard coffee. Beautifully-styled and focussed on an attention to quality, Cafe RuNam is now embarking on the road to becoming a successful franchise. The venue's first floor is particularly enchanting in the late evening.

96 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
www.caferunam.com



En Tea House & Restaurant

En replicates the feeling of the old Saigon by modern Saigonese, complimented by authentic Vietnamese cuisine and deluxe teas, for anyone who wants to look for Saigon's sense of nostalgia and friendliness.

308 - 308C Dien Bien Phu, Ward 4, D3
 3832 9797
 Facebook: Enteahouse



K.Coffee

Accented with sleek furniture and dark wood, this cozy cafe serves fresh Italian-style coffee, cold fruit juices, homemade Vietnamese food and desserts. The friendly owner and staff make this a great spot to while away the afternoon with a good book or magazine.

86 Hoang Dieu, D4
 8253316 / 090 142 3103



La Rotonde Saigon

Situated in an authentic French colonial structure, this relaxed café is the perfect haven to escape the hustle and bustle of District 1. The east meets west interior décor is reminiscent of Old Saigon, and is greatly complemented by the Vietnamese fusion cuisine on offer.

77B Ham Nghi, 1st Floor, D1



The Workshop

The cafe is located on the top floor and resembles an inner city warehouse. The best seats are by the windows where you can watch the traffic zoom by. If you prefer your coffee brewed a particular way, there are a number of brewing techniques to ask for, from Siphon to Aeropress and Chemex. Sorry, no Vietnamese *ca phe sua da* served here.

27 Ngo Duc Ke, D1

CHINESE



Dragon Court

The well-heeled Chinese certainly go for luxury and this venue has it in spades. Situated in a classy location just opposite the Opera House, Dragon Court features a broad selection of dishes from across the spectrum of mainland cuisines, making this an ideal a-la-carte venue as well as the perfect spot for Dim Sum.

11-13 Lam Son Square, D1
3827 2566



Dynasty

New World's own slice of Canton with a particularly fine Dim Sum selection, Dynasty is a traditional lavishly-styled Chinese venue with flawless design. Authenticity and a sense of old-world China make this one of Saigon's more refined options for the cuisine. A number of private rooms are available.

New World Hotel
76 Le Lai, D1
3822 8888
www.saigon.newworldhotels.com



Kabin

Dine Cantonese-style by the river at the Renaissance Riverside's own Chinese venue decked out with flourishes reminiscent of classical Qing period tastes. Kabin's cuisine is known for presenting new takes on traditional dishes as well as for its more exotic fare.

Renaissance Riverside Hotel,
8-15 Ton Duc Thang, D1
3822 0033



Li Bai

Thoroughly traditional Chinese venue at the Sheraton Hotel and Towers offering choice oriental delicacies against a backdrop of fine Chinese art. This opulent venue, open throughout the day, is one of the city's more beautiful restaurants in this category.

Level 2, 88 Dong Khoi, D1
3827 2828
www.libaisaigon.com



Ming Court

The best in Chinese cuisine with a unique Taiwanese focus in a Japanese hotel, Ming Court is classy in its precision and graceful without compromise. It's certainly one of the city's most impressive venues for fans of the cuisine, and nothing is left to chance with the venue's signature exemplary service standards.

3rd floor, Nikko Saigon Hotel
235 Nguyen Van Cu, D1



Ming Dynasty

Ming Dynasty serves authentic Chinese food in a setting reminiscent of an old Chinese palace. Specialties include dim sum, abalone and dishes from Guangdong.

23 Nguyen Khac Vien, D7

Also Try...

Hung Ky Mi Gia

An old mainstay on the Chinese cuisine trail with well over a decade in operation, Hung Ky Mi Gia is known for its classic mainland dishes with a focus on delicious roasts. Safe and tasty Chinese food.

20 Le Anh Xuan, D1
3822 2673

Ocean Palace

A place for those who love Chinese food. The large dining room on the ground floor can accommodate up to 280 diners. Up on the first floor are six private rooms and a big ballroom that can host 350 guests.

2 Le Duan Street, D1
3911 8822

Seven Wonders (Bay Ky Quan)

The brainchild of an overseas Chinese/Vietnamese architect who wanted to build something extraordinary in his home town, this venue combines the architectural features of seven world heritage structures blended into one. The

cuisine is just as eclectic with representative dishes from several major Chinese traditions.

12 Duong 26, D6
3755 1577
www.7ryquan.com

Shang Palace

Renowned as one of the finest restaurants in the city, Shang Palace boasts mouth-watering Cantonese and Hong Kong cuisine served in a warm and elegant atmosphere.

Whether it be an intimate dinner for two or a larger group event, Shang Palace can cater for three-hundred guests including private VIP rooms. With more than fifty Dim-Sum items and over two-hundred delectable dishes to choose from, Shang Palace is an ideal rendezvous for any dining occasion.

1st Floor, Norfolk Mansion
17-19-21, Ly Tu Trong, D1
3823 2221

Yu Chu

Yu Chu is renowned for the quality and presentation of its authentic Cantonese and Peking cuisines along with its elegant décor. Watching the chefs prepare signature dishes such as hand-pulled noodle, Dim Sum and Peking Duck right in the kitchen is a prominent, popular feature.

1st Floor, InterContinental Asiana Saigon, Corner of Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan, D1
3520 9099
www.intercontinental.com/saigon



 For full review, please visit: www.oivietnam.com

SPANISH



La Bodega

La Bodega is a quaint Spanish restaurant serving succulent tapas dishes in a setting infused with a Latin-American vibe. With a bar open till late serving reasonably priced cocktails, this is the perfect place for both foodies and mojito lovers alike.

11 Xuan Thuy, D2
0120 757 3288



Olé

With all the warmth you'd expect from a decent venue in this category, Olé serves authentic and tasty Spanish favorites with great tapas and highly-recommended paella. Family-run venue with a passion for great food and good service without undue fuss. Feel at home.

129B Le Thanh Ton, D1
012 6529 1711



Tapas Saigon

Tasty tapas at Vietnamese prices not far from the center of District 1. Fresh ingredients, broad menu with food prepared by a Spanish chef. Best washed down with authentic house sangria.

53/26B Tran Khanh Du, D1
090 930 0803



WINE

An Phu Supermarket

Large supermarket stocking a wide range well-known international brands of dry goods along with fresh groceries, frozen meat and fish, fresh fruit and vegetables, cheese, wine, toiletries and more.

43 Thao Dien, D2

Annam Gourmet

An upscale deli and grocery chain offering gourmet groceries, cheese, organic products, gluten-free products, fruit and vegetables, gourmet deli, wine and other beverages. All locations have a coffee lounge that serves breakfast, lunch, drinks and early dinner.

41A Thao Dien, D2
16-18 Hai Ba Trung, D1

Finewines

Vietnamese company specializes in providing imported wines, wine accessories and beers at reasonable price to luxury price.

50 Hai Ba Trung St., D1

Red Apron

As a part of Celliers d'Asie, one of the leading wine importers and distributors in Vietnam with more than 1000 international wines and spirits from over 200 producers in both old and new world.

102 Ham Nghi, D1

Saigon Wine Club

Saigon Wine Club is the first online wine club in Vietnam, offering free speedy delivery aiming for delivery in 30 minutes.

92 Nguyen Huu Canh street, Binh Thanh

Saigon Cellars

A shop specializing in premium-label and easy-drinking wines from Australia and New Zealand. Winner of multiple global awards and served in 5-star hotels worldwide, Saigon Cellars is part of business class service on Singapore Airlines.

6/7 Cach Mang Thang Tam

The Warehouse

A premium wine importer, distributor, and retailer supplying wines from all over the world, the Warehouse also offers spirits, wine accessories, glassware and refrigeration to complement their customers' choices.

15/5 Le Thanh Ton, D1

Veggy's

A specialized grocery store carrying imported products, Veggy's offers wine, a wide range of international food imported from abroad and fresh produce grown in Vietnam.

23A le thanh ton, D1

Vinifera

Established in 2002, Vinifera is one of the most reliable wine distribution companies in Vietnam. Offering prestigious wines from around the world at a great value.

7 Thai Van Lung, D1



FRENCH



Augustin

Augustin is a romantic and charming French restaurant located just steps away from the Rex Hotel. Serves lunches and dinners and offers 10 percent discount on la carte menu items.

10D Nguyen Thiep, D1
www.augustinrestaurant.com



Le Terroir

Recently opened, Le Terroir serves dishes such as Bouchée à la Reine duo, Pan seared salmon along with pastas, risotto and decadent desserts. The wine list here is an oenophile's dream with over 200 labels in stock from Australia, California and Chile to Italy. The restaurant is on two levels with a small terrace in the ground floor.

30 Thai Van Lung, D1



Le Bacoulos

Le Bacoulos is a French restaurant, bar and lounge that serves French cuisine, bar food like burgers, fish and chips alongside vegetarian options like spinach soup and Greek salad. There's also a garden to unwind in with a glass of wine or enjoy a game of pool.

13 Tong Huu Dinh, D2
3519 4058
www.bacoulos.com



Le Jardin

This place is consistently popular with French expats seeking an escape from the busier boulevards. It has a wholesome bistro-style menu with a shaded terrace cafe in the outdoor garden of the French cultural centre, Idecaf.

31 Thai Van Lung, D1



Long Phi

French-owned, this longstanding resto-bar has been a favorite among late-night revelers because of its late opening hours - 4am. The menu is a combination of Vietnamese and French with pasta dishes thrown in to cater to everyone.

207 Bui Vien, D1



Ty Coz

This unassuming restaurant is located down an alley and up three flights of stairs. The charming French owner/chef will happily run through the entire menu in details and offer his recommendations. An accompanying wine list includes a wide range of choices.

178/4 Pasteur, D1
www.tycozsaigon.com

Also Try...

La Cuisine

A cosy restaurant just outside the main eating strip on Le Thanh Ton, La Cuisine offers quality French food in an upmarket but not overly expensive setting. Suitable for special occasions or business dinners to impress. Regular diners recommend the filet of beef.

48 Le Thanh Ton
2229 8882

La Nicoise

A traditional 'neighbourhood' French restaurant, La Nicoise serves simple, filling French fare at exceptional value in the shadow of the Bitexco tower. Most popular for its steak dishes, the restaurant has an extensive menu which belies its compact size.

56 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
3821 3056

La Villa

Housed in a stunning white French villa that was originally built as a private house, La Villa features outdoor tables dotted around a swimming pool and a more formal dining room inside. Superb cuisine, with staff trained as they would be in France. Bookings are advised, especially on Friday and Saturday evenings.

14 Ngo Quang Huy, D2
3898 2082
www.lavilla-restaurant.com.vn

Trois Gourmands

Opened in 2004 and regarded as one of the finest French restaurants in town. Owner Gils, a French native, makes his own cheeses as well.

39 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2
3744 4585



INDIAN



Ashoka

A small chain of slightly more upscale Indian restaurants serving both Northern and Southern Indian cuisine including curries, naan and tandooris.

17/10 Le Thanh Ton, D1

33 Tong Huu Dinh, Thao Dien, D2



Ganesh

Ganesh serves authentic northern Indian tandooris and rotis along with the hottest curries, dovas and vada from the southern region.

38 Hai Ba Trung, D1

www.ganeshindianrestaurant.com



Natraj

Known for its complete North & South Indian cuisine, Natraj's speciality is its special chaat & tandoori dishes. Parties, events & catering services are available, with Daily Lunch Thali and set menus. Available for delivery. Complete menu on Facebook.

41 Bui Thi Xuan, D1

6679 5267 - 6686 3168

www.facebook.com/natrajindiancuisine



Saigon Indian

Saigon's original Indian eatery is still going strong, located in a bright, roomy upstairs venue in the heart of District 1.

1st Floor, 73 Mac Thi Bui, D1



Tandoor

Tandoor has recently moved to a new location. The restaurant serves authentic South and North Indian cuisine, with set lunches available, in a spacious dining area. Offers free home delivery and outside catering. Halal food.

39A - 39B Ngo Duc Ke, D1

39304839 / tandoor@tandoorvietnam.com



The Punjabi

Best known for its excellent tandoori cooking executed in a specialized, custom-built oven, Punjabi serves the best of genuine North Indian cuisine in a venue well within the backpacker enclave, ensuring forgiving menu prices.

40/3 Bui Vien, D1



TÊ TÊ CÓ CÒN PHÊ?

Thousands of pangolins are killed every year although there is no scientific evidence that pangolins can cure diseases.
Help us stop the poaching!
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Hãy ngăn chặn sự tàn sát vô lý này!
[#cuutete](https://twitter.com/cuutete)

WHEN THE BUYING STOPS - THE KILLING CAN TOO

CHANGE CỨU TRỢ HOANG DÃ
WILDAID

ITALIAN



Ciao Bella

Hearty homestyle Italian food served with flair and excellent service. An extensive menu is complemented with daily specials. Arriving guests are greeted with a free glass of Prosecco. Diners sit in a cozy setting upstairs or on the ground floor for people-watching. Big groups should book in advance.

11 Dong Du, D1
3822 3329
tonyfox56@hotmail.com
www.ciaobellavietnam.com

Ciao Bella



Inter Nos

Inter Nos means "between us" in Latin. Food amongst friends is exciting yet sincere. At Inter Nos, their dishes represent the appreciation they have towards guests, who they consider as family. Many of the ingredients are handmade, from the cheese to the pasta, even the milk is taken directly from the farm. The emphasis is on handcrafting special ingredients so that guests can taste the honesty in the food.

26 Le Van Mien, Thao Dien, D2
090 630 1299
info@internos.vn
www.internos.vn
Facebook: Internossaigon



La Cucina

La Cucina has opened on Crescent Promenade in Phu My Hung, with an open-plan kitchen that can accommodate 180 diners. Enjoy top-end dining featuring the best of Italian cuisine and a wide selection of imported seafood, prepared from the freshest ingredients, in a relaxed, rustic atmosphere with a wood-fired pizza oven at its heart.

Block 07-08 CRI-07, 103 Ton Dat Tien, D7
5413 7932



La Forchetta

La cucina La Forchetta is located in a hotel building in Phu My Hung. Chef Gianni, who hails from Sicily, puts his passion into his food, focusing on pastas and pizzas with Italian meat and fish dishes as well delicious homemade desserts. Most of the tables are outside, so you can enjoy a relaxing outdoor dinner.

24 Hung Gia, PMH, D7
3541 1006



La Hostaria

Designed with an intimate atmosphere invoking something like an Italian town, this venue focuses on traditional ethnic Italian cuisine (rather than the ubiquitous pizza and pasta), creations of the skillful executive chef – straight out of Venice. The place lights up on romantic Thursday evenings with candlelight and light music.

17B Le Thanh Ton, D1
3823 1080
www.lahostaria.com



VIII Re

VIII Re Eight King Italian restaurant is an open space setting serving grilled dishes, pastas and wood oven pizzas. Internationally known chef Roberto Mancini brings his vast experience at five-star hotels to his restaurant.

R432 Le Van Thiem, Phu My Hung, D7

Also Try...

Casa Italia

Filling, hearty Italian fare served with a smile in the heart of District 1. Authentic pizza and a comprehensive range of pasta, pork, chicken and beef dishes offers something for everyone. Located a stone's throw from Ben Thanh Market.

86 Le Loi, D1
3824 4286

Opera

The luxury Park Hyatt Saigon is home to Opera, an authentic Italian dining experience open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Try their famous lasagna and tiramisu. Head chef Marco Torre learned his craft in a number of Michelin-star restaurants throughout different regions of Italy during a 14 year career. Dine on the deck alfresco or inside in air conditioned comfort.

2 Lam Son Square, D1

Pendolasco

One of the original Italian eateries in Ho Chi Minh City, Pendolasco recently reinvented itself with a new chef and menu, and spawned a sister eatery in District 2. Set off the street in a peaceful garden with indoor and outdoor eating areas, separate bar and function area, it offers a wide-ranging Italian menu and monthly movie nights.

87 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 8181

Pizza 4P's

It's too late to call this Saigon's best-kept secret: the word is out. Wander up to the end of its little hem off Le Thanh Ton for the most unique pizza experience in the entire country – sublime Italian pizza pies with a Japanese twist. Toppings like you wouldn't imagine and a venue you'll be glad you took the time to seek out.

8/15 Le Thanh Ton, D1
012 0789 4444
www.pizza4ps.com

Pomodoro

Often unfairly mistaken as a purely tourist dining destination, Pomodoro offers an extensive range of Italian fare, especially seafood and beef dishes. The dining area is in a distinctively curved brick 'tunnel' opening into a large room at the rear, making it ideal for couples or groups.

79 Hai Ba Trung
3823 8998



 For full review, please visit: www.oivietnam.com

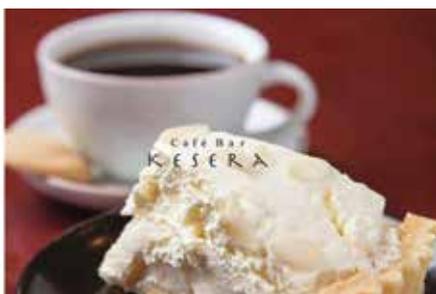
JAPANESE



Gyumaru

Gyumaru is a quintessentially minimalist Japanese dining experience rotating around the style of meat meal Westerners would be quick to link to a gourmet burger, but without the bread. Fresh, healthy, innovative cuisine in a relaxed, cozy environment and regular specials including quality steaks.

8/3 Le Thanh Ton
3827 1618
gyumaru.LTT@gmail.com



KESERA Cafe Bar

Café Bar KESERA is an ideal space to offer you fresh meals. We are here cozy and friendly serving specialist coffee, Japanese beers, fine wines, freshly baked homemade cakes, bagels and delicious Western and Japanese fusion foods. Live music every Saturday night.

26/3 Le Thanh Ton ,Dist 1.
0838 270 443



Miyama Café

Miyama Café was born from an ambition to transport a truly modern Tokyo cafe into the midst of bustling Saigon. From grand desserts to inspired modern Japanese food and service, Miyama Café's minimalist space and large glass windows allow diners to views of the bustling city below. They use the finest and freshest ingredients to create beautiful and delicious set meals and desserts.

Takashiyama Saigon Centre Mall
Level 3-01
(08) 2253 1076
www.miyamacafe.com



Monde

A Japanese whisky bar and grill serving some of the best Kobe beef in the city. The menu is Japanese with a European twist. The venue is celebrity bartender Hasegawa Harumasa's first foray into Vietnam, styled after his flagship operation on Ginza's fashionable whisky bar district in the heart of Tokyo.

7 bis Han Thuyen, D1



Sushi Dining Aoi

Sushi Dining Aoi is one such restaurant, where the whole atmosphere of the place evokes the best of the culture. With its typical Japanese-style decor – the smooth earthen tones of the wooden furniture and surrounds, the warmth and privacy of the VIP rooms – it's possible to believe you're in a more elegant realm.

53-55 Ba Huyen Thanh Quan, D3
3930 0039
www.sushidiningaoi.com



Yoshino

The decor is straight out of the set of Shogun, with black wood, tatami mats, stencilled cherry blossoms and all the trappings of Japanese exoticism – tastefully done. While Ho Chi Minh City is certainly not short of fine Japanese eateries, this one is particularly impressive.

2A-4A Ton Duc Thang, D1
3823 3333

Also Try...

Blanchy Street

Inspired by London's world-famous Nobu Restaurant, Blanchy Street's Japanese/South American fusion cuisine represents modern dining at its best in the heart of downtown, a truly international dining experience in a trendy, modern and friendly setting. Great sake and wine selection.

74/3 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3823 8793
www.blanchystreet.com
11am - 10:30pm

Chisana Hashi

Serves authentic Japanese cuisine including sashimi, sushi, tempura, sukiyaki and shabu shabu.
River Garden, 170 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
6683 5308

K Cafe

One of the larger Japanese restaurants in the city, this exemplary sushi venue is an ideal choice for business and friendly gatherings.

74A4 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3824 5355
www.yakatabune-saigon.com

Osaka Ramen

This sleek, open-kitchen contemporary eatery serves up Japanese noodles starting from VND78,000. There are also set menus, individual dishes and a range of smaller, appetizing sides.

SD04, LO H29-2, My Phat Residential Complex, D7



KOREAN



Galbi Brothers

Superb casual BBQ venue focusing on every foreigner's favorite K-dish: galbi. Home of the only all-you-can-eat Korean BBQ in Saigon, GB is distinguished by its inexpensive lunch sets and unabashed enthusiasm for Korean spirits.

RI-25 Hung Phuoc 4, Pham Van Nghi – Bac, D7
5410 6210



Lee Cho

The venue may be upscale, but the service and feel of this local-style Korean restaurant is very much down-to-earth. Enjoy the pleasure of casual outdoor street-style Korean dining without worrying about the proper decorum for an international venue. Great Korean dishes at good rates.

48 Hung Phuoc 2, D7
5410 1086



Seoul House

Long-standing venue serving Korean delicacies in this city for many years, Seoul House is simple on décor and strong on taste. Specializes mainly in Korean hotpot and grills.

33 Mac Thi Bui, D1
3829 4297



Won's Cuisine

One of the city's most important Korean venues – not for reasons of authenticity, but rather for straying from the norms. The restaurant's proprietress has infused so much of her own quirky tastes into the menu she's completely ignored the conventions of the cuisine, making Won's a unique creation with an unforgettable taste.

49 Mac Thi Bui
3820 4085



THAI



Koh Thai

Supremely chic Thai venue with all the authentic burn you need – or without if you prefer. An opulent, fashionable decor with the cuisine to match – often reported to serve dishes comparable with those of Thailand itself.

Kumho Link, Hai Ba Trung, D1
3823 4423

Lac Thai

Hidden away down a narrow alley in the heart of downtown this unique Thai restaurant boasts authentic flavours and surprising character. Eat downstairs at tables in a cosy, themed environment - or be brave and climb the narrow spiral staircase to the attic and crouch on cushions in true Thai style while attentive staff serve plates to share.

71/2 Mac Thi Bui St. D1
3823 7506

The Racha Room

Brand new fine & funky Thai venue with kooky styling and a great attitude – and some of the most finely-presented signature Thai cuisine you'll see in this city, much of it authentically spicy. Long Live the King! Reservations recommended.

12-14 Mac Thi Bui, D1
090 879 1412

Tuk Tuk Thai Bistro

Kitch and authentic, Tuk Tuk brings the pleasure of street-style Thai food into an elegant but friendly setting. Now a fashionable venue in its own right, Tuk Tuk's menu features some unique dishes and drinks you won't see elsewhere.

17/11 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3521 8513 / 090 688 6180

STEAKHOUSE



Corso Steakhouse & Bar

The steakhouse boasts an open kitchen with private dining areas. With an extensive wine menu, contemporary Western and Asian cuisines and a wide range of sizzling steaks cooked to your liking, this is the ideal choice for a special celebration or formal business dinner.

Ground Floor, Norfolk Hotel, 117 Le Thanh Ton, DI
3829 5368
www.norfolkhotel.com.vn



El Gaucho Argentinian Steakhouse

The fine dining steakhouse boasts a modern yet rustic decor, giving it an inviting ambiance and genuine atmosphere. The authenticity of the Argentinian cuisine is strictly followed by the methods of preparation, hand-made charcoal grill serves as the focal point in the kitchen to maintain and accentuate the original flavor of the meat.

74/1 Hai Ba Trung, DI



New York Steakhouse

New York Steakhouse is definitely in the upmarket category and serves exclusive American imported beef dishes, with a whole range of steaks from rib eye, New York strip steak and tenderloin being popular options.

25-27 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, DI



Nossa Steakhouse

A stylish restaurant featuring Italian cuisine and Western steaks with a wide selection of imported steaks from Australian and the US. Nossa brings food and decor together to create a cozy ambiance. With an attention to bringing authentic flavors, we provide good food, good prices and good taste.

36 Pham Hong Thai, DI / www.nossa.vn



Pho 99

Not a traditional steakhouse per se, but Pho 99 is known for its excellent filet mignon steaks made out of Cu Chi beef. Also serves great pho.

139 Nguyen Trai, DI



Wild Horse Steakhouse

The restaurant offers grilled pork, barbecued chicken and steak dishes along with a wide selection of cocktails as well as a number of smaller dishes.

8a/1d1 Thai Van Lung, DI
www.wildhorsesteakhouse.com

Baba's Kitchen
164 Bui Vien, District 1
49D Xa Lo Hanoi, District 2
Phone: 083-838-6661 & 083-838-6662

Open 11am to 11pm
North & South Indian food

Halal & vegetarian dishes
Of course we can cater!
order online at vietnammm.com & eat.vn
"Baba brings India to Vietnam"

wok n'roll American Chinese Food

Full Menu
www.woknroll.vn

100% Halal
We wok hard for you!

SUPER FAST DELIVERY!
0122-690-8881

Scan for the full menu

VIETNAMESE



Quan Bui

Leafy green roof garden, upmarket restaurant with reasonable prices and a wide menu of choices. Open style kitchen advertises its cleanliness. Designer interior with spotlighted artwork and beautiful cushions give an oriental luxurious feeling – augmented by dishes served on earthenware crockery. New Quan Bui Garden just opened in District 2.

www.bui.restaurant

17A Ngo Van Nam, D1
First Floor, 39 Ly Tu Trong, D1
55 Ngo Quang Huy, Thao Dien, D2



Five Oysters

Five Oysters serves authentic and excellent Seafood & Vietnamese food with SG Green beer at VND12,000 as well as a promo of VND10,000 per fresh oyster daily. There's also a rooftop, a great place to start or end the night! Recipient of Certificate of Excellence 2014-16 from Tripadvisor and Top Choice 2015 by Lianorg.com. Recommended by VNexpress.net, Lonely Planet, Utopia and Saigoneers.
234 Bui Vien, D1



Mountain Retreat

Home style cooking from the Vietnamese north in a quiet alley off Le Loi, Mountain Retreat brings a rural vibe to busy central D1. The breezy and unassuming décor nicely contrasts the intense northern flavors ideally suited for the international palate.

Top floor of 36 Le Loi, D1
+84 90 719 45 57



Red Door

Red Door offers traditional Vietnamese food with a contemporary twist. The restaurant is also a platform for art talk, science talk, and social talk; where ideas and passions are shared.

400/8 Le Van Sy, D3
012 0880 5905

Facebook: Reddoorrestaurant



Time Bistro

Timebistro – a tiny little restaurant will bring you back to Saigon 1960s. Visitors will be impressed by romantic atmosphere with elegant and simple style which is close to your heart.

44 Nguyen Hue, Ben Nghe, D1
09 8910 4633

www.en.timebistro.vn



Also Try...

3T Quan Nuong

Tasty BBQ venue situated above Temple Bar. The venue has a traditional, rustic theme with old-style furniture and a quaint Vietnamese decor, making this a nicely atmospheric restaurant and a great place to dine with international friends new to the cuisine. The menu features a number of local favorites.

Top Floor, 29 Ton That Hiep, D1
3821 1631

Banh Xeo 46A

Fun Vietnamese-style creperie popular with locals and expats alike for its tasty, healthy prawn pancakes, along with a number of other traditional dishes.

46A Dinh Cong Trang, D1

Cha Ca La Vong

If you do only one thing, you'd better do it well – and this venue does precisely that, serving only traditional Hanoian Cha Ca salads stir-fried with fish and spring onion. Delicious.

36 Ton That Thiep, D1

Com Nieu

Famous for its inclusion in the Anthony Bourdain *No Reservations* program, the venue is best known for its theatrics. Every bowl of rice is served in a terracotta bowl that is unceremoniously shattered upon serving. Unforgettable local food in a very pleasant traditionally-styled venue.

59 Ho Xuan Huong, D3
3932 6363
comnieusaigon27@yahoo.com
comnieusaigon.com.vn

Cuc Gach Quan

Deservedly one of the highest ranking Vietnamese restaurants in Saigon on Trip Advisor, this delightful restaurant serves up traditional, country-style foods and contemporary alternatives in two character-filled wooden houses located on opposite sides of the street from each other. Unique food in a unique setting and an unbelievably large menu.

10 Dang Tat, D1
3848 0144

Hum

Hum is a vegetarian restaurant where food are prepared on site from various

fresh beans, nuts, vegetables, flowers, and fruits. Food are complemented with special drinks mixed from fresh fruits and vegetables.

2 Thi Sach, D1
3823 8920
www.hum-vegetarian.vn

May

Fine Vietnamese fare served in a character-filled three-story rustic villa located up a narrow alley, off the beaten track. Watch the chefs prepare authentic food from a varied menu in an open kitchen.

19-21 Dong Khoi, D1
3910 1277

Nha Hang Ngon

Possibly the best-known Vietnamese restaurant in Ho Chi Minh City, Nha Hang Ngon serves up hundreds of traditional local dishes in a classy French-style mansion.

160 Pasteur, D1
3827 7131
www.quananngon.com.vn
8am - 10pm

Propaganda Bistro

Spring rolls and Vietnamese street food with a Western twist. Serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. The restaurant features

hand-painted wall murals in an authentic propaganda style.

21 Han Thuyen, D1
3822 9048

Temple Club

Named after the old-style Chinese temple in which the venue is located, the ancient stylings of this impressive restaurant make for an unforgettable evening spent somewhere in Saigon's colonial past. Beautiful oriental art that will please all diners and great local cuisine.

29-31 Ton That Thiep, D1
3829 9244
templeclub.com.vn

Thanh Nien

A favorite with tourists and locals for many years, Thanh Nien behind the Diamond Plaza is a buffet in a home setting, with a-la-carte dining available in the leafy garden outdoors. Relaxing, beautiful place to eat.

11 Nguyen Van Chiem, D1
3822 5909

 For full review, please visit: www.oivietnam.com

INTERNATIONAL



Bamboo Chic

Bamboo Chic serves an inventive menu of Japanese and Chinese dishes and creative cocktails. Open for dinner, the contemporary space features modern velvet chairs with purple and plum pillows and dramatic beaded chandeliers inspired by the Saigon River along with live music from the house DJ.

Level 9, Le Méridien Saigon Hotel

3C Ton Duc Thang, D1

6263 6688

www.lemeridien.com/saigon



BoatHouse

With amazing views of the Saigon River, the restaurant's open seating plan is the ideal space for business lunches, romantic dinners and lazy weekend brunches. The menu is international with focuses on Mexican and American comfort food. There's live music almost every night of the week.

40 Lily Road, AP5C, 36 Thao Dien, D2

boathousesgn@gmail.com

+84 8 3744 6790

www.boathousesaigon.com

www.facebook.com/boathousevietnam



Cuba la Casa del Mojito

Bienvenido a Cuba, The first Cuban Bar, Restaurant & Lounge! Come enjoy some fine Cuban Cuisine, Authentic Mojitos and flavorful Cigars! Music and Ambience will transport you to the Old Havana where Salsa never ends.

91 Pasteur, D1

3822 7099



Eleven

Eleven is located in the center of town, a 5-minute walk from Ben Thanh Market. The Restaurant has a stylish vintage design with a friendly and cozy atmosphere. The Asian fusion menu combines Asian & European vegetables and spices, providing a unique and unforgettable experience.

29 Le Anh Xuan, D1

08 38222605

Mail : info@elevencafe.com.vn

Facebook : ElevenCafeVN

Website : www.eleven.com.vn



Latest Recipe

Latest Recipe invites diners to an international culinary experience set against views of the Saigon River. An open kitchen is the focal point of this contemporary space, with chefs preparing an array of dishes to order. Every Sunday Latest Recipe serves an elaborate brunch buffet filled with tantalizing dishes from around the world.

Level M, Le Méridien Saigon Hotel

3C Ton Duc Thang, D1

6263 6688

www.lemeridien.com/saigon



Ngon Asia House

Contemporary three-storey bistro that welcomes you with style and leads you into a house of sumptuous colorful food cultures, rich in both in flavors and inspirations. More than 350 savory street dishes from Korea, Japan, China, Thailand and Vietnam come together in one designer space. The drinks menu includes a great selection of wine, cocktails and smoothies. If you can, grab a table by the tall glass windows overlooking the Nguyen Hue Pedestrian Walkway – a great spot for people watching.

Facebook: "ngonasia" / www.ngon-asia.com

2nd - 4th Floors, Saigon Garden

99 Nguyen Hue, D1

08 3821 3821



Rose Garden

With its main focus on Vietnamese cuisine, Rose Garden also has an extensive international menu that includes pastas, sandwiches and wraps. Located with the backpacker district, the restaurant is a great spot for people watching and soaking up the city's vibrant atmosphere. The freshly made juices come highly recommended.

232 Bui Vien, D1

(08) 6680 0847

Facebook: RoseGardenSaigon



Saigon Kitchen Club

Saigon Kitchen Club specializes in fresh, healthy and perfectly-portioned meals delivered to your home or office. They offer a variety of packages: Full Day, Lunch, Family and Weight Loss. The ingredients used are 100% pure olive oil, brown sugar, brown rice and strictly no MSG; giving diners exquisite and healthy meals. Place order through the website **www.saigonkitchenclub.com** or call **0888.629.788**



twenty21one

A new casual dining venue with an innovative tapas menu divided into two categories: Looking East, and Looking West, with dishes such as Crispy shredded duck spring rolls and Bacon-wrapped dates stuffed with Roquefort blue cheese. There are two dining levels: an upstairs mezzanine and downstairs are tables with both private and exposed positioning (open-air streetside; and a terrace by the pool out back).

21 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3



Travel & Leisure

ALASKA





IMAGE BY JIMMY VAN DER KLOET



At -32 °C just north of the Yukon River, the landscape brings you snow-covered pine trees and icy roads



ALASKA

IMAGES BY JIMMY VAN DER KLOET





The Alaska Railroad Corporation brings you from Talkeetna to Fairbanks through stunning mountain scenery in eight hours



The Real "Ice Road Truckers" on Dalton Highway, which stretches 414 miles (666 km) from north of Fairbanks to Deadhorse near the Arctic Ocean



Center: View from a
Cesna 185 of the Alaska
Range, featuring Denali,
the highest mountain
peak in North America at
20,310 feet (6,190 m)

Top and Bottom:
Seward is the ninth most
lucrative fisheries port in
the United States



MEKONG DELTA

MEKONG QUILTS (mekong-plus.com), the social enterprise known for their handmade quilts and bamboo bikes, are offering visitors an opportunity to visit the women and villages behind the products. Local NGO Anh Duong, under the umbrella of the NGO Mekong Plus, is working to alleviate poverty in the region through training and microloans. Every year groups of bikers cycle to the Delta and along the way stop to meet quilters, papier mâché crafters, water hyacinth bag weavers and more. Anh Duong provides the bicycles and guides visitors through the villages. The Delta offers splendid little roads along the canals, through small bridges and under shaded trees—making the bike ride picturesque. The Delta is always green and visiting the villages in small groups, on a bicycle, brings you close to the people. I'm sure you've heard of biogas, but have you seen pig feces being turned into gas for cooking? You'll visit farms equipped with this cheap system, which ends up saving lots of trees. After the trip to the Mekong Delta there are options to continue to other projects and then to Angkor Wat, Cambodia. Visitors cover all logistic costs in addition to donating USD100/day (USD50 for children) to support the projects. You see exactly where your money is going, talking with the villagers and with the Anh Duong team. No special training is necessary. ■

Images Provided by **Mekong Plus**, the NGO





Sol Beach House Phu Quoc

Phu Quoc's newest hotspot TEXT AND IMAGES PROVIDED BY SOL BEACH HOUSE

SOL BEACH HOUSE

Phu Quoc is the first of its brand in Vietnam. A haven for barefoot relaxation, this home-on-the-beach gives every aspect of hospitality an effortlessly personalised touch.

Situated in the south of the island on Truong Beach and a short 15-minute ride from Phu Quoc International Airport, Sol Beach House Phu Quoc is an ideal retreat for laid-back solo travelers, couples, families, groups of friends and the young-at-heart—four-legged friends are welcomed, too!

The resort exudes a natural, relaxed vibe with a vintage flair through its casual chic and modern design. Residents in or travelers through Ho Chi Minh City will find Phu Quoc is only one-hour from the city, making an escape from a hectic work schedule

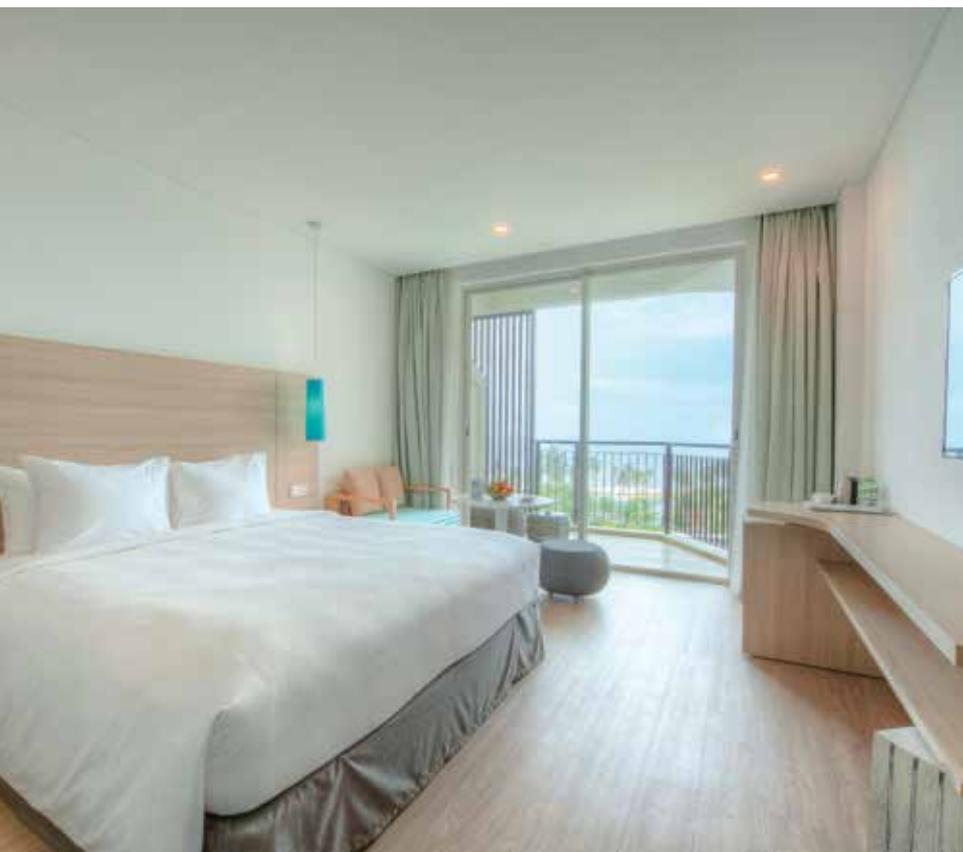
or the manic city a cinch. Guests will immediately feel at ease and more at one with nature among the teals, whites, wickers and woods.

Guests are invited to unwind and bask in the delight of idleness, or to take part in the resort's expansive list of activities lasting from morning until night. With yoga, meditation, cuisine workshops, paddle boarding and chilling to the resident DJ's tunes, even the most particular travelers will find something to suit their interests.

Sol Beach House Phu Quoc boasts three restaurants and bars with carefully handcrafted menus of local and Mediterranean fare. The resort takes full advantage of Phu Quoc's fresh and delicious seafood, making guests want to extend their stay just to get through the delectable dishes.

Found on the beautiful beachfront, each of Sol Beach House Phu Quoc's 284 rooms and suites feature private balconies with stunning views of the ocean. Stone walkways embedded in grassy plots dotted with palm and coconut trees lead from the main building to the infinity swimming pool, located between OLA Beach Club and The Shack, a concept inspired by traditional Spanish beach bars and restaurants.

Launched in mid-December 2016, Sol Beach House Phu Quoc is your next holiday destination. Guests are invited to take advantage of their opening specials through April 27, 2017, excluding Tet. The resort's opening special starts from VND2,310,000 (USD103) per room, per night, including breakfast for two people and 5% service charge and 10% VAT. ■ Visit www.melia.com for more info.



A Trip Back to Nature

Escape the busy city and treat yourself to the serenity and tranquility of Madagui Forest City

TEXT AND IMAGES PROVIDED BY MADAGUI FOREST CITY



THIS WINTER, THE season of the southern winds, instead of staying in the hectic and crowded city, make a change and enjoy a nature trip along pathways of colorful flowers within the forest, and taking selfies with wild deer and ostriches.

The beauty and fascination of Madagui Forest City is best experienced during the last days of the year. The air is neither cold, as in the winter of the northern regions, nor frosty, as in the mountain highlands. It's perfect, and the gentle

winds at Madagui will inspire you to play in the sunlight and mingle with nature. Now is the time to discover all the adventure games this unique forest city has to offer in a cozy atmosphere, drinking fermented rice wine (a specialty of the area), sampling seasonal grilled meat and exchanging ideas.

You'll find Madagui Forest City brings you back to nature.

Helpful Information:

- Madagui Forest City is about 152km

from Ho Chi Minh City and takes 3 hours by road.

- Advance hotel reservations for your trip are recommended.
- Madagui hotel has four restaurants.
- Most of the games at Madagui are adventurous, some are played in groups.

Contact (063) 3709 444 or email sales@madagui.com.vn. See more at www.madagui.com.vn & www.facebook.com/madaguiforestcity ■

Travel



Ana Mandara Villas I Dalat

Ana Mandara Villas Dalat comprises 17 restored French-style villas from the 1920s and 1930s, preserving the original design, décor and charm; and set in the cool climate of the rural highlands of Central Vietnam. Striking views of the surrounding town and countryside abound from all areas of the gently sloping hillside property. Some of the villas have been converted into 65 guest accommodations, with each villa comprising between three and five ensuite rooms.

www.anamandara-resort.com



Boutique Hoi An Resort

Explore the rich heritage of Hoi An at Boutique Hoi An Resort. Discover authentic Vietnamese cuisine and hospitality, unwind in the swimming pool surrounded by lush tropical gardens or indulge in a massage at our hotel spa. Our villas are directly on the beach facing the sea with large terraces for the ultimate in privacy and relaxation.

34 Lac Long Quan, Cam An, Hoi An
+84 (0)510 3939 111
www.boutiquehoianresort.com



Cham Villas - Boutique Luxury Resort

Best resort in Mui Ne. Located right by the beach in one hectare of lush tropical gardens, this 18 villa property is ideal to get away from the hustle and bustle, to chill out and be pampered. Each villa has a bath overlooking a private garden and a large private patio with comfortable club chairs and a day bed. Two restaurants provide culinary pleasures to round up a perfect holiday.

32 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, Phan Thiet
+84 62 3741 234
www.chamvillas.com



Cham Garden Restaurant

Cham Garden Restaurant is located inside Cham Villas Boutique Luxury Resort. Set in the midst of a lush tropical garden, this cozy and quiet restaurant serves Asian Fusion, Vietnamese and Western Cuisine. The ideal place for a romantic and exquisite dinner.

32 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, Phan Thiet
+84 62 3741 234
www.chamvillas.com
www.facebook.com/chamgardenmuine



InterContinental Nha Trang

InterContinental Nha Trang is a luxurious modern beachfront hotel where an enriching urban retreat harmonized beautifully with its surroundings. Right in the heart of Nha Trang, a 40-minute scenic drive from Cam Ranh International Airport, experience the perfect blend of local charm and nature.

32 - 34 Tran Phu, Nha Trang
(058) 388 7777
www.nhatrang.intercontinental.com



Mia

With its own private white sand beach, cliff-top ocean views and jungle clad mountains as a backdrop, Mia resort has carved out its own little piece of tropical heaven in Nha Trang. Mia features a variety of accommodation options, each with fantastic ocean views, nestled among manicured gardens. There are great dining options, a relaxing spa and gym.

Bai Dong, Cam Hai Dong, Cam Lam, Khanh Hoa
0583 989 666
www.mianhatrang.com
info@mianhatrang.com



Pullman Danang Beach Resort

Located on the stunning white sands of Danang beach, the stylish Pullman Danang Beach Resort is an oasis of activities and facilities for the modern traveler. With an idyllic setting on the silver shores of Central Vietnam, this luxury resort is perfect for a family holiday or romantic beach getaway.

Vo Nguyen Giap, Khue My, Ngu Hanh Son, Danang
0511 395 8888
www.pullman-danang.com



Sheraton Nha Trang Hotel & Spa

With 280 ocean view rooms and suites and six signature restaurants and bars, including Altitude – the highest bar in Nha Trang. Amenities include outdoor swimming pool with infinity edge and reflection pool area, Shine Spa with 9 luxurious treatment rooms, Sheraton Fitness with 24-hour access, Sheraton Club Lounge, Link@Sheraton, Sheraton Adventure Club, and a purpose-built Cooking School.

26 - 28 Tran Phu, Nha Trang, Khanh Hoa
058 2220 000
www.sheratonnhatrang.com



The Island Lodge

Newly-opened, The Island Lodge is a 12-room Indochine-themed lodge set on Unicorn Island (Thoi Son). Mekong River view rooms and bungalows are scattered around the grounds, but the jewel is the open air restaurant/lounge fronting 50 meters of riverfront along with a French restaurant. There's also an infinity swimming pool and Jacuzzi.

390 Ap Thoi Binh, Thoi Son, My Tho
073 651 9000
www.theislandlodge.com.vn

>> The List Business

INSURANCE



Pacific Cross Vietnam (formerly Blue Cross Vietnam)

Pacific Cross Vietnam is a Medical Insurance Administrator specializing in Health and Travel insurance in Asia. Our competitive advantage is in our design and administration of modern travel and medical insurance plans; plans built for people living and working in Vietnam.
4th Floor, Continental Tower, 81 - 83 - 85 Ham Nghi, D1 3821 9908



Also try ...

ACE Life Insurance

One of the world's largest multiline property and casualty insurers, insurance products include universal life insurance, term life, whole life, riders, and global personal accident.
21st Floor, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1

Baoviet Insurance Corporation

BaoViet is now the leading financial insurance group in Vietnam with more than 145 branches across 63 provinces.
23-25 Thai Van Lung, D1

IF Consulting

IF Consulting has for 20 years provided advice to individuals and businesses in assessing health/accident risk and finding the best suitable solution. The company is independent and Vietnam-based.
**90-92 Dinh Tien Hoang D1
www.insuranceinvietnam.com**

Liberty Mutual Insurance

Liberty Mutual is a 100% US-owned general insurer licensed to provide insurance services directly to Vietnamese individuals and state-owned enterprises as well as motor insurance.
15th Floor, Kumho Asiana Plaza, 39 Le Duan, D1 3812 5125

McLarens Young International

McLarens Young International is a global claims service provider that helps our clients achieve timely and equitable claims resolution.
9th Floor, Yoco Building 41 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1 3821 3316

Prudential Vietnam

Prudential Vietnam is one of the leading life insurers nationwide, also providing a variety of financial solutions, with over 200 customer service centers, branch offices and general agency and business partner offices.
Unit 25F, Saigon Trade Centre 37 Ton Duc Thang, D1

RELOCATION



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Saigon Express Agency Limited (SEAL) is an experienced and versatile relocations and logistics company. SEAL staff are experts in relocations and pet transportation and can deliver all your logistics requirements to your satisfaction at a competitive price!
**+84 8 39432853
sgnexpress@seal.com.vn
www.seal.com.vn**



Also try ...

AGS Four Winds (Vietnam)

Global leader in international removals & relocations, with 128 offices in 78 countries, they can move you to/ or from any location worldwide.
**5th Floor, Lafayette De Saigon, 8A Phung Khanh Khoan, D1 3521 0071
ags-vietnam@agsfourwinds.com
www.agsfourwinds.com**



Crown Line

Crown Line is a well-known Japanese moving firm now operating out of Ho Chi Minh City.
7th Floor, HPL Bldg 60 Nguyen Van Thu, D1

SAIGON VAN International Relocations

Whether you are moving around the corner or around the world, SAIGON VAN is your one stop contact to assist your move from start to finish. Their professional team will provide you with all the info needed from the country of origin to your final. With a team of 52 staff and 5,000 sqm international standard warehouse premise, services include car move, custom clearance, domestic move, international door to door, pet relocation, storage service and more.
**1st Floor, 214 Nguyen Van Huong, D2 (08) 3744 7101
www.saigonvan.com**

VETERINARY CLINICS

Animal Doctors International

Offers the very highest levels of compassionate, competent and professional veterinary medicine and surgery to all pets in Ho Chi Minh City with international veterinary surgeons. Upholding international standards, the team works tirelessly to help clients with the support of a dedicated surgical suite, digital X-Ray and comprehensive diagnostic facilities.
**1 Tran Ngoc Dien, Thao Dien, Q2 6260 3980
www.animaldoctors.vn**

K9

A Vietnamese clinic that offers basic care.
**192 Hoang Dieu, D4
www.phongkhamthuyk9.com
091 382 0812**

AEC Pet

Opened since 2012, the clinic staffs a team of specialized veterinarians who are committed to offering professional, caring and personalized services to their patients.
A12-A13 Nguyen Huu Tho, Kim Son Project, D7 6298 9203

New Pet Hospital & Spa

The clinic has two locations and offers boarding, 24-hour emergency care and grooming services such as washing and nail trimming.
**53 Dang Dung, D1
www.newpethospital.com.vn 6269 3939**

Saigon Pet Clinic

Founded in 2008, Saigon Pet Clinic's goal is to open the best animal welfare veterinary clinic in Vietnam. They combine skill and technology to ensure your pet gets the best possible care.
**33, 41 street, Thao Dien, D2
www.saigonpethospital.com 3519 4182**

Sasaki Animal Hospital

The hospital is managed by a team of skilled doctors from Japan and Vietnam. Services include grooming and general care.
**38-40-42 Nguyen Thi Thap, Him Lam, D7
www.sasakihospital.com 2253 1179**



Health & Beauty

DENTAL



Starlight Dental Clinic

New Dentist



Dr. Adrian Sinanan
General Practice & Cosmetic Dentistry

Dr. Adrian qualified from King's College London School of Medicine and Dentistry, University of London in 1997. Over the last eighteen years he has practiced both in the UK and Australia, giving him the opportunity to experience a wide variety of clinical treatment philosophies and the latest in postgraduate training.

2 Bis Cong Trung Quoc Te, D3 / 3822 6222
24 Thao Dien, D2 / 6282 8822
www.starlightdental.net

HEALTH



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Family Medical Practice (FMP) is one of the first and oldest foreign and privately-owned, international primary health care provider in Vietnam. With a countrywide network of integrated clinics for foreign and local populations, FMP's main specialties include Family Medicine, Pediatrics, and Emergency Medicine as well as health checks and work permit health-tests. Its subscription only EMR*9999 service is the only international standard emergency response service in the nation.

34 Le Duan, D1 or 95 Thao Dien, D2
(08) 3822 7848 Contact Customer Service: 0932 776 971
(Mon - Fri 8am - 5pm)
www.star9999.vn



SKIN CLINIC



Stamford Skin Centre
LASER DERMATOLOGY CLINIC

Stamford Skin Centre
Stamford Skin Centre is a Laser Dermatology Clinic developed by Stamford Healthcare Ltd. We never cease to improve our quality of medical care.

99 Suong Nguyet Anh, Dist. 1, HCMC
(08) 3925 1990 or 0908 453 338
www.stamfordskin.com

SPA



Aveda Herbal Spa & Wellness

Aveda is an authentic Indian spa specializing in Ayurvedic and herbal treatments for revitalizing the body and soul in a clean, professional ambiance. Meet qualified Panchkarma specialist to know your health history and body constitution through Ayurvedic theories. Their Panchkarma expert will advise the best treatments, dietary and lifestyle plan based on your prakriti (body constitution).

Villa 1, Hem 21 (21/1) Xuan Thuy, Thao Dien, D2,
www.avedaherbal.com, avedaherbal@gmail.com
(08)3519 4679 / 090 697 7110
Facebook: [avedaherbal/avedasaigon](https://www.facebook.com/avedaherbal/avedasaigon)



Maison Mikio Boutique Salon 

District 7's Premium Boutique Salon. Two floors providing full beauty services nestled in a quiet residential area in Phu My Hung's Garden Plaza 2 Complex. Equipped with a café, nail bar, 2 VIP rooms, and a spacious massage room - this boutique salon is like no other in Ho Chi Minh City.

Garden Plaza 2 Complex
8 Ton Dat Tien, D7
5412 4773



Mini Spa:

Authentic Thai Spa in Thao Dien. Mimi Spa is proud to offer true Thai treatment, an Ancient healing tradition that combines a floral foot bath, elements of yoga, acupressure and Energy work combined with gentle rocking. Your session is enjoyed in comfortable, loose fitting clothing and is performed with or without natural oils.

33/8 Quoc Huong, Thao Dien, D2.
9am - 11pm. Open 7 days p/week



Moc Huong Spa

Moc Huong Spa is supported by top-ranking professional physiotherapists who combine Eastern with Western techniques resulting a full body wellness. Reasonably priced with a wide range of services that include manicure, pedicure, facial, both body and for your complete well being.

9C Ton Duc Thang, Dist 1, 0839 117 118
2A Chu Manh Trinh, Dist 1, 0838 247 433
61 Xuan Thuy, Thao Dien, Dist 2, 083 519 1052

Also try ...

Orient Skincare & Laser Center 

The center offers non-surgery aesthetic treatments by certified dermatologists as well as pampering services for any type of problem skin. A variety of treatments includes: wrinkle removal, acne & scar treatment, rejuvenation & pigment augmenting treatment, slimming treatments, permanent hair removal and massage therapy.

244A Cong Quynh, D1
3926 0561-62-63-64

Saigon Dep Clinic and Spa

Saigon Dep offers cosmetic, acne and pigmentation treatments, as well as scar and rejuvenation services, alongside a full reflexology suite.

90 Le Lai, D1
www.saigondep.net

Temple Leaf Spa

Temple Leaf is located in the heart of District 1, and is staffed by a multinational team of skilled masseurs. In addition to foot and full body massages, Temple Leaf also offers cleansing green tea facial care and moisturizing masks.

74 Hai Ba Trung, D1
www.templeleafspa.com

YCK Beauty Spa and Hair Studio

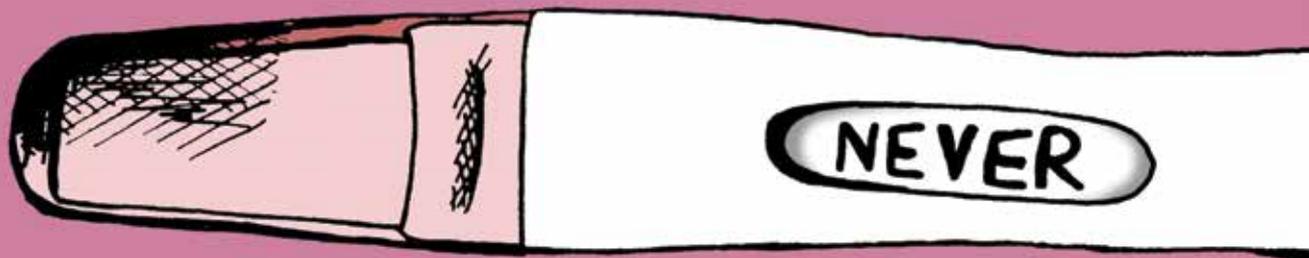
The spa offers full relaxation massages, as well as cosmetic care such as firming and collagen treatments. YCK Beauty also offers hair coloring and styling in a relaxing ambiance.

178B Hai Ba Trung, D1
www.ykcsa.com

Kids & Education







Kid Me Not

More and more Vietnamese women are choosing to be child-free

TEXT BY SOPHIA CHEN

Thu Nguyen has been married for more than nine years now and does not have a child. But that hasn't deterred her parents from giving her traditional herbs "to help her conceive" because they still cannot believe her decision to remain childless.

Thu, 37, does not feel that the absence of a child has made her an

incomplete woman. "I think motherhood is overrated. It may be full of joy, but it's also a big responsibility that I could never prepare myself for," she says.

Thu is among a growing number of women who are choosing not to have children in a country where motherhood is glorified in society, literature and films. A local scholar once wrote that the "apotheosis of motherhood has reached a greater height in Vietnam than anywhere else."

Women earn respect in Vietnam by fulfilling two responsibilities: bearing children and feeding the family. So, opting out is not easy for women here.

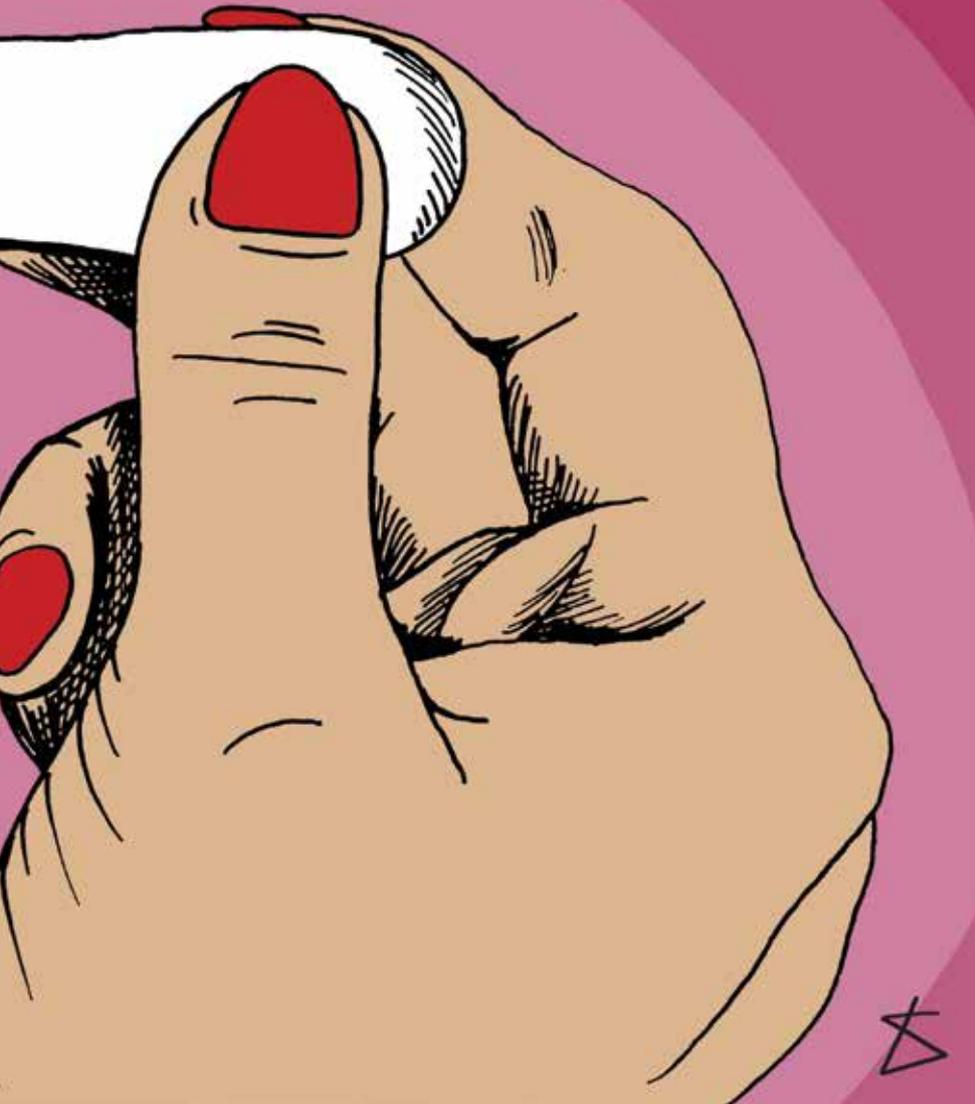
"I don't feel a sense of loss at this, my life has been fulfilling in so many

other ways. Why should I have to define it in terms of a lack? I am not a barren woman. I can't square this with what I know of myself," Thu adds.

Phuong, 45 and single, says she opted out of motherhood because her schedules left her with little time to look after a child.

So how do women like Thu and Phuong create space for themselves in a society which values motherhood so much?

Phuong was born and brought up in a small city in An Giang. But studying and working in cosmopolitan Saigon changed everything. "Now I am in charge of my life. I live it on my terms, and that doesn't include motherhood.



Traditionally, motherhood is considered to be the most fulfilling aspect of a woman's life, but class and education opens up horizons for women to see that there are many more ways of finding meaning and purpose in life.

"very responsible" women by opting out of motherhood. "People don't think before deciding to have children, about the kind of childhood they can provide, about how much time they can spend with the child, increasingly they just rely on helpers and maid servants to bring up their children. The older generation believes that you have to have kids so the kids can take care of the parents when they get old, however, that belief is no longer valid for the younger generation."

Thu and her husband were never in a situation to give a fulfilling childhood to their child, and hence decided to not have one. "We didn't want the child to be lonely. And it wasn't like we were completely bereft of the joy of parenting. A lot of our friends and family have children so we have a special bond with them."

Dr. Hong believes that girls in Vietnam are brought up to look up to marriage and motherhood as the big inevitable goal in life. "Most women who decide to remain childless tend to be highly educated, urban professionals. Traditionally, motherhood is considered to be the most fulfilling aspect of a woman's life, but class and education opens up horizons for women to see that there are many more ways of finding meaning and purpose in life."

Most women face some sort of stigma or barbed comments from friends, family and acquaintances for their decision. But the fact that they had been able to exercise that choice was because some support existed in their immediate social circle. "Interestingly, all the women I met were happy with the choice they had made. They look back and tell me that their lives are more enriched, dynamic and fulfilling and that given a second chance, they will not live them any other way." ■

I don't feel a sense of loss at this, my life has been fulfilling in so many other ways. Why should I have to define it in terms of a lack?

And I know the decision to become a mother will change a lot of things," she explains. "I will have to quit my job, will have to limit my travel and will probably have very little time for myself."

But such utterances can often invite ridicule and she is often described as "irresponsible."

"People get so judgmental. I take care of my parents, my career and my house. Whenever there is a crisis, I don't turn to my brother. I behave like an equal and figure things out myself. So, how can I be called irresponsible only for not wanting a child's responsibility?" Phuong asks.

Dr. Hong, a family counselor who works at a Vietnamese clinic, believes that both Thu and Phuong are being

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Leaves, logs and life skills



“GO CLIMB A TREE!” sounds like a demand from a flustered parent reaching the end of their tether. While the context could have many meanings, taking it literally could well lead to a wide range of benefits.

As a man raised not too far from a sleepy, yet picturesque, countryside, camping holidays were an annual experience and they hold a number of fond memories. When I think back, I am reminded of a great sense of independence and many life lessons that were learnt during those trips. It came as no surprise to me, then, that when I entered the primary education sector ten years ago, I found that something called “Outdoor Adventure Activities” (OAA) was seeing something of a resurgence in the curriculum.

Of course, elements of outdoor

learning are nothing new. Early Years children have been encouraged to learn through play for many years, particularly using aspects of the outside environment. Similarly—and with much success—some Reception and Grade 1 classes in the UK in recent years have adopted the Scandinavian concept of “Forest School,” whereby children learn about the environment, how to handle risks and how to use their initiative to solve problems and cooperate with others.

Such is the importance of these skills, and a ‘holistic’ approach to a child’s learning, that the calls by various education authorities to increase the provision of outdoor activities have increased substantially, in both the UK and overseas. Something which prompted this, in my opinion, was a

noticeable shift in viewpoint towards risk and ‘the elements.’ Essentially, something clicked. Numerous studies and industry experts established a theory that many would argue has been obvious for a long time... children’s learning, the outdoors and ‘the elements’ are not mutually exclusive—they work together.

Previously, it seemed as if teachers would seldom take risks due to overly strict health and safety concerns, and so they would generally wrap their class up in cotton wool during the course of the school day for fear of reprisals, particularly where bad weather was concerned. Now, the value that school leaders, teachers and, thankfully, parents themselves place on risk-taking, problem-solving and independence has grown significantly. There seems to be some common ground that, while necessary risk assessments and



James Quantrill is a senior teacher at Saigon Star International School. He moved to Vietnam in August 2014, having previously taught at an outstanding school in the UK.



common sense should always prevail, challenging children both physically and mentally in a natural environment will bring a whole host of benefits, including:

- Greater physical and emotional well-being: Perhaps the most obvious of the various benefits is the physical fitness one can feel in the great outdoors. Less obvious are the psychological ones.

- Improving outcomes for at-risk children in terms of disengagement and anti-social behavior: As well as providing children with a much better chance of happiness and success, financially, it is far more cost-effective to find pre-emptive strategies to address these issues rather than attempt to resolve them at a later date.

- Self-awareness and a sense of autonomy: Children can often, for the first time in their young lives, discover

real abilities they never knew they had, and thus gain confidence and self-esteem. I have seen a young boy with reading difficulties shine brightly when assuming a leadership role in an outdoor activity and gain confidence amongst his peers.

- In terms of resilience, young people today need to know how to deal with whatever life throws at them. The aforementioned experiences help to challenge youngsters to find a balance and assess various risky situations.

- In order to build a relationship between the environment and the future leaders of tomorrow, they need to spend time in it and to become more aware of the growing needs within our society.

Fortunately, much like the rest of the world, opportunities for our children in Vietnam to encounter these experiences are becoming more and

more plentiful, and diverse. Recently, our Years 4, 5 and 6 classes had a fantastic residential experience at the Giang Dien site, only an hour drive from Saigon. Not only did the children sharpen various skills, they also bonded and forged strong relationships of which we are still seeing the benefits many weeks later. Furthermore, at the end of the last academic year, I was privileged to witness the resilience of the same children when caught in some heavy monsoon rain in Cat Tien National Park; they chose to carry on cycling in their ponchos until they reached their intended destination. Impressive stuff.

Climb a tree? Why not?! ■

Education

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS



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EUROPEAN International School Ho Chi Minh City

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730 Le Van Mien, Thao Dien, D2

www.eishcmc.com



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92 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh

+84 (8) 2222 7788/99

admissions@issp.edu.vn

www.issp.edu.vn



Saigon Star International School

Saigon Star is a student focused international school offering a high quality, first class education. Specialising in the British National Curriculum, all of the class teachers hold an international teaching qualification. In our Early Years programme, a Montessori specialist works closely with the mainclass teachers to ensure a high rate of progress and attainment. The school also provides specialists for children requiring additional ESL support.

Residential Area No.5, Thanh My Loi Ward, D2

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www.saigonstarschool.edu.vn



The American School

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admissions@tas.edu.vn

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Also...

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www.aisvietnam.com

British International School (BIS)

Inspected and approved by the British Government, BIS provides a British style curriculum for an international student body from pre-school to Year 13. The school is staffed by British qualified and trained teachers with recent UK experience. Fully accredited by the Council of International Schools and a member of FOBISIA, BIS is the largest international school in Vietnam.
www.bisvietnam.com

Renaissance International School Saigon

Renaissance is an International British School offering the National Curriculum for England complemented by the International Primary Curriculum (IPC), Cambridge IGCSE and the International Baccalaureate. The school has made a conscious decision to limit numbers and keep class sizes small to ensure each pupil is offered an education tailored to meet their individual learning

needs. It's a family school providing first-class facilities including a 350- seats theater, swimming pools, mini-pool, drama rooms, gymnasium, IT labs, music and drama rooms, science labs and an all-weather pitch.
www.renaissance.edu.vn

Saigon South International School

Founded in 1997, Saigon South International School seeks to accommodate an increasing need for American education for both local residents and expatriate families. SSIS enrolls over 850 students in Early Childhood – Grade 12 from over thirty-three countries in a spacious six-hectare, well-equipped campus.
www.ssis.edu.vn

The Montessori International School of Vietnam

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