



VIETNAM

03-2018

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*For
The Love
Of
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IMAGE BY VY LAM

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Datebook

What's on this month...

MARCH 9

What: Salmo World By Katsura Yamauchi Experimental Music

Where: Salon Saigon (6d Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3); 7pm

About: Katsura Yamauchi picked up his first saxophone in the early 1970s and was quickly drawn to modern jazz, avant-garde and free improvisation. For years he was sporadically active as both musician and concert organizer, and helped arrange performances in Japan for veteran musicians from both the US and Europe, such as Derek Bailey, Han Bennink and Milford Graves.

He was influenced by the new experimental sounds coming from Tokyo, but had developed his own original style, mixing improvisation and minimalism with melodic elements. The music is at the same time challenging and easily accessible, unrecognizable and beautiful.

In addition to extensive activity in Japan, Katsura Yamauchi has toured the USA and several times in Europe. Also, he started filmmaking since 2012 and has been selected for several film festivals including Cardiff International Film Festival (UK), Festival Internazionale del Cinema d'Arte 2015 (Italy), Asiana International Short Film Festival 2015 (Korea) and Bangkok Underground Film Festival 2015 (Thailand).

Contact: Visit www.salonsaigon.com for more info

MARCH 11

What: American Education Event

Where: Rex Hotel (141 Nguyen Hue, D1); 3pm-6pm

About: The American Education Expo is the best place to find the perfect US college or university for you. At the event, you will get the chance to speak face-to-face with admissions officers from some of the top 20 US colleges and universities and get the answers you need about the admission process, tuition fees, and merit-based scholarship opportunities. The expo is free of charge for students interested in undergraduate, graduate, and English programs. Parents are also encouraged to come and meet the college representatives. You only need one ticket per family.

Contact: Visit isnexpo.com for more info

MARCH 14-16

What: HortEx Vietnam 2018

Where: SECC (799 Nguyen Van Linh, D7); 9am-5pm

About: HortEx Vietnam 2018 is the first specialized exhibition and conference for Horticultural and Floricultural Production and Processing Technology in Vietnam. Vietnam is now in a period of golden population structure with 60% of its population being at working age. Furthermore, the country is a market economy, a member of the WTO, and a party to multiple frameworks for international economic integration, including free trade agreements with partners both within and outside the region. Horticulture and floriculture are one of the most promising sectors of the Vietnamese economy. Furthermore Vietnam has the potential to become one of the world's largest flower exporters according to experts.

Contact: Visit www.hortex-vietnam.com for more info

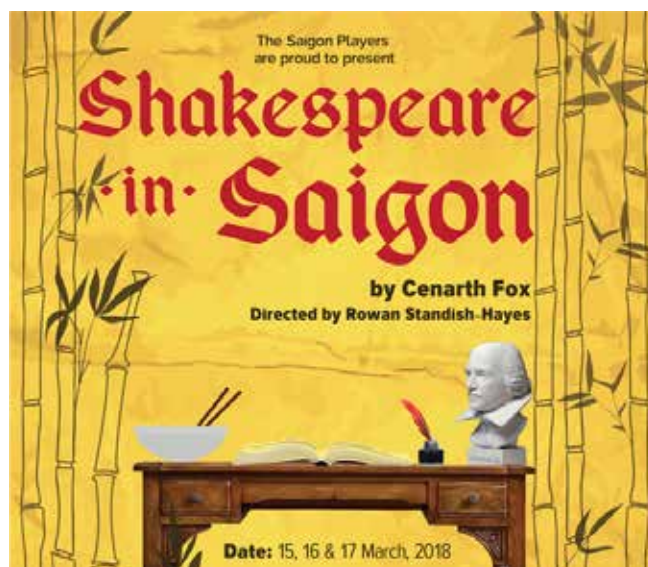
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MARCH 15

What: Saigon Players' Shakespeare In Saigon By Cenarth Fox

Where: Koi Coffee (26/6a Nguyen Binh Khiem, D1); 7:30pm

About: David Cadwallader is a soon-to-be retired English literature high school teacher. His students and friends send him off in style. But when he gets home to his wife of 30 years, he discovers terrible news and worse. Suddenly David's retirement plans for travel and writing are lost. He hits the bottle. Then suddenly a stranger, a young woman recently arrived from Vietnam, knocks loudly on his door. David meets Thanh who also faces a crisis. Communication is almost impossible as neither speaks the others language. David helps Thanh who repays him with food. Then David offers to teach Thanh English but not what you might expect; 'tis Elizabethan English, the language of Shakespeare. Their lessons proceed with humor and spirit. Is Thanh falling in love with the much older David? Both have secrets and when these are revealed, each is surprised and shocked. The twist is both surprising and heart-warming.

Contact: Visit saigonplayers.com for more info



What: Marcus Henriksson + Marco Lenzi
Where: The Lighthouse (104 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D1); VND100,000 after 10pm
About: Marcus Henriksson, aka Minilogue, Son Kite and nobody Home, has dedicated his life to this inner and outer journey for a quarter century. Marcus fell in love with dance and trance when he went to his first Rave party in the summer of 1993. Marcus and a group of friends started creating their own raves and mixtapes together. They called themselves Toxomniac. In his early DJ years, Marcus spun music like Jammin' Unit, Hardfloor, Air Liquide, Purple Plejade, Basic channel, Massimo Vivona, Der Dritte Raum and tracks from Harthouse, Headzone, Frankfurt beats, Djax-Up-Beats, Eye Q, among other labels.

Marco Lenzi has been producing, remixing and playing all over the world for over a decade, taking his minimal and funky sound to the masses. Marco was born in Livorno, Italy and raised in Rome, where as a teenager he got into clubbing, record collecting and mastered his DJ technique. With seamless mixing and the originality of his programming, he soon developed his own unique style. He has lived in London ever since he came for a week in 1988 and got stuck in the acid house music scene. Marco is forward thinking, with a modest attitude considering his extensive experience in the music field.

Contact: Visit heartbeatsaigon.com for more info

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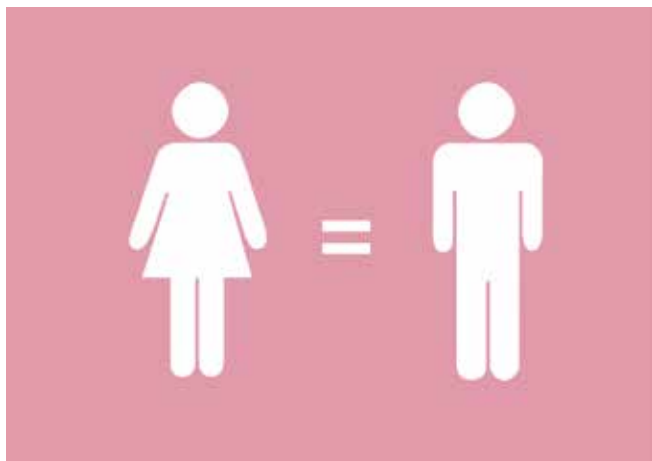


www.facebook.com/TheOliveSteakHouse/

Opening time
11:00 - 22:00

MARCH 27

What: The First Wave of Vietnamese Feminism (1918 - 1945)
Where: Salon Saigon (6d Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3); 6pm-7:30pm
About: Dr Bui Tran Phuong is a researcher, teacher and former Rector of Hoa Sen University (Ho Chi Minh City). She has a long history in teaching and researching on modern and contemporary Vietnam as well as on Vietnamese culture. Her work deals with topics including the history of education and intellectuals, the history of colonization, the history of women and gender and the emergence of a feminine elite linked to colonial education. A Doctor in contemporary history, she defended, in 2008, a thesis entitled "Vietnam 1918-1945, gender and modernity: the emergence of new perceptions and experimentations." Her presentation at Salon Saigon will be an adaptation of this thesis. The conference will be held in Vietnamese with English translation.
Contact: Visit www.salonsaigon.com for more info



APRIL 14



What: TEDxYouthAISVN
Where: American International School (220 Nguyen Van Tao, Nha Be); 8:30am-12:30pm
About: TEDxYouth@AISVN is an independent TEDx event operating under the license from TED. TEDxYouth@AISVN presents their first event under the theme: "Under The Microscope," where many remarkable discoveries and ideas go unveiled. TEDxYouth@AISVN empowers and urges youth to recognize the significance of uncovering the unseen. Speakers will evaluate ideas "under the microscope." If you're keen on embarking this journey follow their Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook page @tedxyouthaisvn to be updated on upcoming news and speakers recruitment events.
Contact: Visit www.ais.edu.vn for more info



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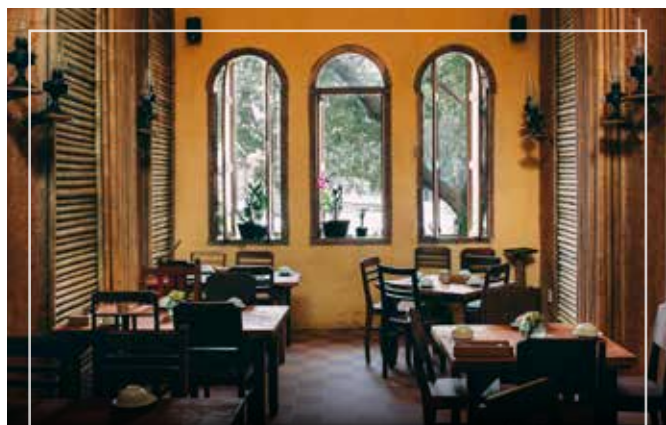
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30th Floor, Pullman Saigon Centre
148 Tran Hung Dao Boulevard, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

THE BULLETIN

Promotions and news in HCMC and beyond...

Full Moon Festival Celebrating Vietnamese Ethnic Minorities

A cultural event capturing the beauty and pride of a number of Vietnam's 54 tribes, Anantara Hoi An's Ethnic Minorities Festival returns in a monthly format this year. A collaboration between Anantara Hoi An, the Department of Culture, Sport and Tourism of Quang Nam Province and the Precious Heritage Art Gallery Museum, the event strives to showcase the richness and diversity of local ethnic minority groups and runs alongside Hoi An's lantern festival taking place on the 14th day of every lunar month when the moon is brightest.

Before the traditional dancing teams of Nam Giang, Tay Giang, Dong Giang, Phuoc Son, Nam Tra My and Bac Tra My districts take to the stage, guests are invited to browse the stalls of Anantara's pop-up arts and crafts market with local artisans offering

hand-embroidered batik pieces, original art, all-natural organic honey and locally-grown Robusta coffee.

Guests will also be able to purchase original photography by Réhahn—a renowned French photographer who has spent years documenting Vietnam's ethnic minorities and who is one of the festival's main sponsors. His poignant work offers an insight into the daily life of the local communities and celebrates the richness and diversity of Vietnam's ethnic cultures.

At sunset, a floating lantern ceremony kicks off at Anantara jetty setting the Thu Bon River aglow in the shimmering light of dozens of colorful paper lanterns as they slowly drift downstream. A buffet dinner is then served at the Riverside restaurant. For further information about the festival, contact Anantara Hoi An on 0235 391 4555 or at hoian@anantara.com.



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VEHICLES WERE FINED EARLIER THIS YEAR FOR breaching the three-minute stop rule at Tan Son Nhat Airport. While 'no parking' signs are erected along the street in front of the terminals inside the airport, the regulation has been relaxed, with drivers now given three minutes of stopping for picking up or dropping off passengers. Drivers who breach the three-minute limit will be subjected to a VND350,000 fine. Any vehicles found without the driver inside will be deemed illegal parking, thus receiving a fine of VND700,000. In 2017, transport inspectors detected and fined a total of VND587.5 million on 903 vehicles, according to the transport department.

USD62 MILLION

CEMETERY WILL BE BUILT IN HANOI FOR HIGH-RANKING

state and Party officials, national heroes and people of note in the uptown part of the capital. The new graveyard will cover an area of roughly 120 hectares, of which about 60 percent is allocated for burial plots and the remaining for decorative verdant background. It will be created in a rural town of Hanoi, at the foot of Ba Vi Mountain. The cemetery will accommodate up to 2,500 plots and is due for completion in three years. The final resting place is designed with a variety of functional facilities, such as buildings for work, reception and funeral service, together with land for traffic and a parking lot. Vietnam's high-ranking leaders have been buried in Mai Dich Cemetery, Cau Giay District, Hanoi, since 1982.



94.7 MILLION

TOTAL POPULATION IN VIETNAM BY THE

end of 2018. Vietnam's population will rise by one million, its life expectancy will hit 73.7, and the infant sex ratio will be 112.8 boys/100 girls in 2018, according to the Vietnam General Office for Population-Family Planning (GOPFP). This would make Vietnam the 14th most populous country in the world. Vietnam's population has increased by 1.07 percent compared to 2016, according to Le Canh Nhac, deputy general director of GOPFP. About 1.3 million children were born in 2017, with the average sex ratio at 112.4 boys/100 girls. The highest boy to girl sex ratios of infants can be found in the northern provinces; such as Son La (120 boys/100 girls), Hung Yen (118.6 boys/100 girls), Bac Ninh (117.6 boys/100 girls), Hai Duong (116.3 boys/100 girls) and Hanoi is 114 boys/100 girls.



1.5 KILOMETERS

OF TRACK WILL BE ADDED TO THE 17 KILOMETERS of elevated rail that make up Saigon metro route No.1, connecting Ben Thanh Terminal in District 1 with Suoi Tien Terminal in District 9. The parallel tracks, which will allow trains to travel in both directions, have been placed between the two metro stations in Thu Duc District and District 9. According to an engineer in charge of the construction, about 50 meters of track will continue to be installed per day. The installation is expected to be completed in late 2018. The construction of metro route No. 1 began in 2012, at a budgeted cost of about US\$2.49 billion. The structure will be nearly 20 kilometers long on completion and is designed to connect District 1, District 2, District 9, Binh Thanh District and Thu Duc District in Ho Chi Minh City.



80 CLUBBERS WERE CAUGHT USING DRUGS IN AT A CLUB IN DONG NAI.

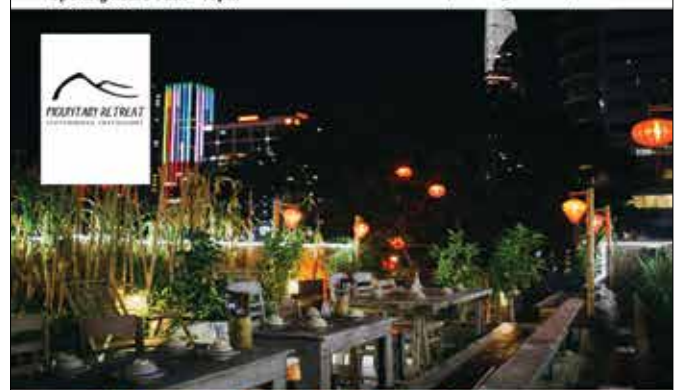
Officers raided the H5 Club on Vo Thi Sau in the provincial capital city of Bien Hoa. 218 customers and employees were inside the venue at the time of the raid, many of whom displayed symptoms of being under the influence of drugs. Following an on-the-spot examination, officers confiscated two and a half pills worth of ecstasy, another packet of synthetic drugs, one bag of marijuana, and two switchblades, which had been thrown on the floor.



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Rooftop 36 Lê Lợi, District 1



Lunch - Dinner / Opening hours 10am - 10pm

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Find Art

Experience Saigon's evolving contemporary art scene

Text by **James Pham**

CASUAL VISITORS TO

Ho Chi Minh City (colloquially known as “Saigon”), Vietnam’s largest and most cosmopolitan city, could be forgiven for thinking that its art scene is relegated to well-done but kitschy reproduction paintings and an endless supply of traditional crafts like lacquerware and wood carvings of lithe Vietnamese women in *ao dai*, Vietnam’s iconic tunic dress. But those ready to delve beneath the façade of made-for-tourists souvenir art will be rewarded with an emerging contemporary art scene as loud and vibrant as the city itself.

Most art lovers will start by visiting the Fine Arts Museum (97 Pho Duc Chinh, D1), a gorgeous 1929 colonial-era ochre-and-white building whose period architectural details including stained glass and vintage tiles are almost as eye-catching as the works it houses. While

the collection spans the ages mixing traditional Vietnamese painting and the plastic arts, it really ends at the fascinating combat and propaganda art of the 1970s. Contemporary art would have to wait almost two more decades for the economic and political reforms known as *Doi Moi* of the late 80s to pave the way for conditions conducive to self-expression.

At the Craig Thomas Gallery (271 Tran Nhat Duat, D1), lawyer turned artist turned curator Craig Thomas prides himself on finding and nurturing young talent. “I think the main difference in our gallery is that we have always focused on younger artists where we can generally have a bigger impact,” says Craig. “In 2016 we hosted four solo exhibitions for artists having their first curated gallery shows.” The gallery actively represents about 25 visual artists working in painting and sculpture but also performance,

video and installation media. One such contemporary artist is Lim Khim Ka Ty for whom Craig first curated a show in 2005. “She works every day and the positive effect from that can be seen both in her always improving and evolving technical skill as a painter and in the somewhat more ephemeral quality of creating works with ever more emotional and societal relevance,” says Craig.

Indeed, part of the allure of Saigon’s contemporary art scene is how excitingly new it is, with artists increasingly open to pushing the boundaries. “If you look at the system that exists for artists – the educational system and the galleries that can represent them—there hasn’t been a very strong infrastructure,” says Sophie Hughes, founder of Sophie’s Art Tour (www.sophiesarttour.com). “The universities don’t make it part of their system to teach contemporary art; what they teach is technical skills. However, over recent years, more spaces have opened where artists can show their work, and more young artists are going abroad and being exposed to different influences and a variety of contemporary materials. That has made them more experimental.”

Since opening in 2015, Dia Projects (1057 Binh Quoi, Binh Thanh) has generated buzz in the art community for showcasing the exploration and experimentation of contemporary art. Set on the peninsula of Thanh Da just 20 minutes north of downtown Saigon but known for its rustic simplicity and rice fields, the independent, non-profit space exhibits a variety of media including painting, photography, video, installations and performance art. Indicative of the experimental nature of the space is MoT, a



BO CHAY - Escape

Lim Khim Ka Ty
Oil on canvas 145
x 190 cm. Image
provided by Craig
Thomas Gallery

recently launched sound project exploring auditory experiences featuring local and international sound artists playing conceptual sonic pieces together.

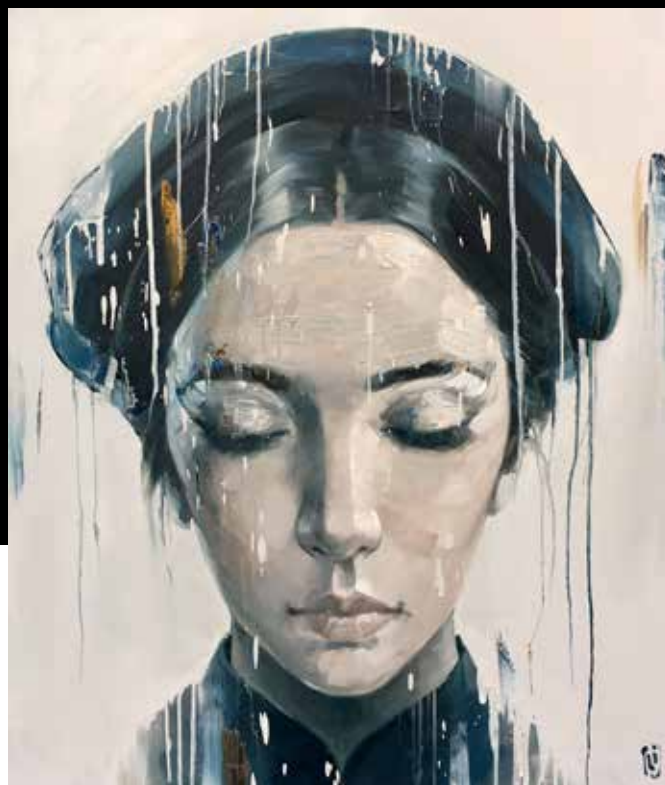
While recent years have seen a long overdue increase in exhibit space for artists, Sophie Hughes notes that the city still lacks the documentation of contemporary art—people writing about, critiquing and discussing art. To address that need, Salon Saigon (6D Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3) opened late 2016 in the posh confines of a historic house once the residence of a former US ambassador. “Salon Saigon is not just an art gallery but a place for artists and art lovers to gather, discuss and exchange ideas,” says Director Sandrine Llouquet. “Our inspiration comes from the salons that flourished in France during the 17th and 18th century which

hosted refined gatherings—partly held to amuse the participants and to refine the taste and increase their knowledge.” Salon Saigon’s collection looks both forward and back, with the 15 or so artists taking on topics related to Vietnamese history or using traditional Vietnamese art or artisanal techniques to deal with current issues, an encouraging development in a



Balls and The Seven Capital Sins.

Mix Media
Installation by Le
Hien Minh. Image
courtesy of the Artist
and Dia Projects.



Lady - PQT

Oil on canvas_130 x 110 cm. Image provided by Craig Thomas Gallery

country where freedom of expression has not always been nurtured.

“Young Vietnamese artists now are so much more daring, provocative, almost ‘irritating’ in the way they take on contemporary themes of politics, gender and society,” says Shyevin S’ng, owner of her eponymous gallery in leafy District 2, a tony suburb of Saigon favored by expats with expense accounts (6 Le Van Mien, previously VinGallery). “While it’s much more open than it was before, some of the more daring work can be only be seen at private, invitation-only showings in cafés and homes limited to just 20 or 30 people which makes it difficult for outsiders to access.” Like many of Saigon’s commercial galleries, Shyevin’s recently remodeled space strives to ride the fine balance between being financially viable while still showcasing cutting edge work. “Our clientele skews heavily towards international buyers,” she says. “The market is not so ready for local collectors, but while we’re waiting, I want to showcase more experimental, conceptual art.”

For now, the million-dollar question remains where Vietnam’s contemporary art scene is headed. “Contemporary art is such a great way to gain insight into modern-day Vietnam,” says Sophie. “It sheds light on the question of what it means to be a young person living in Vietnam right now, addressing the issues of gender and sexuality, threats to the environment and also reflecting on history and using art to explore an often complicated narrative. In a country that is changing as fast as Vietnam, it is the artists who are constantly asking questions and who are revealing the inner workings of a nation and the people who live here.” ■



By Block

Blockchain and how it's changing the nature of real estate

BLOCKCHAIN IS THE SECURE ledger system behind the Bitcoin cryptocurrency, and it's the technology that has been credited with the power to reinvent the property sector. Understanding why, is far from simple. Blockchain technology is notoriously complicated. In simplest terms, it is a shared record of transactions. Anyone can hold a copy of the ledger, and anyone can read it. Changes ripple through all versions of the Blockchain held worldwide. A locking method is employed to prevent any tampering by one party – making it secure.

Land registries around the world are interested in it because they suspect that blockchain could enable the 'almost instant' transfer of property ownership in a secure way. Troy Griffiths - Deputy Managing Director, Savills Vietnam believes "blockchain has the capacity to revolutionize land transfers." One of the world's oldest land registries, HM Land Registry in the UK, called it a "highly ambitious objective" that would require the most "far-reaching transformation in their 150-year history." Earlier this year, HM Land Registry announced plans to

create a virtual 'digital street' to test the new technology.

There are a growing number of similar trials with blockchain around the globe. The Ukrainian government, for example, is hoping to attract foreign investors by adopting blockchain technologies to replace paper processes. Investors will be able to conduct transactions online using smart contracts. The technology is based on the Ethereum blockchain—the second most valuable implementation after the one used for Bitcoin. Similar projects are underway in Honduras and the Republic of Georgia.

If the technology were to be implemented for land-registry purposes, it would have several possible benefits. The automatic processing of contracts would mean that costs are reduced. There would be increased security, as identity records are tamperproof. And deal times are reduced, as a deal can be an entirely digital experience.

Blockchain puts real estate on a new footing. If it has the potential to increase liquidity and reduce costs, some significant barriers for investors are

removed. If unitization of direct property holdings can be achieved and/or if income streams derived from direct property holding can be split, it also decreases the 'lumpiness' of real-estate investment; the barriers between real-world holdings and synthetic derivatives start to break down, making investment liquid, transparent and instantly tradeable.

However, it may be some time before this can be achieved, as further safeguards would need to be in place. Griffiths also noted, in his recent regional review during Vietnam Quarterly Market Report Q4/2017, that "blockchain is coming, but there yet to be any major breakthrough." It must be noted that there are doubters as to the security and viability of blockchain applications. The Ethereum currency was hit by a USD64 million hack in 2016, leading to a major overhaul, and breaches have continued.

In August, researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Media Lab examined the code behind the IOTA cryptocurrency, ranked at the time as the world's 8th most popular. They quickly found a basic security flaw, and warned the developers.



At the time, the IOTA currency had a market capitalisation of USD2 billion, yet none of the investors nor technology partners, which included a number of Silicon Valley giants, had performed adequate due diligence on the code. Joi Ito, director of MIT, cited the episode as evidence of the immaturity of blockchain deployments—understandable, he stressed, given the technology's comparatively recent development.

The real-estate industry, meanwhile, remains interested and optimistic that flaws can be ironed out. A RICS report, *The Impact of Emerging Technologies on the Surveying Profession*, argues that a radical improvement in the accuracy and timeliness of reporting, a reduction in the cost of managing buildings, and a change in the way property agencies work will be seen. Real-estate professionals, the RICS says, "are likely to become either data scientists or client managers." We think that blockchain could mean that real estate itself could find it has a much bigger role in everybody's portfolios.

Griffiths is also optimistic about blockchain application, particularly in Vietnam. "So far Vietnam has been slow on the up-taking of this new technology but that will change very quickly. We have a large population of dynamic, aggressive, smart young people and a big start-up culture. I think we are in a wonderful position to take advantage of the new digital age." ■



Bark to the Future

Pet supply retailers and services are beginning to bloom in Vietnam

Text by **Wayne Capriotti**
Images by **Ngoc Tran**

ONE MUST PUT THINGS IN

prospective in regards to the evolution of pet ownership and a supporting pet supply retail industry in Vietnam. The first documented, commercial “small companion animal” veterinarian clinic opened in Hanoi in 2003 and the first licensed commercial pet supply shop opened in 2006 in Ho Chi Minh City. And five years later there were still only a handful of quality pet supply shops in the major urban centers of Saigon and Hanoi who were only selling a limited range of products, mostly from international companies, priced in the economy to mid range. The exteriors and interiors of these pet supply shops were utilitarian, offering the most basic of pet care services, but times are changin’.

There are still barriers and challenges to investing and operating a pet supply shop in Vietnam. From high rent in urban centers, limited range of inexpensive, local products, supply chain and warehousing issues, a restrictive legal and business environment to difficulties in obtaining investment and operating capital from financial institutions—most existing shops are “family financed.” This is a retail sector that’s new, largely unheard until recently and not taken seriously by many pragmatic business-minded locals. Although wages for personnel are low, with many shops staffing three to five people, the real problem lies in poor sales training on awareness

and proper use of pet products. Profit margins are slim as Vietnamese pet owners buy based on price, usually lacking a deeper understanding of the pet food they are buying. However, this is about to change because there is a growing trend for the demand of premium products and services, allowing pet supply retailers to increase their margins.

The average pet supply shop is usually packed on a busy street with similar types of buildings (it is rare to have it as a stand-alone building or located in a mall because leasing price prohibits it). Most, if not all, new pet supply retailers have to renovate and refurbish existing buildings at a considerate cost and time, and shelving

space is limited therefore inventories are kept low. Although limited by space restraints, many shop owners are overcoming this problem by becoming creative with their space: maximizing the multiple levels of their building, adding colorful, lively interiors and product presentation, and even allowing their own dogs and cats to wander around and make themselves “at home”—adding to a better shopping experience for customers.

Market Value

It is difficult to provide an accurate market value of the pet supply retail industry in terms of dollars because many businesses are privately owned and there is no assigned association in

Vietnam that can gather this data, so I can only provide a quantitative survey in the major urban centers that offer the following services: veterinary care, pet supply stores, grooming salons/spas, pet accommodations, live animal sales, dog training, pet relocation services and pet cafés (dog and cat).

It is estimated that there are 49 veterinary clinics, 61 supply stores, 5 grooming salons, 4 pet accommodations, 5 dog trainers and 6 pet cafés in Saigon (metropolitan population, including urban and rural districts, is approximately 8.76 million as of 2017). In Hanoi (metropolitan population is approximately 7.58 million as of 2017) there are 15 veterinary





Daily dog walks at Bed and Pet-First Villa

clinics, 36 supply stores, 5 grooming salons, 5 pet accommodations and 4 pet cafés.

Now, these figures represent businesses where their major source of revenue comes from a single service segment. They also represent the most popular and largest businesses in a particular segment. However, a new trend emerged recently where many pet supply stores began offering a wider range of pet products, grooming services, relocation services, accommodations and live animal sales, hence the development of the full service pet care retail shop in Vietnam.

In secondary urban, and rural, cities like Hai Phong (population approximately 1.9 million as of 2017), Can Tho (population of 1.24 million as of 2017 and the largest city in the Mekong Delta) and Danang (metropolitan population is approximately 1.07 million as of 2017) there is a dramatic increase in the amount of vet clinics and supply stores. Originating from the concept of a veterinary center providing medical care to farm animals and livestock because most veterinary universities in Vietnam still cater their curriculum to livestock. The emergence of these modern pet supply shops are being developed by young, pet loving entrepreneurs seeing the need to offer care products and services for small companion animals (dogs, cats, birds, fish, reptiles and small furry pets).

Offline and Online

The first pet supply retail franchise in Vietnam, by definition owning and operating pet supply stores under one brand with central management and having locations in various urban centers across the country, was developed by The Spring Group, formerly known as the VeeGroup. The Spring Group was officially established in 2006 by the name of Veesano Joint Stock Company (VeeGroup). In the beginning of 2018, the company changed their name to Spring Group. Spring Group owns a number of Vietnamese consumer retail brands in various business sectors

Saiga's House

including childcare, homes/interiors and specialty food markets. They are also a major distributor of consumer retail products in Vietnam.

In 2013, Spring Group launched retailer PetCity with 5 shops in Hanoi, 1 in Hai Phong, 3 in Ho Chi Minh City and 1 Danang. The PetCity supermarkets provide a wide range of products, accessories and services including grooming and accommodations. PetCity is also very active in the local pet-owner community, providing education and awareness on how to be a socially responsible pet owner. They also support local animal rescue centers with fundraising and campaigning on behalf of abandoned dogs and cats in Vietnam.

Although not considered franchises, there are a number of companies in Hanoi and Saigon that own and operate more than one pet supply shops in one particular city. Most notable and probably the first modern pet supply store, opened in 1999 in Vietnam, is CityZoo with a store in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi.

In 2017 the first international pet supply franchise retailer entered the market. Pet Lovers Centre, based in Singapore, opened two shops in Ho Chi Minh City, with plans of expanding nationally. Pet Lovers Centre has over

90 shops in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Brunei and now Vietnam. According to their spokesperson, they see the development of the pet market in Vietnam as a pivotal point for investment, backed by a young population with a growing fondness of pet ownership and are ready to buy the best of the best for their new four-legged family members.

According to EuroMonitor International, although e-commerce pet supply retailers in Vietnam are increasing in popularity the sector is producing low sales overall. However, an emerging class of tech-savvy wired young pet owners (with increasing disposable incomes who prefer shopping online for apparel, electronics, food and music) are now considering buying pet care products online as well.

A major factor slowing a robust growth in e-commerce in Vietnam is buyers' overall lack of trust in this retail channel and in questionable sellers. Other issues include unclear seller's policies on buyer-seller contracts, not addressing customer complaints, non-protection of personal data, lack of clarity in product description, and purchases not delivered or taking weeks to arrive.

A word of caution to pet supply retailers in Vietnam: Tread carefully with online retail because your reputation is "on the line" and any bad e-commerce shopping experience will be reviewed under intense scrutiny in social media. So, pet supply retailers, try to advance the cause of e-commerce and accommodate the buyer, hence more earned trust in the retailer. Since most pet owners believe their pets are family, a retailer must realize they could be insulting their 'family' if they do not provide a positive online shopping experience. Family is everything in Vietnam.

Finally, Facebook is becoming a key player in the e-commerce gray area because most sellers are not registered by law with the Vietnam E-Commerce and Digital Economy Agency (VECITA) and most do not pay taxes, so buyer beware. ■





Small Change

Oi Vietnam and AsiaLIFE join forces with the city's food and beverage sector to create big changes from small change

Text by Peter Cornish

THE POWER OF HARNESSING

ordinary consumer spending for good causes is by no means a new concept, but it is one that has been drawing increased attention of late as people become more comfortable with the idea of for-profit social organizations which might previously have been seen as holding conflicting values.

One example of harnessing this power is the recent upsurge in socially conscious community events around the city. Groups such as Saigon SOS are hosting large charity fundraisers, the city's craft beer companies making regular donations to support community causes through charity beer fests and event sponsorship, and multiple groups doing what they can to offer help to those in need.

Often the outcome of these events is to raise awareness of the work that local NGOs and charities are doing, and to provide a much-appreciated financial injection to help them reach certain goals or, in some instances, just to continue with the work they are doing for the communities they support.

Yet the reality remains that while these fundraising events can be a great opportunity to capture the power of community goodwill, they often provide little more than a short-term panacea to the continued objective of raising funds. Worse still, in some instances they cost more to hold than they raise.

The challenge of reaching financial sustainability for organization operating in the social sphere remains an ongoing one, yet the number of organizations competing for an ever-shrinking pot of philanthropic donation and governmental support is increasing.

One answer to this is the notion of a social enterprise, or a business venture driven by a social or community cause and getting its income from a product or service transaction. However, although no longer reliant on the uncertainty of donations most social businesses still face the struggle of persuading consumers to part with their money.

Setting out to meet this challenge is newly formed social enterprise, Small Change Big Changes. Launching late April 2018, Small Change hopes to harness the power of consumer spending through targeting one of the city's fastest growing sectors, the food and beverage (F&B) industry. Funds are raised through consumer support of existing businesses,

spending their money where they would spend it anyway.

The idea is simple. Partner F&B outlets contribute a percentage of their monthly revenue to the fund. The amount they contribute is small change, less than 1% a month, and can be capped at any amount they feel comfortable with. Nobody is asked to contribute more than they can afford, and partners are welcome to withdraw temporarily or permanently at any time.

In return for their monthly contributions, partner restaurants receive offline and online promotional support from Small Change founding media partners, *Oi Vietnam* and *AsiaLIFE*. The marketing support on offer from the two magazines is valued at higher than the proposed contribution so that partner restaurants get a fair exchange for their contributions to the fund.

"After over ten years of *AsiaLIFE* in print and online, I thought the environment was right for this initiative. Both *AsiaLIFE* and *Oi Vietnam* have a great reach within the community and feel that if we can make a small change we have something sustainable," says Jonny Edbrooke, Director of *AsiaLIFE*.

By using partner restaurants as a collection point, guests that visit and eat at participating venues are indirectly contributing to the fund through a small percentage of their spending. The more the community supports the partner restaurants, the larger the contribution to the fund and the greater the social impact the fund can have.

With a monthly revenue stream, the fund set up by Small Change will be used to create lasting and sustainable opportunities at a grassroot level, having direct impact on the lives of individuals or small groups. Sticking initially with the F&B sector, the first project they will support is the sponsorship of scholarship funding for trainee chefs at Streets International in Hoi An.

Itself a successful and innovative social enterprise, Streets International (Streets) develops and operates sustainable programmes for street kids and disadvantaged

youth in Vietnam, preparing vulnerable, orphaned or disenfranchised young people for rewarding careers in the hospitality industry. With a training platform that offers hands-on learning, observation and practice, course participants are equipped with the skills needed for work in the F&B and hospitality industry.

Set up in 2009, Street's comprehensive 18-month program of vocational hospitality and culinary training offers the prospect of a future that would be otherwise unattainable. Since their founding, Streets has managed a 100% track record, graduating over 250 trainees through their program, many of whom have started careers at 5-star hotels and restaurants within 60 days of graduating.

Once Small Change sponsored trainees complete their program it is hoped that partner restaurants will offer them employment in HCMC and support them as they embark on their new careers.

Future projects that Small Change supports are expected to include the development of a low cost, high nutrition meal plans to be introduced at orphanages and schools around the city. The social enterprise would also like to provide seed funding for other start-up, high impact social business, perhaps chosen through a Dragon's Den type scheme. As a community fund, they welcome cooperation from other groups as well as proposals for fund allocation.

"Working with Streets International is a no brainer for us. The benefit of getting culinary skills is obviously a very sustainable and life changing skill for trainees and can create far-reaching opportunities. As our initiative develops we are looking at other initiatives we can fund, especially those that will have a sustainable impact on the environment," says Jimmy Van der Kloet, Managing Director of *Oi Vietnam*.

Launch of Small Change will happen on April 28 with a culinary event held at Grain. The event will introduce four prominent chefs from partner restaurants who will showcase a four-course meal for guests, with each chef responsible for a different course. All proceeds from the event will be placed in the fund.

For more info and to purchase tickets for the event, contact info@smallchangevietnam.com. ■

Brianna Pavon

Lost and Found

The assimilation and dissimulation
of two Vietnamese living abroad

Text and Images by **Duy Vo and Thao Bui**

DRIFTERS: SERENDIPITY

marks the conclusion to the first chapter of our creative exploration of which photography is the main medium. More importantly, this book has allowed us a momentary pause during which we have been able to revisit old memories, abandoned and fragmented thoughts. It has allowed us a space to put our vulnerability on display. It has enabled us to better understand ourselves in light of distant memories. However, it is our belief that we do not experience this life alone, so if you're also going through a difficult time, know that we're sharing the pressure, the fear, and the loneliness.

In this time of moral turmoil when the color of your skin determines how you are perceived, neon lights appear unassuming and indiscriminate. Under neon lights, you are no longer just the shade that you're born with. You are whatever color the lights cast on you. Red, blue, green, orange. Bright, vivid and worth every single shutter click. And just like neon lights, distant memories, though often overlooked, once fully embraced, give insights into who you have become and illuminate the possibilities of who you could have been. The neon lights captured in *Drifters: Serendipity* remind us of our hometown of Saigon, our time growing

up there, and an old part of ourselves. Our younger selves dreamed of adulthood as something extraordinary. But now in the middle of our 20s, we're still lost souls in the spectrum of things. Yet, we believe that all this mess is a temporary arrangement. That heartbreaks and failures help us to embrace the triumphs in life.

For a physical copy of *Drifters: Serendipity* order online at www.blurb.com/b/8468840. For an e-book, order at www.blurb.com/ebooks/650941-drifters-serendipity

The following are excerpts and images from Duy and Thao's book *Drifters: Serendipity*:



Livy Poulin

Fall of 2005

I boarded a plane from Saigon and headed for Pleasant Hill, Oregon at the age in which the world is often seen through rose-colored lenses and pubescent rebellion is just as pleasurable as eating a good bowl of *pho*.

Fifteen years old, alone in a foreign land, I embarked on a journey determined to prove my worth. Eleven years later and still so much left to prove. But I've come to realize one thing:

The more time I spent forging my own path, the further I drifted away from my own home.

As the last decade passed, Saigon, though constant in my longing, was no longer a place to which I belonged. As I stayed and pursued my goals and aspirations in America, I became an outsider. For that, I missed out on a lot.

I missed out on seeing my baby brother grow up. I missed out on growing together with my older brother as young adults. I missed out on bonding with my parents and even missed out on having the talk with them.

I remember during my first year, completely consumed by my own frustration and homesickness, I would spend many nights in the darkness of my room under the blanket crying. And to mask my uncontrollable sobbing, I'd put on Backstreet Boys' *Never Gone* album. As silly as that might sound, it was the only cheap bootlegged CD that I acquired shortly before I left home. For the longest time, I could not bring myself to listening to this whole album as it reminded me of the many times my emotions got the best of me. Those brooding lyrics transport me back to that very bedside. There I stand watching my old self completely falling apart, wondering what could have happened if I had given up. — Duy



In 2008, on the flight from Vietnam to Portland, Oregon, I did not expect everything in my life to change drastically. My plan was to go to college, get a degree, go home, and then maybe settle down. The longer I lived in another country, the further away I drifted from my previous plans. I chose to fully immerse in American culture and decided to not go home so often. While adapting

with Western values, I slowly detached from what I knew. A few years in, Vietnam became a place I no longer fit in. Drifting between two lands, two cultures, but I never truly belonged anywhere. As I stayed and filled my life with hopes and dreams in the Pacific Northwest, my family was torn apart with jealousy and betrayals. —*Thao*



Bobae Mary Lee

Like many young Vietnamese men in the early '90s, my father owned an olive green Honda Cub. It was a small motorbike, but it sure got our family of four through a lot. On hot summer nights, my father used to take the whole family for rides and somehow we almost always ended up lugging home groceries.

Our Honda was an older model and did not have the front basket like others.

As resourceful as my father was, he would strap a red plastic (perforated to look like woven) shopping bag full of produce to the rear end of the Honda with copious amount of elastic cords. Our family of four would then squeeze our way onto the padded seat with my father at the helm. My older brother would sit at the tip; his knees bent and fitted snugly below the Honda's neck. I would sit sandwiched between my parents, hands clutching my father's pants. My mother would reach forward to hold onto my father's waist with one hand while holding my right leg away from the scalding hot exhaust pipe with the other. We would ride in this "formation" everywhere. —*Duy*

During a trip to Hong Kong, my parents gifted me with a Nikon D40, my first D-SLR. The camera quickly became a part of my identity. I would spend most weekends driving around town and photographing the streets of Saigon. District 2 was one of my frequent stops. Isolated from the rest of a bustling town by Saigon River, the place was populated with poor families and rice fields. There a corner right by the water where I parked my mom's scooter. I photographed the city's shadow, the summer sunset and a couple kids hanging out next to me.

There was this little girl who never had her photos taken before. She would come and ask many questions about the camera, so I took her portraits. As I showed the kid her own photos on the screen, her eyes sparkled with joy. —*Thao*



One thing you must know: In Vietnamese culture, we believe that the spirits of those who have passed away always look over us. For my parents, this belief is at the core of their spirituality, especially after having seen and known many loved ones who died in the war. My mother has gone on many expeditions to find the soils upon which once lay the bodies of my maternal great-grandpa and grandpa. She firmly believes that their spirits are still out there waiting to come home to the warm family altar. So you see, as a kid, topics of death and spirituality were not unfamiliar to me. —*Duy*

Lam and I tried to keep our relationship a secret, but every glance and whisper from my nosy neighbors were a brutal attack. One night, as I sneaked back in the house, my mom was waiting with a stack of *The L Word* DVD collection in her hands. I stared at her. Trying not to exhale while estimating how angry she might be. The air was so tense that I could almost cut it like a cake. My mom broke the silence. “I didn’t give birth to you to have a sick mind. What is this kind of illness? I am so ashamed of you.”

—*Thao*

Growing up, my cinematic universe was filled to the brim with Hong Kong films. My childhood would not be complete without long television series such as *Legend of the Condor Heroes* and many of its redos, slapstick comedic films of Stephen Chow, Hong Kong mafia flicks or moody moving pictures of Wong Kar-wai starring Tony Leung. To this day I can still vividly recall the laborious rewinding of VHS tapes in preparation for a binge-watching weekend. Or the contest within my group of friends to see who could put up the best Viet dubbed impersonations. Or the endless on-foot chase of the baddest machete swinging Hong Kong mafiosi through the packed illuminated streets. Or even the grainy and wildly saturated yellow lights of a tunnel setting the mood for Tony Leung and his mistress. —Duy

My obsession with Wong Kar Wai's films started in 2008. It was my first winter in the US away from home, from Saigon, and everything familiar. Freshly wounded from a serious breakup. It was also the year that Oregon was hit with the biggest snowstorm in 50 years. My excitement to see snow for the first time quickly fled when I got stuck in the apartment for days only with a few ramen packets and a bottle of mayonnaise. I spent every snow day watching Wong Kar Wai's films. Every frame was filled with lively nights and nostalgic lights that brought me back to Saigon.

Moving to New York City in another loosely-planned phase of my adult life revives those old feelings. This city feels very much like home. I love the nights with endless lights in front of my eyes. I love the bustling streets full of loud noises and honking cars. Every street corner brings back memories of Saigon. —Thao



DRIFTERS: SERENDIPITY

In our daily struggles for the past seven years, I have learned to open up, to feel at ease with my own vulnerability.

In a sense, *Drifters: Serendipity* is a means for me to rediscover all of my buried feelings and memories from the years past and most importantly, to finally embrace them. And who could be better to make this book into a reality with me than Thao? —Duy

When Duy suggested documenting our photography in this book, I agreed.

I desperately needed an outlet for my pains, frustrations, angers and guilts. I wanted to transform those negative emotions into something beautiful.

Drifters: Serendipity became the result of that process. —Thao

Dead Presidents

Dealing with a deceased spouse's bank account

As an expat here what happens if I die suddenly and my Vietnamese wife's name is not on my Vietnamese bank account? What will she need to do to access my account?

THIS IS AN EXCELLENT QUESTION.

Your wife will have to convince the bank that she has the right to manage or use—for herself—the money in the account. The bank will not want to risk anything and will request your wife to bring in supporting official documents.

By official documents, I mean letters from a competent authority certifying that the wife has rights over the bank account. Since you two were husband and wife, these documents should not be difficult to obtain. In most countries, public notaries are competent to issue them. It is advisable to first confirm with the bank precisely what kind of official documents it needs to allow your wife to use the bank account.

A crucial important point, however, is that although the bank will allow your wife access to the bank account, it does not mean that she *owns* the money in it.

So, let's start at the beginning: To whom does the money belong? This depends on many factors, since assets owned by a married couple are usual either "common property" or "separate property". Common property means that the asset belongs to both spouses: each of them hold a 50% interest in it. Separate property means that the asset belongs personally to one of the spouse: the other one has no interest in it.

Well, how do we determine whether the bank account is common or separate property? First of all, if the couple is international, married and lives abroad, it is likely that the law of another country (other than Vietnam) will be applicable (even if the bank account is located in Vietnam). For example, they married and lived for many years in the US, then moved to Vietnam. In this example, it is likely that the relevant US law will be applicable to determine whether the bank account is common or separate property.

But let's assume that the wife and husband married and lived in Vietnam only. In this case, Vietnamese law applies. What does Vietnamese law say about assets of married couples? It says that, unless the couple has decided otherwise, all assets must be either common or separate property in accordance with the following rules:

Common property are, in particular, all assets created by a spouse during the marriage period, income of a spouse generated by employment, business or production activity, the profits earned by a spouse from the spouse's separate property and any other income during the marriage period.

On the other hand, separate property are assets, in particular, which were owned by a spouse before marriage and which are inherited by a spouse or given to her or him during the marriage period. Those assets are owned by the spouse individually and the other has no interest in it.

I said *unless the couple has decided otherwise* because the 2014 Vietnamese Law on Family allows marrying couple to sign a specific agreement at the time they marry. Such kind of agreement shall be made in writing and it shall be notarized (signed before a public notary) or certified. Typically, it will allow the couple to change the rules described above: the spouses may, for example, decide in this agreement that incomes from their employment or business activity will not be common property, but separate property of the spouse in question.

In your case, after having confirmed that the law of Vietnam applies to the assets of the couple, it is advisable to check whether this specific agreement was signed by you and your wife when you both wed.

Now that we are able to determine

whether the bank account is a common or separate property, the second question is: What rights does the wife have over the bank account? If it is a common property, then Vietnamese law allows the wife to "manage" the common asset upon her husband's death. However, to be able to manage does not mean that she owns the asset. For example, when a person is missing for any reason, a relative of the missing person may be appointed by a court to manage such person's assets. But it does not mean that the appointed person owns the assets: it is only entitled to manage them, for the purpose of conserving them, etc., waiting for the missing person to return. The idea is the same when a spouse dies, but the surviving spouse is not waiting for the missing person to come back, but for the "division" of the asset in accordance with the inheritance law.

As you know, when someone dies, the assets of the deceased person are allocated between that person's heirs, it could be children, spouse, other relatives or other persons that the deceased person had designated by will. When a spouse dies, the other spouse has the right to manage the common asset until the time the asset is divided in accordance with the inheritance rules: part of it may be given to the children, part to other relatives, etc. Because the asset is common (it belongs to both spouses), the common asset will be divided into two parts: 50% for the surviving spouse, 50% for the heirs of the deceased spouse. For separate property, the solution is easier: the asset is divided among the heirs of the deceased spouse only.

Let's not forget this important point: The right to manage the bank account does not mean ownership of the money in it. ■



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. 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.

Social Security

The importance of socialization for puppies and kittens

DOGS AND CATS ARE SIMILAR TO human beings, before they start their journey as a member of our family they need time to adapt to their new home and their surroundings. So, in order to obtain a friendly, easy going dog or cat we must understand how and when to being their socialization period.

The socialization period (when it's a puppy or kitten) is the time when they are most open to learning about their new environment, littermates, mother and other animals of their species, human and even different animal species. During this time we should provide them with diverse, positive experiences to prevent the development of fearful responses and subsequent behavioral problems.

Dogs who had more social meetings, contact or attend puppy classes early are less likely to develop fearful and aggressive behavior towards other puppies or kittens. Animals who lacked early non-fearful exposure to a range of environment, people, animals may become afraid and avoid these situations when they grow older.

As pet owners, we must also understand that, in general, animals reared in barren environment (both socially and physically) are unable to deal effectively with environment and activities a normal companion animal will experience. Any socialization meeting may potentially be a risk for disease or injury, so they must be carried out in a safe manageable space.

The Sensitive Period

Puppies and kittens should begin their exposure to relevant stimuli during their 3-week-old sensitive period, and then continue with the owner. Puppies and kittens expose themselves at their own pace, given suitable opportunities, and their brains and behavior will rapidly develop through to least 20 weeks of age. Fearful or shy puppies and kittens should be allowed to experience the world at their own speed, with every social encounter reinforced with rewards such as food and play. With continued exposure to people, places and things, many will continue to adapt their behavior beyond 20 weeks.

Puppies

At 3 weeks, a puppy's eyes and ears are well developed, they are now able to start bonding with the animals and people around them as well as to recognize

features of the environment where they live. From three weeks to 14 weeks old is when they are most responsive to unfamiliar things.

By 7 weeks of age they will actively avoid passive handler, by 8 to 9 weeks most dogs are sufficiently neurologically developed that they are ready to start exploring unfamiliar social and physical environments.

Data show that if they are prohibited from doing so until 14 weeks of age they lose such flexibility and may be forever fearful, early socialization is highly recommended because if it does not occur until 5 weeks of age puppies may be wary on first presentation.

Kittens

Earlier exposure is strongly recommended in kittens, the sensitive period for cats begins at 3 weeks of age, but their receptivity to new experience was earlier than for puppies.

In order to obtain maximum benefit from early exposure, kittens need to be exposed to people, other animals and new environments by 9 weeks of age. In general, kittens benefit from early exposure to family member, other pets, visitors, grooming, veterinary visits and other life experiences.

Kitten classes may also assist owners in learning about their new pet and thus help prevent future relinquishment of the kitten to a shelter. For these reasons, a plan for the socialization of kittens by owner should immediately be done after taking the kitten home for the first time.

Continuing Socialization

Most owners start to adopt their pets between 8 to 12 weeks old (this should be the minimum age because they require their mother's care in the crucial first 2 months) where this is the peak sensitive socialization time, so the transition process should be managed carefully. At this point every new owner should always assume that the puppy or kitten has not been socialized prior to adoption, and around this age the puppy or kitten is also very mobile so avoid contact with dogs or cats with unknown temperament, unclear health or vaccination status or surfaces that may harbor disease vectors such as grass at public parks.

After all primary vaccinations have been given, the puppies or kittens should be in an enriched environment with a variety of toys, and structure and play



Dr. Data Putra Sembiring graduated from Bogor Agricultural University in Indonesia. Before working as a veterinary surgeon at Animal Doctor International Vietnam, he worked with German Primate Center (Siberut Conservation Program) and a private animal clinic in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

should be encouraged. Socialization should also include regular positive interactions with people, other dogs and cats, other animal species and always make sure that all the interaction during the socialization period are supervised to prevent injury.

Lifelong Socialization

Socialization opportunities should be continued for the first 9 to 12 months because re-enforcement of the lesson is important for them to remember. Every owner should also understand and be aware that some animals have an innately more fearful temperament and need to be managed differently and will need more effort in socialization time for them to remember and adapt.

Adopting An Adult Dog Or Cat With An Unknown Or Limited Socialization History

When we decide to adopt stray (unknown history) animals, we should be aware that habituation of older animals to various stimuli and experiences can be more difficult and challenging but follows the same basic steps as for puppies and kittens.

In the beginning we must also recognize the character of dog or cat we want to adopt, care should be taken to develop a bond with the animal and provide a sense of security for the animal to allow them to cope with new experiences without distress. Animals that are timid or aggressive may need an extended period of introduction to their new environment and new owners must take part in all the activities and also understand their needs. And if the dog or cat continues to be fearful or aggressive, consultation with a veterinarian should be included.

an extended period of introduction to their new environment and new owners must take part in all the activities and also understand their needs. And if the dog or cat continues to be fearful or aggressive, consultation with a veterinarian should be included. ■



Precisely

White

What could be more appropriate treatment for your wardrobe after Tet than to detox it from noisy clashing graphic prints and the saturated color pops that punctuated our autumn outfits. Well, it may be a little premature to take on summer's biggest color trend in full force, but start as you mean to go on we say.

Model: **Hang Nguyen**
Photographer: **Hoang Phuc**
Designer: **Phuc Tran**





Orchestrating a wardrobe white-out will provide as much of a mental overhaul as it will a physical one. Sensing that we'd be craving purity and calm right around summer time, designer Phuc Tran explores the soothing potential of white.





For The Love of Chocolate

Without cocoa, there is no chocolate. It's as simple as this. Everything starts from there. When you look at the vast array of chocolates, products and concepts the cocoa has inspired that are available in the 21st century, it's hard to imagine that the first introductions of this delicious food was thousands of years ago, and further, wasn't originally quite as delicious as what we now recognize as 'chocolate'.

The
*Lady
Rides
Again*

Godiva, a luxury chocolatier, finds a sweet spot in Vietnam

Text by **Johnny Tran**
Images by **Vy Lam and Godiva**



THEY SAY DIAMONDS ARE A girl's best friend, but whoever first coined that phrase must have never tasted a piece of premium Belgian chocolate before. Why Belgium? Because there is a broad consensus that the world's best chocolates come from Belgium, more specifically, because of a certain company that started there in 1926, a company called Godiva.

Joseph Draps founded Godiva Chocolatier in 1926 in Belgium, and there are now Godiva stores in over 100 countries, with the most recent in Mongolia. In Vietnam, the flagship store is inside Sai Gon Centre on Le Loi in District 1, and it is here that our journey begins.

As I entered the brightly lit, yet warm and relaxed atmosphere of the modern chocolate store for our interview, I was introduced to Chef Philippe Daue, one of Godiva's only five Chef Chocolatiers. Philippe was born in Belgium, but from one faithful trip in 1991, as he put it, he "fell in love immediately with Asia," and he has called the region home since 1995. He is currently based in Shanghai, and helps take charge of Godiva's expansion in Asia. And the country that started his love affair with Asia? It was Vietnam ("I love Vietnamese food. The coffee! The pho!" he was quick to exclaim). So it was rather a fitting full circle that he was in Saigon again to help kick-start Godiva's expansion plans for Vietnam. There are currently two stores in Vietnam, and the plan is for ten.

So, what does Godiva mean, and why was the name chosen to represent the chocolate? "Our founder was inspired by the legend of Lady Godiva [and her story of dedication to help the impoverished and the oppressed]," he says. The story goes: Lady Godiva's husband was a ruthless ruler in 11th-century England who had imposed a heavy tax on his townspeople. Lady Godiva protested, and her husband would only relent and lift the tax if she rode naked on a horse through the town. After issuing a proclamation that all persons should stay indoors and shut their windows, she rode through the town, clothed only in her long hair, and her legacy was eternally cemented in the hearts of her people and her story spread throughout history. Philippe added, the name Godiva "embodies timeless values balanced with modern boldness," just like Lady Godiva, and the brand's credo is to strive for a balance of "extraordinary richness, premium quality, and iconic style."

A major reason Godiva's reputation has endured is because of its iconic chocolate piece—the chocolate truffle. It has become synonymous with the Godiva brand: "It is our best selling and most-recognizable chocolate," Philippe proudly asserts. If you are not sure what exactly a chocolate truffle is—it is the small, mostly circular-shaped chocolates, unlike the longer chocolate bars you see sold at supermarkets and convenience stores. Another customer favorite are



speculoos, which are Belgian cookies often enjoyed with coffee.

Other main ingredients are cocoa solids (the actual chocolate), vanilla for flavoring, and "the least amount of sugar possible!" Philippe exclaims. When he switches from (dark) chocolate to milk chocolate, Philippe adds milk powder. What about white chocolate? Then you just take out the cocoa solids. So, in terms of 'chocolate-ness,' it goes white chocolate, to milk chocolate, then dark chocolate.

Another important reason why Godiva stands out from the competition is how well its chocolate physically holds up, regardless of the country its being sold in. You can have many popular brands that service a particular country or region, but when you move to the global level, there are health/nutrition regulations

and compliances you must abide by, and yet the chocolate also must hold its shape and texture while being sold in the coldest to hottest climates worldwide. The Godiva staff also does a good job of offering ice packs to store with the chocolate for customers who are out shopping and aren't going straight back to their home or hotel. Philippe also offers this advice: "Ideally, you should store the chocolates between 12-18 degrees Celsius. Don't freeze it, and if you store it in the refrigerator, wait for 20-30 minutes after you take it out for the best taste experience." Also, chocolate absorbs smells of other foods, so to allow it to deodorize all the smells first before you enjoy it is also a prudent decision.

Finally, it is the unique shapes and designs of Godiva chocolates that make them world-renown. To say that Godiva takes its tastes and aesthetics seriously is an understatement—its design process usually takes from 1.5-2 years from start to launch. There are approximately 50 core molds, but add to them the different flairs and flourishes,



colors and textures, and unique individual truffles and other chocolate pieces number in the thousands. For example, for this past Lunar New Year's theme and celebration, there will be dog-shaped chocolate pieces, with Oolong, Pu'er (fermented black tea), and Matcha tea flavor combinations. And for the mid-autumn festival later this year, there will be "chocolate flavored and themed mooncakes!" Philippe gleefully declares.

With its uniqueness and recognizable image, you would think Godiva can just cruise on forever—it is, after all, according to Philippe, "one of the top three chocolate brands in the world, and the top for premium chocolates." Those who don't adapt are doomed to fail, and Godiva is keenly aware of the changing lifestyles of the modern consumer. Whereas once you can succeed by solely selling, now you must add service. Instead of a 15-minute experience to just buy chocolates, it is more memorable to spend an hour socializing with your family and friends, enjoying the chocolate you just bought, along with a cup of coffee or tea—perhaps even some ice cream? Pull up a comfortable chair, or lose yourself in a sofa, enjoy the free Wi-Fi, and stay a while.

Going forward, Godiva wants to be more mainstream. It is already a renowned luxury premium chocolate brand, but it wants to also be known as a brand everyone can enjoy, so hence, a café where everyone can enjoy in. "Please, call it a lifestyle boutique," Philippe corrects me. As the consumer evolves, so does Godiva. Although there are over 800 stores worldwide, the journey continues. Any advice for the road, then? "Eat more chocolate!" Truer words were never spoken. ■





Food of the Gods

From the Aztecs to Vietnam, the journey of the humble cocoa pod to chocolate is long, rich and deliciously divine

Text by **Mike Wakely**
Images by **James Pham and Ngoc Tran**

DEEP IN THE QUIET, banana-covered groves of smallholdings and farms across Vietnam a revolution is gently gathering pace. From humble beginnings an army is slowly taking shape, bringing together farmers armed with knowledge and a new belief. And they're coming down from the hills and in from the delta to take the cities by storm.

But fear not, these are revolutionaries for good. For deliciousness.

This is the Army of Chocolate—and it's on the march.

If I go as far back in my memories as I possibly can, back in time to the first moments I can remember as a child, there has always been chocolate. Stealing chocolate snowmen off the lowest branches of the Christmas tree (as soon as my parents turned their backs). Racing through a wet garden filled with shrieking kids, trying to be the first to find the hidden Easter eggs (and normally the last to share...). The crackling sound of opening my first Kit-Kat and running my fingernail down the foil before hearing the comforting sound of the first finger snapping in my hand. Chocolate has been a constant companion, lifting my soul when times were hard—and it's always there to help me celebrate the happiest moments.

I'm not alone in my love. Each year we consume in excess of seven million tons of chocolate in a global market worth more than USD100

billion. Chocolate is big business, and the market is dominated by some of the biggest brands in the world. Names like Mars, Nestlé, Hershey's, Cadbury's and Lindt are indelibly burnt into our minds from childhood.

Humans have been cultivating the cocoa bean for more than 3,000 years. The Aztecs believed that cocoa was a gift from Quetzalcoatl—"the God of Wisdom" (who am I to argue with him)—and they valued it so much that it was frequently used as a currency. Early Spanish visitors to South America recorded that 100 cocoa beans was "worth a canoe of fresh water, or could be traded for a turkey." It was traditionally served as a fermented drink called "*nahuatl*," which translates as "bitter water." The Aztecs fermented the beans and then ground them into a paste, which they mixed with water and sometimes other spices. It was whisked into a froth (think weird mocha?) and served unsweetened.

While the Aztecs thought of the cocoa bean like a precious metal, early European explorers saw little value in it. Christopher Columbus encountered cocoa for the first time in 1502 off the coast of Honduras. Visited by a local chief aboard the Santa Maria he was served *nahuatl* and offered the beans to trade. He clearly wasn't enamored

of the cocoa, as he declined and carried on instead to "discover" tobacco and hammocks. Oh, and apparently America as well.

Instead it fell to Hernan Cortez, a conquistador, who—on his return to Spain 20 years after Columbus had declined the chief's deal—was cocoa's biggest ever PR executive. He sold the magical drink from "New Spain" that conjured images of the furthest, exotic corners of the great Spanish empire, of wealth. Of power. Soon there were commercial shipments of cocoa arriving on the docks of Seville and the world's love affair with chocolate fluttered into life.

It was still mostly made into a bitter drink, as the Aztecs had showed them, and often drunk as an (bitter) aphrodisiac. (I can't vouch for this claim myself, but I have doubled my intake of chocolate—just in case...). Lots of claims have been made about the benefits of chocolate, most of which you'll have to take like good, dark chocolate—with a pinch of salted caramel. But one thing was true—people loved it.

There is genuine scientific evidence to suggest that cocoa is good for you. And it makes you feel better. There's a reason why so many of us reward ourselves with a dairy milk after a hard day at work, or grab the chocolate ice cream and a blanket when the world goes wrong.

It contains lots of minerals and is good for your heart, circulation and brain function. It also contains

flavanols—which are great for your skin and your brain. Both excellent things to take care of. But one of its active ingredients (the most important one) is phenylethylamine, or (PEA), which is the same chemical your body produces when you fall in love—which explains a lot.

We love chocolate. And it is good for you—in its purest form. Dark, high percentage cocoa chocolate can be beneficial for you. But we know that large amounts of chocolate aren't good for you.

In the 1550s two popular commodities met: sugar and cocoa. And from that our love escalated. The sweet tooth of the European quickly turned a bitter frothy drink into a solid, creamy bar of chocolate. The genius of the industrial revolution created machines that tempered and molded chocolate, mass producing bars in the tens of thousands. Companies like Fry's in England and Hershey in the US started to bring the joy of chocolate to everyone. It was no longer a luxury.

And as the Europeans' love affair with chocolate grew the production base of cocoa drifted away from South America and nearer the customer. It found a new home in the fertile lands of colonized Africa. A huge market developed as plantations were set up to quench the world's thirst for cocoa. Today the continent produces two thirds



of the world's cocoa beans and the Ivory Coast remains the single largest producer of cocoa beans in the world. But that is starting to change.

Cocoa Confidence

Gricha Safarian was one of the first group of people to see the potential for a cocoa market in Vietnam; "I first came here in 1993 and very quickly decided that this was a potential market for chocolate consumption. I started setting up my business here in 1994 and our involvement into cocoa growing and fermentation came naturally around 10 years ago."

Gricha is the Managing Director of Puratos Grand-Place, a company that takes a very unique approach to chocolate. It works with people at each stage of the process that takes the chocolate from the plant to your mouth, investing in farmers to provide them with everything from the expertise required to nurture the plant to the seedlings themselves.

He has been in the industry for more than 30 years and is passionate about chocolate. "When I was five years old I had the idea that if you feed cows with chocolate then they would produce hot chocolate rather than milk" Gricha says with a chuckle. He hasn't managed to achieve that yet (watch this space!), but he has been able to begin to help transform Vietnam into a significant cocoa producer.

It was the combination of great conditions and the right people that made Vietnam the perfect place to encourage cocoa growing; "the environment is very good for cocoa, as it is for coconut and banana. We have the right amount of water, the right shades from higher trees and the Vietnamese farmers are very, very skillful."

There have been others who have tried to develop plantations of cocoa before in Vietnam, most noticeable the French, but these didn't really seem to work. A lot of the recent success has been achieved by encouraging farmers to plant cocoa amongst existing crops (which provide the crucial shade that the young cocoa plants need to grow) and selling their beans through a co-operative.

"We've been able to give the farmers the notion that they can learn a completely new craft, really from A to Z," says TJ Ryan, who works for the US-based NGO ACDI VOCA. They have been championing a co-operative approach to cocoa farming since the early 1990s. And it certainly seems to be working—cocoa production has increased from 2,000 hectares when TJ first came here to almost 54,000 hectares today—and it's continuing

to grow each year. He believes that as long as the farmers have the support and financial incentive to grow then cocoa will become an increasingly important crop to farmers across Vietnam; "It's about confidence, you can't underestimate the importance of that." And that confidence has been dramatically increased by the realization that one of the world's fastest growing markets is just across the border.

China is a relative newcomer to the chocolate craze, but as it's population has become more affluent the demand for chocolate has rocketed. "Since we started a lot of major companies have put processing plants in China, and there

is a deficit of processing capacity which they're really only meeting with imports from West Africa." Just as in the 1600s when demand in Europe saw cocoa production move from South America to Africa, there is a possibility that production will move closer to the major Asian markets—making Vietnam a potential major supplier to China.

One of the biggest challenges for the farmers is the very volatile international market for cocoa. Prices can fluctuate



wildly as commodity traders in the major financial centers of Europe and the US buy and sell future crops, but Gricha and Puratos Grand-Place have recently launched a scheme that they hope will protect Vietnamese farmers from the uncertainty of the markets. "We have launched in Vietnam a special program that we call "Chocolate Bonus" through which cocoa farmers are paid a price that is higher than the market price." The additional money needed to guarantee the farmers a higher price is generated by subsidies on the sale of the chocolate to the consumer. So money from the chocolate bar that you or I buy is returned to the farmer and in turn it encourages them to grow more cocoa. Even with the incentives it can be hard to keep farmers committed to cocoa, as other crops such as pomelo and coffee can yield almost three times as much money per hectare, but teaching them that cocoa can be planted in conjunction with existing crops can bring in as much a USD1,000 a year more.

The fruits of this labor are finding their way on to the streets around us and there has never been a better time to be a chocoholic. Artisan shops are popping up all over, offering Vietnamese chocolate—often incorporating local ingredients. Pheva now have four shops selling single variety, single origin Trinitario cocoa bean chocolate—with a Phu Quoc black pepper flavor. The cocoa beans come from farmers in the Ben Tre region.

Companies like Marou have not only been able to establish a local retail market, but also now source Vietnamese cocoa for Belgian master chocolatier Pierre Marcolini to use in his global range of chocolate. Marou's own products are also stocked in major western retailers and the quality of Vietnamese cocoa is beginning to be recognized globally. Last year Vietnam was only the second Asian country to be issued with fine flavor status by the International Cocoa Organization (ICCO), putting Vietnamese beans on a par with more established producers like Trinidad and Tobago.

Continued international

recognition of the quality and an ever-growing Chinese customer base on the doorstep should see the country well-placed to become an increasingly important player on the global market. "Vietnam has the potential to become a significant cocoa producer in the region, it is just a question of willingness and grabbing the opportunity," says Gricha.

I for one want to see Vietnam emerge as a source of great cocoa, and I encourage us all to do it our bit by keeping our love affair with chocolate as passionate as ever. Make Vietnam great—eat more chocolate. In moderation of course.... ■





Skin Deep, Dark & Delicious

The skinny on chocolate's
therapeutic benefits

Text by **James Pham**

Images by **James Pham and La Maison de L'Apothiquaire**

EVER SINCE THE FIRST

Europeans encountered cacao, they've been documenting its use as medicine. The Badianus Manuscript (dating back to 1552) recorded that Mesoamericans used cocoa derivatives as remedies for everything from angina and constipation to gout and hemorrhoids.

As it made its way over to the Old World, kings and cardinals also saw the therapeutic benefits of chocolate. In a 1671 letter thanking Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici for a box of assorted chocolates, the very forthright Father Ettore Ghislieri added that in addition to being delicious, they were effective as a treatment for his unfortunate flatulence.

Fast forward several hundred years and thanks to research largely

supported by Big Chocolate, the “food of the gods” is now practically viewed as a superfood, able to do everything from improving blood flow and cognitive performance to treating immune disorders and reducing blood pressure.

Admittedly, much of the research is based on observational studies rather than hard science, like in the case of the Kuna Indians, an isolated tribe in Panama who drank on average more than five cups of cocoa a day in their native habitat. Despite also having an unusually high salt intake, hypertension was extremely uncommon in this community. However, their health seemed to worsen when they moved to urban environments and away from their chocolate-rich diet.

As a lover of all things chocolate, I’m happy to believe that whatever is good enough for the Kunas is good enough for me. Using my own highly anecdotal and therefore thoroughly unscientific methods, I wanted to add to the chocolate debate by trying to find out: Is chocolate as good on my stomach as it is in it?

My laboratory would be La Maison de L’Apothiquaire (64A Truong Dinh, D3), a beautiful colonial-inspired villa tucked down a shady, tree-lined lane, and home to 23 treatment rooms and suites, stylishly sprinkled with vintage tiles, fresh flowers and plush purple velvet curtains.

My experiment involved something called the Chocolate Fango Wrap, the fulfillment of a lifelong fantasy of getting smeared from head to toe in warm, gooey chocolate. In preparation, I donned a pair of barely-there spa briefs, the only thing between my own Almond Joys and the rest of the world. On a plastic-covered massage table, with New Age music playing in the background to accompany an Old World cure, I became a willing subject to 75 blissful minutes of getting slathered in what could be best described as the ingredients of a chocolate chip cookie recipe.

To prepare my skin for its chocolate wrap, the therapist began with an exfoliating sea salt scrub, gently rubbed into my skin using circular motions and helped along with splashes of warm milk. It reminded me of Cleopatra’s legendary milk baths as part of her daily beauty regimen, albeit with donkey’s milk rather than cow’s milk. It’s thought that the lactic acid in milk, the same substance that causes pain in our muscles when overused, helps to break down dead skin cells allowing the skin to rejuvenate itself more quickly.

It finally came time for the chocolate wrap, applied with long strokes from a

warm container. The therapist shook her head when I asked whether it was edible. In the name of thorough research, a quick lick confirmed that the concoction was rather bland and pasty rather than the sweet, sweet decadence of my dreams. It turns out that L’Apothiquaire mixes dark chocolate with ghassoul, a reddish brown cosmetic clay mined from the Atlas Mountains in Morocco. Had I been more of a linguist than a scientist, I would’ve known that the “fango” in the Chocolate Fango Wrap actually means “mud”, specifically a clay mud taken from hot springs at Battaglio, Italy, and often used to treat certain medical conditions. L’Apothiquaire uses its Moroccan cousin, ghassoul, known for its ability to absorb impurities from the skin, which perfectly complements chocolate’s benefits of

moisturizing and softening skin as well as smoothening wrinkles, reducing inflammation and improving circulation.

Streaked with the stuff, I looked like I had lost a particularly uneven fight with a scrappy Willy Wonka, but my skin had never felt so smooth and nourished, proving unequivocally that chocolate is equally wonderful inside and out. Over a final head and scalp massage, my entire body felt good, almost good enough to eat.

The Chocolate Fango Wrap costs VND910,000 before VAT. Customers are also invited to swim in the pool and use the steam/sauna room after the treatment. ■





The Chocolate Who Can Sing

Meet Doan Trang, Vietnam's Latin pop singer

Text by **Michael Arnold**
Image by **Cao Trung Hieu**

“THIS IS THE BEST YEAR OF MY LIFE” beams Doan Trang, one of Vietnam’s most charismatic popular singers of recent decades. She’s just hit one of the most universally dreaded milestones of anyone’s lifetime, clocking into her forties in early February—yet for a performer whose youthful confidence has always been the core of her stage presence, she remains blissfully unconcerned about her age.

“Everything in my life is balanced now,” she smiles. “My career, my friends, my extended family and my little family

with my husband and daughter. I’ve been trying to share my time with them, and now everything is balanced. I feel so good about that. I know many people don’t have that—some of my colleagues are very famous, but they just concentrate 100 percent on their careers, and they forget about their friendships. Of course my career is very important to me, but now I realise that my life and my family are even more precious, so I have tried to balance everything, and I feel that’s my success.”

The maturity of Doan Trang’s perspective is an interesting emergence.

Trang's career has undergone profound changes in recent years—she is a highly-sought-after cultural performer in Vietnamese communities overseas, and in the past year she has performed more frequently in Europe and the US than she has here, where her work has instead focused more on her television roles as host and mentor on a number of game shows. Where these evolutions will take Trang in future remains to be seen—although one thing that can be comfortably relied upon is her persistent strength of character, which has repeatedly seen her resisting any attempts to modify her style since her first entry into the public eye.

It was 2001 when the petite, dark-skinned beauty from Long Khanh competed and won second place in one of the biggest singing contests in the country, *Tieng Hat Truyen Hinh*, a victory that guaranteed stardom at a time when such competitions were rare. She was a rebel from the start, refusing to wear the traditional *ao dai* for the final performance and delivering a popular ballad rather than the propaganda tunes expected of contestants. As a new public figure, she quickly recorded a few sugary tracks that became hits, but it wasn't until she caught the attention of prominent composer and producer Quoc Bao that she discovered what would become her signature style.

"I don't know why my early songs became hits, I didn't even like them that much," she recalls. "Then one day, one of my favorite composers in Vietnam sent me the song *Tango Objection* by Shakira. He said 'Trang, I can see you in this song. You go home and practice it.' When I first heard it, I said it was too hard for me to sing, and I didn't even have any idea about the song or that style of music, it was so different for me. But when I heard it a second time, I realized it's exactly me in that song. You know—you don't need to have your hair straight all the time, sometimes it's messy, you wear the gypsy skirt... so I went to the studio, I recorded that song, and from that moment on, I've been in love with Latin music. I've practiced many songs, and many people wrote Latin songs in Vietnamese for me as well. Since then, I have never tired of Latin music."

As Vietnam's first performer exclusively devoted to rhythmic Latin tracks, Doan Trang quickly developed a reputation for her sensuous, energetic performance style and warm, tanned look. It was then that a close friend and music writer coined the perfect nickname that has remained synonymous with her brand ever since.

"One day I woke up and everybody was calling me 'Chocolate,'" she laughs, "because of one article on *Bao Tuoi Tre* youth magazine that was called 'The Chocolate Who Could Sing.' After that article was published, everybody called me Chocolate, and I liked it so much. Yes, when I was a child, my skin got very dark, I was so active—and of course,

my original color is dark. People always teased me, but I didn't care, I had that confidence since I was very young. At the time when people started to know me, the beauty industry was taking off in Vietnam and all the celebrities were going to spas to make themselves whiter. I couldn't understand why they did that, so I didn't. So they still called me Chocolate."

Trang's self-confidence was evident from the start. Her parents noticed her aptitude for the arts very early on, and took her to the local Youth House every summer to join the singing club, where she learned her first pieces of music. With the same group, she and the other children would watch movies, and then they would all be sent home to write their own impressions of what they had seen, competing the next day to see who could retell the story best—she would always win. Doan Trang continues her writing habit to this day; she's sometimes called "Notebook Singer" in the media for her conspicuous habit of frequent journal-writing.

By the time she entered university, she was already clearly destined to be a performer, studying at the Conservatory of Music at the same time as pursuing a back-up career in teaching at HUFLIT.

"HUFLIT was my real milestone, my origin, my whole career," she says. "I studied at two universities, and of course it was very hard for me, because I had to divide my time, my energy, my everything. But the president of HUFLIT, Huynh The Cuoc, supported me so much. He allowed me to skip over general subjects that I was already studying at the conservatory. He treated me like a daughter."

Following graduation and her high-profile competition win, Doan Trang's career progressed in a very straight line, with a rapid succession of album releases that explored various Latin rhythms from a Vietnamese perspective. Trang's determination to stick to her own style didn't always play to her advantage, however—the rise in popularity of EDM in particular saw fans losing their patience for the more complex beats that typified her music. At the same time, Trang's personal life proved tough to manage.

"I was never balanced before I got married," says Trang. "I had some relationships, but they were messy. Then one day in 2011, I'd just broken up with my boyfriend—I was visiting my sister in Norway, sitting in my niece's room, my tears streaming down my face, and then I got a call from an unknown number. I usually don't pick those up, but something made me do it. And a voice said 'This is Johan.' I'd met him when his company invited me to perform back in 2004. We hadn't spoken in years. He could tell I was upset, and then I started crying and talking to him like he was my very best friend. We married two years later. So that's how I found my soulmate."

The couple, whose daughter

Angelina is now four years old, have an exceptionally close bond. "Many Vietnamese people think that after marriage, you don't need to feed your love anymore," she says, "because anyway, you're already husband and wife. But my husband said no, it's like a tree, you have to take care of it every day—and then he did that. He taught me so many things about love and married life, and every day we're in harmony." The pair had the chance to portray their relationship onscreen in Minh Thang Ly's 2016 film *Saigon Anh Yeu Em*, in which they played characters very much like themselves—while Johan had zero intentions to pursue his own acting career, Trang managed to convince him that if he didn't take the role of her husband in the movie, another man would. He gave that prospect a little thought and then replied, "OK, I'm in." The film was well-received in Vietnam and Australia, and is now publicly available on YouTube.

While Trang's current work in Vietnam now firmly revolves around her television projects (she describes herself as being unusually devoted to her mentor roles, to the point where the directors have asked her to take things down a notch) there's another album in the works for this year. It's been a while since her last release (*The Unmake-up*, an English-language album recorded in Germany) faced a discouraging reception that has led Trang to wonder about her decision to doggedly pursue her own style rather than cater to the brief attention spans of modern local music consumers.

"Some producers say that working with me is sometimes difficult," she admits. "I want something traditional and modern mixed together, and it's not so easy to find a producer who can understand that and do it well. Producers these days are young, they need to earn money, and they sometimes don't care so much, so that occasionally makes me feel tired of the show business. But I still have the passion for it, so this year we will do something—back to the music."

Over the years, being "the Chocolate who can sing" has given Trang the chance to remain a unique figure in Vietnamese celebrity circles, as well as manifesting a self-defining, self-confident image that she hopes has given some encouragement to young Vietnamese women who may themselves have faced pressure to change their style, skin color, or the way they look.

"People are always saying that you can't do this, you can't wear that, you can't sing that style, especially in Vietnam and Asia in general," Trang observes. "Why? Why can't you just be yourself? We're smart enough and good enough to understand that it's right to believe in ourselves and then to do what we choose to do. But of course we have to learn every day, from everything around us, and that's what's key for me—I just love everything around me." ■

The Extinction of Chocolate

It's a scary possibility,
but it's also not quite as
simple as that

Text by **Sam Sinha**
Images by **Vy Lam**



AT THE TURN OF 2018, the internet melted at the news that chocolate would be going out of existence in 40 years. Supposedly because of rising global temperatures caused by global warming. It's all well and good to get upset about polar bears, but chocolate! Where's the humanity?

The original article published on *Business Insider* ran the headline "Chocolate is on track to go extinct in 40 years." Leaving aside the semantic issue of whether man-made confections can go extinct, this is a shocking claim. Predictably the story went viral and suddenly every media outlet was reporting that chocolate was heading out of existence.

But could it really be true? Given that to be declared technically extinct, there would have to be no sightings of cacao trees for 50 years, it seems implausible. A classic case of a need for clicks winning out over the integrity of reporting. But if not totally extinct, what is the future for cacao production and how will it affect your daily fix? Let's examine the facts and try to assuage our fears.

The Claim

The original *Business Insider* article starts with the claim that "cacao plants are under threat of devastation thanks to warmer temperatures and dryer weather conditions." It focuses on a new gene editing technology—CRISPR—which scientists hope to use to tweak the DNA of cacao trees so that they are better able to cope with climate change, explaining that multinational confectionery giant Mars helped fund the research as part of a USD1 billion effort to reduce the carbon footprint of the business. The article goes into more detail about the new technology and its applications for other plants like cassava, but barely mentions chocolate again.

It continually references another online piece, published on *Scientific American*, about an attempt to sequence the cacao tree genome "to stop the spread of two virulent pathogens that threaten to devastate the world's cacao crop."

It goes on to say that cacao trees have largely been wiped out from their native South America by these diseases, and that if any of this diseased material made it to West Africa—where most of the world's cacao is produced—and was able to infect the trees there, it "would lead to the loss of one third of total global production."

The *Scientific American* article is linked via this part of the quote above: "under threat of devastation thanks to warmer temperatures and dryer weather conditions." But doesn't mention climate



change once. Something's amiss here.

The *Business Insider* piece also references an article from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) that is all about the threat of climate change to cacao production. Specifically to cacao trees of The Ivory Coast and Ghana, the same areas mentioned in the *Scientific American* article.

The NOAA article states that in these areas "by 2050, rising temperatures will push the suitable cacao cultivation areas uphill." The worry is that as temperatures rise and cause plants to lose more moisture, and with rainfall expected to remain much the same, the cacao plants will not be able to survive in the larger low lying areas. They will only survive in much smaller areas, higher up, where the temperature is lower. This will result in a massive reduction in the area suitable for growing the trees.

The Upshot

There are two different issues purporting to effect the chocolate supply, muddled into one article. One of climate change and one of disease. Neither one is going to cause the extinction of cacao in 40 years, so don't panic. The furthest either referenced article goes is to say cacao trees in around half the world's growing regions are under threat. They don't even talk about the other half, or about the impact of the threat.

To be fair to *Business Insider*, the article was published on December 31st. It's reasonable to suppose that the reporter had her mind on other things on New Year's Eve and probably didn't realize the story would go viral and be picked over so carefully. In her bio it even states that she enjoys everything from "sequencing her own DNA at a biohacking lab in Brooklyn to raving at 4am." In the end, it turned out to be a brilliant piece of online marketing which saw her story, a rather

dull one about DNA research, go viral across the internet. So hats off and who cares about the facts?

What Is The Destiny Of Chocolate Then, If Not Complete Oblivion?

Like so many other things we hold dear, there certainly seems to be a threat here, whether it's from climate change or disease, or a combination of the two.

The NOAA article concludes that if nothing is done, chocolate production will suffer hugely. But it states that in all likelihood, something will be done, probably by the global corporations that stand to lose billions of dollars in revenue if production suffers.

A statement from UC Berkeley's Innovative Genomics Institute, released only a few days after the *Business Insider* article went viral attempts to clear up the issue: "Scientists predict that climate change will significantly reduce the amount of land suitable for cultivating cacao in the coming decades, though probably not to the point of extinction."

Given that Mars is already aware of the problems and investing in research to solve it, it looks like chocolate is relatively safe for the time being and is certainly not going to be wiped out in 40 years. But it's another stark warning about how our actions are affecting our planet and our food supply.

There are two lessons to learn from this episode:

1. Don't trust everything you read online.
2. If huge corporations stand to profit from the production of anything, it will not go extinct. Ever. It's something to think about next time you're unwrapping a Mars bar. ■

Wine & Dine

SKY GARDEN BBQ / IMAGE BY VY LAM







Buen
Appetito!

Come for the wood-fired
pizza, stay for the barbecue
ribs and wings

Text by Nick Piggott
Images by Vy Lam

Prosciutto



Ribs & Wings Combo

ITALIANI'S HAN THUYEN

(17 Han Thuyen, D1) is just a short walk from the tourist and selfie mecca of Notre Dame. The un-prepossessing exterior belies an achingly cool interior—the bare brick cladding, exposed lightbulbs and a smattering of faux-pop-art posters, coupled with a 'lounge' bedecked with slatted mirrors is reminiscent of a NYC loft-cum-speakeasy. Adding in the 70s disco music, all it lacks is waitresses on roller-skates to complete the picture.

Speaking to Kevin, the soft-spoken owner and his girlfriend Lynda, we learned a bit about the history of Italiani's, and how it came to be what it is. After nine years in Texas Kevin returned to Vietnam, moving from his home province in the north to the "more cosmopolitan" south of the country to open his first restaurant next to the New World Hotel in 2017, boasting a genuine wood-fired oven and most of the kitchen. "If you have a favorite wood-fired pizza in Saigon, you'll like mine better," boasts Kevin. And he's right—the thin-crust pizza comes laden with toppings, and in a bid to broaden customers' experience, Italiani's offers half/half pizzas. We opted for the house special—prosciutto with homemade burrata on one half, paired with four cheeses on the other (VND239,000). Decapitating the twist of burrata, the rich filling bursts out creating a delta of creamy goodness oozing across the pizza, around cherry tomatoes bursting with flavor. The four-cheese option is always my acid test of a pizzeria, and Italiani's passed with flying colors—offering rich, uncomplicated ingredients and a crispy crust.

Flipping the menu over to explore the BBQ options, we treated ourselves to the Ribs & Wings Combo (VND399,000), which arrived promptly—another

nod to the service culture Kevin is keen to bring back to Vietnam. The wings are succulent and have a pleasant, dry spice to them, with wonderfully crispy skin, and the ribs are generously smothered in your choice of sauces. Served as standard with sweet chilli dipping sauce and a complimentary side salad, the combo is definitely a good option for sharing.

Joining the trend of restaurants offering craft beer on tap, Italiani's offers Pasteur Street's ubiquitous Jasmine IPA on tap alongside the standard range of cans and soft drinks. Looking at the binary wine choice on the menu reminded me that Kingsley Amis once claimed that "the most depressing sentence in the English language was "red or white?" However, falling on the red side of this bifurcated choice pays off at Italiani's, and we were rewarded with a beautifully chilled Toscana Querceta Sangiovese 2016. The restaurant on Han Thuyen doesn't have a dessert menu, but our ever-smiling waitress came up with a solution for my enduring sweet tooth, and offered to 'pop over' to the other branch at 290 Ly Tu Trong and bring us back some gelato. And although we declined, this is indeed the next level of customer service that is rarely encountered in mid-range eateries in Saigon, and an offer I'll definitely take her up on next visit. As we left, I noticed a bitcoin ATM in the downstairs dining area. "Yes, it's a bit of an attraction for tourists actually. We have one of the only ATMs in the city where you can buy and sell bitcoins. We get lots of Japanese and Koreans coming in to see it, then staying for food. It's quite a draw," says Kevin. He secured it

through his relationship with bitcoin.vn, and plans to include them in his other restaurants across the country.

Italiani's is proud to be in the top three pizza restaurants on Tripadvisor and plan to expand to other cities and locations in Vietnam and Asia in future. Following that, Kevin tells me the next step will be to open branches in Hanoi, Nha Trang and Hoi An. "My happiness is not just about making pizzas but delivering the best experience to my customers, locals and foreigners both. And on top of that, I have created jobs for many people and I believe that taking care of my employees is one of the major ways to take care of my customers because they are the ones who deliver happiness to them," adds Kevin.

So if you're looking for somewhere to trade your crypto-currency, or you're hungry for a slice of Italian, you can satiate both in the friendly, relaxed atmosphere of Italiani's. ■





Crazy for Crustaceans

Outbound to District 11 for possibly Saigon's biggest and most succulent lobsterfest

Text by **Michael Arnold**
Images by **Vy Lam**

IT TAKES A LOT TO DRAG CUISINE lovers out of their comfort zones and steer them toward venues far from the central districts, but sometimes that long Uber ride across town is richly rewarded. This is one of those times and places—out in one of the more featureless corners of District 11, **Sky Garden BBQ** (624 Lac Long Quan, W5, D11) is an outdoor restaurant occupying an alley between two adjacent towers that has

one of the most unique menus in the city. It has recently become the top importer in the market of giant live lobsters from Canada and northern Europe (Norway and Sweden), along with enormous Alaskan crabs that make challenging meals for even the most ardent seafood fanatics. While the restaurant has been quietly popular with local residents for a number of years already, the arrival of these oversized crustaceans on the menu

has given the venue a sudden spike in popularity, along with repeated media coverage and a number of viral video clips online that in some cases have attracted millions of views.

At the center of the hype is founder Lanh Nguyen, who has been running the restaurant as a pleasant rooftop seafood barbeque in the building next door since around 2013. At some point last year, a bizarre standoff with the building's



Pizza Lobster



owner prompted the relocation of Sky Garden downstairs and resolved with Lanh operating both spaces—he promptly rebranded his rooftop as a pizzeria (**Royal Pizza**), and set about making both restaurants completely lobster-centric. He now imports a hundred kilograms of live giant lobsters and 400 kilos of frozen lobster a week (that's two metric tons of lobster per month) and while he does supply a number of other restaurants around town, he keeps a tank of the biggest and best alive at his restaurant for serving his own customers, many of whom have never seen such monsters—let alone had the opportunity to hold them up for selfies. While originally conceived of as a way to bring premium lobsters to local diners at affordable prices, his unexpected popularity has started to see curious foreigners, VIPs and celebrities hunting down the venue too to find out what all the fuss is about.

Selecting a lobster for your evening meal at Sky Garden is a performance in itself—once the obligatory photographs are staged, the beast is weighed (pricing is at VND1.9 million/kg) and brought to the table to scuttle across its last destination on Earth. He (“she” if you’re lucky—the females carry roe and are more delicious, but most are thrown back into the sea by the fishermen) will become a four-course meal, the first of which is a one-of-a-kind take on a traditional Vietnamese blood soup. As in the conventional recipe which uses fresh pork blood, the animal is completely drained (you may need to look away) into a bowl of herbs and prawns, which is then left for several minutes to congeal. The resultant light jelly is mildly salty and unexpectedly delicious; for now, this is the only venue in the country where you’ll find the dish.

While you’re tasting the soup, the quivering lobster is withdrawn to be made presentable for its second act, returning on a platter with the tail meat sliced into strips and arranged around the shell on ice as sashimi. Sky



Chef Jack Lee

Garden insists you try a slice on its own before carrying on with the ginger and wasabi, just so you can appreciate the unembellished flavors of what is a rare treat in Vietnam.

The claws and arms seem to take up half the basket; they’re removed and returned 15 minutes later deep-fried in butter and garlic. With the shell now broken, it’s clear just how massive this creature is; each claw is a meal in itself, breaking nicely into steaming chunks and best dipped in Vietnamese green chili lime sauce.

This isn’t the last of the lobster, however—once you’re through, all the remaining slivers of meat will join the head in a steaming hot pot with a chicken bone broth, in which the remaining blood soup foams like a savory tofu and all the herbs and spices gather together for a fitting final farewell.

It’s worth mentioning here the restaurant’s own craft beer “Dzo”, as this

is your most appropriate accompaniment to the lavish meal. Dzo is a very malty, easy-to-drink brew that is probably the cheapest craft beer in the city at just VND100,000 for a huge bierstiefel yard glass.

For the purposes of this review, we also tried Sky Garden’s half-kilo lobster pizza (VND495,000). For the record, ordering both the pizza and the live lobster isn’t recommended unless you have enough people to help you get through the evening—but that being said, you must take it from me that *you cannot miss this pizza*. None of the popular pizza chains are doing what Sky Garden/Royal Pizza do with their whole-lobster pizza pies—served on a black Vietnamese hot stone tray, these pizzas stay hot and crispy for an hour, and the quality of the cheese is so good you’ll need to reconsider whether or not this is really too far to come across town for. ■



Fill up At The Station

Good food? Check. Good beer? Check.
Gastropub? Check again, it's more
than that

Text by Johnny Tran
Images by Vy Lam

IT'S SAFE TO SAY THAT VIETNAMESE PEOPLE LOVE drinking *bia* (beer), with the ubiquitous *quan nhau* (drinking hole) dotted on almost every block in cities and countryside throughout the country. However, most are only familiar with local brands such as 333, Saigon Red/Green and Huda, or effectively marketed foreign brands like Heineken, Tiger and Sapporo. That is an issue Rio Tuan Trang, founder of **Rehab Station – not a gastropub** (27/6 Nguyen Binh Khiem, D1), hopes to remedy. Once inside the relaxing and ambient atmosphere of the Western-styled establishment, Rehab stands out from a typical *quan nhau*. It is even different from most other gastropubs: “It is *not* a gastropub!” Rio was quick to correct me. “Most gastropubs are pubs with food often as an afterthought. At Rehab Station, we focus on both the beers *and* the food.”



While conversing, Rio started me off with Dong Son beer, a light (5%), refreshing citrus-flavored draft beer brewed right here in Vietnam. For appetizers, we ordered Fried Chicken Skins and Flat Bread. The chicken skins were topped with beef bits and buttery aioli sauce, and a side of chili sauce and ketchup, and they held their crunchiness even 30 minutes later when we forgot one on the plate. For pork rind lovers, this is the quintessential must-try version. The flat bread was like a small authentic Italian pizza—thin-crust, crunchy and zesty, topped with chicken and baby tomatoes.

Moving on our mains, Rio recommended the King and Orange sausages, both come with a side of fries and pickles. “Sausages and beer are the meal,” says Rio. These sausages are the authentic European kind—the ones that are meaty, juicy and so big you have to eat it with a fork and knife. The skin crunches when you chomp down and it releases a full stream of flavors and aromas. The King sausage was especially smoky and rich, but I was also impressed with the orange-flavored sausage (you can literally taste an orange). The flavor was effectively infused within the sausage, making the experience a very pleasant surprise.

To wash it all down, Rio introduced me to the Kwak (330ml)—a thick, Belgian dark amber ale. It was quite strong (8.4%), thick, frothy, aromatic, and rich. For the adventurous, this is the way to go. For the casual, or for your date, you can’t go wrong with the lighter Dong Son beer. If you still have room for dessert, the family-made pineapple ice cream is a good cap to the evening—fluffy and lightly sweet; it is something everyone can enjoy after a hearty meal and drinks.

Rio’s goal when he started Rehab Station in May 2017 was to create a perfect balance of food and beer, with the former accomplished and over 100 beers in stock, he is well on his way to achieving that. Enjoying good beers from around the world doesn’t sound like such a bad idea, does it? 1, 2, 3...*dzo!* ■

Olive Steaks

Passion meets
mouth-watering beef
at Saigon's newest
steakhouse

Text by **Grant Hawkins**
Images by **Vy Lam**



Australian Beef Steak Tenderloin

THE OLIVE STEAKHOUSE

(2nd Floor, 151 Dong Khoi, D1) is a cozy French bistro in the heart of Saigon's most popular street. Long-time residents will recognize the address: The Art Arcade at ground level, you must first walk or drive through to a small parking area, then turn left and climb two short flights of stairs. Once inside you'll find a bright, calm oasis of amazing smells and mood-setting music. Open for lunch and dinner, Olive Steakhouse is a hidden gem with clean, airy vibes and serious French cuisine.

The Olive is the product of two partners: Megan, a Saigonista and already the owner of a thriving tour company; and her boyfriend, a Frenchman and local chef who's manned the kitchen of some of Saigon's most elite restaurants (from Bitexco to Sheraton) for over a decade. The two put their heads and hearts together in late 2017 to create The Olive Steakhouse. With a soft opening on January 7th and grand opening a month later, they're already causing a stir among locals, expats, tourists and business travelers.

Guests to The Olive Steakhouse are greeted warmly at the door and led to a small, intimate and well-lit dining room. Our dinner began with two glasses of the house red wine—a sweet, medium bodied cabernet sauvignon (VND110,000). As we waited for our entrées, we took some time to appreciate the details Megan has put into the design, from the warm color scheme to one of Saigon's near-ubiquitous encaustic tile mosaics.

Our appetizers arrived promptly: the Mixed Grilled Vegetables with Garlic Butter (VND40,000) and Creamy Pumpkin Soup (VND95,000). The vegetables were hot, fresh and deliciously seasoned, and the soup was smooth and savory, with crunchy croutons to accent the creamy pumpkin. Both dishes were a great portion for an appetizer, and left us eager for our main courses.

Mains at The Olive are all about impeccable ingredients and French preparation. Guests can choose from a variety of fish, poultry and beef dishes. We decided on the Tenderloin Australian

Beef Steak (VND320,000), which didn't disappoint. This 200g steak is served with fries, roasted potatoes, a green salad and a choice of sauces: black pepper, mustard, mushroom or wine (my choice). As requested, the steak was cooked to a moist medium-rare and thinly seared around the outside. The sides were all lovely complements to the main and the result is a well-rounded, scrumptious steak dinner.

What stands out about The Olive is the comfortable, unpretentious atmosphere paired with outstanding food. Forget about the dark, smoky dining halls where the man in the gray flannel suit goes after work; The Olive Steakhouse is about escaping the busy street and enjoying a fine meal in a bright and intimate setting. Come for lunch or for dinner, but come prepared to eat well. ■



Creamy Pumpkin Soup



Mixed green salad





My Chicken Tikka

CHICKEN TIKKA FINDS IT ORIGIN in the Punjab region of the Indian Subcontinent and is popular across India and Pakistan. The dish has many variants, like Persian, Afghan and Arab, which tend to be sweeter compared to the Indian version. It is usually served with green coriander and tamarind chutney, onion rings and lemon.

Not to be confused with chicken tikka masala, chicken tikka is both a main attraction, and an ingredient used in Indian food. The word “tikka” refers to the way the chicken is prepared in boneless chunks. Traditionally, the meat is boneless, skewered and cooked in a tandoor, or clay oven.

It's not all about the meat, however.

Spices are an important part of cooking proper Indian food, and chicken tikka is no exception.

Recipes vary from chef to chef, but also by region. Some popular trends that set Punjabi chicken tikka apart from other varieties is the method of grilling the meat over coals, rather than using a tandoor, and that the meat is often not

boneless. Some chefs even like to prepare it in a wrap.

Chicken tikka is a dish in and of itself, but because of its simplicity, can easily be used to make other, more elaborate dishes as well. The more popular example is, of course, chicken tikka masala, which adds a tomato cream sauce, and other textural additions that are up to the chef's discretion. The sauce is then often enjoyed over rice, or on its own.

I have an interesting memory associated with this dish. I was born in a Hindu family where even eating

and cooking eggs was a strict no-no. I got married to the love of my life, who enjoyed eating non-vegetarian food. As it happens with expat life, soon the newness of the place and surrounding lose its charm and he started to miss home cooked non-vegetarian food, and like the saying goes "the way to a man's heart is through his stomach." So, for the first time, I cooked chicken tikka in 2006 and surprised my husband on his birthday and till this day he says it was one of the best surprises he ever got. ■



Ruchita Obhan was a former advertising professional and is now a self-styled home cook by passion. She recently won the "Home Chef" category in a charity cook off event in Saigon. Having hosted countless house parties across four countries, including Vietnam, she became passionate about culinary art.

Follow Ruchita: Facebook Page: ruch bytes and Instagram: ruch.bytes.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 large skinless, boneless chicken breasts, sliced into large pieces
- Raw onion rings for garnish
- Green capsicum rings for garnish
- Small piece of coal for BBQ flavor
- Half spoon of clarified butter (Indian ghee)

First Marinade

- Salt to taste
- Red pepper powder, 2 teaspoon
- 2 tablespoon of lemon juice

Second Marinade

- 200gm of Hung curd or Greek yogurt
- Fresh ginger 1-inch long piece
- 3 pieces garlic
- 1 tablespoon of mustard oil
- 2 teaspoon of dried fenugreek leaves (kasturi methi)
- Large bunch of fresh coriander, roughly chopped, plus extra to serve

1 Take 200gm of boneless chicken and cut into cubes approx. 2 inches in size.



2 Marination is a 2-step process:
a) Marinade the chicken cubes in a mixture of salt, red pepper and lemon juice. Add a pinch of orange food color and set aside for 30 minutes.

b) For the second marinade, prepare a mixture of yogurt (preferably hung



yogurt, to remove access water), ginger and garlic paste, dried fenugreek leaves (kasturi methi) and a spoonful of mustard oil. Ensure the chicken cubes are fully covered in this marinade, now set aside for at least 3 hours—the longer, the better.



3 Now take a pan and place on medium heat. Brush the pan surface with oil. Place the marinated chicken cubes in the heated pan. Keep turning over the chicken cubes till cooked through.



4 Once the chicken is cooked, place it in a plate or bowl. In the center of the plate, place aluminum foil and on it a piece of burnt charcoal. On the charcoal add a spoon of ghee (clarified butter) and immediately cover it with a lid and leave it for approx. 5 minutes for the smoke to be absorbed by the chicken cubes. This will give a natural smoky BBQ flavor to the chicken, similar to the traditional tandoor.



Serve with green mint chutney, sliced onion rings and lemon. Also, it can be accompanied with hot butter naans (traditional Indian bread).

Fake Wine

Which of these reds is not like the others?

AS I WRITE THESE LINES, a new scandal has made international headlines, this time the target is New Zealand, where several wineries (again) have been caught “producing,” labeling and selling New Zealand wine, but were actually made from grapes bought and grown in Australia.

“We try to mimic the wine style as much as possible and have sourced grapes from the cooler parts of Australia that mostly closely reflect the flavor and quality of New Zealand fruit,” Mapson, the General Director of Pernord Ricard New Zealand, one of the wineries caught, said.

This comes just a few months after another winery from New Zealand was caught mislabeling wines, blending vintages, estates, and who knows what else.

Please don’t stop drinking New Zealand wine because of this; they

are not the only ones. Several similar scandals have happened in France, where a large proportion of “French wine” is actually made in Spain, where quality is as good and much cheaper. Also last summer one of France’s largest wine companies was at the center of a storm over the alleged false labeling of large amounts of cheap table wine as being from Châteauneuf-du-Pape.

Similar issues have been discovered with premium Italian wine regions like Barolo, Brunello di Montalcino and Chianti. And these are just a few examples of what is being “discovered” by the authorities.

One wonders how many of us are paying premium money for a wine that is nothing as described. The situation worsens in Asia, especially in countries like China and Vietnam, where not the producers but some importers and intermediaries create fake labels



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.

and bottle fake wine and sell them in the market to make an extra buck, or actually quite a few extra bucks.

Many cases have been found in China where about 40 percent of the premium French wines in the market are likely to be fake. The problem is not only about paying a lot of money for a fake product, but also health issues because the wine given to us has not passed any quality controls.

Your best choice to avoid being scammed is to buy wine from renowned importers, although even this is not fail proof. However, if you are buying a large quantity of wine, you can always ask the importer to show you the authorization letter issued by the winery authorizing them to import the wine; or even better contact the winery directly and ask for information about who their importers/distributors are in Vietnam. ■



Wine & Dine

ROOFTOP BARS



Liquid Sky Bar

A casual destination to escape and unwind in the sun. In the evening, the space transforms into a rooftop lounge where guests and locals will come to socialize, dance or just let loose. On the mezzanine level, comfortable lounges and a flow of cocktails create a casual and fun atmosphere. It is the perfect spot to watch the sunset over the horizon.

21F - Renaissance Riverside Hotel Saigon
8-15 Ton Duc Thang, DI / 028 3822 0033



Rex Hotel Rooftop Bar

Set on the fifth floor, Rex Hotel Rooftop Bar makes up for its modest height with breath-taking views of Vietnam's French colonial structures such as Saigon Opera House and People's Committee Hall. Rex Hotel Rooftop Bar is also fitted with an elevated stage and dancefloor, hosting live Latino bands and salsa performances at 20:00 onwards.

141 Nguyen Hue, DI



Social Club Rooftop Bar

Part of the Hôtel des Arts Saigon, Social Club Rooftop Bar is a great place to overlook Saigon's glittering skyline sipping on a cocktail and unwinding. Things become more vibrant with the ambient music and DJs at sunset. Social Club Rooftop Bar has the highest rooftop infinity pool in the city.

76 - 78 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, Dist.3
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SUNDAY BRUNCHES



Indulgent Sundays @ Nineteen

A legendary buffet in the Heart of Saigon. Sensational cooking and an intimate, lively atmosphere are guaranteed. Authentic cuisine from around the globe, prepared by award-winning chefs, with fresh seafood as the highlight of the brunch. From noon to 3pm, with options from VND 890,000++ without drinks to VND 1,490,000++ with a free flow of Champagne, cocktails, house wine, and beer.

19-23 Lam Son Square, DI
hotel@caravellehotel.com / 028 3823 4999



Le Meridien

Centered around three distinctive dining venues - Latest Recipe, Bamboo Chic and Latitude 10 - Le Meridien offers three brunch packages, prices range from VND1,500,000 to VND2,500,000 and include Oriental and International cuisine.

3C Ton Duc Thang, DI
028 6263 6688 - ext.6930
www.lemeridiensaigon.com



BARS & CRAFT BEER BREWERIES



Aperitivo

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.



BiaCraft

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



Rehab Station

Gastropub in a lovely quiet alley, serves Asian fusion food, 15 kind of different craft beer from most of the popular breweries in Vietnam, along with 60+ imported bottle beers, mostly from Belgium.

02839118229 hello@rehabstation.com.vn
facebook.com/rehabstationsg/

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, Café 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



Chat

A quaint cafe with a red brick wall on one side and a mural of everyday life in Saigon on the opposite. A friendly staff serves smoothies, juices, and a good array of Italian-style coffee such as cappuccinos and lattes for cheap, prices start from VND15,000.

85 Nguyen Truong To, D4



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.

Opening time: 7AM- 10PM (Sunday closed)
86 Hoang Dieu, D.4 - 38253316/090 142 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. 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 cà phê sua da served here.

27 Ngo Duc Ke, D1



Le Bacoulos is a French brasserie located in the heart of Thao Dien. Following the brasserie tradition, Bacoulos serves typical French food at affordable prices.



French Restaurant

Daily Set Lunch
at **VND180.000**

2 courses + 1 soft drink
Le Bacoulos french bistro,
13 Tong Huu Dinh
Thao Dien. Q2. HCMC

02835194058



The open-air premises include a bar and terrace and there is an air-conditioned dining room.

FRENCH



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.

13 Tong Huu Dinh, D2

028 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



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

028 2229 8882

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

028 3898 2082

www.lavilla-restaurant.com.vn

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

028 3821 3056

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

028 3744 4585



ITALIAN



Carpaccio

Rebranded "Carpaccio" after many years under the name Pomodoro, this Italian restaurant still has a simple, unpretentious European decor, sociable ambiance and friendly welcome. A small corner of Italy in Saigon.

79 Hai Ba Trung street, D1
+84 90 338 78 38



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
028 3822 3329
tonyfox56@hotmail.com
www.ciaobellavietnam.com

Ciao Bella



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
028 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
028 3823 1080
www.lahostaria.com



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
028 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
028 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



JAPANESE



Chaya Restaurant

Chaya, a new small Japanese Cafe is coming to town. We are here to bring the best Japanese atmosphere to Saigon customer. At Chaya, customer can relax on the Tatami, taste some delicious Sushi Roll, Japanese sweets or local cuisine while enjoying Japan historically decorated space. Most of our ingredients are imported directly from Japan, especially Kyoto Matcha. Welcome!

35 Ngo Quang Huy Street, Thao Dien, District 2
0938 996 408 (Vietnamese)
0939 877 403 (Japanese)
chayavietnam.com
Facebook: chayavietnam



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
028 3827 1618
gyumaru.LTT@gmail.com



Ichiban Sushi

Ichiban Sushi Vietnam serves fine sushi and signature drinks/cocktails in a lounge setting. Featuring one of the most eclectic Japanese menus in the city. The current Japanese venue to see and be seen in – everyone who's anyone is there.

204 Le Lai, D1
www.ichibansushi.vn



Kesera Bar & Restaurant

An Ideal place for your city escape and enjoying Japanese fusion foods. We have the best bagels in town, fine wine and cigars in a custom cabinet and is a must-do for anyone visiting the city.

26/3 Le Thanh Ton, Ben Nghe Ward, Dist 1
028 38 270 443



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
028 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
028 3823 3333



VIETNAMESE



Five Oysters R

Five Oysters serves authentic and excellent Seafood & Vietnamese food with 5G 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 DI. 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



Ngoc Chau Garden

Generally, Ngoc Chau Garden is genuine authentic Vietnamese Restaurant with simply beautiful food. They concentrate on traditional food of South Viet Nam, especially home-cooked, value for money. There for, the food, drink and the atmosphere make you comfortable during family's meal time. It's a really nice blend as you're setting into Ho Chi Minh City and Viet Nam.

116 Ho Tung Mau, phuong Ben Nghe, quan 1, Tp.HCM.
028 6687 3838

<https://facebook.com/ngocchaugarden.hotungmau>



Red Door R

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



River Restaurant

Tasty Vietnamese food by Saigon River side. The River Restaurant has its' own vegetable garden and a play area for kids. There is a pool table and a futsal table.

199bis Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien Ward, D2, HCMC
Tel: 0907 65 66 67



The Hue House

Located on the 10th floor roof of the Master Building, The Hue House opens up to a breezy space with views over the city. The décor is simple yet elegant – bird cages repurposed into lamps, bonsai centerpieces in pretty ceramic bowls and lots of greenery. The menu highlight unique ingredients only found in Hue, like the Va tron fig salad with shrimp and pork, assorted platter of rice cakes meant to be shared, the sate-marinated ribs come with a plate of crunchy greens and mixed rice, originally grown by minority groups in the Central Highlands, and many more.

Rooftop Master Building
41-43 Tran Cao Van, D3
Opening time 10am-10pm.
0909 246 156 / 0906 870 102



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
028 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
028 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
028 3848 0144

Hum R

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
028 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
028 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
028 3827 7131
www.quananngon.com.vn
8am - 10pm

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
028 3829 9244
templeclub.com.vn

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

INTERNATIONAL



Blanc Restaurant

How to listen with your eyes? Blanc Restaurant employs a team of deaf/hearing impaired waiters. Try a new dining experience and order your dishes from the a la carte menu in sign language; communication will take on a new form.

178/180D Hai Ba Trung, Da Kao, DI
02862663535
www.blancrestaurant.vn



FORK Restaurant

Open from 11 am till 11 pm everyday, Fork Saigon gathers Spanish tapas and asian one going from 50.000 VND to 160.000 VND. It offers an expensive list of international wine and 16 available by the glass. A mixologist corner is also present with Gin and Vodka base in addition to local craft beers and seasonal white or red sangria. A set lunch at 190.000 VND served Monday to Friday from 11 am to 3 pm is also available. It allows you to pick any 3 three items between a large selection (Montaditos, meat, fish and vegetable), iced tea and dessert of the day included.

15 Dong Du, DI 028 3823 3597
info@forksaigon.com www.forksaigon.com



Hotel Equatorial HCMC

New Vietnamese Bistro & European Grill Menu At "Chit Chat at the Café"
The new menu features the Chefs' flair for creativity with international inspiration from Europe and Asia. This special execution can be experienced in the new a la carte menu which includes imported steaks, meats, and seafood.

242 Tran Binh Trong St, Dist. 5
028 3839 7777
<https://hochiminhcity.equatorial.com/>



Madcow Wine & Grill

Mad Cow combines the feel of an edgy grill with the casual tone of an urban wine bar to create a stylish, laid-back atmosphere. Guests can enjoy a delicious meal on the 30th floor of the award winning 5 star Hotel, Pullman Saigon Centre, and look out over vibrant Ho Chi Minh City. Mad Cow's expert culinary team brings each cut of meat to flavorful perfection on handmade charcoal grill. Aside from grilled delights, delicious tapas are on offered – sourced locally and created fresh every day.

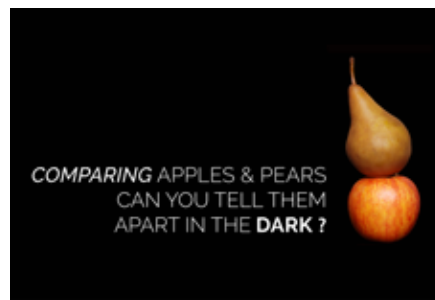
30th Floor, Pullman Saigon Centre
(0)28 3838 8686



Hungry Bunny

Hungry Bunny is a new American Bistro situated in the heart of Thi Nghe neighborhood in Binh Thanh district. The restaurant's main focus is gourmet Burgers such as the Bacon Clubhouse and Bacon & Blue burger. Other offers include breakfast, soups, salads, sandwiches and pastas. There is one main dining area downstairs with two smaller rooms upstairs that offer guests with more privacy and great views. Come enjoy our great selection of American diner food with a glass of cold beer.

8am-10pm / Tel 028 2229 0011
01 Nguyen Cuu Van street, Binh Thanh district
www.hungrybunnybistro.com
www.facebook.com/hungrybunnybistro



Noir - Dining in the Dark

Can you differentiate beef from duck? Mystery meals are served in complete darkness by blind/visually impaired waiters. Select from one of the three-course set menus from the East, West or Vegetarian. Mystery wine pairing available too. Discover with taste and smell, embark on a culinary journey of the senses.

178/180D Hai Ba Trung, Da Kao, DI
02862632525
www.noirdininginthedark.com



Poke Saigon

Poke is a traditional Hawaiian dish made with fresh, cubed raw fish and toppings. Poke Saigon is the first poke restaurant in HCMC where diners create their own bowl. Located on the second floor of an apartment building, the dining space reflects the menu: fresh, fun, creative and healthy. There are many different options for your poké bowl with bases that include sushi or brown rice, including mix-in sauces like wasabi mayo and goma sesame and toppings such as wakame seaweed salad, crab salad and poke options: ahi tuna, salmon, shrimp and more. We are available for delivery.

Tue-Sun 110am-8pm
2nd Floor, 42 Nguyen Hue, DI
0902474388
<https://www.facebook.com/pokesaigon/>



Tomatito Saigon

This sexy tapas bar is Chef Willy's casual interpretation of the prêt-à-porter concept. Willy has a very personal perception of style, that is reflected in all his creations. His universe is colorful, funky and eclectic.

171 Calmette, Dist 1, Ho Chi Minh City
www.crhcm.com/tomatito
www.facebook.com/crhcm
+84 (0) 2862 881717



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 & Wellness

ROVINJ - CROATIA







The Center Of It *ALL*

Croatia is full of hidden gems, charming coastal towns, wonderful natural sites and beautiful beaches.

Text by Cynthia Krya

CHANCES ARE YOU'VE HEARD a bit about Croatia, either as friends consider a honeymoon here, or as a stop on the Adriatic cruises. Croatia's tourism industry is booming. It's an "it" spot on the European travel scene, mostly because of the affordable prices, gorgeous national parks, cobbled streets and miles of coastline. Added to that is a hotspot of music culture, with festivals throughout the year and across many musical styles, which has created a bit of a year-round party scene too (many backpackers I met in the region raved about the party scene).

In short, it has a bit of something for every style of traveler. I backpacked through here with two female friends and we all agree it was one of the prettiest places we've visited. Croatia's enormous coastline gives travelers heaps of water-based activity options. And the inner region of Croatia also boasts a UNESCO World Heritage site, Plitvice

Lakes National Park, as well as the heart of the country's culture and tradition.

Before You Go, What You Should Know

Croatia has a complex history dating back centuries, archaeological evidence takes it back to the stone age, in fact. With five bordering countries, as well as a huge coast, Croatia has been influenced by diverse cultures and ethnicities over the centuries. Croats edged out the other influences around the 7th century, aligned with Hungary at points, and lost ground to the Ottoman Empire around the 15th century. These range of influences are important as they form the bedrock of the country's culture, cuisine, traditions and architecture.

In 1918, Croatia became a part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, eventually shifting into the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia alongside neighboring countries. Regional turmoil and political instability began in 1980.

That turmoil escalated until Croatia voted for independence in 1991. The dissolution of Yugoslavia created an imbalance in the region, and as the former Yugoslavian countries created independent states it led to the Balkans War. This war lasted until 1995, when Operation Storm gave Croatia a decisive victory. This war is a major point in Croatia's history. Part of the issue was inter-ethnic tensions created by the countries formed as Yugoslavia dissolved. Many people from nearby countries were displaced into Croatia, and the entire country was affected, not only the border regions.

Given this recent history, it's a delicate subject in Croatia, as well as throughout the neighboring Balkan states. Though some locals will open up about the war, most are keen to let the past lie in the past. Croatia joined the European Union in 2013, and the country is looking forward toward continued peace, stability, and tourism.



Dubrovnik

You can spend an entire week enjoying Dubrovnik, it's a gorgeous city in its own right, but it's also a hub for day trips into nearby hotspots and countries. Many travelers cut their time short in Dubrovnik because of the overflow of cruise ship passengers—it's true, they are overwhelming. But it's hasty to assume that you won't still love spending time in this city. First off, it's the filming location for King's Landing in the uber-popular Game of Thrones series. This is a growing business now, to find the locations and vistas featured in the show. Even for non-fans, it's a gorgeous spot. If you have a kitchen, take advantage of the locally-grown organic fruit and veggies for at least one meal, they're a real treat. Sample the famed local wines while you're in town, and buy rakija, homemade alcohol. Let's take a look at what you should see in Dubrovnik, and then in the next section a close look at the best day trips nearby.

Things To Do

View the City Walls. Dubrovnik is known for the city walls, among the finest in the world. You have to hike the city walls at least once - plus you'll have stunning photos of the orange tiled rooftops set against the twinkling blue of the Adriatic. The Pile Gate is always busy, my recommendation is to enter from the Ploce Gate. Bring water or you'll regret it.

Explore Old Town. After hiking the walls, get lost among the streets of the old city. Plan your route so you can stop at Gundulic Square Market inside Old Town—if you make it there for noon there is a neat custom of feeding the birds in the Square that makes a neat photo-op. The Square is also an easy spot to buy souvenirs if you are short on time as they have a huge selection.

Visit the fish market. This visit is easy to combine with your walking tour of Old Town. If you have the stamina (or fortify with a hearty lunch and wine), then take an Uber or a bus to Gruz Harbor to visit



Dubrovnik Old Town

the produce and fish market located just outside the city walls.

Hike to Mt Srd. This is a gorgeous hike and it's usually brisk and cool even in the hot season if you start in the early morning. There is a cable car that starts just north of the city walls. You could hike in one direction and use the cable car. This is not to be missed, it has stunning views over Dubrovnik.

Rent a car. Many of the most affordable hotels and restaurants are located outside of the city walls. The nearby towns are filled with options. While bus transport is easy, renting a car will give you more mobility to explore not only Dubrovnik, but also the many gorgeous day trips on offer. Prices can be incredibly reasonable during shoulder- and off-season.

Places to Eat and Sleep

Food inside the city walls is pricey. Croatia has the standard Mediterranean fare, so you could easily find delicious seafood and fresh foods. If you have an apartment rental (I recommend Airbnb, or Meshtrip is a pretty good aggregator of the various vacation rentals), then consider shopping and cooking some meals at home. If you are vegetarian, then the advice to cook at home runs double true—Croatia is not vegetarian friendly. For all travelers, if you plan very full days, then it might be nice to pack snacks. Because Dubrovnik is a cruise ship port, eating or touring anywhere during the docking times is busy.

Eat at Nishta in Old Town. This vegetarian spot is so create and tasty that it's a local favorite even with non-vegetarians. Visit a bit off of peak hours or you will queue for ages.

Sample traditional eats at Amfora. This spot has some of the iconic Dalmatian favorites for the seafood and meat eaters.



Dubrovnik



cevapi, a local sausage-like specialty. The cobbled streets of Mostar are quite lovely, and it's a great spot to relax. You could also enter the Koski Mehmed Paša Mosque, it has gorgeous aerial views of the cityscape. Mostar is a good spot to buy honey if you're keen.

Then, it's an easy drive to the truly spectacular Kravice Falls. It's 40 kms outside of Mostar, and there is a café on site where you can grab lunch and coffee if you didn't eat in Mostar. Bring your swimsuit as it's a gorgeous spot to swim and cool off.

I happen to love Bosnia and have an entire travel guide for that country, too—it's worth spending longer. If you have time, you could easily sleep in Mostar for the night and see a couple of other sites nearby. Budget backpackers will enjoy Guesthouse "Taso", and Hotel-Restaurant Kriva Cuprija is a great mid-range spot from which to organize travels.

Book an apartment for your stay. Nearly all of the rentals are privately-owned apartments, or many homeowners rent rooms in their house. The best deals are outside the Old Town, it would make a great place to stay if you are there for a special occasion, but it's incredibly expensive to stay in that area. Lapland is the most common spot to stay, but these hostels and hotels book up quickly.

Stay somewhere nice. Boutique Hotel Stari Grad is a charming spot in the Old Town and is a great choice if you are in looking for a nice spot right in the thick of things.

Go budget with a hostel. The two best options for convenience, price, and amenities are the Cocoon Hostel and My Way Hostel. Both are walking distance to Old Town and are fantastic affordable spots from which you can explore Dubrovnik.

Day Trips Near Dubrovnik

Sometimes I prefer to have a guidebook for day trips and long drives. The guides, like the *Lonely Planet* or *Rick Steves*, offer a description of the highlights among the tiny towns you could visit. That said, here is a starting point for day trips into the nearby beaches, countries, and the best coastal drives around Dubrovnik.

Lokrum Island and the Beaches

Lokrum Island makes for a great day just spent relaxing and enjoying the beauty. The island is covered with wild peacocks and there is a saltwater lake in the middle. You can easily take a boat over from either Dubrovnik Old Town Harbor, or usually any of the nearby towns where you might be staying. But because it's so close to the Old Harbor port, it's often crowded. Also, the beaches in Lokrum are often rocky, so keep that in mind if you are hoping to relax in warm sand. You could also make it a beach day by visiting Mlini, Srebreno,

or Kupari. There are neat abandoned hotels in Kupari that make for a good wander. There are so many beaches near Dubrovnik, but these are the best for quality and convenience. If you're keen to sunbathe and explore, take a ferry to Mljet National Park—the views are gorgeous and the beaches are nice too.

Mostar & Kravice Falls in Bosnia and Herzegovina

From Dubrovnik, it's easiest to rent a car and make a full day of your trip to Bosnia and Herzegovina. With a car, you can get an early start and avoid some of the tourist crowds that come in waves by mid-day. But if renting isn't feasible, then there are plenty of tour buses from Dubrovnik running there as well. Enjoy the gorgeous drive through the green mountains and then spend a few hours eating lunch in Mostar while watching people jump off Stari Most, an iconic bridge that was damaged during the war and rebuilt. Bosnia isn't very vegetarian friendly, but a *burek* is always a good snack. Meat-eaters will enjoy the



Kotor, Montenegro



Lokrum Island

Peljesac Peninsula

If you are a wine lover then this makes an easy day trip from Dubrovnik. You could arrange a tour as well if you are concerned about driving back—or if you're in a large group consider renting a driver for the day and you can all have a good time at the wineries. My recommendation is to stop by the Korta Katarina Winery in Orebic if you're a wine lover.

Kotor, Montenegro

Pop across the border into Montenegro and hike to the fortress above Kotor. This is one of the most idyllic spots in the world. Not only are the views from the fortress gorgeous, but the down is charming too. It's just a wonderful place to hike and spend the day. And behind the fortress is a "secret" hole in the wall that makes for fun explorations.

Drive the Coastline

Wear a swimsuit under your clothes and pack a spare set of clothes as this is a gorgeous coastal drive and you'll want to cool off along the way. Give yourself a fair bit of time to stop in the little towns and wander. Head north along the coast from Dubrovnik, and make sure to stop by Trsteno, which has a pretty arboretum and a unique vibe.

Or, depending on what you like to do, you can go to Mljet National Park and rent bikes to bike around the island. I also heard Korcula was amazing, but we never had the chance to get there.

Plitvice Lakes National Park

Travelers visit this area for Plitvice just for the National Park. Book two nights accommodation—arrive via bus by evening (the owner of your accommodation should pick you up), explore Plitvice Lakes all day, and stay one more night (you'll be tired). Then leave on an early morning bus the next day! If you're driving, you might be able to drive in from your previous destination and still have a full day. Be warned that there are sometimes ticket scammers nearby trying to sell you overpriced (and sometimes invalid) tickets.

Things To Do

Plitvice Lakes National Park: A gorgeous UNESCO site in the center of Croatia. The stacked lakes take hours to explore and if you're a nature lover you'll enjoy it. The park has been designed for tourism though and there are a lot of tourists. Don't expect to commune with nature, but it is a beautiful couple of hours as you follow the boardwalks for miles through the various levels of lakes. I visited in the summer, but it's equally stunning in the winter when covered with snow.

Places to Eat and Sleep

Villa Jezerka: This hostel is run like a B&B and comes recommended. It had free wifi, was impeccably clean, and featured gorgeous gardens. Laundry



access too. The owner is great, he brought me a free drink on arrival and drives visitors one-way to the park; then it's only a 20 minute walk back to his place. The bus stop to leave this area is walkable from here.

Stay in a nice spot. Consider Guest House Korita for midrange, and Plitvica Lodge for a nice place from which to organize your search. Hotel Jerezo is also a nice place for groups as they offer triples.

Pizza Place: There is a nearby restaurant with great to-go pizzas that you pass on the walk back to the guesthouse, starts with a "G" and the guesthouse owner will recommend it. That was the easiest option since there isn't a lot walkable nearby—we ordered a pizza on our way back then relaxed back at the guesthouse after the full day of walking.

Krka National Park

Skradin is roughly 20 km from Šibenik and the town borders the entrance to the Krka National Park. The buses and trains stop in Šibenik. If you arrive late in the day, you will have no choice but to cab it into Skradin (Euro 40+). Krka is not on the beaten path and tourists only visit for the Krka Waterfalls—plan just one full day here to do the waterfalls. Wear a swimsuit and bring a picnic lunch to the falls with you since you'll be there most of the day!

Things to Do in Skradin and the Krka Waterfalls

Krka Waterfalls: The main attraction in the Skradin area, and normally the only reason tourists visit this area of Croatia. Boats leave the docks and ferry tourists to the entrance to the park. This is, by far, the easiest way to see Krka. It drops you off right at the entrance and boats leave all day long (check times so you catch the last one!). You can also visit the monastery on Lake Visovac, it's dated to the 14th Century and is gorgeous.

Biking to Bribirska Glavica: Not a "must-see" by any means, but a great way to pass the time if you've done Krka and you're in Skradin for an extra day. Rent a bike from the bike shop on the riverfront and head West out of town. Bring snacks and water because there is nothing but houses along the way.

Places to Eat and Sleep

Try Skradinski Rizot. This local risotto is crazy popular now because of Anthony Bourdain and as such it's pretty easy to find in Skradin.

Villa Marija. This is a well-run budget spot that makes an ideal place to visit the town. Highly recommended if you're visiting the waterfalls at Krka National Park. It's a great location, more of a hotel than a hostel but still very reasonably priced. Gorgeous patio off of our room and a great breakfast included! Friendly staff and free wifi included.

Stay somewhere gorgeous. If you're feeling spendy, then the Hotel Panorama has stunning views over Krka Canyon and is really a special spot to stay.

Cantinetta. Skradinskih Svilara 7. This is pricier than a backpacker budget but delicious seafood according to my travel buddies. This is considered one of the best-kept local secrets.

Zlatne Skoljke. Grgura Ninskog 9. This is a solid choice on all fronts. Lots of good options and I enjoyed it. ■

A top-down photograph of various travel-related items on a dark, textured wooden surface. In the upper left, a white tablet is partially visible next to a maroon passport. Below the passport is a teal mesh garment. A teal t-shirt is spread out in the lower left, with a pair of white earbuds resting on it. A pair of green-tinted aviator sunglasses lies on a blue denim jacket in the lower center. In the bottom right corner, a silver digital camera is partially visible.

Travel TECH

Boost productivity with
clever travel hardware

Text by **Nermin Hajdarbegovic**

REMOTE WORKERS, FREELANCE

developers and designers, travel writers are usually always on the road. When I started writing this, some of my friends were in Portugal, trying to work out the math behind surfboards. Now it's my turn, and I'm wrapping up my draft with a nice view of the Adriatic Sea, just a few miles away from the best windsurfing spot in Europe.

Yes, I'm a workaholic, so this might as well be a good time to cover the topic I had in mind. I can probably guess what some of you are thinking:

"This is a lifestyle article! This guy is going to talk about surfing, healthy food and exercise."

No. This is not a lifestyle article. As far as food goes, fresh fish and veggies are always a safe bet. Exercise? Well, cycling to a nearby village to try a marginally different fish dish and sample local wine counts as exercise, at least to me.

So, with all the lifestyle stuff out of the way, I can get back to my message and start discussing the logistics behind travel and remote work. You can buy capri pants, cheap flip-flops, and boonie hats everywhere, but beachside shops usually don't carry quality hardware that can help you be more productive on the road, or save time and money for more enjoyable activities.

Caveat: If you're an avid Apple user with a profound dislike of Windows, you may not like where I'm going with this. I don't intend to bash Apple, but Cupertino simply doesn't bother with cheap hardware that won't be missed if it ends up in the water.

Travel Hardware: Myths and Moths

When you hit the road, what do you stick in your carry-on? And no, I'm not talking about shorts and t-shirts. You pack a fair amount of hardware, and I am assuming we all have our personal preferences when it comes to our kit. This is entirely subjective, so I'm not going to tell you your choice of hardware sucks.

If it works for you, stick with it. End of story.

Instead, I will focus on often-overlooked gadgets and accessories that can make your life easier and complement your existing travel hardware. I will try to stay away from expensive or exotic hardware that may be hard to come by, and focus on cheap stuff that won't burn a hole in your pocket.

Working on the road with spotty internet access can be a nightmare.

Luckily, the hardware is evolving to keep pace. The hardware industry has been making a killing on high-end laptops and notebooks for decades. They come in all shapes and sizes, from ruggedized Toughbooks that can withstand a low-yield nuclear blast, to sleek ultraportables

that sacrifice performance and value for money, but look awesome and turn heads wherever you go. Whether you're in the market for a powerful, portable workstation for virtualization and design, or a featherweight ultraportable that doesn't skimp on performance, you are likely to spend loads of money on your primary laptop. I am not suggesting high-end computers are a bad investment because they cost a lot of money to produce, and in turn, they save time and boost productivity. Magnesium alloys, high-density batteries, powerful mobile GPUs and low-voltage CPUs cost a lot of money, and performance rigs will never be cheap. Virtually every major component in a high-end laptop costs much more than desktop components with comparable performance, and like all things in life, you have to pay a premium to get the really good stuff.

But does this principle apply to all portable hardware? It does not, and this is the myth I mentioned earlier. Useful stuff doesn't have to cost an arm and a leg.

The commoditization of IT has turned the market on its head. Devices that used to cost hundreds of dollars a couple of years ago are now being sold on supermarket shelves for US\$99, and you can get even better prices if you take your time to look for online deals.

As I explained earlier, these cheap gadgets won't replace your MacBook or ThinkPad. You won't mothball them anytime soon, but you could get some hardware that will supplant them. You won't have your full development environment or Adobe CC suite on cheap, secondary devices. At the same time, you don't need a USD2,000 laptop to check Slack, write a few emails, or tinker with spreadsheets while you're sipping your Mojito by the beach. A convertible or hybrid device can handle basic productivity tasks at a fraction of the cost, plus many of them offer superior battery life and can be charged by a powerbank in your backpack. Why drain the battery on your primary computer just to attend a Skype meeting and draft a few follow-up emails? It's overkill.

Would you use a massive chainsaw to trim a couple of shrubs in your garden?

Of course not. Well, I might, but that's just because I dislike my neighbors.

To summarize, you will still have to pay loads of money to get a proper primary computer, but you can save money elsewhere, and you can get more flexibility. Luckily, mobile computing has never been cheaper, and just a couple hundred bucks can buy you a useful yet nearly disposable device.

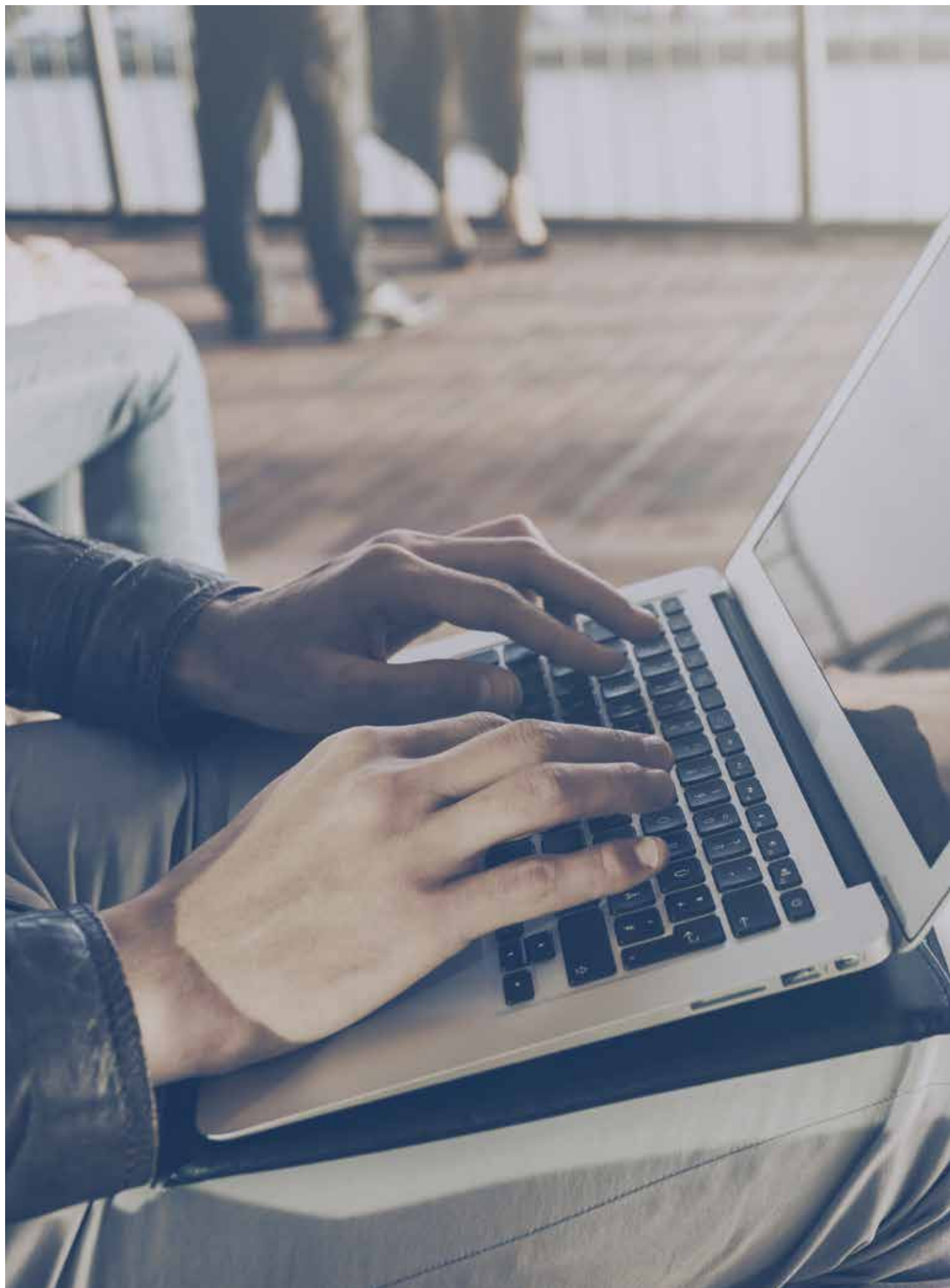
Wait, What The Heck Are Convertibles and Hybrids?

I spent the better part of a decade covering hardware, and based on my extensive experience in the field, I can confidently say that I have no idea.

These are not technical terms, they're marketing talk. Every few quarters, chipmakers and vendors have to come up with new buzzwords to appease pitchfork wielding activist investors and analysts, but you can only come up with so many pointless buzzwords before you blur the lines between all sorts of product categories, throwing all rules and definitions out the window.

New chips and form-factors are turning inexpensive hybrid computers into useful secondary devices. Check them out.

So, convertibles, detachables, clamshells, 2-in-1s, hybrid tablets... What are they really? They're basically



But what about the rest of the spec?

This is what a typical low-end hybrid/convertible/2-in-1 tends to have under the hood today:

- Atom x5 or x7 series processor - usually an entry- to mid-level x5 chip
- 4GB of LPDDR3
- 32GB/64GB of eMMC storage - eMMC storage is slower than proper SSDs, but eMMC 5.0 drives can be quite fast and won't bottleneck the system
- microSDXC card reader
- FullHD IPS touchscreen - usually ranging from 10.1 to 12 inches. Some devices also support stylus input, in case you need to sketch stuff or just doodle something
- Optional 3G connectivity - 4G is still quite rare in this product category, but that's changing fast
- 6000mAh to 12000mAh batteries - this largely depends on display size and the form factor
- Windows 10 - Apple users probably won't like this, and neither will the Linux crowd
- Proper full-sized keyboard with touchpad

cheap computing devices, usually based on tablet hardware platforms. Their design and form-factor vary wildly. I know this is a very broad definition, but this is a broad product category.

These devices can't and won't replace your primary computer, but they're not supposed to—that's the point. They are secondary devices, stuff you can fall back on in case your primary fails, or if you need something lighter and more portable for menial tasks. However, if you think all these devices are underpowered and useless in a professional setting, you're probably wrong, and once you try one of them you may be in for a pleasant surprise.

Don't be fooled by the "quad-core" moniker. Yes, these are quad-core processors, but the architecture is different, and four Atom cores are usually much smaller than a single CPU core used in Intel's Core-series chips. This means performance is much lower, but since these are 14nm parts, power consumption is ridiculously low. This means the processor can be cooled passively, and a vendor can get an Atom processor for the price of a beachside lunch. In fact, sometimes vendors pay next to nothing for them, because Intel subsidizes its platforms, although the chipmaker tends to use different nomenclature for this controversial business practice. Last time I checked, they were referring to it as "contra-revenue," and didn't like people using the s-word, which is exactly why I am using it.

While a thoroughbred Core i5 mobile processor requires 15W to 35W of juice when it's running at full load, tablet Atoms can get away with just a fraction of that, on the order of 2W to 3W. This obviously has massive implications on battery life. A few years ago, I had a chance to review one of the first Atom-based hybrids, designed by Asus. One of the biggest problems I encountered during my review was battery life. I had a hard time draining the bloody thing in my everyday routine. It was like a Duracell Bunny; it offered all-day battery life and then some. Better yet, it could be topped off using a standard microUSB charger, although it took a while to fully charge. Intel was clearly onto something, and its engineers from Israel to California obviously did an exceptional job designing this new breed of Atoms.

Atom processors aren't the toys they used to be. The latest generation offers sufficient performance for many applications and scenarios.

That was three years ago, and things are even better now. The latest crop of 14nm Atoms is even more efficient, so battery life should not be an issue, even if you get a dirt-cheap "whitebox" device.

Big brands usually market such devices at about USD500+, but if you want something really cheap and expendable, you might want to consider Chinese vendors, as you can get something with this sort of spec for USD200+, and you'll usually get slightly better specs than if you go for a big brand device. Some of them use virtually the same components as big brand devices.

Personally, I rely on a compact 10.1-inch "detachable" based on a more powerful Core M processor, with a pretty good stylus that I use sparingly, mostly to annoy our illustrators with my half-baked ideas. Core M devices cost more than Atom-based hybrids, but they offer superior performance and can actually replace your primary computer in some situations (especially if you get a bigger device, as 10 inches isn't going to cut it for most people).

Unfortunately, Apple users don't have nearly as much choice.

If they insist on avoiding the traumatic transition to Windows, they're limited to the MacBook Air series or the newest iPad Pro, neither of which are cheap or expendable, and the necessity to carry around a Bluetooth keyboard leaves much to be desired. If you're an Apple user, and if you can live with Windows from time to time, you're probably better off getting a cheap Wintel hybrid with a proper, full-sized keyboard. It all depends on what you're going to use these devices for. Google apps and all sorts of web apps look and behave identically on Apple and Windows. ■

Nermin Hajdarbegovic is a technical editor at toptal.

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Text by **Michael Arnold**
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THIS JANUARY, GUESTS OF Aurora International School of The Arts (www.aurorareggio.com) were treated to a fascinating presentation by visiting Pedagogistas Tani Bertacchi and Alessandra Ferrari, experts from Reggio Emilia Approach, Italy practiced at the school. Those who attended had the opportunity to learn more about how this small-town Italian philosophy of education has become such a well-developed set of values regarding children that are shared between all people who work to implement this approach—not only teaching staff, but also the parents, the families, and everyone participating.

The presentation was an opportunity to learn more from the visitors to the school, but it was also a forum to share experiences. After the conference where the Pedagogistas presented and declared their philosophy and their own variation

on the approach, participants joined together for sharing, professional development, visiting the school, meeting the teachers, and openly reflecting on the approach as a group.

The core of the Reggio educational philosophy is that the child is at the center. It's the child who has the right to be listened to; who is trusted and considered competent. This stands in contrast with the traditional school system, where the child is thought of as an empty box to be filled up with information, and the teacher has the information and puts it inside the empty child.

"We believe the opposite," explain the Pedagogistas. "We believe that the child is competent and full of things that we can, as facilitators, pull out. The child expresses his own ideas, his own points of view about the world, his own theory. So he is able to create, elaborate on



his own theories; he's able to cooperate with others, to learn with others, build knowledge in a social environment as a social construct. The adult is listening to the child, creating contexts for sustaining learning possibilities and opportunities. So the adult doesn't follow a program with a journey that is pre-established, but is working through projects."

One of the features of the Reggio Emilia approach is that it is adapted in every place where it is practiced, based on the notion that the environment also plays its role in educating a child. Each implementation of the approach is a "translation" that is derived from the region where it is practiced. One of the first observations made by the visiting Pedagogistas was that Aurora is an international, multicultural environment, making the approach here very inclusive, both in holding different cultures within it at the same time and in being open to cultural differences.

"It's very aware of what is being implemented," they commented, "and the Vietnamese culture is really intertwined with the traditions of whatever is being done."

Reggio Emilia is a system where every person who is part of the journey is growing. Not only do the children learn from adults, but also adults have much to learn from the children. According to Alessandra, children can teach adults "never to stop to wonder, that nothing is obvious. There are different points of view and new perspectives; we are going beyond stereotypes. We as adults are closed, we are not always open to the world and we have lost the capacity to go beyond. If we can really listen to children, we can reclaim this way to look at the world. We become more facilitators and not protagonists as adults; we don't create direct learnings but contexts that stimulate the learning possibilities of the children."

The Reggio Emilia approach implemented at Aurora is in line

with modern scientific research that children best explore their possibilities when stimulated through contexts.

"It's not simple learning, it's not an island," explained Tania. "You know that other schools are separated into disciplines—but no, every learning is intertwined with its relationship within the group. Gardner [a Harvard psychologist] talks about the multiple intelligence theory, saying that learnings do not occur in isolated areas like disciplines; they are intertwined and interconnected. In neuroscience, the latest pedagogical discoveries put the child in the center. So teaching different disciplines to children can't be the aim, because they are going to learn these different disciplines anyway in their lives. It's more important to teach them how to

learn to learn, how to make associations, develop lateral thinking, divergent thinking, to find a new solution and solve problems. They learn skills as capacities, abilities for the rest of their lives—life skills, social life, cognitive skills. This is the basis for all the other learnings."

Both of the visiting Pedagogistas are intimately familiar with the Reggio Emilia approach, having been working for many years as teachers in Reggio schools following graduation with degrees in pedagogy. Both have been working as pedagogical coordinators in the same coordination group for more than a decade.

"This approach started to develop in the 70s when the schools started to get more municipal," explains Alessandra. "That's when the positions of Atelierista and Pedagogista were born. The first sprouts were in the 60s with a Pedagogista called Loris Malaguzzi, but then it took 10 years to develop into a proper approach. It was developed in Reggio Emilia because of the cultural historical political context, and so that's why we call it an approach—because we can't copy it in another place that has a different cultural background, it has to be wisely intertwined with the culture of the place where we want to implement it. Everything is deeply interconnected with the base territory, that's why it's so important. Because we are part of a larger system that is interconnected with the territory, wherever we are."

Shortly before their departure, the two Pedagogistas affirmed that they felt richer with more knowledge that they would share with their colleagues upon their return to Italy, opening new reflections together about education. For the visitors, gaining a perspective on other realities—and interconnecting with those realities where the approach has been translated in a different environment and territory—has brought about welcome opportunities to reflect on their own work. ■





Camp It Up

Camp Asia is the coolest thing your kids can do during school holidays

AS SUMMER IS FAST approaching, parents might be wondering what there is for children to do in Ho Chi Minh City during the summer holidays? Look no further, Camp Asia has arrived!

Camp Asia is the leading holiday camp provider in Singapore and is

launching in Vietnam from June 2018 through International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP). With a selection of 1, 2, 3 and 4-week camps available from June 18 to July 13, Camp Asia is flexible to suit everyone's summer holiday plans.

The decision to introduce Camp Asia exclusively through ISSP was

an obvious choice explains Angelina Tee, Managing Director, Vietnam for Cognita, "ISSP continues to provide an outstanding international education in Vietnam. The ISSP Leadership team are passionate and committed to improving every aspect of school life. Camp Asia can leverage this talent by providing a memorable experience for children during summer, in an environment that continues to be redeveloped with new facilities."

Lester Stephens, Head of School at ISSP describes what it means to have been chosen by Camp Asia to be selected as an exclusive partner, "We, as a school community, are extremely honored. Camp Asia recognizes ISSP as the best international school for children from 18 months to 11 years old to launch in Vietnam."

Launching a new holiday camp in an international environment has taken months of preparation as Kerriann Tyson-Jones, Head of Camp Asia shares, "I am thrilled to be bringing Singapore's most successful children's holiday camp to Vietnam. Ensuring the same quality and standard of camp is delivered has been integral to this expansion. It has been



a pleasure supporting and working with the Camp Asia team at ISSP and developing the programs. I am sure the children (and teachers) will have lots of fun!"

With a selection of three programs to choose from, there is something for every child aged 18 months to 11 years old this summer. Each program focuses on continuing the development of physical, emotional and social skills

whilst making new friendships in a fun and engaging environment through a balanced approach of conceptual learning, inquiry-based and the reinforcement of core skills.

MULTI ACTIVITY.

For children aged 18 months to 4 years old.

Set within ISSP's purpose built Early Education department and outdoor play spaces, children will continue their social, emotional, physical, cognitive and language development through a multi activity program. Supported by specialist Early Education teachers, children will participate in sensory and inquiry based activities, water sports, cooking, art, music and much more!

DEVELOPING SKILLS.

For children aged 5 to 8 years old.

The fundamentals to a child's ability is having a strong foundation of basic skills. From literacy, numeracy to communication and physical skills, this program promotes the development of the whole-child. A balanced schedule of academic and creative activities means a combination of both learning and fun.

INTENSIVE ENGLISH.

For children aged 9 to 11 years old.

The main component for this program will be for children to develop and grow their confidence through English language. Through each weekly concept, children will receive instruction from English language specialists, whilst also having the opportunity to utilize their learning through a range of age appropriate activities such as drama, public speaking and library classes.

WHY CHOOSE CAMP ASIA?

Creating Memories

Childhood memories last a lifetime. That's what Camp Asia hopes to achieve; for every child to take away a positive experience. Our caring camp staff create safe environment and dynamic opportunities for children to engage with each other.

Trusted By Parents

With over 5 year's of experience in running summer camps and being part of Cognita, a leading independent schools group, Camp Asia understands and recognizes the priorities and concerns of a parent. Like during school the school year, Camp Asia nurtures a positive relationship between parents and children. This enables every child to reach their potential and to have an enjoyable, safe camp experience.

All Inclusive Price

One price—for everything! There are no hidden charges or extra 'add-ons' in Camp Asia.

The Camp fee includes; tuition, fieldtrips and excursions, morning and afternoon snacks, lunch—catering for a wide range of dietary needs, stationery, learning materials and Camp Asia t-shirt and hat.

Experienced Camp Staff

Camp teachers are carefully selected not only fulfil camp program goals, but are a perfect match for the age ranges and needs of the children. Camp teachers are hand-picked for their experience, qualifications, character and passion.

Every camp will be overseen by a Camp Manager who will be the key point of contact during camps. A fully qualified Nurse, who experienced at working in an international school environment is on campus full-time and available during camp hours.

All staff undergo thorough background checks to comply with Cognita's Safeguarding and Child Protection culture.

Professional Management

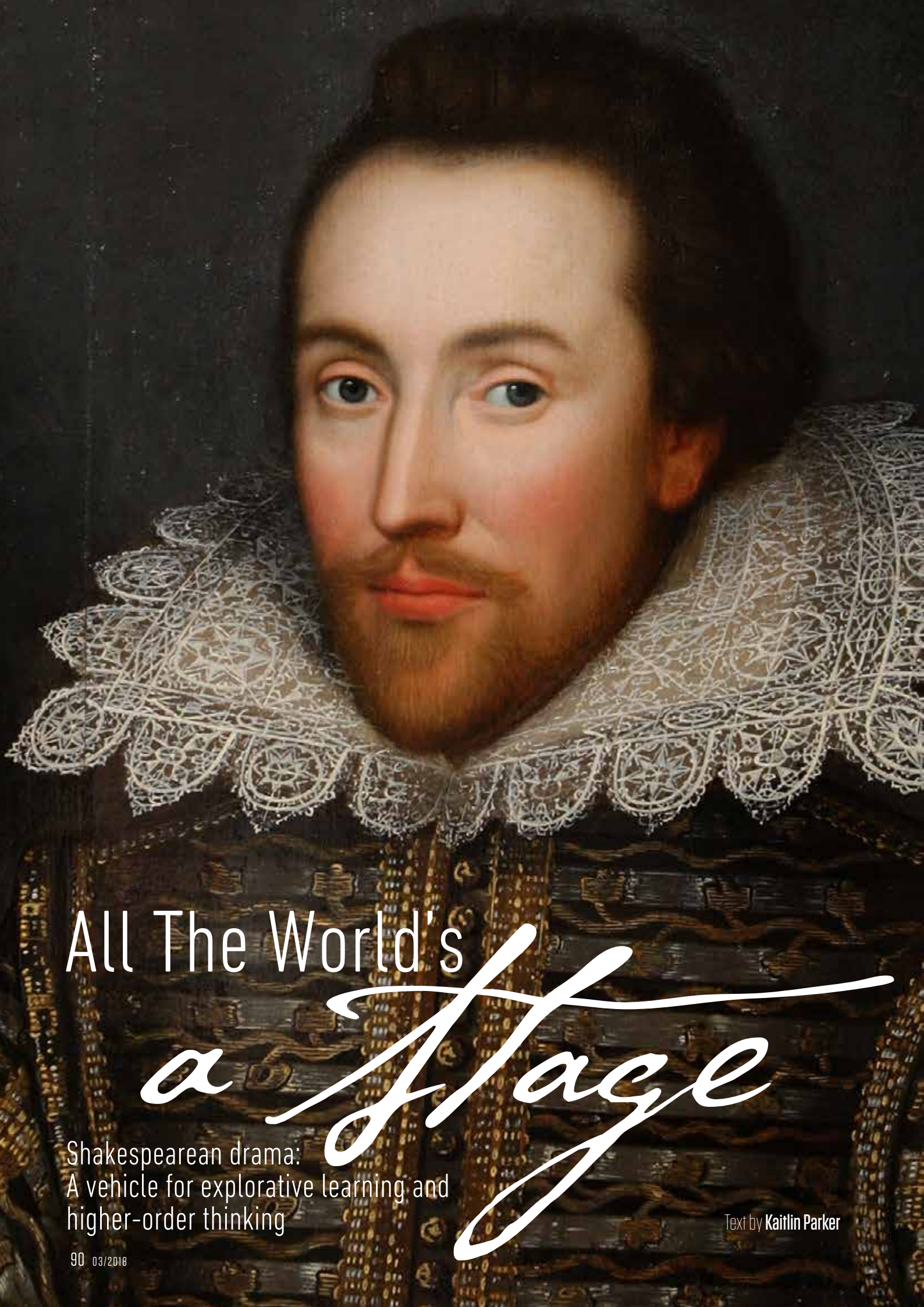
Camp Asia and International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP) are part of Cognita. Launched in 2004, Cognita is a leading international schools group of 67 schools in eight countries, with more than 30,000 students worldwide. At Cognita, no two schools are the same, but tailored to the needs of children, parents, communities and cultures. School leaders are empowered, teachers committed and students happy and enthusiastic - just like at Camp Asia!

SIGN-ME UP!

There are several convenient ways that parents can sign-up their children to Camp Asia. By visiting www.issp.edu.vn/campasia, e-mailing campasia@issp.edu.vn or speak to a member of their multilingual team by phoning (028) 2222 7788.

Parents are recommended to sign-up soon as possible as all programs have limited places and small class sizes. Sign-up and make full payment before March 31, 2018 and receive a 20 percent BIG discount of a 4-week camp! ■





All The World's *a Stage*

Shakespearean drama:
A vehicle for explorative learning and
higher-order thinking

Text by Kaitlin Parker

THE BRITISH SHAKESPEARE

Association hosted a conference in England to engage with the legacy of Shakespeare as a playwright. The conference gathered academics and educators from around the world to discuss new ideas in literary and historical research around Shakespeare, as well as new strategies for teaching and learning of Shakespeare with a focus on his relevance as a playwright in secondary schooling.

Among the teachers who attended the conference, there was a wide consensus that the current shift in many developed countries towards a universal curriculum and standardized testing is shifting the focus of classroom experience. The renewed focus in these curricula in English on comprehension and essay writing is putting new constraints on classroom teaching and learning, with teachers being forced more and more to 'teach to the test,' despite their good instincts that this limits what their students can gain from their learning.

Though we need not accept these constraints to remain indefinitely into the future, they are a reality that we as educators must deal with in this present day. The question then remains, how might we foster freedom and independence in students' creative expression and literary interpretation in a scope and sequence running to a strict timeline with exams the most likely measure for student outcomes?

When studying Shakespeare's plays, we know students often have to overcome their perceived unfamiliarity with both the context and language of these texts if they are to compose a sophisticated response in any assessment format. For this reason, Shakespeare studies—especially at senior student level—can become a subject area where teachers are left feeling even more constrained, as they must work against this perceived cultural distance to create a safe environment for creative exploration and interpretation of the text.

These struggles for students reflect a process of learning that we all must face in adult life: understanding unfamiliar languages, cultures and social contexts when working with groups of people in every sphere, from business to education and health, stressing the universal

values of Shakespearean drama, but this should go beyond the pure thematics of his playtexts. What if we were to focus on developing a level of comfortability with unfamiliar cultures and language-learning in our teaching of Shakespeare?

What actually happens in a Shakespeare play is you're prevented from arriving at easy certainties. This reality can be terrifying for both teachers and students when a curriculum might seemingly push Shakespearean drama into thematic boxes for classroom analysis. However, the process of having to continually rethink your ideas when dealing with one of Shakespeare's playtexts is what is aptly identifies as "what makes the plays work—because everything keeps shifting."

This process of grappling with new forms of communication and unfamiliar societies is something that Shakespeare and his company also had to deal with at the turn of the 17th century. Shakespeare moved away from the countryside into the growing city of London, and with a group of collaborators was daring enough to begin staging theatre works in the first permanent playhouses, to crowds of thousands from all social spheres in Early Modern England. With the invention of the printing press less than 100 years earlier, his work also fell right into a point in history of great transition, as society moved from a culture of oral storytelling to a more visual, literary culture.

Discovery Space

Today, Shakespeare continues to be influential on a global scale. In the Imperial age, Shakespeare became one of Britain's most important exports. As the English language has spread around the world, his work remains our first known record in print for many of our most commonly used words in modern English.

In the case of Shakespeare as a playwright, I firmly believe allowance in the classroom for creative exploration of him as an artist, theatre-maker and writer is essential as a foundation for thematic and interpretation. As put

by anthropologist Clifford Geertz, "The giving to art objects a cultural significance, is always a local matter." In other words, no text is composed in isolation from its surroundings in time and place. But how can we connect students more effectively with knowledge of Shakespeare's time and place?

I believe the answer is in allowing them to discover these details in a research environment and reading lab. With the current trend in academic research toward historical research rather than close reading, there is so much potential for students to tap into an ever-growing knowledge base about the conditions that lead to Shakespeare's works as we see them today. In my workshops, I call this the 'discovery space' (much like the space where actors entered Shakespeare's stage from the back doors at the Globe was called the Discovery Space), and allow time for structured discovery of Shakespeare's world, before we explore the thematic references and use of genre in the particular play being studied. We need not feed this information to students, but allow them to enter Shakespeare's world via their own process of learning.

If we are truly to foster higher order thinking and enquiry into our students, this process of independent discovery managed through a structured and safe research space is essential to their independence as readers and interpreters of texts, as they are required to be in English literary studies. This level of creativity and exploration is desperately need in the jobs of the future; no longer are passive work and systematic learning the skills that employers require. Instead they require people willing to take initiative, to explore and think laterally, to imagine possibilities and be willing to travel across cultural distances in a globalised world in order to achieve any kind of significance. Shakespeare studies has something to offer in this direction: encourage your students to explore, to discover and to interpret his texts confidently using historical knowledge that they find in their own excavations. ■



Lend Me Your Ear

Must-read guide to babies and ear infections

BEHIND THE EARDRUM IS A SPACE called the middle ear. It's a resonating chamber, like the body of a violin or guitar. It amplifies sounds coming from the outside through the eardrum, and within it is a system of small bones that transmit sound signals to the inner ear and onward to the brain.

This space is connected to the nasopharynx (nasal cavity) by a canal, one of the spaces in the upper respiratory tract that can fill with mucus or pus whenever inflammation occurs. When this happens in the middle ear, the surrounding tissues become engorged by mucus or swelling, and this impairs drainage toward the nasal cavity—creating ideal conditions for bacteria to proliferate there and causing a condition we call *otitis media*.

It's very common in small children for a number of reasons. Some kids are always getting congested, and because of their smaller anatomy, the drainage canal is narrow and can block easily. The middle ear is not a sterile space, so if it fills with fluid, it's easy for flora from the nasal and oral cavities to spread there and cause a serious infection, as well as a constant sensation of pressure and painful discomfort within the ear.

There are a few types of bacteria that are generally responsible for



Dr. Serge Gradstein is Family Medical Practice's pediatrics and infectious disease specialist. With over three decades of experience in medicine, he completed his residency in pediatrics at Israel's Kaplan University and in infectious diseases at Soroka Hospital, also in Israel.

this condition. The most dreaded of these is now a thing of the past: the *Haemophilus influenzae* bacteria, a very virulent organism that used to be an enormous problem in children's medicine before the advent of the HIB vaccine—which is now given to almost every child, including kids in Vietnam.

An efficient HIB vaccine was difficult to create. *Haemophilus* proteins alone cannot stimulate a strong immune response, so an ingenious vaccination method had to be used to jolt the body's immunity into action. To do this, researchers tried combining *Haemophilus* with a protein issued from an unrelated pathogen like diphtheria, known to have a powerful impact on the immune system. The vaccine that resulted stimulated a protection that worked strongly against *Haemophilus*. Nowadays, *Haemophilus* infections have dropped to almost zero, so this vaccine was very successful.

Unfortunately, vaccination has not been as effective against the second bacteria in the list that usually causes otitis media: *pneumococcus*. The problem with *pneumococcus* is that it has a lot of serotypes, which means that no single vaccine can work against all the varieties that exist. But there are around a dozen types that are more common, and the vaccines we have against these are actively sufficient.

Vaccination is extremely important in fighting serious infections and also has a beneficial effect in reducing the incidence of *otitis media*, because it is a very good preventive measure against *Haemophilus influenzae*—and to some extent, also against *pneumococcus*. By contrast, treating the condition after it takes hold is quite problematic.

The trouble with otitis is that it occurs within an enclosed space that is not well irrigated by blood vessels. Normally to treat a bacterial infection, we administer antibiotics that will be carried by the blood to the site of the infection. With otitis, because you don't have blood vessels in the middle ear, you've got nothing that can deliver the medicine.

It's not enough to have a good antibiotic that kills the bacteria in the lab; you need one that you can give in higher doses without being toxic—such

as antibiotics from the penicillin family. Derivates of penicillin (amoxycillin, cefuroxime, etc.) have a particularly safe profile that enables us to increase their dosages significantly without the risk of increased side effects, so we often prescribe these kinds of antibiotics for children. *Pneumococcus*, however, develops a resistance to penicillins quite easily. This sometimes makes treating otitis more difficult. First of all, we need to use high doses to address the low-grade resistance of the bacteria, or prescribe antibiotics that can overcome that resistance. If the simple antibiotics don't work, perhaps we have to escalate and use a more potent medicine. But due to the problem of poor irrigation within the middle ear, even this treatment can fail. The pus and fluid within the middle ear will continue to build up and cause pain, discomfort and disorientation.

Nature has a solution for this problem, in that there is a little triangular membrane in the eardrum that is a bit weaker than the rest, like a security door. It can perforate when the pressure builds inside the middle ear without causing functional damage, and then the pus can drain out and the tissue will eventually heal. It's the body's answer to how not to get an ear infection that can't be controlled.

Of course, when the child's mother sees the pus draining out of the ear, she will certainly panic. In fact, the baby will feel much better at that point, because the pressure will immediately vanish. This is where the ENT doctor is sometimes necessary—when we have a child with unbearably painful otitis who is not responding to antibiotics, we may decide to do the perforation surgically. Generally once the pus has been removed, you don't need any more antibiotics.

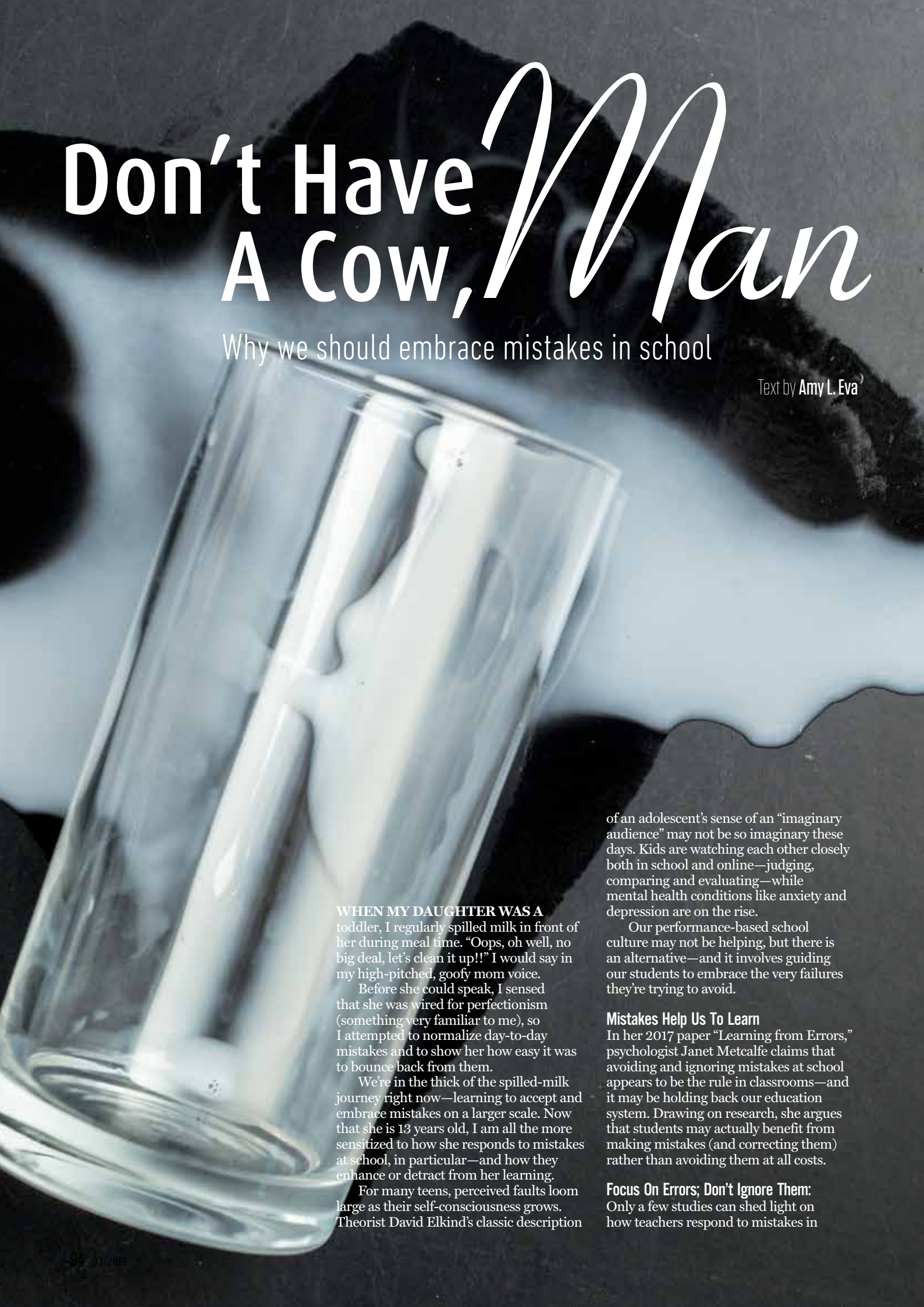
The procedure hurts, but it lasts a fraction of a second, and after that there is no further pain. It's painful because the exquisitely tender eardrum is particularly sensitive to pain, as a membrane that is supposed to feel delicate vibrations. After it's over, thankfully, the pain is gone. The difficult thing is to get the child to accept the surgeon to get to the ear!

Young children are at risk because

of their anatomy; secondly, their immune system is immature, which is why they cannot mount a good immunological response on their own. After the age of two or three years, infection by *Haemophilus influenzae* and *pneumococcus* is naturally less of a problem. Older children and adults have a natural way to cope against these bacteria because of the maturation of their immune system. Children below the age of two have no good defense. This is why it's important to vaccinate against HIB and *pneumococcus* early, and this will also protect your young child against *otitis media*. After a certain age, it's not as important anymore.

When the otitis is not treated, there are sometimes complications. The most serious of these is that the infection can spread to the brain and cause meningitis or a brain abscess. In the era of vaccines, antibiotics and good access to medical care, this should not happen. Thanks also to the perforation, it is a rare event. But sometimes it still does happen. Some particularly virulent bacteria can occasionally cause a very fast-spreading infection, where all the security systems, including the antibiotics, have no time to control the infection, and so it rapidly enters the brain. By that point, treatment becomes very complicated and an intensive care setting is necessary. The emergence of bacteria more resistant to antibiotics is another argument in favor of prevention via vaccines rather than a reliance on antibiotics.

The bottom line is, it's important to vaccinate. Vaccination will not prevent 100 percent of cases of otitis, but it will prevent some, and decrease the risk of cases that slip past its effects due to those resistant and virulent bacteria. As always, prevention is the most important way to fight diseases and their consequences. ■

A tilted glass of milk with a straw, set against a background of a cow's face.

Don't Have A Cow, *Man*

Why we should embrace mistakes in school

Text by **Amy L. Eva**

WHEN MY DAUGHTER WAS A

toddler, I regularly spilled milk in front of her during meal time. "Oops, oh well, no big deal, let's clean it up!!" I would say in my high-pitched, goofy mom voice.

Before she could speak, I sensed that she was wired for perfectionism (something very familiar to me), so I attempted to normalize day-to-day mistakes and to show her how easy it was to bounce back from them.

We're in the thick of the spilled-milk journey right now—learning to accept and embrace mistakes on a larger scale. Now that she is 13 years old, I am all the more sensitized to how she responds to mistakes at school, in particular—and how they enhance or detract from her learning.

For many teens, perceived faults loom large as their self-consciousness grows. Theorist David Elkind's classic description

of an adolescent's sense of an "imaginary audience" may not be so imaginary these days. Kids are watching each other closely both in school and online—judging, comparing and evaluating—while mental health conditions like anxiety and depression are on the rise.

Our performance-based school culture may not be helping, but there is an alternative—and it involves guiding our students to embrace the very failures they're trying to avoid.

Mistakes Help Us To Learn

In her 2017 paper "Learning from Errors," psychologist Janet Metcalfe claims that avoiding and ignoring mistakes at school appears to be the rule in classrooms—and it may be holding back our education system. Drawing on research, she argues that students may actually benefit from making mistakes (and correcting them) rather than avoiding them at all costs.

Focus On Errors; Don't Ignore Them:

Only a few studies can shed light on how teachers respond to mistakes in

the classroom. One famous study of mathematics classrooms in a variety of countries revealed a marked difference between the instructional strategies in Japan versus the United States.

Videotapes showed that American teachers focused on the correct procedures for solving problems—primarily ignoring errors and praising students for correct answers only. Japanese teachers, on the other hand, rarely praised their students and asked them to solve problems on their own. Then, they led discussions of common errors as students explored a variety of pathways to both correct and incorrect solutions.

Because Japanese students outperform US students in math, it's worth taking note of this contrast. Japanese teachers seem to be embracing the learning struggle by acknowledging mistakes rather than ignoring them.

Real learning isn't usually easy. Teaching methods that center on errors may make learning more challenging but can also be more motivating—potentially enhancing metacognition (the ability to think about your thinking) and self-efficacy (a belief in your capability to accomplish a task).

Fail First, Then Learn:

In another study, researchers in Singapore identified the value of “productive failure” in learning. They separated seventh grade mathematics students into a “direct instruction” group and a “productive failure” group.

In the direct instruction group, students learned to solve complex math problems with the teacher helping them along the way. In the productive failure group, however, students struggled and failed at solving problems until the teacher stepped in to help them analyze their failed attempts and find the correct solution.

As a result, the productive failure group outscored the direct instruction group on both simpler and more complex problems during a final test. Further, groups of students who demonstrated multiple approaches to solving problems were also more successful than those who did not.

In addition to understanding the different ways you might err, it seems helpful to actually make errors in the first place.

Be Confident And Be Wrong:

If productive failure appears to enhance learning, so does overconfidence. Multiple studies suggest that the more confident you are in the wrong answer, the more likely you will remember the right answer after you are corrected.

In one study, students answered questions on a quiz and rated their confidence level in each of their answers. Then they were given feedback on their incorrect answers. Researchers discovered that students were more likely to correct their initial errors during a final test if they had been highly confident in them.

Why did this happen? Researchers

speculate that students focus more attention on corrective feedback when they are both confident and wrong (and perhaps surprised by their error). They also claim that when a learner expresses confidence in wrong answers, the learner's second guess may often be the correct answer. When corrected, some students claimed that “they knew it all along.”

Bottom line: If we embrace and even study errors in our classrooms, students may actually learn more. However, there is a glaring caveat here: This only works if students have the emotional resilience to respond to mistakes adaptively and flexibly.

Helping Students Respond To Perceived Failure

When children worry that they are making too many mistakes or possibly failing at something, the emotional fallout can be difficult to manage. According to UC Berkeley professor Martin Covington, the fear of failure is directly linked to self-worth, or the belief that you are valuable as a person. Covington found that students will put themselves through unbelievable psychological machinations in order to avoid failure and maintain the sense that they are worthy.

In a study of fourth to sixth graders, researchers analyzed students' emotional responses when they made mistakes and identified three distinct styles. The “distance and displace” style (withdrawing and blaming someone else) and the “minimize and move” style (moving on and looking beyond the mistake) reflected patterns of avoidance. However, students who had the “regret and repair” style (featuring some guilt, normalizing of the situation, and self-care) engaged in less self-blame, participated more actively in problem solving with their peers, and earned greater respect from teachers.

Here lies the larger challenge: How can we help kids to accept their errors and failures, particularly in school, so that they might translate this skill to the real world?

Adjust The Learning Context:

“Let's Try This Another Way.” In the same study of fourth to sixth graders' mistakes, emotions, and coping strategies, researchers suggested that the context for learning may be important. Students may find it more emotionally challenging to work in a small group when they're having difficulty, and may be better served by working privately. So consider providing options to kids who may need a little space to flounder.

Encourage Persistence:

“Keep Trying. Don't Give Up!” A 2017 study demonstrates that when adults model persistence in working toward a goal, infants as young as 15 months tend to mimic that behavior. Persistence can be learned. As teachers, we have a lot of power to influence our students' efforts by sharing our own vulnerability and identifying our own self-conscious emotions, our stops

and starts during problem solving, and our commitment to keep going. Students who engaged in the “regret and repair” style of coping still felt guilt when they made mistakes, but they continued to engage and keep trying—while also being gentle with themselves.

Model Self-Compassion: “Be Kind To Yourself When You're Confused; It's Okay.”

If we model and normalize the ups and downs of learning with our students, we can also share the power of self-compassion. They can learn to think: “This is tough, and I don't get it. I'm not alone here; other people get confused just like me, and I'm going to cut myself some slack; it's okay to not know the answer right now. I can be kind to myself and know that I will find my way through this challenge.”

Build Positive Relationships With Students: “I See Your Strengths, And I Believe In You.”

This is particularly important for students who are failure-avoidant. Students are motivated to try their best when teachers they feel attached to value academic tasks. Studies have also shown the inverse to be true—that students are less motivated when faced with teachers who they feel don't care about them.

Focus On Resilience: “Even Though This Is Tough, You Will Find Your Way.”

When researchers reviewed over 38 studies of resilience in response to failure, errors, or mistakes, they found that more resilient individuals had higher self-esteem, lower levels of perfectionism, and a more positive way of explaining past events (e.g., I failed the test, but I can study harder next time). However, having high academic self-worth and practicing emotional suppression in the face of mistakes were not linked to resilience.

If teachers can help their students focus on skills and strategies that enhance resilience, students will learn to cope better, recover more quickly, or at least start heading in that direction.

Maybe we shouldn't be surprised that American teachers and students tend to avoid talking about mistakes at school. However, there are good reasons to rethink our approach to mistakes so that we can help our students to ultimately benefit—both academically and emotionally.

It's okay to “mess up” and spill the milk. There is even beauty in vulnerability. It gives us space to find our strength. ■

Amy L. Eva, Ph.D., is an education content specialist with over 23 years in classrooms, she is a teacher at heart. She is fascinated by neuroscience, the psychology of learning, and adolescent development and has spent the last 12 years as a teacher educator. As a researcher, she has published in the areas of teacher education, metacognition, adolescent mental health, social-emotional learning, and mindfulness-based interventions with marginalized

>> The List Education

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18A Vo Trung Toan, An Phu Ward, D2, HCMC.
(028) 2253-4728
www.steps.edu.vn
Steps2017vn@gmail.com



The International School Ho Chi Minh City - American Academy

ISHCMC - American Academy is a U.S. curriculum secondary school, preparing students aged 11 to 18 years old for success at universities worldwide. Early university credits, through SUPA and AP courses, a 1:1 University Counseling Program, and an extensive EAL program sets our graduates on the road to success with 100% acceptance rate and U.S. \$1 million scholarship fund to overseas universities.



16 Vo Trung Toan, D2
+84 (28) 3898 9100
admissions@aavn.edu.vn
www.aavn.edu.vn



The International School Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC)

ISHCMC is a leading school in HCMC with a rich history, yet is always innovating. Students from over 50 nationalities are taught in modern learning environments by trained IB educators specializing in inquiry-led teaching. This, paired with international-standard safeguarding policies ensures that all children are safe and supported to reach their potential. ISHCMC students develop a life-long passion for asking questions and searching beyond what is asked in the classroom ultimately becoming true 21st century citizens equipped for the future. The 2017/18 academic school year will see the new Secondary Campus open and the continued refurbishment in the Primary Campus.

28 Vo Truong Toan, D2
+84 (28) 3898 9100
admissions@ishcmc.edu.vn
www.ishcmc.com



The American School

The American School (TAS) is an international school that has been accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), representing 21 nationalities. TAS provides an American-based curriculum with rigorous performance standards and a variety of academic offerings including Advanced Placement courses, university credit courses through our partnership with Missouri State University, and an Intensive ESL Program for English Language Learners. In 2018, The American School will open its new, sprawling mega-campus in District 2's An Phu Neighborhood. This purpose-built facility will house up to 1200 students from pre-nursery through grade 12. This is an exciting time in the growth of the school!

177A, 172-180 Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien, D2
028 3519 2223 / 0903 952 223
admissions@tas.edu.vn
www.tas.edu.vn



WONDERKIDS MONTESSORI SCHOOL (WMS)

School ages: 18 months to 9 years old. WMS is a standard international Montessori school offering nursery, kindergarten and lower elementary program by North America Montessori Curriculum covered with 100% English environment (for children from 18 months to 9 years old). Where the best integration of this philosophy and practices happen, we are proudly an active member of American Montessori Society. "Free the child's potential and you will transform him into the world." Maria Montessori

Campus 1:
3A Tong Huu Dinh, Thao Dien, D2, HCMC
0938 909 268 / 028 22534999

montessori-office@wonderkids.edu.vn
www.wonderkidsmontessori.edu.vn

Campus 2:
4-6 Road No.20, My Gia 1, Tan Phu, D7, HCMC
0977299288 / 028 54141416
info@wms.edu.vn
www.wms.edu.vn



Also...

Aurora International Preschool of The Arts



Aurora International Preschool of The Arts (Aurora), a school inspired by Reggio Emilia, fully embraces "childhood" as a magical time of life for our citizens from 18 months to 6 years olds.

13 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2
www.aurorareggio.com

Australian International School (AIS)

The Australian International School is an IB World School with three world class campuses in District 2, HCMC, offering an international education from kindergarten to senior school with the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP), Cambridge Secondary Programme (including IGCSE) and IB Diploma Programme (DP).

Xi Campus (Kindergarten)
www.aivietnam.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





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