

The background of the cover is a close-up photograph of a Black man's face. He has a shaved head and is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. His hands are clasped in a prayer position (Anjali Mudra) in front of his mouth. He is wearing a light blue button-down shirt. The background behind him is a pattern of blue and green circles.

Ơ!

VIETNAM

JUNE 2015

WAY OF THE SAMURAI

Live Life Like a Warrior
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Groovy Delicious Burgers
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**A Matter of
FAITH**

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2015

The Year 13 Graduation Ceremony took place on Saturday 30th May 2015 at the Rex Hotel.
Celebrating with the students were over 300 teachers, family members and friends.



Back row L-R Ruby LE; Bo HO; Santiago MORGAN; Seung Ho OH; Quang Minh NGUYEN; Keegan CHUA; San ROS; James LAU; Tommy VO; Jason CHOI; Minh Phong NGUYEN; Phu PHAM; Huy DO; Steven LEE

Fourth row L-R Sally TRUONG; Jane TRAN; Brenda CHAN; Kate NGUYEN; Kelly VO; Julia KIM; Hannah AN; Yuri JEONG; Emma NGO; Hannah SCHMITT; Mizuka YASUDA; Sonali DANE; Nam TRAN; Shayla RANCE; Hoang Anh NGUYEN; Rita VU; Mary CHUNG

Third row L-R Willy CHOI; Daniel LEE; Khanh LIEN DOAN; Tue VU; Arnold JUNG; Duc NGUYEN; William NGUYEN; Jai Kyun NOH; Cameron WILLIAMS; Hoang NGUYEN; James CHOI; Egor IMMOREEV; Yoo Hyun CHANG; Michael TRAN

Second row L-R Evan PLANCHON; Ambre SIMARD; Natalie NG; Alexandra IVANOVA; Jacopo ANCHISI; Valentin GERSCHBACHER; Blake MIDDLETON; Craig WILSON; Nicolas NGUYEN; Michelle KWOK; Roos KRUIJMER; Jacqueline LAM; Isaac YOUM; Emily ROSALES

Front row L-R Suri DANG; Khanh Linh LUONG; Vy Trinh TRAN; Minh Hong NGUYEN; Trang LE; Betty CHANG; Gauri PRITHVIRAJ; Hanh NGUYEN; Quynh Anh PHAM; Cheryl LOW; Rielly PUCHALSKI; Kristina FRANCE; Trang NGUYEN; Lan NGUYEN; Jia Xin HOW



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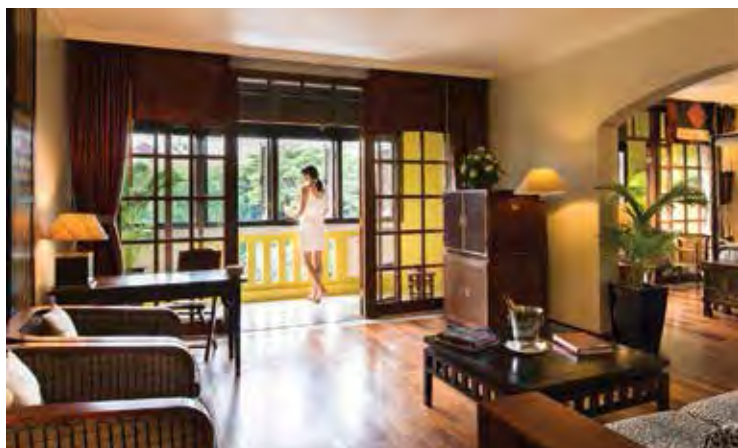
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Datebook

What's on this month...



JUN
3-6

JUNE 3-12

What: An Evening With Tennessee Williams - Dinner Theatre

Where: Cargo Bar (7 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4); 6:30pm; VND1.5 million for the dinner package, VND400,000 for advanced ticket for the performance only

About: Dragonfly Theatre and Saigon Sound System present an evening of authentic Cajun cuisine and provocative theatre. Five plays interspersed with a three course meal plus two free drinks will provide an evening of entertainment rarely found in Saigon. Tickets for the shows only (no food) are available at the door subject to availability.

Contact: Email dragonflyvietnam@gmail.com for more info or book tickets at www.ticketbox.vn

What: AmCham's World Blood Donor Day

Where: Various Locations

About: In Vietnam, since the government's approval of the national program for encouraging voluntary blood donation in 2000, blood donation has been steadily increasing. However, the current blood donation level only meets 58 percent of demand. Therefore, AmCham is asking volunteers to join this meaningful program. The AmCham CSR Group is working with the Hospital of Hematology and Blood Transfusion and Ho Chi Minh City Humanitarian Blood Donation Center of Red Cross to organize an AmCham World Blood Donor Day at locations provided. World Blood Donor Day, celebrated on June 14 every year, serves to raise awareness of the need for safe blood and blood products and to thank blood donors for their life-saving gift. WHO's goal is for all countries to obtain all their blood supplies from donors by 2020.

Contact: For more info on registration and locations, email amy.nguyen@amchamvietnam.com

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JUN 5 -
JUL 4



What: Carne Vale Exhibition

Where: Galerie Quynh (Level 2, 151/3 Dong Khoi, D1); 10am - 7pm, Tuesday to Sunday and by appointment

About: An exhibition of new work by Nadège David and Sandrine Llouquet. The two-person show comprises drawing, sculpture and installation that reveal a poetic dimension to our human condition, through disconcerting yet strangely familiar imagery. Carne Vale is the Latin translation for "farewell to meat." In the exhibition, the adieu is to the flesh, to our human physicality and materiality. The artists also make reference to "carne vale" as "carnival," the costume festival of religious origins (where masks are obligatory) occurring before the start of Lent, during which eating meat is prohibited. Providing a visual diary of the tensions between human and nature, and of esoteric and imagined rituals, the exhibition digs into the very core of our existence.

Although David's and Llouquet's processes are essentially opposite – from visualization to intellectualization and from research and conceptualization to visualization respectively – the two artists both engage with notions of transformation, transmutation, and transcendence of our physical being, spawning a skillfully fabricated parallel dimension to our human existence.

Contact: Visit www.galeriequynh.com for more info

JUNE 6

What: Saigon Summer Ball

Where: InterContinental Asiana Saigon; 7pm – 11:30pm; VND3,800,000

About: An evening of elegance, great food, wines, entertainment, music and dance to support the work of Saigon Children's Charity. Each year Saigon Children's Charity gives over 2,500 children from disadvantaged backgrounds the chance to escape from poverty through scholarships to go to school, vocational training, life skills development and by building modern classrooms.

Contact: Email saigonsummerball@saigonchildren.com for tickets



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Terry Storer, Deputy Executive Principal

CLASS OF 2015



University destinations of AIS graduates:

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of Sheffield, Sheffield; University of Warwick, Coventry; University of York, Heslington; Bellerbys College, Brighton; University of Goldsmiths, London; De Montfort University, Leicester; University of Glasgow, Scotland; University of Gloucestershire, Cheltenham

Australia

Australian National University; Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School, Leura; Curtin University, Perth; University of Melbourne, Victoria; Monash University, Melbourne, Victoria; University of Sydney, New South Wales; University of New South Wales, New South Wales; Deakin University, Geelong; Charles Sturt University, Bathurst; University of Technology, Sydney; Griffith University, Queensland; Eynesbury College, Adelaide

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Hong Kong

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Singapore

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New Zealand

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Korea

Han Yang University, Seoul; Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul; Korea University in South Korea, Seoul

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Japan

Abk College, Tokyo; Waseda University, Tokyo

Germany

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Hungary

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Vietnam

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JUN
12



LES SAIGONNAIS

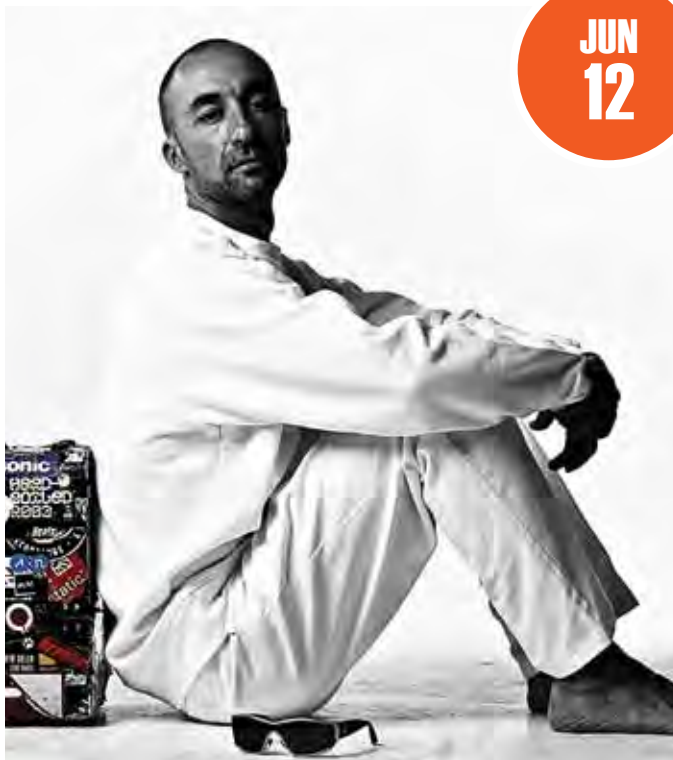
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BOUTIQUE

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AFTERNOON TEA



What: Eduardo de la Calle

Where: The Observatory (5 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4); Screening starts at 10pm; Free before midnight, VND150,000 after

About: With over 20 years' experience as a DJ and producer, Eduardo knows how to move a party. He also knows a lot about electronic music, and has made a documentary on it called *BEATZ*. The night will begin with a screening of the movie, followed by a brief discussion before an all-night DJ set by the man himself.

Contact: Visit www.theobservatory-hcmc.com for more info

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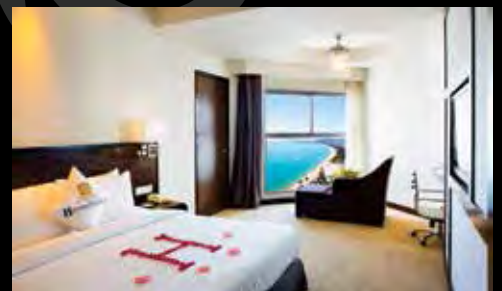
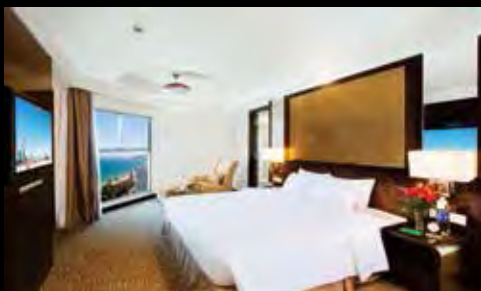
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JUN
12-14



What: Auditions for The Hamlet Project

Where: DanCenter (53 Nguyen Dang Giai, Thao Dien, D2)

About: Auditions for actors and dancers for a movement-based theatrical adaption of Hamlet created by a production team of NYC-based artists. The Hamlet Project is a multidisciplinary art project that aims to strengthen social and cultural ties among the millennial generation in the US and Vietnam. The project is designed to shed new light on Vietnamese art forms and performance practices that have previously been undiscovered and unrepresented in the Western art community, and to utilize the universal language of the arts as a tool to find a common ground for communication and growth. The production of Hamlet will remove the use of all spoken language in order to create an accessible and visceral storytelling experience. The narrative will unfold through the use of movement-based performance pieces, visual installations, live dance, and a continuous musical soundscape. A documentary will chronicle the process and will be screened at international arts organizations in NYC and in upstate NY, and will be submitted to film festivals across the US.

Contact: For more info, email vietnamproject2015@gmail.com

JUNE 20

What: Obey Radio Saigon

Where: The Observatory (5 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4); 10pm; VND150,000 or VND100,000 for students

About: Globally-renowned Obey Radio is bringing their outfit to Saigon for the first time, in collaboration with ILL Beats Saigon. Featuring LA-based beatmaker Free the Robots alongside curator Roam Elsewhere and Vietnam based bass masters JIN & JASE. Known for his ever-evolving, imaginative sound breaks and sonically rich compositions, Free the Robots is Chris Alfaro, a beatmaker and DJ responsible for introducing the LA beat scene to the global audience. His sets are usually composed of original recordings and energetic live performances, and has toured with electronic/hip hop greats Afrika Bambaataa, Flying Lotus, and DJ Shadow to name a few.

Contact: Visit www.theobservatory-hcmc.com for more info

JUNE 24

What: AmCham Palooza Party

Where: InterContinental Asiana Saigon; 6pm - 8:30pm; Free members, VND 150,000/non-members

About: The monthly event is a platform to develop new friendships, networking opportunities and information exchange. People from all age groups are welcome to attend. Come for a night of casual networking, meet other professionals, and don't forget to bring your business cards. The AmCham Palooza is a popular group that holds networking events and happy hours regularly to increase communication amongst membership and expats. Admission includes free canapés and special prices for drinks.

Contact: Visit www.amchamvietnam.com for more info

JUNE 26

What: The Box

Where: Around HCMC; VND850,000 per person including bicycle

About: A secret box is hidden somewhere in the city and at approximately 9pm participants will be given clues to find it before the box, and the valuable content inside, disappears at midnight.

Contact: Email info@ubi-quest.com for more info



JUN
13

What: Non

Where: IDECAF (28 Le Thanh Ton, D1); 8pm; VND200,000 or VND150,000 for students

About: *Nôn* is a contemporary art project that combines contemporary dance with traditional Vietnamese music. Artists Vu Ngoc Khai and Ngo Hong Quang's inspiration comes from Vietnamese culture, such as the conical hat, soil, water, *banh chung*, *banh giay* and traditional musical instruments. The combination of contemporary dance and folk music creates not only a visual display of Vietnamese culture but illustrates Vietnamese musicality. Khai is a dancer and choreographer who has studied and worked in Vietnam and Europe. In 2006, he gained a scholarship from the Consulate of Holland to study at the Rotterdam Dance Academy. Over the years, Quang and his *dan nhi* have attracted audiences not only in Vietnam but also in Thailand, Korea and Europe. He recently studied contemporary composition in Den Haag Royal Conservatory of music in the Netherlands in order to broaden his musical creations.

Contact: Visit Facebook: [institutfrancais.hochiminh](https://www.facebook.com/institutfrancais.hochiminh) for more info

JUN
18



What: Saigon Artbook Edition 5

Where: Station 3A (3A Ton Tuc Thang, D1); 7pm - 11pm

About: Published quarterly to

introduce three Saigon-based artists - Turine Tran, Letnitskaya Vitaliya and Do Hai Anh - with different styles. Each publication goes with an exhibition launch party where people can meet the artists and view their work. The purpose of the project is to promote contemporary Vietnamese art, support artists based in Saigon, and promote creativity among the art community.

Contact: Email info@saigonartbook.com for more info

JUNE 27

What: Mugic Soundsystem

Where: The Observatory (5 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4); Free before midnight, VND150,000 after

About: Fed up with what was happening on the music scene in Singapore, Mislav, Kentaro, Davoman, Ulysses and Dang started up Mugic Soundsystem. Expect to hear every kind of music at their nights - from psychedelic rock, disco, techno and everything in between - because the Mugic nights are all about fusion music not genre, and about digging out and sharing classics and future classics. Their tagline is "Come as strangers, leave as friends," a pretty sweet deal.

Contact: Visit www.theobservatory-hcmc.com for more info

A USD3 million Seed

FPT, Vietnam's biggest tech corporation, launches FPT Ventures



Anh Minh-Do is the editor at TechInAsia.com for Vietnam, focusing on technology startups, trends and companies. Minh is on the board of Starthub.vn - a database and forum for startups dedicated to the growth of Vietnam's business ecosystem.

AT THE TOP of Vietnam's tech startup industry is FPT. In its annual report last year, FPT announced that it hit USD1.65 billion in revenue in 2013. That's considerably more than any other tech company in Vietnam, partly because FPT does everything from software outsourcing and infrastructure to telecommunications and education. It's also 27 years old, which means this megalithic giant has considerable history and influence on Vietnam's technology direction.

Therefore last month's announcement that FPT would be starting its own venture capital arm - FPT Ventures - is a huge step for the corporate giant and has potential ripple effect for Vietnam's startup community. The new fund would be over USD3 million per year of investment dollars earmarked for seed and series A investments in startups. Investments would target companies with valuations below USD1 million and fund at a minimum of USD50,000 - that's potentially 60 seed-stage startups per year. FPT is working with Silicon Valley investors for the initiative but has yet to specify who. It would act as an investor and accelerator by providing cash, resources, as well as their technical and management expertise, however FPT needs the startups to commit at least five years to building a bigger company. But FPT guarantees that it will finalize every investment decision within four months of the submission date.

FPT Ventures has already made select investments internally, testing investment with its own people who wanted to leverage FPT resources to build new startups. These include:

- Sendo.vn - An ecommerce marketplace
- Ants.vn - A data platform for advertisers
- FPT Play - An online and mobile video streaming service
- Nhacso.net - A premium music portal
- Viec Nha - A mobile platform to call plumbers and maids to your house (Uber-style)
- Gostudybooking.com - A platform for people who want to study abroad
- FShare - A Dropbox-like platform that leverages FPT's server infrastructure.

The startups are representative of the breadth of FPT's business licenses and technical expertise. They operate as separate, independent entities from FPT's main corporate branches, which means they have separate profit and loss statements and management structures. The main thing is they use FPT's existing architecture to help scale.

Projects like Nhacso, Sendo.vn, and FPT Play have been in operation for over a year now, which has given FPT Ventures insight into acceleration and incubation. With the FPT Ventures initiative, the team will now be looking outward into the ecosystem for potential investments. So, if there are any Vietnamese startups looking for investment, you might want to start knocking on FPT's door.

Beyond these broad categories, FPT is also looking very seriously at digital solutions across a swath of industries including healthcare, transportation, mobile, SME, voice recognition, and more. The leadership at FPT, specifically chairman and founder Truong Gia Binh, has long been harping on themes related to software and internet of things, and that FPT needs to be at the forefront of these trends as they shift the landscape in Vietnam.

CTO of FPT Group, Nguyen Lam Phuong, one of the key people leading the FPT Ventures initiative, is keen on pushing FPT out of its corporate malaise. In last month's press conference he mentioned that FPT should look to other corporates like Barclays for inspiration on how to transition from corporate to startup investor. ■



Troi Oi

The country in numbers

122 YEAR-OLD

Vietnamese has become the world's oldest woman, which means she will be eligible for a USD1 million sum offered by a Moldovan multi-millionaire if she remains alive next year. The Vietnam Book of Records said that the World Record Association has recognized Nguyen Thi Tru, a resident in Ho Chi Minh City, as the world's oldest living woman. Dmitry Kaminskiy, who himself wants to live forever, has promised to give USD1 million to the first person in the world to reach the age of 123, *Inquisitr* reported.



~2,000

children die in traffic accidents in Vietnam every year, and one of the leading causes of fatalities is not wearing helmets while traveling on motorbikes, a transport official has warned. Speaking at the Third United Nations Global Road Safety Week last month, Manu Eraly, the World Health Organization's representative in Vietnam, said traffic accidents are the leading cause of mortality for children aged 10-19 in Vietnam. According to the website of the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration, around 186,300 children under the age of 18 die from road traffic crashes annually, and rates of road traffic deaths are three times higher in developing countries than in developed countries.



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99TH

is where Vietnam is on a list that measured internet speed across 136 countries. With an average connection speed of 2.7 Mbps, Vietnam stood in 99th place in global standings, and 11th in Asia-Pacific, according to *The Akamai State of the Internet Report*, a global leader in content delivery network services. The average peak connection speed in Vietnam in the October-December period last year was 17.3 Mbps. Vietnam's internet speed in the last quarter of 2014 increased 5.6 percent from three preceding months, and 48 percent compared to Q4/2013, according to the report obtained by *Tuoi Tre News*. South Korea had the fastest average connection speed, 22.2 Mbps, followed by Hong Kong and Japan, with 16.8 and 15.2 Mbps, respectively. Hong Kong, meanwhile, had the highest average peak connection speed, 87.7 Mbps against 84 Mbps for Singapore and 75.4 Mbps for South Korea.



2

600-year-old gold apple trees planted near the Ho Dynasty Citadel in Thanh Hoa have been awarded national heritage status in Vietnam. The Ho Dynasty Citadel was recognized by UNESCO as a world cultural heritage site in 2011. According to UNESCO, the Citadel of the Ho Dynasty built in 1397 and composed of the Inner Citadel, the La Thanh Outer Wall, and the Nam Giao Altar covers 155.5 hectares, surrounded by a buffer zone of 5078.5 hectares. It is located in accordance with geomantic principles in a landscape of great scenic beauty between the Ma and Buoi Rivers in Vinh Loc District, Thanh Hoa Province.



KPH

is the maximum speed vehicles, except trucks, are allowed to use when driving along Nguyen Hue Pedestrian Street, while all vehicles will likely be banned from using the inner part of the Pedestrian Street. The Department of Transport made the proposal in its recent report to the People's Committee about the operations of the walking street since it was put into use on April 28. Truck operators wanting to use these two lanes must apply for a permit and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The department suggested that the city's volunteer youth force be assigned to set up parking lots for motorbikes on nearby streets such as Le Thanh Ton, Ton Duc Thang, Pasteur and Ham Nghi. The Nguyen Hue Pedestrian Street spans 670 meters from the Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee edifice to Bach Dang Wharf and measures 64 meters in width.

145-YEAR-OLD

damaged culvert underneath Dong Khoi to be changed for safety reasons. The proposal was made by the city's Anti-Flooding Program Operation Center. The tunnel is about 1 kilometer long and was built in 1870 by the French. The system is expected to be replaced with a circular sewer line with diameters ranging from 400 to 1,500 mm. Heavy trucks have been banned from traveling on the street from 6am to midnight, while lighter trucks are allowed to use the street outside the rush hour period.

USD19.9 MILLION

advanced oncology center opened in Ho Chi Minh City last month. The 250-bed Cho Ray Oncology Center, equipped with advanced medical equipment, was inaugurated at the Cho Ray Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City and offers more treatment opportunities for patients. The center has 12 above-ground floors, an entresol and two basements. Dr. Nguyen Truong Son, Director of the Cho Ray Hospital, said that the center is equipped with a linear accelerator for cancer radiotherapy. The center will offer examinations, diagnosis, early detection and treatment of cancers and tumors, as well as necessary consultations for patients. Notably, the center has a surgical pathology department with a telediagnosis system connected with a hospital in Japan. The center can examine and treat 500-600 patients every day on average.



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The Bulletin

Promotions and news in HCMC and beyond...

FATHER'S DAY AT INTERCONTINENTAL ASIANA SAIGON

Market 39 offers endless champagne, salmon, prime beef, lobster and a variety of sumptuous desserts this Father's Day. All fathers will receive an exclusive pen engraved with their name. Father's Day brunch is priced at VND1,698,000++ per adult and VND800,000++ per child including free flow of Veuve Clicquot champagne, cocktails, house wine, beer, soft drinks, coffee and tea. Father's Day dinner is priced at VND1,190,000++ per adult and VND500,000++ per child including free flow of selected house wines, Tiger draught beer, soft drinks and signature cocktails. Get the family together for an authentic Italian meal at Basilico to celebrate Father's Day. A three-course lunch set is priced at VND398,000++ per person while a three-course dinner set is priced at VND498,000++ per person.



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EIS SUMMER SCHOOL 2015

The European International School Ho Chi Minh City is pleased to announce that registration is now open for Summer School 2015. The summer program will run from June 15th – July 3rd and is available to children from 2 to 17. If you would like to register your child to the EIS Summer School or for more info, email info@eishcmc.com or call 7300 0257.



ANANTARA MUI NE PROMOTION

The resort (www.mui-ne.anantara.com) has various accommodations to suit your style. In a two-bedroom suite you can play iPod tunes while soaking in a Jacuzzi, or relax on the balcony overlooking the lagoon and pool. Alternatively, hide away in a spacious private villa, enjoying your own personal pool and outdoor dining pavilion. Rates start from VND4,437,320 for two nights' accommodation or more in a pool villa or suite. Daily buffet breakfast for two persons staying in a one-bedroom pool villa and for four persons staying in a two-bedroom suite or two-bedroom pool villa.



LE MERIDIEN SAIGON OPENS

Le Méridien Saigon (3C Ton Duc Thanh, D1; www.lemeridien.com/saigon) offers both panoramic river vistas as well as views of the bustling cityscape. The hotel features 350 contemporary guest rooms and suites starting from 38 square meters. Each room has a separate sitting and working area, French soaking bathtub and rainforest shower. Culinary experiences include the brand's specialty restaurant Bamboo Chic, serving Japanese-Chinese cuisine fused with European touches; Latest Recipe, the hotel's signature dining venue which offers interactive buffets and Le Méridien signature breakfast; and Latitude 10 transforming from day to night to offer fine coffee, wines from around the world, and imaginative cocktail and sake creations. In addition, Explore Bistro, part of the Explore Spa & Health Club, offers healthy and detoxifying food and beverage selections for dining-in or to grab-and-go, while Art Caicao presents signature éclairs, artisan chocolate and sweet bites. Other hotel facilities include over 1,000 square meters of meeting and pre-function spaces, including a versatile 400 square meter ballroom and Le Méridien Fitness and Explore Spa, with an indoor pool offering breathtaking views at its sundeck. To celebrate the hotel's opening, Le Méridien Saigon is offering room rates starting from VND3,870,000++ including free internet, per room per night. Starwood Preferred Guests will also earn triple Starpoints. Offer is valid until December 31, 2015.



PREMIER SUNDAY BARBECUE

When you're in Danang, head to Premier Village Danang Resort (www.premier-village-danang.com) for Sunday barbecue by the beach. While indulging on your favorites grilled to order, enjoy the spectacular view of the sea and the Nautica Beach Club's 30-meter outdoor pool - then round off the night with a live music performance. Priced at VND350,000++ for adults, VND175,000++ for children between 6 and 11, and those under 6 are free. BBQ served from 11:30am - 2pm & 3pm - 5pm every Sunday.



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HELLO SUNNY

This summer The Cliff Resort & Residences (www.thecriffresort.com.vn), located in Muine, will be launching their Hello Sunny program - a summer beach party theme for the whole family. Hello Sunny offers a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities of all levels including sand castle building, cupcake decorating, cooking class, creative beach craft, music show, water sports, and more. The Cliff's summer food specialties such as *lau* Thai hotpot, skate fish with tamarind sauce, lemongrass mojito, watermelon margarita, aloe vera honey tea are available to recharge your energy after a day of activities. The Hello Sunny package is offered at VND3,890,000 for a two-night stay at Azul Sea View for parents and two children under 12 years old, valid until August 31, 2015. Each package comes with a swimming Teddy bear and an English worksheet that has more than 20 ocean-related words to enrich your kid's vocabulary.

INTERCONTINENTAL NHA TRANG PROMOTIONS

The InterContinental Nha Trang (www.intercontinental.com/nhatrang) is offering a decadent culinary evening at Cookbook Café to celebrate fathers on June 21st. Diners will enjoy an Asian set dinner in style, and lucky dads will receive a complimentary glass of sparkling wine and a mug. The evening tops off with a live music performance. The six-course set dinner is priced at VND499,000++ per person.

This month The Lobby Bar offers an exclusive promotion of Penfolds' wines at all dining outlets. Enjoy a glass of Penfolds wine and get a complimentary second glass. A special live singer and band will perform from 8pm until 10pm, every Tuesday and Wednesday at Lobby Bar as part of the program's entertainment. Dine indoors or al fresco against the beautiful backdrop of Nha Trang beach at Cookbook Café and enjoy our rotating seasonal buffet specials. Our delicious buffet offers a brand new seafood menu with an extensive East meets West menu such as Whole Baked Groupers, Roasted Australian Lamb, Beef Wellington Fillet, a crustacean station and more. Priced at VND650,000++ per person with free flow of Tiger Draught Beer and live music. Every Saturday night in June.



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Way of the Samurai

Discover one of the fountainheads of Japanese martial tradition

TEXT BY **NICHOLAS D. HEATH** IMAGES BY **ANDY LANG**

IT'S A HUMID evening at Hoa Lu Sports Centre in District 1. In a second story studio, students gather for tonight's class in Katori Shinto-ryu - an ancient Japanese martial art. Dutch-born anthropologist and Katori Shinto-ryu teacher Malte Stokhof has just delivered three lethal cuts to one of his students. Well, lethal if he'd been using a real sword. It all appears easy when you are watching someone as skilled as this. Observing Malte and his students duel is amazing, the stances and free-flowing movements are beautiful yet potentially dangerous - all done in rapid succession within a blink of an eye.

"If you give someone a sword and there are 20 people attacking there's going to be at least 10 on the floor, at least!" exclaims Malte. "When somebody does these highly-skilled techniques with you, especially sensei (Malte's teacher), you are cut and sliced

everywhere. You feel like you are a piece of barbecued pork! And it's not them, it's the art."

Malte strides around the classroom closely observing his students, giving praise when stances are performed correctly and carefully sculpting those into the correct positions when their bodies or wooden blades are askew. The class attendance is surprisingly diverse. "We've been able to attract such an eclectic group of people. We've got professionals, people that are 60 years old, young expats, kids, more girls than a lot of other martial arts," Malte points to a student. "He's a concert pianist. The guys that we get now are extremely dedicated. To persevere is also a talent."

Malte's journey from first discovering Katori Shinto-ryu as a youngster to becoming a teacher in Vietnam is a fascinating story.

Traditionally, Katori Shinto-ryu had strict rules on foreigners being able to learn, let alone teach the art, especially abroad. The fact that Malte's sensei in Japan gave him the opportunity to become a teacher speaks volumes. Even Malte himself was surprised. "I never wanted to teach. My luck was that I landed a job in Southeast Asia. I was training by myself and I found I was not improving, and this was after four or five years. I went to Japan every year and sensei said, 'You're not getting any worse, but you're not getting any better. What's going on with you?' I explained that I had no one to teach or train with. Then suddenly he gave me a leadership license." With the unexpected blessing of his sensei, Malte returned to Ho Chi Minh City to open up his first dojo (training space), Katori Shinto-ryu Vietnam (www.katorivietnam.org) in 2012.



“After a few months they are walking around like a proud samurai. It also teaches us concentration, patience, stamina and perseverance.”

Blood Oath

Established in the 14th century by Iizasa Choisai Ienao, Katori Shinto-ryu is different from younger martial arts like Kendo or Karate because instead of focusing on a single fighting-style, weapon or philosophy, Katori Shinto-ryu involves multiple weapons and unarmed combat. Students become versed in swordplay, the staff, the single-bladed glaive, the spear, spike throwing and jujutsu. Further advanced practitioners also learn subjects like battle tactics, intelligence gathering, astrology and even mysticism and sorcery.

“It’s a very wide system of knowledge,” says Malte. Having this knowledge base is important, especially given the potential lethality of the art. Along with the challenging physicality of the teachings, Katori Shinto-ryu also teaches respect and intelligence. “It also works on good body mechanics. If you look at my guys, most of them aren’t overly built, but you become extremely strong in the core. I have people coming in from office jobs.” He hunches over feebly to demonstrate. “After a few months they are walking around like a proud samurai. It also teaches us concentration, patience, stamina and perseverance.”

“It’s officially an intangible cultural asset of Japan, so it’s quite a responsibility,” he adds. “That’s why I’m really conservative in the way I teach. It is weird, but I think it’s the ultimate cultural exchange. I’m really grateful to my sensei. There were five or six thousand of these schools around in the 1400s and so many have passed or withered away. The fact that I am able to learn and to teach in this country now is unbelievable. We even worked with the Department of Sports and Tourism in Vietnam. That is wonderful because without that support I would never have been able to open up this dojo.”

I ask Malte if his students still take *keppan*, the blood oath proving one’s dedication. He answers deadpan: “They have to. All of them. Except those that don’t want to because of their religion or those who are not yet serious about the art. As soon as they go to Japan though, they have to do the blood oath. That’s it.” ■





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My life as...

a foot masseur

TEXT BY JAMES PHAM

MY NAME IS Chung and I'm 27. I've been giving foot massages for a few years now. I was born in Binh Duong, about 40km north of the city. My father died when I was seven, so it's just my mom and my three brothers and sisters.

You know those people who sell gasoline by the side of the road? Well, that was what my mom did to earn enough to raise us. I helped her with that and when I finished fifth grade, I quit school for good to work. I did odd jobs here and there, seasonal work. I worked in a shoe factory. I had a job once where we put up decorations at Christmas and Tet. When I was about 20, my uncle asked me what I wanted to do. He was a



barber and said I could apprentice with him. Or he would pay for me to study massage. When he told me it would take three to four years to start making money as a barber, but that I could start making money after just a few months as a masseur, that was it. So he paid for me to take a four month course at the Women's Cultural Center. The class had both girls and boys in it. The course was hard. Not everyone could do it. Sometimes at the end of the day, the new students couldn't even hold chopsticks. Some of the other students were already doing massage, but just wanted the certificate. With the certificate, it's easier to get a job. And when the police come to check, they'll fine places

that hire uncertified workers. Nowadays, it's mostly the places that do 'sexy' massage that take in people with no certificate. I've seen them hire girls as young as 15! Here, though, everything's above board. There's about 10 guys that do foot massage and 40 girls that do body massage.

On an average day, I probably have around four customers. The most I've ever had was seven. My hands were dead after that. It's not about whether I like this job or not. I don't think anyone wants to be a foot masseur. I do it for the money. I can make about VND600,000 in tips a day. I'm saving up to buy a small house here in the city so I can get married and have kids. I know that

Westerners only tip 15-20 percent but that's not the custom in Vietnam. They understand that people like me don't earn a salary. We live solely on tips. So if a massage costs VND100,000, people usually tip VND100,000 or even VND 150,000. It might sound like a lot, but it really isn't. You can only do this until you're about 30. After that, you're too old. [Note: He uses the expression *hết đất*, which literally means "expired".] Customers want someone young and strong, not someone old. Most massage places will fire you when you're 30 or 35. Besides, there are occupational hazards. Look at my hands. [Shows his knuckles on both hands which are swollen and calloused.] Some places use a massage stick. But they're not allowed here. Customers want the human touch. But everyone who does massage will end up with joint pain sooner or later. My instructor said that we should retire at 30 or else we'll have heart problems.

Small Change

I know there's not a future in this. I just started doing massage again after two years working at a factory that makes medicine for animals. My job was to mix and cook the medicine. I made about VND6 million a month including hazard pay for working with chemicals, but it got too complicated. I couldn't remember all the names of the medicines. The boss said my brain was too slow from leaving school too early. He said that my brain was dead and I couldn't learn as fast as younger people who had gone to school. Sometimes I'd get careless or want to leave early, so I'd turn up the heat to cook the medicine but then the batch would go bad. In the end, I just left.

It's not all that bad here. I get to meet interesting people. There's this one guy who pays for everything with VND500,000 notes, even drinks! He says he doesn't like small change. I think he works for the government. Then there's this other guy who tips like VND1 million each time. We all like it when he comes in. Then there was a Japanese girl once. She couldn't speak Vietnamese and I couldn't speak English or Japanese, but during her massage she asked if I knew somewhere to eat. I was working in District 1 then, near Dong Khoi, so afterwards, we went near Lucky Mall for some German food. Every night after that we went out, sometimes to eat, sometimes to a club. I had to bring my friend along to translate. He's a receptionist at a hotel. He tried to get chummy with the Japanese girl's friends, but they weren't having it. In the end, she stayed for a month and when she left, she gave me her phone number and email. I think she really loved me. But I didn't know how to use email or how to call to Japan, so I just threw the paper away.

Now my sister does massage, too, in District 5. My other sister is a seamstress. My brother works here parking the motorbikes. He tried to do massage but his joints hurt too much. I rent a room here for VND1.5 million a month. It's convenient. I can just open my eyes in the morning and start doing massage. It's not such a bad life. ■

Hit the Brakes

Keep it legal on the roads



A member of the Paris Bar, **Hadrien Wolff** has been practicing law in Vietnam for more than seven years, currently as a partner of Audier & Partners based at its HCMC office. Having gained extensive legal experience in the Netherlands and Cambodia, **Marijn Sprokhereef** is an associate at the Hanoi office of the same firm. **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.

Dear Hadrien and Marijn,

I am Jonas from Denmark and I have been working in Ho Chi Minh City as a software developer since last year. Like a local, I love to ride my motorcycle - an old Minsk. The adrenaline that I get from moving through the crazy traffic is great, but I am a bit concerned about not having a Vietnamese driver's license. Every time I see those khaki-uniformed policemen my heart skips a beat, and what if I get into an accident? How can a foreigner, like me, obtain a Vietnamese driver's license?

WELCOME TO VIETNAM Jonas, the country of 40 million motorbikes. Your question is very relevant and we couldn't agree more with your plans to obtain a valid driver's license. We will give you a few options for you to consider.

The first option, which is most often practiced, is available to foreigners who reside, work or study in Vietnam for a period of three months or longer and who are already in possession of a valid, unexpired foreign driver's license. The Vietnamese Road Traffic Law and the implementing Circular of the Ministry of Transport call this option the "replacement" of a foreign driver's license, but don't worry you can keep your original one. However, keep in mind that your new Vietnamese license will only allow you to drive the vehicles that are mentioned in your foreign license.

In order to replace your driver's license as described above, you will need to submit an application file either directly to the Vietnamese Directorate for Roads or to the Department of Transport where you registered your residence. For the application, you will need to fill out a standard form and attach one color passport photo, a certified translation of your foreign license, and a photocopy of your passport and visa, your temporary residence card or any other official document proving your residency in Vietnam. Upon submitting the complete

application and files to the authorities, fingers crossed, it should take around five working days to get your Vietnamese driver's license.

This first option is fairly easy, but if you don't have a foreign driver's license and you still want to hit the road in Vietnam, you will need to put yourself through a test at a local driving center. Vietnamese law allows foreigners who reside, work or study in Vietnam to take the driving and written exams.

If you just want to continue riding your 125cc horse from Belarus, you will need to pass a theoretical computer-based exam (which you can study for at your local cafe or in a classroom) and a practical driving test.

To apply for lessons and the exam, you will need to fill out a standard form and attach four color passport photos, a photocopy of your passport with your visa and a health certificate issued by a competent medical facility. So far so good, but here comes the tricky part: how good is your Vietnamese? To the best of our knowledge, it is currently not possible to follow the lessons and take the exam in any other language than Vietnamese. Another good reason to pick up *tieng Viet*.

One of us (don't even ask) has shamefully failed the computer-based exam two times. It is not that easy, probably because the everyday driving experience or simply witnessing traffic here tends to

create growing confusion in one's mind on the applicable rules for road traffic in Vietnam...

Those are the two options that are currently available to you. Unfortunately, Vietnamese law does not yet accept an international driving permit as a valid document for a foreigner to drive a vehicle here. However, this situation may change in the near future, as the Vietnamese Ministry of Transport is currently working on a regulation to facilitate this. This would mean that foreigners holding an international driving permit issued in any country that has ratified the Vienna Convention on Road Traffic of 1968 (including Denmark) will no longer be required to replace their driver's license and can simply use their international driving permit in combination with their foreign license.

Sources within the government confirm that the new rules may enter into effect as early as August of this year, but you may want to take this prediction with a grain of salt and one of Phu Quoc pepper. In the meanwhile, best of luck and please stay safe while cruising the streets of Ho Chi Minh City.

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

Sweet Notes

Maintaining harmony in the home



As an interior and furniture designer for Austin Home Interiors (www.austinhominteriors.com), **McNeill Shiner** is always looking for new ways to mix styles and influences to create spaces that are uplifting, comfortable and very personal.



IMAGES BY CARRIER & COMPANY

IF YOU'VE EVER sung in a choir, you know that it only takes one off-key voice to throw the whole thing off. You may not be able to identify a source of the sour note, but your ears will certainly feel the resulting discomfort. On the other hand, the result of many parts clicking into place can be euphoric. Harmony in design is that sense of "rightness" that occurs when there's aesthetic agreement among visual elements. At their best, even the most visually dynamic spaces should produce a certain feeling of calm. You see contrast and interest, but not competition or discord. To put it another way, a visitor to your home should be able to walk through the rooms and feel certain that they embody the style and lifestyle of just one family.

A palette of sea, sand, and sunset colors combines with lots of natural texture for visual harmony in the above condo by Carrier and Company. The main living area plays vivid corals and yellows off of sandy beige tones, which makes for

striking contrast to the ocean view. You'll also notice the abundance of natural texture. Although it's everywhere in this space, no single material is repeated: rattan chairs, a live wood coffee table, geometric jute carpet, and cork on the lampshade simultaneously present unity and variety. In the den, on the other hand, we see neutral walls, but in a distressed natural wood. More texture appears in the bunching tables and daybed, but there's no repetition of the exact elements seen in the living room. Here we also see accents in blue, and peachy echoes of the living room's coral tones in the painting.

If you view the full project on Carrier and Company's website (Gulf Shore Naples Retreat), you'll notice that they've recycled the same elements in the condo's additional spaces. The master bedroom is done in an allover azure tone, while the additional bedrooms use bolder versions of the existing colors to distinguish the spaces from one another. This project also exemplifies another crucial aspect of

harmony. This is a beach home, and although everything is impeccably done, none of it looks too precious. Elegant carved wood furniture in a high sheen finish would be completely out of place here, a definite sour note in the composition. Likewise, the spaces in your own home should be harmonious in purpose and mood.

It can be a very fine distinction between contrast that is interesting and unique, or just plain wrong. As with understanding any other principle of aesthetics, the best way to educate your eye is by viewing a lot of good design. In this case, make a point to explore whole projects in the portfolios of designers you admire. Pay particular attention to shots that show you a glimpse of the next room, and you'll get an idea of how spaces connect to one another visually. This is particularly important in small or open-plan homes. You may not necessarily choose a consistent color palette for your own home; that's only one way to do it. It is important, however, that there be threads of commonality running through your space. ■

Body of Work

Art created on a human canvas

TEXT BY **NPD KHANH** IMAGES BY **NGOC TRAN**

“THE SKIN IS a canvas that lives, moves, breathes,” says body painter Mien Thao (Facebook: *MienThaoBodyPainting*). “It interacts with other forms of art such as photography and lighting. It changes depending on the emotional condition of the model. It’s warm to the touch and the texture of each canvas is unique to its owner. Some people have smooth skin all over. Some have birthmarks. Some have scars. Those scars have stories. There’s an amazing transformative power inherent to the act of

painting on the human body. My models may be ordinary office ladies or sport instructors, but once the painting is complete, they become fantastic creatures of my imagination. Compared to human skin, plain paper, no matter the quality, is a dead and empty canvas.”

Mien Thao, 36, is head of the visual art department at Japan Beauty Art Academy (JBart Academy) and teaches makeup, body painting and special effects makeup. She has been “playing” around with body painting for

six years. “I say ‘play’ because very rarely do I earn money from my work, maybe a couple of times out of a hundred. You can say it’s my hobby or obsession. I think obsession is the more appropriate word.”

The art of body painting has existed for centuries in India, Africa and the Pacific Islands, and has enjoyed popularity in America and Europe for the past few decades. In Vietnam however, it is still largely unknown with only a handful of active practitioners. Thao’s first encounter with body painting was through a series of art training courses for young instructors at JBart. “I was curious and I’ve always liked drawing things. I started doodling on myself in my spare time: little words on the back of my hands, flowers on my palms, vines along my legs. It was all very playful.” Soon her passion for body painting grew past the doodling phase and Thao started looking for a model willing to bare all under her brush.

“I was lucky in that I lived in an artist community. Had I looked outside that



community, well, my passion for the medium might not have taken off at all,” says Thao. Her first model was a friend who was also an artist. They conducted the session in a small downtown cafe along with a dozen photographers who jumped at the chance to photograph a rare live body painting session. “I drew vines and purple flowers. That first time was very simple, very rustic, and clumsy even. I had zero experience and knew nothing about composition, vectors, or even which paints are safe to use on human skin,” she recalls. Yet for all its amateurishness, the session was a success and soon she was a household name in the art industry.

A Very Fine Line

According to Thao, body painting requires teamwork and a lot of tact. Most of her models have little qualms about posing nude, however, a careless word or a photo taken in the wrong light can ruin a good working relationship. Therefore she is incredibly fastidious when it comes to picking out a

model and photography crew. “Most of them are my friends. If they aren’t my friends, then after I’ve painted on their skin, they will become my friend. It’s difficult to remain detached from somebody who has seen you nude for six to seven hours straight.”

Even after carefully choosing her team, problems can arise from the model’s husband, boyfriend or family. “Before they walk into my studio space, I let each of them know that they will be photographed and that we will keep the photo and post them online in art forums. There’s no sense in creating arts that cannot be seen. Sometimes that is an issue for the boyfriend or husband.” Body painting inhabits a precarious area in Vietnam’s still-conservative society. For some it’s art, for others it’s soft porn. When asked about how her work is viewed outside the art community, Thao grimaces.

“There’s a very fine line between art and porn. It has always been that way for many other art forms, not just body painting. I think it’s getting better, though. Perspective

can change over time, and more and more people, when they see my work, gasp and say ‘that’s amazing’ rather than frown and spit out ‘that’s disgusting.’ To me, that just means artists need to work harder to distinguish themselves as artists in society. It’s not easy of course, but on the positive side, this level of scrutiny is a filter that will let only the best and most dedicated artists come through.”

In Vietnam, body painting is not recognized as an art form. “No body painting artist, whether Vietnamese or foreigner, has been able to get their work published or been granted an exhibition license anywhere in Vietnam,” says Thao. But she hasn’t given up. Thao is currently searching for sponsors for her first exhibition. She plans to hold it at the end of this year. “If I push it through... when I push it through, it will be the first body painting exhibition ever in Vietnam.”

Oi’s May 2015 cover is a body painting piece Mien Thao designed exclusively for the magazine. ■



Depth of Field

A photographer's life in history

TEXT BY **NPD KHANH** IMAGES BY **NGOC TRAN**



LIVING A QUIET life on one of downtown Saigon's busiest and most expensive streets is perhaps one of Vietnam's most underrated wartime photojournalists. Hoang Van Cuong, a former photographer for UPI (United Press International), is an old man now but 40 years ago he was young and full of passion, and called journalists Peter Arnett and Tim Page his friends and colleagues. Yet while Arnett and Page became famous and their works globally recognized, Cuong remains in anonymity. It is not because of a lack of talent, rather one of circumstance.

Though he only worked as a photographer for 12 years, Cuong has a long resume. When he was 15, he photographed the first 400,000 American GIs to land in Vietnam with a secondhand Pentax camera and next to zero knowledge on photography. When he was 27, he made history by capturing an image of the tanks knocking down the gate of what is now the Reunification Palace. That image is still used in history textbooks at Vietnamese high schools today. He has sold thousands of photos to numerous international media outlets covering Vietnam during the war. But Cuong's success didn't come easily.

"I was born in Hue to peasant parents in 1949. My mother had a small snack shack by the village road. My father was a traveling

merchant with more children than he could feed. It was wartime. Life was difficult. Naturally, school was a luxury we could not afford for more than the first four years," he recalls.

When he was 15 he held his first camera - a beat up, old Honeywell Pentax his father gave him for his birthday. It was the greatest birthday present he had ever received.

When he was ten, he ran away from home after his parents pulled him out of school because they couldn't afford the tuition

anymore. Homeless and living in sewers and construction sites, he managed to learn English from tourists and foreigners who took pity on him. After saving some money he returned home to help around the house before enrolling in free anti-illiteracy classes sponsored by the government. When he was 15 he held his first camera - a beat up, old Honeywell Pentax his father gave him for his birthday. It was the greatest birthday present he had ever received.

"I took a couple of shots and realized I was holding something incredible in my hands," says Cuong. "I was transfixed." He exhausted the film roll his father gave him in a matter of days, taking photos of anything he found interesting. When he was 18, he met Kyoichi Sawada, a Japanese war journalist who would go on to win the Pulitzer Prize for Photography in 1966 but later died on the battlefields of Cambodia in 1970. "Sawada liked antiques and by chance was checking out the stuff at my father's place during his time in Vietnam. He looked at the amateur photos I shot from my old Pentax and told me I had an eye for angles. He then sat me down and in a couple of days taught me the basics of photojournalism."

However, Sawada did more than just show him a few tips. Sensing uncultivated talent

“Photographers should never turn away from historical moments. I will stay behind and capture everything on film. Don’t worry about me. I’m sure I’ll be fine.”

in the young boy, he encouraged Cuong to pursue a career in photography and later on introduced him to recruiters at UPI. “There was no lack of good photographers at UPI at the time, but most of them were foreigners. The interest of the period was war and life in Vietnam. There were places that foreign photographers could not get into. People they could not talk to. So UPI was looking for Vietnamese photographers for strategic positions. A thousand photographers applied for the job. They chose only two. I was one of those two.”

Cuong worked for UPI and API for 12 years, from 1966 to 1978, covering the war. He learned on the job that a picture oftentimes holds more value than words. It was during this time that he met, worked with, and got to know countless reporters and journalists coming in and out of Vietnam in search of a big scoop. He thought Peter Arnett was a swell guy who could hold his calm and humor even when bullets were whistling past his ears. On the other hand, he wasn’t so fond of Tim Page who he thought was all bark and no bite and had a nasty habit of stealing other people’s credits.

On April 30, 1975 as Saigon fell, millions fled the city, many among them the same journalists, photographers and reporters he once worked with. “My boss asked me if I wanted a seat for myself and my family on the evacuation helicopter. I had worked for him for more than a decade then and we had survived countless battles together.” He turned down his boss’s offer, holding his camera to his chest and told him: “Photographers should never turn away from historical moments. I will stay behind and capture everything on film. Don’t worry about me. I’m sure I’ll be fine.”

With him were a handful of brave journalists who looked forward to witnessing a turning point in history. He continued to send photos to UPI headquarters in America as promised until three years after the reunification. At 29 years old Hoang Van Cuong retired from photojournalism and put away his camera. ■





A Matter of FAITH

This month we speak to men and women whose belief is a living element in their everyday life. No simple definition can describe the numerous religions in the world. For many people, religion is an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, practices and worship that center on one supreme being. For others, religion involves a number of gods or deities. People practice religion for a number of reasons: because it is part of the heritage of their culture or family, or because it gives them a feeling of security to believe that a divine power watches over them. These are their stories...

Image by Ngoc Tran





Collective Beliefs

Text by Lorcan Lovett

Images by Quinn Ryan Mattingly

Where the faithful worship among the tourists

IT'S MINUTES BEFORE noon when a flurry of arrivals stir people from the blistering heat. Monks draped in flowing white robes, along with nuns and priests, stride across the baked asphalt to the airy relief of a vast temple in southwestern Vietnam. Visitors slip off their shoes and enter through a side entrance, curious about the coming ceremony of Vietnam's third biggest and perhaps most intriguing religion, Cao Dai.

Four ceremonies are held daily at the sect's headquarters, The Great Temple, or Holy See Temple, four kilometers east of Tay Ninh in the village of Long Hoa near the Cambodian border. The collage of vivid paints illustrating a mesh of philosophies in the

temple become flecked with colorful garments of worshippers during praying masses every six hours throughout the day and night. Before climbing the stairs to the tourists' stand, I comment to a monk on the impressive number of young followers here. "When they're 18 they follow what their parents follow," 62-year-old Uncle Bhai replies. "As soon as we grow up we find the passion of bringing truth to the religion."

Formally established in 1926, Cao Dai has five million adherents and the one tricky aim of uniting all of humanity through a common vision of the Supreme Being. Figurines of Jesus, Confucius and Buddha hang above a large blue dome that shows one imposing eye staring out. Cao Dai, which means "High Tower," incorporates aspects of Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism and Catholicism, Judaism and Islam. Its saints are diverse and include Muhammad, Julius Caesar and Joan of Arc. God is represented as the ubiquitous Divine Eye, an eye in a triangle, and appears across the temple's facades, centered between patterned twines of red roses, as well as the dome.

Upstairs a group of five young followers are tuning two-stringed fiddles and a two-stringed guitar, known as *dan kim* in the south. A choir of women surrounds the musicians. Tourists begin to pile up, about 20 at first and then more. We all stand above the long hall facing two rows of pink columns wrapped in swirling green



dragons, creating the impression of candles sticking out of an elaborate birthday cake. The ceiling bulges out into several domes painted as skies with green and pink dragons dancing among the fluffy clouds. It's a pagoda, a church, a mosque, a psychedelic meeting of the world's religions.

Graham Greene helped introduce Cao Dai to the West in his book *The Quiet American*. The main protagonist describes the scene in front of me as "a Walt Disney fantasia of the East."

We hear a drum beat.

A priest dressed in yellow walks toward the dome followed by an array of clergy in three colors: yellow represents Buddhism, blue for Taoism and red for Confucianism. They sport different hats shaped like cylinders and shovels. The musicians and choir are in full swing now and tourists squeeze against each other to get the best photograph of the worshippers prostrating below.

THE PERFECT PERSON

The temple, built from 1933 to 1955, has balconies running parallel to the hall. These were recently packed with tourists, affording people more space, however they've been closed off due to the weakening structure. Visitors should get here in plenty of time if they want a good vantage point for the beginning of the mass.

Young women who sit in a meditative stance upstairs snatch glimpses at the tourists. One of them picks an insect from her robe and places it on her neighbor's lap. They begin to giggle. Incense fills the air.

The most senior priests have sat down near the end of the hall, which is divided into nine sections by shallow steps, representing the nine steps to heaven. Worshippers attain each new level depending on their years as Caodaists. The religion seems to be egalitarian although all the high-ranking priests in the temple are men. Followers adhere to the ethical precepts of Confucianism, which prioritizes relationships - sovereign and subject, parent and child, elder and younger brother, husband and wife, and friend and friend. It embraces Buddhist theories of karma and rebirth and the ecclesiastical hierarchy of Roman Catholicism. The first and only Cao Dai pope was Pham Cong Tac who died in exile in Cambodia in 1959.

Taoism, the other largest building block of Cao Dai, lends its

The main protagonist describes the scene in front of me as "a Walt Disney fantasia of the East."





philosophy of two balancing forces in the world, yin-yang. It champions health and vitality, or as student priest Quoi Bing, 25, puts it before the ceremony: "In Taoism you try to reach the perfect person."

The religion also draws upon occult practices from Taoism. In fact, Ngo Van Chieu, a civil servant for the French in Indochina, created the religion after he spoke of receiving word from God during a table-moving séance in 1919. Chieu became the first prophet of the religion and Caodaists believe this ushered in Tam Ky Pho Do or the Third Period of Salvation. Promising (although dead) historic figures imparted their wisdom through the séances until the practice was banned in the 1970s.

Many of these figures were heralded as saints, such as Victor Hugo (1802–85) who was said to have made regular contact with Caodaists. He now holds the title "Spiritual Chief of the Foreign Missions" of Caodaism and features alongside Chinese revolutionary leader Dr. Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925) and Vietnamese poet Nguyen Binh Khiem (1492–1587) in a mural at the temple's front entrance. Dr. Sun Yat-sen holds an ink stone while the other two write "God and Humanity" and "Love and Justice" in Chinese and French. These are the three signatories of the Third Alliance between God and Man - the first two being Moses and Jesus.

After 40 minutes the high-ranking priests walk back out into the heat. One of them is the husband of Duong Thi Chi (*pictured above*), 54, who benignly guards the front entrance, making sure tourists do not accidentally stray into the main hall. "This is the cradle of religion," she tells me, with the help of translator and Buffalo Tours guide Son To Lake. "This is not collecting pieces of a religion. This is the first time God set up a religion to reunite all together and to help each other."

We sit down cross-legged at the entrance and chat. Duong, whose white clothes and yellow armband give the impression of a very pious bouncer, is a street vendor during the spare time she has away from the temple. She attends three ceremonies - 6am, 12pm and 6pm - daily and practices vegetarianism at least 10 days a month to purify her body and spirit and to avoid killing living beings in accordance with Confucianist ideals. Her meat-free diet normally exceeds 10 days because she cooks for her husband

whose position requires a full vegetarian diet. Her children, a son and daughter in their 20s, work in a nearby factory and also follow the religion.

"We have had support from God who has blessed us. Our business is getting better," she says. "The religion passes down from generation to generation. Cao Dai will not last forever but we have our own calendar, which goes up to 700,000 years. There's only 90 years gone so far. Nobody knows what will happen after that."

I ask whether she thinks the tourists are a disturbance. "I feel happy to welcome the guests. "It is part of the duty of our religion to spread the word about it so we do not feel bothered by people coming to see the ceremony." She's right. All the followers I've seen have been ready with a smile.

About 20 minutes later the rest of the worshippers trickle out of the temple, touching their faces as a final act of reverence before exiting into the well-maintained 188-acre complex of administrative offices, temples, dormitories, a hospital of herbal medicine and a large area for religious processions. For such a modern religion Cao Dai has had a heavy load of turmoil. Contradictory to its principles, it established an army in 1943 during the Japanese occupation of Indochina. In the following years it rapidly expanded its membership, eventually becoming a dominant force in politics. It opposed the French, and then broke a deal with them before opposing again.

To quote *The Quiet American* again, the protagonist describes the Cao Dai militia as a "private army of 25,000 men, armed with mortars made out of the exhaust-pipes of old cars, allies of the French who turned neutral at the moment of danger."

By the early 1990s Cao Dai was reported to have some two million adherents in Vietnam, Cambodia, France and the US. Worshippers here pray the current peace will continue and as I stroll among the medley of colors once the ceremony has finished, listening to the sound of chirping birds on the roof, I can see why others would like to see it flourish here in its home of the Mekong Delta.

A trip to witness the ceremonies at the Holy See Temple in Tay Ninh can be booked through Buffalo Tours (www.buffalotours.com; 3827 9170)

Divine Inspiration

Text by James Pham

Image by Ngoc Tran

SINCE THE BEGINNING of time, humans have felt the need to use the secular to express the divine. From shamanic cave paintings to the pagan Golden Calf of the Israelites, from the slabs of Stonehenge to the storytelling panes of Notre Dame Cathedral's windows, from the calligraphic decorations in Islamic sacred art to the familiar rotund form of the Buddha, religious art has captured the imagination of people spanning time and geography. It's been used for many purposes: to teach the masses, like the Biblical scenes designed to educate the illiterate in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel; as aids or props in worship, as in African tribal masks; as a means of propaganda or social commentary or in some cases,

simply to capture the beauty of the divine, designed to evoke reverence and awe.

Just across the Binh Trieu Bridge in Thu Duc lies the massive Fatima Binh Trieu Church. Named after the Statue of Our Lady Fatima which commemorates the appearance of the Virgin Mary to three shepherd children in Portugal in 1917, the red and rose-colored brick church has its own miraculous origin. Legend has it that a replica of the Statue of Our Lady Fatima was on international tour, stopping in Vietnam in 1962. When the truck carrying the statue got to Binh Trieu, the motor died. Mechanics were summoned but after two hours could find nothing wrong





with the truck. After a round of prayers, the engine miraculously started again, which was taken as a sign that the Virgin Mary wanted a holy site built in the then undeveloped area. The church (which is currently being renovated with projected completion in two to three years) houses a three meter tall replica of the Statue of Our Lady Fatima and serves a Catholic community about 5,300 strong in the surrounding area, and attracts thousands more pilgrims annually.

The road that leads to the church is lined with shops selling religious paraphernalia of all kinds, including Thien An Art. Founded by Nguyen Thanh Lam in 1999, Thien An Art (www.thienanart.com.vn) makes Catholic devotional art for galleries, churches, organizations and private homes both in Vietnam and abroad. The showroom is filled with wooden sculptures of Jesus, Mary and various saints, many seemingly emerging from the wood, left in its natural state.

"Different from other materials, wood has life. It's organic," says Lam. "Only when it's completely decomposed does it lose its characteristics. But until then, it's still living, breathing, changing. Stone is lifeless, cold. Steel is rigid. Composites are man-made. But when you make a statue out of wood, it's like you're working together with God. For a tree to grow, it takes more than a month, more than a year. The trees we use are 30 years old or more. It's not common to hold something in your hand that's decades, centuries or even millennia old. Life today moves at a rapid pace, but wood is timeless."

For Lam, his devotional art business is a happy marriage of his fine arts background and his devout Catholic faith, passed down over many generations. His workshop is in nearby Thanh Da, employing dozens of artisans. "Most of them come from a disadvantaged background," says Lam. "Some are illiterate. I train them all personally over the course of three years or so. Catholic art is different from Buddhist art. The Buddha is stylized, represented as a rotund man, whereas Catholic art follows the European style. There's some knowledge of math and anatomy involved."

In amongst the statues with distinctly Western features, is a single Asian Madonna and child, the mother figure wearing a Vietnamese *ao dai*. "Vietnam is a maternal society. The Vietnamese have an affinity for the gentle mother figure. Together with the *ao dai*, it speaks of femininity. Personally, I like adapting the statues to our culture. The ideal figure is usually drawn at eight heads tall. A Vietnamese figure is less, at seven heads. Vietnamese versions are popular as gifts to foreigners, but mostly, the Vietnamese still prefer statues with Western features. It's what's familiar. Creativity is one thing, but this is a business. We still have to make whatever sells. That said, I still believe in miracles. Over the years, we've suffered so many losses and had so many problems with the land, paperwork, expenses. When it looked like I wouldn't have enough money to pay our expenses and pay the workers, someone would

come and buy something at the last minute. If that's not a sign that the Virgin Mary is looking out for us, I don't know what is."

"I know that in the end, these are only statues, just a piece of wood. But it represents your faith. At the end of your life, when you're sick and no doctors, science or money can help you, it becomes a choice between zero and one. I choose one, because my faith makes me happier than those without. Like the Good Book says, 'Happy are those who do not see, yet believe.'"

Multimedia, Multidenominational

Saigon-based Italian artist Barbara Pellizzari has likewise found inspiration in Vietnam's religions. Her multimedia series, *Cargo* (pictured above), includes an image of religious icons together on a boat. "I was struck by the variety of religions in the area of the Mekong Delta and in HCMC - about how these religions live, stick and melt together," she says. "I think it is no coincidence that precisely in this area was born the Caodaism, a religion, in my opinion, [which is a] symbol of tolerance."

"For my artwork, I went around with my camera, taking photos of statues from Buddhist temples, Hindu, Cao Dai, Catholic churches but I also photographed the statues in taxis, on terraces of the houses and from the markets. I wanted to give to the spectator the feeling about how religion is an integral part of everyday life here. These images have been combined into a collage and painted on top of a printed boat. As an atheist I have always been fascinated by the human necessity of believing in God. As an artist, I am extremely grateful for the existence of artwork that has been created through the centuries to celebrate God." See more of her work at www.barbarapellizzari.com.



Faith Healing

**Text by James Pham
Images by Ngoc Tran**

A Catholic clinic provides comfort to the needy

THE CONVERSION OF the Apostle Paul is one of the most powerful scenes in the Bible. Formerly a rabid persecutor of the new religion of Christianity, St Paul was personally converted by Jesus, turning this once arrogant man into a humble “Apostle to the Nations.”

Tucked inside the quiet, palm tree-filled courtyard of St Paul’s Convent (4Bis Nguyen Trung Ngan, D1), is a life-size statue of the apostle himself, on the ground next to his horse, hand raised against the blinding light of the Lord, preparing him to accept a grandiose mission of spreading the gospel of hope. It’s fitting that in this compound, housing a large chapel, a theology school, a women’s dormitory, a wing for retired nuns and a kindergarten, lies a non-descript clinic whose mission is similarly to bring comfort to the city’s downtrodden.

Founded by Sister Anne (known as “Soeur Anne”) in 1980, the clinic houses a physical therapy area and an Eastern medicine pharmacy, but it’s best known for its electro-acupuncture and



laser therapy. “It started almost 35 years ago with only three beds in a dilapidated house down the street. I charged people just VND1,000,” says Sister Anne, now 72 years old with kind eyes and a soft voice, her flawless skin framed by a white habit. “I saw so many people suffering and in pain, abandoned and hopeless.”

Joining the convent at 15, Sister Anne trained to be a nurse at the former Clinique Saint-Paul (now the Ho Chi Minh City Eye Hospital). With the blessing of the convent, she opened a small clinic to serve the city’s poor. “It’s been all word-of-mouth since then,” says Sister Anne, reluctant to have her photo taken or to even talk about herself or bring any publicity to the clinic. “People who could donated beds or machinery. Now we help more than a hundred people a day. But that’s no reason to be prideful. I just want people to know that we’re here to serve everyone, especially those who can’t afford regular medical care.”

The clinic charges only VND20,000 per acupuncture session (not including the cost of disposable needles), but even then, many cannot afford this modest sum. When that happens, more likely than not, Sister Anne simply waives off their debt with an understanding pat on the shoulder. “I’m always here in my office, so patients feel free to come in and talk to me. They tell me their stories. Most come in for pain relief from arthritis and joint problems. Some are rehabilitating after a stroke. We try to help everyone here, Catholic or not, poor and rich, foreigners and Vietnamese.”

TO SOEUR, WITH LOVE

The clinic hasn’t been Sister Anne’s only foray into charity work. As a young nun, she opened up a few classrooms for disadvantaged children. “The first was in District 8. I asked to use a woman’s home to start a classroom. It was by a stinky river and at first, the stench was overwhelming,” she recalls. “We started out with just a few students, but when parents heard what we were doing, they wanted to send their kids to us, kids who had quit school or who couldn’t afford to go to school. We treated them with kindness and gave them little candies and cakes after class. They so loved it. They became serious about learning. But then the local school heard about what we were doing and stopped the classes. We subsequently opened up classrooms in Bach Dang (District 1) which at the time was full of drug addicts and in Cau Muoi (District 4). So many children were street kids, wandering the

streets, shining shoes and doing who knows what. Now, though, the public schools are better, so we don’t need to do that anymore.”

Sister Anne leads us on a tour of the extensive grounds of the compound, mostly hidden from view by a plain perimeter wall. The sound of children singing disrupts the peaceful silence, the way a gentle rain disrupts a sweltering Saigon afternoon. The children are from the 800-strong kindergarten on premises, practicing for a performance. Further down, the sound of pianos can be heard from another music class in session. Much as when it was inaugurated in 1864 as an orphanage for local street children, the convent today focuses on the well-being of the young. Services are held daily in the chapel for parents, children and the sisters, with public services only on Sundays. The nuns also operate a dormitory for female college students whose parents feel less anxious about their daughters alone in the big city under the care of the sisters. “We watch them very closely here, helping them avoid temptation. They have a curfew which we build around their study schedule. It doesn’t always work out, though. There was one very pretty girl...” remembers Sister Anne with a laugh. “She just couldn’t stay in.”

In the beautifully restored Gothic-style chapel, a handful of nuns sit in quiet meditation and prayer. “This church was practically destroyed by bombs during the war. I remember being so scared. They told us to leave for the provinces, but we couldn’t. Who would take care of the place?” Sister Anne stops in front of a small statue of Jesus as a child, cradling a globe in his hands. “This was one of the only things that survived the bombing,” she says fondly.

Sister Anne is eager to get back to the clinic, as a few patients have been patiently waiting to see her personally. “It’s almost like we’re a family,” she says. “Some people come here so regularly, they start to talk to each other and help each other.” Before we leave, there’s only time for one final question about the role of religion in an increasingly secular world. Sister Anne pauses thoughtfully as she looks out onto the clinic, filled with people who have come seeking comfort. “I think religion has two missions: to spread the truth about the Lord, but also to show love. When you treat people with love, sometimes that’s all they need.”

The Eastern medicine clinic is open from early morning to about 11am, Monday to Friday. While the suggested price is VND20,000 per acupuncture session (not including the cost of needles), additional donations are much appreciated.

Fit for Consumption

Text by Michael Arnold

Images by Ngoc Tran

Keeping kosher when dining in Saigon

FOR A GREAT old faith that has lasted for millennia, there's a certain youthful humor at the heart of Judaism. The Jewish religion is a vibrant, warm tradition that values erudition and learning just as highly as it does joyous celebration – and no truly Jewish life can be separated from the pleasure taken in eating good and proper food.

The concept of just what constitutes kosher food in this tradition, however, is often misunderstood by those outside the faith. It wouldn't be right to see the kosher system as a set of arbitrary rules imposed from on high merely to remind believers of their duties. That doesn't take into account the satisfaction followers experience in practicing a lifestyle grounded in basic ingredients – both culinary and otherwise – that they hold to be

wholesome and fit for good living. Far from being a burden on the faithful, dining kosher is something Jewish people consider as one of life's greatest joys.

The Chabad of Vietnam, which exists to serve the Jewish expat community resident in Ho Chi Minh City (as well as those just passing through), is chiefly concerned with the provision of kosher meals, without which Jewish people would face a huge barrier in leading their daily lives here. The Chabad's Rabbi Menachem Hartman (*pictured below left*) oversees its kosher restaurant – which is the only one of its kind in the whole of southern Vietnam.

"People come to eat," explains Rabbi Hartman, who has run the facility in Saigon for the past nine years. "We celebrate big holidays every year, and we cater for all the celebratory gatherings. Many of the Jewish holidays go with food; they're inseparable, and there's no other kosher restaurant in town. Kosher products are available – like tuna in a can – but not fresh food."

It's easy to underestimate the importance of having kosher food available to Jewish travelers. "It means that they're able to travel here," explains Rabbi Hartman. "It's not only the orthodox Jews – many Jewish people who don't observe everything still keep up a certain level of kosher eating. If they want to eat outside, they





can eat only vegetarian food; if they want kosher food, then they come here. But with many Jewish people in Vietnam, even if they eat vegetarian in other countries, here they avoid it and eat only kosher. They just don't trust even the vegetarian restaurants here."

Open every day and catering to all guests – even those from outside the faith – the Chabad restaurant does a good business, providing not only a source of ritually clean nourishment, but also a taste of home. "People want to eat food from the home," says Rabbi Hartman. "It has to remind them of their mother or their father. That's really what it is. Israelis, even Americans want to see food that reminds them of home. Felafel, schnitzel. That's not Israeli – it's from Vienna, but Israelis like to eat schnitzel. Americans like to eat hamburgers. The main reason people come here is because it's kosher, but also because the food is good."

LIFE OF SERVICE

The Chabad also caters for hotels and events attended by Jewish people. While the menu at the restaurant is relatively simple (although preparations are underway to extend the range of options shortly), for big events like Passover, professional chefs are brought in from outside. "We can bring in any professional cook," says Rabbi Hartman, "so long as they follow the rules. We provide the ingredients, so there are no mistakes. They use only our ingredients."

Being based in Ho Chi Minh City allows the Rabbi to offer consulting services to the 70-80 local food production factories who export kosher food abroad. Demand for the Chabad's services has been such that he has recently been joined by his nephew

Rabbi Avremi Hartman (*previous page, left*) from New York, who has been appointed the Chabad's new *shluchim*. Despite the primary focus on serving Jewish needs simply by serving Jewish food, the new Rabbi Hartman draws great inspiration from his role.

"Yes, it's a life of service, contributing, helping," he says. "It's a good feeling to get up every morning to go help other people. It's something more than 'work, go home, work, go home.' That's good for 10 or 15 years, but afterwards, you don't have anything beyond that."

While the Rabbis' way of life at the Chabad could be described as spiritual, there's an important distinction in the Jewish faith. "Judaism doesn't separate spiritual life and physical life," explains the Rabbi. "Kosher food is physical, but it becomes part of your body when you eat it. You have to watch what you put in."

And what if, by some accident, a believer was to eat non-kosher food by mistake?

"Keeping kosher is strict," explains the Rabbi. "But if you accidentally don't eat it, we say 'just be careful next time.' Do you eat dog meat? What would you do if you accidentally ate it? Either you love it, and you look for it next time, or you don't like it, you regret it, you feel sorry and next time you'll try to avoid it. We say 'be sorry, and don't do it again.'"

"We did have a punishment," the Rabbi jokes, "but I lost my stick!"

The Chabad of Vietnam (Villa 5A Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D1; 3910 0181) is open for meals every day. Popular dishes are felafel (VND90,000), shakshuka (VND80,000), hamburger (VND160,000), and schnitzel (VND180,000).



Middle Way

Text by NPD Khanh
Images by Ngoc Tran

A young man forgoes wealth to become a monk

Ha Van Thanh is set to become a monk in a month. There is still hair on his head, but not much. He shaved it off with a trimmer recently. He still goes by his birth name these days, but soon he will be given a new one when he becomes a Buddhist monk. For the past two months he has been living in a Mahayana Buddhist

temple on the border of Binh Tan and Hoc Mon to prepare for the induction ceremony that will see him and 14 initiates become new monks and nuns at the Hoa Anh Temple. Two major extant branches of Buddhism are generally recognized: Theravada (The School of the Elders) and Mahayana (The Great Vehicle). Theravada has a widespread following in Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Myanmar. Mahayana is found throughout China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Singapore and Taiwan.

Thanh's 14 peers all come from devout Buddhist families whose parents were proud of their children's decision to enter monkhood. Thanh's parents, however, reacted differently. His father has renounced him in name. His mother, the more compassionate

of the two, still comes to the temple every other day to visit her son. "She hopes to talk some sense into me and dissuade me from entering monkhood. She can't understand why I would want to spend the rest of my life as a hermit, chanting Buddhist sutras and doing good deeds for people who aren't of my own blood." He is the only one in his family who practices Buddhism.

Thanh is 21 years old and is the only son of an affluent Vietnamese family. His father is a successful businessman. His mother is a socialite amongst the Vietnamese wealthy circle. Thanh is currently attending a private university on a scholarship in Thailand. When he graduates with a bachelor in business administration he is supposed to take over the family business, the heir to his father's fortune. Ha Van Thanh is set for a future among Vietnam's rich and elite, which makes his choice to reject it in favor of an austere, monastic life a shock to his parents.

A TITLE AND A BURDEN

"The first time I met a monk face to face was in Thailand," he shares. "He was a fellow student at the university, majoring in biochemistry. We shared a class in philosophy. He wanted to apply for med school once he completed all the prerequisites. His temple funded his schooling. He played the guitar and had a good singing voice, said he liked Abba. He was... not at all like how I imagined monks to be."

Their friendship grew and Thanh started following his friend into Thai temples, sitting in on seminars on modern Buddhism. When Thanh returned home after his sophomore year, the first place he visited was the pagoda near his house. "I used to think the life of a monk wouldn't be a whole lot different from that of a prisoner. You can't eat this. You can't do that. You need to wear this, and live by a curfew. No hair, of course, and no girls. Life in the temple sounded terribly restrictive. Most people think like I do, but that's not true. Life as a monk can be as free as you want it to be."

To Thanh, his life as the only son of traditional, successful parents is no less restrictive than the monk life he imagined. "I am to be whoever my parents want me to be. I wanted to become an artist but my father disagreed, so I set my passion aside to study in business school cause that's what makes money. 'Heir' is both a title and a burden," he claims. "Wealth is a trap. Prestige is a trap. The expectations of society are manacles. We allow ourselves to become slaves to the whims of our desire. In the life of a monk, there is peace and freedom."

He says that despite its status as a major religion in Vietnam, Buddhism is still misunderstood by its followers. "I'm not a monk yet, just an initiate waiting to be ordained so it probably is presumptuous for me to say this, but Buddhism is so much more than the superstitions a lot of Buddhists and non-Buddhists equate it to. It's a discipline of the mind and heart. It's the courage to see the world for its impermanent nature. Everything returns to nothing with time - my father's wealth and prestige, my mother's reputation and connections. What do those matter in the long run? I know they both paid heavy prices to be who they are today. I know my parents have more brothers, sisters and past friends than they talk about. They paid such heavy prices but are they any happier for it? I don't think so. And... I don't want to become like them."

Thanh's initiation in a month is a permanent one. He will discard his birth name and be given a Buddhist one. He will forsake all personal belongings and wealth he possesses. He will spend the rest of his life studying the sutras, taking care of the temple and performing good deeds for the people around him. With hard work and dedication, he may be sent to other temples in Vietnam and abroad, but that will be years away yet.

"My mother thinks I'm in a rebellious phase," Thanh says. "She says it's only a passing fancy and that I'll soon regret it. Maybe she's right, but right now the only thing I feel is anticipation for my new life."



Pathways

Images by Ngoc Tran

A walking tour of Saigon's religious buildings

Being the "melting pot" of Vietnam, it surprises no one that Saigon houses some of the country's finest religious buildings ranging from traditional Buddhist temples to Catholic cathedrals, from Hindu sanctuaries to Protestant churches. In his thoroughly researched and highly readable book, "Exploring Ho Chi Minh City," local historian Tim Doling includes some of the city's most beautiful places of worship along walking tour routes of Saigon.

Notre Dame Cathedral

Popularly known in Vietnamese as *Nhà thờ lớn* or "big church," Notre Dame Cathedral is the largest and most important ecclesiastical building in Ho Chi Minh City. Its history dates back to 1866 when architect Georges l'Hermitte was invited to draw up plans for a grand new brick cathedral for the city.

Built from red brick on granite foundations and measuring 91m long and 35.5m wide, the Cathédrale de Saigon was conceived as a work of Romanesque architecture with Gothic elements, modeled loosely on the much larger Notre-Dame de Paris.

The two bell towers on the façade house six bronze bells (two on the right side and four on the left) which were cast in France in 1879, weigh a combined 28.85 tons and (in the days before noise pollution) could once be heard up to 10 kilometers away when pealed together.

The Cathedral has a traditional cruciform-shaped ground plan and the interior features a high vaulted nave flanked by vaulted side aisles and chapels, a transept and a sanctuary which terminates in an apse. The side chapels themselves are dedicated to various saints and biblical figures and also include a shrine to the 117 Vietnamese Roman Catholic Martyrs who were canonized by

Pope John Paul II in 1988. Although the Vatican has estimated the number of Vietnamese martyrs from the 17th to the 20th century at between 130,000 and 300,000, John Paul II decided to canonize only those whose names are known, giving them a single feast day. The list includes the names of several foreign missionaries.

At the time it was built, the Cathédrale de Saigon symbolized the finest work of the French colony and no expense was spared in its construction. Its eventual cost – over 2.5 million francs — acquired it the reputation of an "expensive folly."

In 1960, when the Vatican reorganized the structure of the Roman Catholic church in Vietnam under three Archdioceses (Hanoi, Hue and Saigon) with the Apostolic Delegate located in Saigon, Notre Dame Cathedral was raised to be the cathedral-in-chief. In 1962 the Vatican conferred on it the properties of a basilica and from that time onwards, it was known as the "Basilique-Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Saigon."

1 Cong Xa Paris, D1; Opening hours: Access to main vestibule only for non-worshippers 8am-11am, 3pm-4pm Mon-Sat. Other nearby places of interest to visit on this walking tour include the Subramaniam Swamy temple and the Ngu Hanh Temple.





Nghia Nhuan Assembly Hall

This Minh Huong communal house began life in the early 19th century as the tiny wooden communal house of Tan Nhuan, a rural village. In 1852 King Tu Duc issued an official nomination consecrating its Thanh Hoang Bon Canh or village gods. During the later colonial era it attracted some famous Minh Huong supporters who contributed generously towards its decorations and upkeep. This accounts for the fact that it contains some of the most exquisite devotional art works found anywhere in the city.

The hall itself comprises two distinct buildings, separated by a light well and flanked either side by two subsidiary axes which project outward beyond the main buildings, forming a wall either side of the front courtyard.

The focus of attention in the *tiền điện* or front hall is its exquisitely-carved false door, the *Cửa Trung Môn*. The side facing the front door depicts the “Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea,” a 15th-century Ming dynasty tale which recounts how the Taoist Immortals, while on their way to attend an extravagant banquet of peaches said to confer longevity on all who ate them, suddenly found themselves at sea and had to exercise their unique powers to reach their destination. The other side portrays the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove, a group of 3rd century Chinese scholars, writers, and musicians who sought to escape the intrigue and corruption of court life during the Three Kingdoms period by retreating to the forest and engaging in Taoist-inspired discussions, playing musical instruments, playing chess, writing poetry and drawing — often while inebriated!

27 Phan Van Khe, D5; Opening hours: 5am-6pm daily. Other nearby places of interest to visit on this walking tour include the Silversmiths’ Temple and the Cho Lon Mosque.



Sri Mariamman Temple

Sri Mariamman Temple was the first and the largest Hindu sanctuary to be built in Saigon by Tamil-speaking Chettys from the French territory of Pondicherry, who came here in large numbers at the start of the colonial era, to set up banking and money-lending businesses. Constructed at the end of the 19th century by Indian craftsmen and sculptors, it was extensively renovated in the 1950s.

Sri Mariamman Temple is dedicated to Mariamman, a rural South Indian mother goddess worshipped widely for fertility and protection against disease in rural areas of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Viewed from the front, the most noteworthy feature of the temple exterior is its *gopuram* (tower), situated above the main entrance door in the middle of the flat temple roof, decorated on all sides with brightly-colored carvings and statues of Hindu deities, guardian figures and ornamental decorations. The roof ridge is similarly adorned with ornamental figures and moldings. In times gone by the main deity was placed on a palanquin and carried around Saigon every Autumn in a street procession. This no longer happens, but the palanquin — which takes the form of a lion — may still be seen next to the entrance.

45D Trung Dinh, D1; Opening hours: 7:30am-7:30pm daily. Other nearby places of interest to visit on this walking tour include Ben Thanh Market and the Saigon Sky Deck at Bitexco Financial Tower.



Hung King Temple

The Hung King Temple, also known as the Hung Vuong Temple, was built in 1927-1929 under the name *Temple du Souvenir*, to commemorate the Vietnamese soldiers who died while fighting in the French army during World War I.

After 1954, the temple was rededicated to the memory of the founding Hung dynasty of Vietnam, and officially renamed the *Đền Quốc tổ Hùng Vương* (National Hung King Ancestor Temple).

Dragons flank the stone steps leading up to the temple, which is designed in a style typical of Nguyen-dynasty mausoleums in Hue, with a three-layered curved roof richly decorated with dragons and phoenixes.

Inside the temple, the ceiling is adorned with carved images of cranes, unicorns, turtles and phoenixes, painted gold against a red background. Below the ceiling, the upper wall has carved windows which lighten and ventilate the space. The temple roof is supported by 12 black wooden pillars, each representing a sign of the zodiac.

Each year on the 10th day of the third lunar month (usually around mid-April), the temple hosts the city's official Hung King Ancestors Festival which begins with a solemn ceremony giving thanks to the Hung dynasty for their contribution to the Vietnamese nation.

2 Nguyen Binh Khiem, D1; Opening hours: 8am-11:30am, 1:30pm-4:30pm Tue-Sun, closed Mon. Other nearby places of interest to visit on this walking tour include St Joseph's Seminary and the Saigon Botanical and Zoological Gardens.



Hanh Thong Tay Church

Hanh Thong Tay Church was built under the auspices of the Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris in 1921-1924. One of wealthy landowner Huyen Sy's sons, Denis Le Phat An and his wife Anna Tran Thi Tho provided the land and also paid most of the construction costs, the remainder being met through additional donations.

Uniquely for a church built in Vietnam, its architecture was influenced not by Gothic or Romanesque but by Byzantine style, taking as its model the Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy. Italian bricks were used throughout the interior to give the impression of a traditional Italian sanctuary. The church underwent extensive restoration in 2011-2012.

Hanh Thong Tay Church has a traditional cruciform-shaped ground plan and the interior features a high vaulted nave flanked by flat-roofed side aisles, a transept and a raised sanctuary which terminates in an apse. The semi-dome above the apse features a large painting of Christ on the Cross. A 20m high dome is located immediately above the crossing and the ring at its base is similarly decorated with paintings of Christ's Disciples. The high altar is made from white marble and features elaborate floral engraving. Shrines to St Mary and St Joseph stand in front of the transept walls, either side of the sanctuary. The 14 Stations of the Cross are situated between the windows along both church walls.

The church originally incorporated a 30m high steeple, but in 1953 the spire was removed at the request of Indochina Airlines, reducing its height to 19.5m for reasons of aviation safety. The shortened tower later suffered damage during the 1968 Tet Offensive, after NLF Special Forces famously used it to fire on the American positions at the nearby Tan Son Nhat Air Base.

53/7 Quang Trung, Go Vap District; Opening hours: By permission of Father Clemente Le Minh, 8:15am-11am, 2pm-4pm Tue-Sat. Other nearby places of interest to visit on this walking tour include the Thong Tay Hoi Communal House and the Artists' Pagoda.

Re-printed by permission of Tim Doling, author of the walking tour book "Exploring Hồ Chí Minh City" (Nhà Xuất Bản Thế Giới, Hà Nội, 2014, available at select Fahasa bookshops and other retailers). The 439-page book includes four walking tours of the city center along with sights further afield. Tim Doling also conducts Heritage Tours of Saigon and Cho Lon. For more, see www.historicvietnam.com

Wine & Dine

IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN





Little Richard burger,
Soul Burger

Feed Your Soul

There's a whole lotta burger goin' on

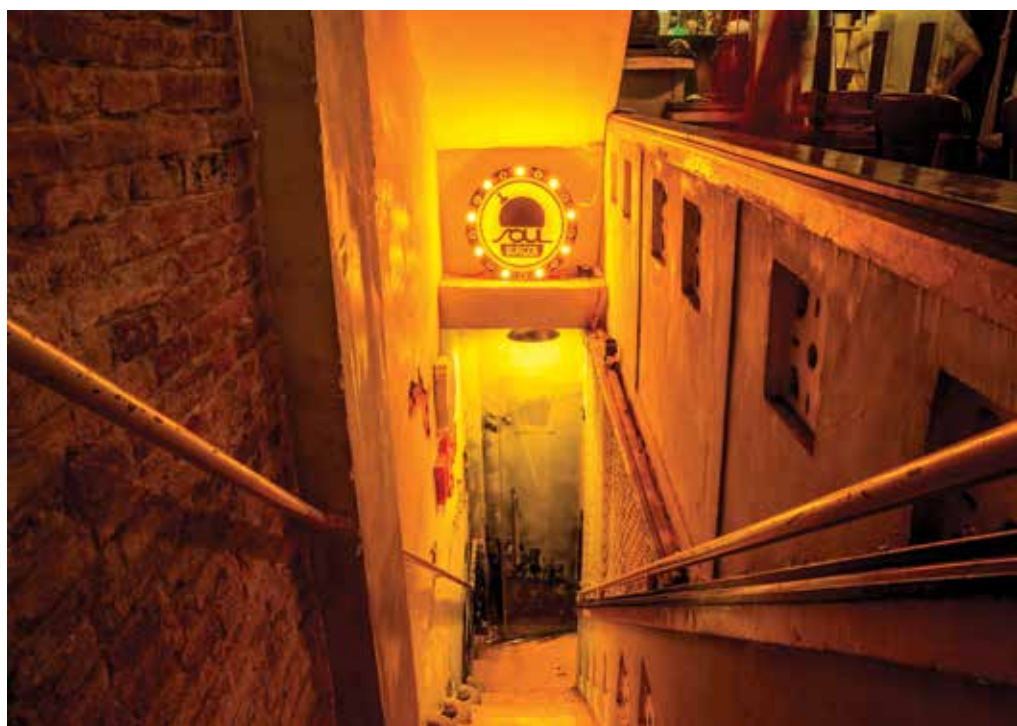
TEXT BY **JULIAN AJELLO**
IMAGES BY **NGOC TRAN**

EVERYONE IN THE civilized world is acquainted with the most iconic of American icons - the burger - although perhaps not its history. Its evolution stretches back to the Mongols who put meat patties under their saddles to tenderize them, making them easy to eat on horseback. The Russians adapted the idea when Kublai Khan invaded Moscow, giving birth to steak tartare, after the Russian name for their assailants. When it reached Germany it was cooked and called Hamburg steak, after the city in which its popularity grew. Finally making its way to the New World, it evolved into the burger sometime between 1885 and 1905. Who served the first burger is a contentious matter, but what's important is they kept serving it.

Despite their reputation as unhealthy and wrong, people love burgers. Every city debates which establishment serves up the best, our fair Saigon included. Only five years ago finding one was more the exception than the rule. The city now finds itself in the midst of a burger boom that includes major corporate chains as well as small endeavors specializing in burgers, and even their inclusion on the menus of some of the finer eateries in town.

Soul Burger (4 Phan Boi Chau, D1), the first restaurant owned by Gabe Boyer, a veteran of Saigon's fine dining scene, is the city's newest addition to its burgeoning burger culture. "Burgers are in my blood," explains Chef Gabe. "My grandfather owned Goldy's, a famous burger joint in the suburbs of Chicago, but it was sold before I had the chance to be a part of it." Now, Gabe's long awaited foray into burgerdom has come to fruition. His testament to passion dwells in a second floor nook on Phan Boi Chau, opposite the southeast corner of Ben Thanh Market. The exposed brick walls and demure lighting invite you to wade into an atmosphere steeped in music by luminaries such as Charlie Parker, Aretha Franklin and James Brown.

An eclectic array of starters inhabits the menu. We sampled three of them: chipotle





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Little Richard & Diana Ross burgers, Chipotle hot wings, and *Elote*
 RIGHT: Chef/owner Gabe.
 OPPOSITE PAGE: Steak poutine



hot wings (VND120,000), Mexican-style corn on the cob called *elote* (VND75,000), and the steak poutine supreme (VND175,000). The zesty hot wings, served with sour cream sauce on the side, are a departure from the traditional buffalo style. I enjoyed them and found the sour cream sauce a refreshing change of pace from ranch or blue cheese dressing. However, my dining companions didn't share the same level of appreciation for the break in convention. The *elote* is delightful. Grilled with butter and dusted with Parmesan cheese and chili powder, then served atop lime mayo and finished with cilantro, they are cause for celebration. Many times corn is filler, but this concoction will have you devouring it with glee.

The menu's inclusion of poutine is a revelation. John Tuzi, Director of Global Café and Gabe's partner, is a native of Toronto, Canada, and made it his mission to include his homeland's culinary calling card and ensure its impeccable execution. It consists of a bed of french fries with grilled slices of imported steak, Phu Quoc pepper gravy, melted cheddar cheese, confit tomatoes and pickled shallots. If ever a dish existed that embodied the cliché "you don't know what you're missing," this poutine has a legitimate claim.

Stop! In the Name of Burgers

Soul Burger is about the burgers, however, and they don't disappoint. We zeroed in on two, the Little Richard (VND195,000) and the Diana Ross (VND230,000), both served with hand cut fries. They arrive on pretzel buns of Gabe's own recipe, baked and delivered daily. The patties are 200g of fresh USDA Choice beef from Kansas, hand ground in an 80/20 lean-to-fat ratio, and cooked to your preference. They aren't scared to cook it rare, and for the less domesticated among us, they'll send it out blue! Furthermore, a different burger of the month appears on their blackboard to keep things novel.

The Little Richard is served with sharp cheddar cheese, bacon, grilled onions, and an egg, sunny side up. If you're hankering for a classic burger experience, with an egg on top, look no further. The Little Richard is built to sate even the most voracious burger craving (for those with gargantuan burger needs and looking to double down on 'wrong,' the signature Soul Burger (VND345,000) is the Little Richard times two, meaning *two* 200g patties and double bacon). The Diana Ross is nothing short of sublime. Covered in sautéed mushrooms and drenched in a creamy Cognac sauce and then sprinkled with fresh horseradish, the memory of this burger will kick your salivary glands into overdrive on a random afternoon. And to round out your experience, Gabe and John are curating a selection of bourbon to quaff during your post-burger bliss. You will leave with your fix, a full belly, and the hook firmly set.

Whether you're an American expat longing for a taste of home, or one of the hordes from around the world that embrace burgers as comfort food, Soul Burger will thrill you. They have attained a profound understanding of burgers... if you're gonna do something wrong, do it right. ■

Velbekomme!

Tak for the food

TEXT BY **RACHEL CABAKOFF** IMAGES BY **NGOC TRAN**



Casper and Camilla

TUCKED AWAY IN District 2 is a ‘mad house’ – a place that hides itself in nature and reveals its transformer abilities depending on the time of day. It’s nestled amongst a sweeping garden and a single-story villa. By day, the house is a relaxing place for a cup of coffee and a good book or a casual midday lunch; by evening it turns into a lively place for drinks and dinner with family and friends.

The **MAD House** (6/1/2 Nguyen U Di, Thao Dien, D2) belongs to Danish couple Camilla Bailey and Casper Gustafsen, and “mad” actually means “food” in Danish. “We really wanted to create a place where you can feel like you can stay all day long,” says Camilla. “We have a hard time putting ourselves into a box. We really just want to make food that is good, simple, honest food.” The two originally came to Saigon to work as chefs at Chill Skybar’s restaurant but eventually branched out on their own. Casper manages the kitchen and Camilla has taken her culinary skills to the bar and front of house. The décor is a mixture of Asian minimalism with Scandinavian accents throughout, from the furniture to the multicolored tiles and lanterns made out of chicken cages and the woven patio chairs.

“This is everything we know and everything we’ve ever known since growing up. You can see that our focus is in the



details, and I think it reflects in our food that we come from Scandinavian roots," Camilla adds. "We both came from a place in Denmark where we had four acres of vegetables and a garden so we were 80 percent self-supplied. We try to source ingredients in the most natural way and make everything as fresh as possible so we don't have a big storage or any big freezer." The ingredients in the cocktails and dishes all are locally sourced.

We started off our evening with a refreshing cocktail. I decided to go with the Green Bourbon (VND125,000) made with thyme, sage, mint, whiskey, lime and honey. The bourbon wasn't overpowering and the fresh herbs gave it a clean taste. My friend ordered a Mad-o-lada (VND125,000), their spin on a piña colada. "It tastes like summer," Camilla explains.

It was time to move onto the starters. Seasoned with garlic and chili butter and splashed with parsley and lime, the scallops on the half shell (VND150,000) had a kick of

spice, leaving us dipping our bread into the leftover sauce. The Mad salad's (VND275,000) fresh greens, Serrano ham, prawn, goat cheese gratin and *foie gras* served with a light citrus dressing was a cooling balance to the scallops.

We then moved onto the mains, beginning with the chicken thigh dish (VND185,000) - a twist on a Moroccan dish presented in a Vietnamese claypot doused in a spicy tomato base alongside couscous, cucumber, tomato and onion relish and a yogurt dill dressing on the side. The chicken is marinated overnight in clovers, chili, cinnamon, oil, lemon, thyme and a hint of toasted cashews and then slow-cooked the next day allowing the chicken to nearly fall off the bone. The tender meat was spicy but a dab of the yogurt dressing perfectly cut through the heat. Hints of citrus and notes of cinnamon also peeked through, perfectly complementing it with the relish salad and couscous.

We then moved on to a crowd pleaser - the Iberian Secreto Pork (VND450,000). "Secreto"

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Green Bourbon; Half-shell scallops; Chicken thigh dish; Mad salad and Iberian Secreto Pork

is a "secret" cut from the Iberian breed of pig in Spain that feeds on acorns, giving the meat a unique flavor. It's paired with sides of grilled cabbage with parmesan cheese and chili butter, creamy wild mushrooms, grilled carrots with thyme, honey and orange - each served as a sweet and smoky balance to the rich, tender meat.

We were too full to indulge in any dessert, so we finished off with a light and refreshing iced tea (VND40,000) made with ginger, vanilla, cardamom seeds, green tea, chamomile and Earl Grey shaken, stirred and mixed into one - a perfect ending to ease us out of our food coma. Needless to say, you would be mad not to give this place a try. ■

Taste the Rainbow

Get to know South African wine

DUE TO ITS strategic location, South Africa has recently become one of the pioneers in producing quality New World wines, with winemaking dating back to 1659 when Jan van Riebeeck, founder of what is now Cape Town, made wine from vines that had been planted a few years earlier.

With the arrival of democracy to South Africa in 1994, South African winemakers had the opportunity to travel to other countries and learn, resulting in considerable improvements to the quality of South African wines, helped by the Vine Improvement Program which began at the end of the 20th century.

The majority of South Africa's 102,000 hectares of grapevines are concentrated in the Cape Winelands. Perhaps the most distinctive grape of South Africa is Pinotage, a cross between Pinot Noir and Cinsault, which was created in 1925 at Stellenbosch University producing fruity delicious red wines.

Don't worry if you love a particular grape, as South African wineries also produce gorgeous wines with

Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc, Riesling, Malbec, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Shiraz and many more.

Wide differences in topography and geology characterize the varied soils on the Cape and the resulting varied wines. Near the coast, vines are planted on sandstone mountains, while at lower altitudes, shale predominates. Another factor affecting the diversity of wines is the influence of two oceans, with the Indian Ocean being warmed by the tropical Mozambique current, while the Atlantic Ocean is cooled by the Antarctic Benguela current. On top of this, the Cape is crossed by five river systems.

Stellenbosch is probably the most famous wine producing district in South Africa, blessed with a variety of micro-climates, rich soils and a multitude of grape varieties. Founded in 1998 by Australian Ben Radford and South African Alex Dale, The Winery of Good Hope is a famous winery with international presence, producing a variety of delicious wines under four different labels, some of



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

which are available in Vietnam. Another of my favorite winemakers is Stephen de Wet, from Robertson Valley, producing gorgeous wines under the brand Arabella at his family-run winery.

Overall, South African wines are rich and earthy, and usually rather inexpensive as they are yet to be widely known, making them ideal for those on a budget.

What I'm Drinking Now

Gravity 2009, Stellenbosch, South Africa

This wine is a good example of New World wines that is as good, if not better, as any Old World icon. Although not on the cheap side, it is worth its value because it is a fantastic wine to drink. From the moment you smell this wine, you can start enjoying its complexity: spices, powder, tobacco, leather and even a hint of vanilla. On the palate is great, full bodied and fantastic length - very complex, delicate while delivering a lot of fruit and structure. Best paired with game, roasts, grills and mature cheeses, it's distributed in Vietnam by Wine Warehouse. ■



Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?

A US celebrity makes an appearance



Vietnamese chef **Jack Lee** (www.chefjacklee.com) has served a host of Hollywood A-listers from Angelina Jolie to Barbra Streisand, and recently returned to chef for Acacia Veranda Dining (149-151 Nguyen Du, DI). His biography *You Don't Know Jack* by OI writer NPD Khanh will be released later this year.



EVERYONE'S GOTTA EAT – even the rich and famous. One of the tricks of the trade in the catering business is learning how to cook for people with expensive tastes, and when it comes to celebrities, you really have to do your homework. People with that much attention from the public tend to be very picky about what they consume.

I've been fortunate in my career to cater for a number of public figures, and I've found that the only way to go is to put a personal touch on everything – which can be pretty hard work. To cook for a celebrity, you need to do three things: Firstly, it's very important to find out if that celebrity has any food allergies, and



secondly, you need to pick their favorite dishes. You've also got to make it healthy – most celebrities like to take nutritious meals to maintain a certain weight suitable for their performances.

I certainly hadn't expected to be cooking for all that many American celebrities in the heart of Ho Chi Minh City, and so when I received word that Demi Lovato would be dining at my restaurant this month, I was taken by surprise. Demi is a big name these days, popular for her work with the Disney Channel, as a famous American singer, and as a judge with Simon Cowell on the US talent show *X-Factor*.

It's intimidating working for any

high-profile figure, but in this case I had to be confident in putting together a five-star meal. I was under great pressure to make an impression, not only from her management, but also my daughter Angela, who's as much of a Demi fan as I am! I needed to make sure it was a perfectly-balanced meal if I was going to have any chance of getting an autograph for my girl.

A little Google research is enough for starters, as most famous people have volumes of information about their lives online. I discovered that she likes cheese, seafood, and chocolate chip cookies, so I knew I had to start from there as I planned the menu for her and her entourage of 30 staff.

For Demi, I started it off with a seafood trio: poached jumbo prawns with sweet remoulade and Japanese *tobiko*; salmon roulade with honey soy glaze; and my favorite watermelon martini with scallop, which I wrote about in my previous column. Following on, we served seared foie gras with passionfruit sauce and balsamic glaze. I feel that the citrus taste of passionfruit balances well with the richness of foie gras, and I added dragonfruit as a palate cleanser – not to mention the cheese croutons, as Demi does love cheese.

For the main seafood course, we served langoustine with soursoop sauce and strawberries, along with pineapple mint salsa and Vietnamese brown rice. The soursoop is a fruit that is full of nutrients, and also contains natural compounds with known medicinal properties, making it wonderfully beneficial for your health.

At the carving station, we had USDA prime rib, seasonal vegetables, french fries, and cream of corn, au jus. We served Acacia's signature prime rib, slow-roasted in the oven at low temperatures for six hours for the perfect flavor and texture. For dessert, we made organic chocolate chip cookies with M&Ms, vanilla waffles with chocolate ice cream and fresh strawberries.

Converting a concept into an extensive menu is always a risk, but fortunately Demi was very happy and impressed with the food, which was an enormous relief. We chatted for a bit and she agreed to take a picture and sign her autograph for both my kids – which sure saved my neck at home! ■

>>The List

Wine & Dine

BARS



Blanchy's Tash

Undoubtedly the hippest, coolest nightclub in downtown Ho Chi Minh, renowned for its cool house music, live DJs at weekends and innovative range of cocktails. Downstairs is a trendy bar where the glitterazi like to be seen; rooftop an open bar with more chilled style music. In between a new Vietnamese dining concept.

95 Hai Ba Trung, D1
090 902 82 93
www.blanchystash.com



Chu Bar

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

158 Dong Khoi, D1



Harry Casual

The sports pub has five floors including inside/outside area on the ground floor, a lounge area, 4 pool tables, 6 dart boards and a rooftop bar. Along with good selection of 70s, 80s and 90s hits with attentive staff and pub grub.

R1/49 Hung Gia 3, PMH, D7



Ice Blue Bar

A small, atmospheric, emphatically English-style pub, Ice Blue is a popular meeting place for Ho Chi Minh City's expats with reasonably priced drinks, friendly staff and a cozy atmosphere. Great place to play darts.

54 Dong Khoi, D1



Last Call

Saigon's king of cool, Last Call is renowned for the finest cocktails in the mellowest of settings. Slink your way back to the Seventies in the velvety interior or watch over the passing crowds from the laid-back terrace. Funky (and even sexy) to the core, this classy establishment is fittingly close to the Sheraton.

59 Dong Du, D1
3823 3122



The Fan Club

The largest sports bar in Saigon, with all the live sports available on 12 large HD screens, an exciting place to watch your team win! A great selection of food & beverage. We also have a enclosed relaxing garden for the family.

The Vista, 628C Hanoi Highway, An Phu, D2
www.dtdentertainment.com
Facebook: The Fan Club

Also Try...

Cavern Pub

Stylish venue in one of the classier inner-city locales, Cavern entertains locals and expats alike with a live band every night, sports channels on a large TV screen, and a great atmosphere. Happy hour is from 6pm to 9:30pm (buy 2 beers – get 1 free). Live music is from 9:30pm-1am.

19 Dong Du, D1
090 826 5691

Chill Skybar

Offers the most stunning panoramic views of Saigon and a wide range of wines and cocktails personally prepared by Vietnam mixologist Le Thanh Tung.

Rooftop, AB Tower, 76A Le Lai, D1
3827 2372
www.chillsaigon.com

Donkey Bar

A new open air, but well cooled bar in the heart of Bui Vien on the site of the once popular

Stellar cafe. A cut above the regular backpacker haunts in style and offer. Downstairs is a modern bar with flat screen TVs showing sports, a huge circular bar and tables, and outdoor seating for people watching. Upstairs are air conditioned rooms, pool table and outdoor deck. Serves a wide variety of liquors, including wines by the glass or bot

Game On

Opened in July 2013, Game On is one of Saigon's biggest sports bar, serving breakfast, lunch and dinner. The bar also has an extensive drinks menu including coffees, juices, beers, wines, vodkas, and more. Game On also boasts a function room for corporate meetings or private parties.

115 Ho Tung Mau, D1
6251 9898
gameonsaigon@gmail.com

onTop Bar

Located on the 20th floor of Novotel

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

167 Hai Ba Trung, D3
3822 4866

Purple Jade

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

1st floor – InterContinental Asiana Saigon
3520 9099
6pm until late
dine@icasianasaigon.com

Red Bar

RED offers one of the longest Happy Hours in Saigon, from 9am - 9pm,

with live music available from Monday-Saturday. This multi-level bar has a non-smoking floor and a function room along with a top quality pool table and soft-tip dart machines. A menu of Eastern and Western dishes includes wood-fired pizzas.

70-72 Ng Duc Ke, D1
2229 7017

Saigon Saigon Bar

This iconic bar is a great place to watch the sun go down over the lights of the city and relax with friends. Live entertainment nightly, including their resident Cuban band, Q'vans from 9pm Wednesday to Monday.

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

CAFÉS



Café RuNam

No disappointments from this earnest local café 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 Bui, D1
www.caferrunam.com



Chat

A quaint café 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, Q4



Guanabana Smoothies

This Californian smoothie bar specializes in healthy all-natural smoothies using fresh fruits and vegetables from locally-sourced farms, with no condensed milk or artificial sweeteners added. Their smoothies can be enhanced with nutritional supplements such as green superfood, whey protein, and spirulina.

23 Ly Tu Trong, Q1
www.guanabanasmoothies.com



Les Saigonais

Les Saigonais houses a boutique, café and artist space in a charming mix of colonial flavor and contemporary settings. Visitors can check out Designer Dieu Anh's chic modern fashion line for men and women, along with accessories. There is also a quaint balcony where you can enjoy an afternoon coffee while watching the world go by.

1st Floor, 77-79 Ly Tu Trong, D1
Facebook: "LES SAIGONAIS"

LES SAIGONAIS
by dieuANH



The Library

The Library recaptures the romance of a bygone era while offering an all-day snack menu as well as the finest tea, coffee, wine and spirits in an elegant setting.

Ground floor – InterContinental Asiana Saigon
3520 9099
dine@icasianasaiagon.com



Windows

Centrally located near the Notre Dame Cathedral overlooking the 30/4 Park near the Reunification Palace, the café is a go-to place among the locals to see and be seen. It has outdoor and indoor air-conditioned seating.

12 Alexandre De Rhodes, D1

Also Try...

AQ Coffee

Pleasing colonial-style café permanently filled with the aroma of fresh coffee roasted with traditional methods, with a shady courtyard and quiet, peaceful atmosphere. Situated in one of the city's oldest mansions.

32 Pham Ngoc Thach, D3
3829 8344

Caffe Bene

A brand new café in the heart of District 1, marking the debut of a Korean coffee and dessert concept in Vietnam. When it opened queues stretched out the door with locals and expats alike eager to try the unique offer of European style coffee, blended drinks and sweet, creamy dessert and cakes. Modern, industrial designed interior spanning two floors, and with a corner site street frontage which cannot be missed!

58 Dong Khoi, D1
3822 4012
caffebenevietnam.com

Ciao Café

There's rarely a tourist who's been through inner-city Saigon and hasn't stopped in on the super-friendly-looking Ciao Café. It stands up well

as an expat mainstay too, with its fashionable décor that varies from floor to floor and its classic selection of Western café and bistro favorites.

74-76 Nguyen Hue, D1

3823 1130

FB Deli Coffee

The café offers signature coffee beans imported from Italy. Customers can also enjoy homemade cakes along with tiramisu, muffins and sandwiches. All cakes 50 percent off from 7pm-10pm.

SE-1 My Khanh 2 Apartments, D7

L'Usine

L'Usine is a retail, café and gallery space occupying two locations in the center of D1. Its retail space is dedicated to Vietnamese designers and more established brands from abroad as well as stocking a wide range of stationery and homeware items. The café in both locations serves international fare and a range of pastries and the ever-popular sweet & sour cupcakes.

151/1 Dong Khoi, D1
70B Le Loi, D1
www.lusinespace.tumblr.com
9am – 9pm



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facebook.com/tntbbqvietnam

CHINESE



Dragon Court

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

11-13 Lam Son Square, D1
3827 2566



Dynasty

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

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



Kabin

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

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



Li Bai

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

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



Ming Court

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

3rd floor, Nikko Saigon Hotel
235 Nguyen Van Cu, D1
3925 7777



Ming Dynasty

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

23 Nguyen Khac Vien, D7

Also Try...

Hung Ky Mi Gia

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

20 Le Anh Xuan, D1
3822 2673

Ocean Palace

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

2 Le Duan Street, D1
3911 8822

Seven Wonders (Bay Ky Quan)

The brainchild of an overseas Chinese/Vietnamese architect who wanted to build something extraordinary in his home town, this venue combines the architectural features of seven world heritage structures blended into one. The cuisine is just as eclectic with representative dishes from several major Chinese traditions.

12 Duong 26, D6

3755 1577

www.7kyquan.com

Shang Palace

Renowned as one of the finest restaurants in the city, Shang Palace boasts mouth-watering Cantonese and Hong Kong cuisine served in a warm and elegant atmosphere. Whether it be an intimate dinner for two or a larger group event, Shang Palace can cater for three-hundred guests including private VIP rooms. With more than fifty Dim-Sum items and over two-hundred delectable dishes to choose from, Shang Palace is an ideal rendezvous for any dining occasion.

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

Yu Chu

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

First floor, InterContinental Asiana

Saigon (Corner of Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan)

3520 9099

www.intercontinental.com/saigon



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

SPANISH



La Habana

Cuban venue with fine Spanish cuisine, Cuban cigars and German beer. A wide range of tapas and cocktails. Great bar atmosphere and late night entertainment.
6 Cao Ba Quat, D1
www.lahabana-saigon.com



Olé

With all the warmth you'd expect from a decent venue in this category, Olé serves authentic and tasty Spanish favorites with great tapas and highly-recommended paella. Family-run venue with a passion for great food and good service without undue fuss. Feel at home.
129B Le Thanh Ton, D1
012 6529 1711



Pacharan

Ho Chi Minh City's original Spanish restaurant. Pacharan occupies a high profile corner spot on Hai Ba Trung. Spread over four floors, it offers a casual bar, two floors of dining (one which becomes a destination for live Spanish music late at night) and a rooftop terrace. Features an extensive menu of tapas, main courses, sangria and wines.
97 Hai Ba Trung Street, D1
090 399 25 39



Tapas Saigon

Tasty tapas at Vietnamese prices not far from the center of District 1. Fresh ingredients, broad menu with food prepared by a Spanish chef. Best washed down with authentic house sangria.
53/26B Tran Khanh Du, D1
090 930 0803



VIVA! Tapas Bar & Grill

VIVA! Tapas Bar & Grill only uses the freshest ingredients, many imported from Spain, for the most authentic tapas experience in Saigon, starting from under VND50,000/plate. Cool décor, indoors and outdoors eating areas, a well stocked bar, and great wines from VND60,000/glass (sangria just VND130,000 per HALF liter). Delivery available.
90 Cao Trieu Phat, Phu My Hung, D7, HCMC
08 5410 6721
Facebook: "VIVATapasBar.PMH"



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www.woknroll.vn

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Baba's Kitchen

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

Open 11am to 11pm
 North & South Indian food

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

FRENCH



Augustin

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

10D Nguyen Thiep, D1

www.augustinrestaurant.com



La Creperie

The first authentic Breton French restaurant in the country, serving savory galettes, sweet crepes with tasty seafood and some of the best apple cider in Saigon.

17/7 Le Thanh Ton, D1

3824 7070

info@lacreperie.com

11am-11pm



La Fourchette

Small and cozy, La Fourchette is a favorite among the French expat community. The vintage posters and wood paneling add to the charm of this French eatery located right in downtown, a stone's throw from the Saigon River.

9 Ngo Duc Ke, D1

3829 8143

www.lafourchette.com.vn



Le Bacoulos

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

13 Tong Huu Dinh, D2

3519 4058

www.bacoulos.com



Le 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 on the ground floor.

30 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...

L'essentiel

L'essentiel offers a quiet intimate dining experience with space for private functions and alfresco dining on an upper floor. The food is fresh, traditional French, and the wine list is carefully collated.

98 Ho Tung Mau, D1

0948 415 646

La Cuisine

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

48 Le Thanh Ton

2229 8882

La Nicoise

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

56 Ngo Duc Ke, D1

3821 3056

La Villa

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

14 Ngo Quang Huy, D2

3898 2082

www.lavilla-restaurant.com.vn

Le Bouchon de Saigon

Delightful, welcoming French bistro that really puts on a show of fine quality and service. With its small-village atmosphere and exotic cuisine, this is one of the more atmospheric and high-aiming venues of the genre.

40 Thai Van Lung, D1

www.lebouchonsaigon.com

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.

18 Tong Huu Dinh, D2

3744 4585



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

INDIAN



Ashoka

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

Ashoka I

17/10 Le Thanh Ton, D1

08 3823 1372

Ashoka II

33 Tong Huu Dinh, Thao Dien, D2

08 3744 4144



Baba's Kitchen

One of Saigon's best-loved Indian venues, Baba's is dedicated to authenticity in its cuisine and fair prices. Tell them exactly what spice level you want and they'll cater to your tastes – from the mildest of butter chickens to the most volcanic vindaloo.

Always friendly.

164 Bui Vien, D1

49D Xa Lo Hanoi, D2

3838 6661



Bollywood

Known for its complete North & South Indian cuisine, Bollywood's specialty is its special chaat & tandoori dishes. Parties, events & catering services are available, with daily lunch tiffin and set menus. Free delivery in Phu My Hung. Complete menu on Facebook.

2213 1481 | 2245 0096 | 093 806 9433

Hotline: 0906357442 (English)

bollywoodvietnam@gmail.com

Facebook: bollywoodvietnamindiancuisine



Ganesh

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

38 Hai Ba Trung, D1

8223 0173

www.ganeshindianrestaurant.com



Saigon Indian

Saigon's original Indian eatery is still going strong, located in a bright, roomy upstairs venue in the heart of District 1. Authentic Indian cuisine at affordable prices; functions a specialty.

1st Floor, 73 Mac Thi Buoi, D1



Also Try...

Bombay Indian Restaurant

With its nice, central location and a very relaxed dining area and home-style atmosphere, Bombay is a superbly casual venue well-reputed for its authentic Indian cuisine and Halal cooking.

250 Bui Vien, D1,

9am - 10.30pm

Curry Leaf

A new restaurant in District 7, specializing in southern and northern Indian cuisine, which grew from the now closed Indus of D1. Fish, meat and vegetable dishes are cooked fresh in tandoor ovens with a commitment to authenticity. Boasts 20 different breads baked daily and six home made chutneys.

62 Hung Gia 5, D7

curryleafvietnam.com

The Punjabi

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

40/3 Bui Vien, D1

3508 3777

ITALIAN



Ciao Bella

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

11 Dong Du, D1
3822 3329
tonyfox56@hotmail.com
www.saiгонrestaurantgroup.com/ciao

Ciao Bella



Inter Nos

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

26 Le Van Mien, Thao Dien, D2
090 630 12 99
info@internos.vn
www.internos.vn
facebook.com/internossaigon



La Bettola

Chef/owner Giuseppe Amorello combines sleek decor with traditional home cooking in this two-story centrally-located Italian eatery. Expect creative dishes such as rucola e Gamberi as well as La Bettola that includes shaved porchetta, focaccia and homemade mozzarella. There's a wood-burning oven on the premises and they try to hand-make all their ingredients. They also deliver.

84 Ho Tung Mau, D1
3914 4402
www.labettolasaigon.com



La Cucina

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

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



La Hostaria

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

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



LovEat

Mediterranean food meets the Italian flair at LovEat. Home made scrumptious dishes are served in exquisite setting, that embodies the métier and the spirit of a modern bistro with an atmosphere that is warm and welcoming in the heart of the city. Black mussels, slow cooked ribs, tiramisu are some of the signatures dishes of LovEat's extensive menu.

29 Hai Trieu, D1
086 260 2727
www.loveat.vn



Also Try...

Casa Italia

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

86 Le Loi, D1
3824 4286

Opera

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

2 Lam Son Square, D1

Pendolasco

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

87 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 8181

Pizza 4P's

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

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

Pomodoro

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

79 Hai Ba Trung
3823 8998



JAPANESE



Achaya Café

Achaya Café has two floors providing a nice atmosphere for meetings, relaxation or parties. The menu is extensive with drinks and Western, Japanese, and Vietnamese food – from sandwiches, spaghetti, pizzas, steak and special Japanese sweet desserts.

90 Le Loi, D1
093 897 2050

11am - 10:30pm



Blanchy Street

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

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



Ebisu

Serving neither sushi nor sashimi, Ebisu's menu instead focuses on a range of wholesome charcoal-grilled meals and on thick, white Japanese udon noodles – made from imported udon powder from Australia – and presenting an overall rustic cuisine with a variety of good sakes.

35bis Mac Dinh Chi, D1
3822 6971
ductm@incubation-vn.com
www.ebisu-vn.asia



Gyumaru

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

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



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



Monde

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

7 bis Han Thuyen, D1

Also Try...



K Cafe

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

74A4 Hai Ba Trung, D1
38245355
www.yakatabune-saigon.com

Chisana Nishi

Serves authentic Japanese cuisine including sashimi, sushi, tempura, sukiyaki and shabu shabu.

River Garden, 170 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
6683 5308

Osaka Ramen

This sleek, open-kitchen contemporary eatery serves up Japanese noodles starting from VND78,000. There are also

set menus, individual dishes and a range of smaller, appetizing sides.

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

Robata Dining An

The restaurant has a downstairs bar and a second floor with private rooms that have sunken tables, sliding fusuma doors and tabletop barbecues. Popular with the Japanese expats, the menu serves up healthy appetizers, rolls, sashimi and An specialty dishes like deep fried chicken with garlic salt sauce An style.

15C Le Thanh Ton, D1
www.robata-an.com

Sushi Dining Aoi

Sushi Dining Aoi is one such restaurant, where the whole atmosphere of the place evokes the best of the culture.

With its typical Japanese-style decor – the smooth earthen tones of the wooden furniture and surrounds, the warmth and privacy of the VIP rooms – it's possible to believe you're in a more elegant realm.

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

Yoshino

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

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

KOREAN



Galbi Brothers

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

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



Kang Nam Ga

An exceptionally refined style of Korean BBQ fit out with high-tech smokeless racks, Kang Nam Ga is fast becoming the Korean go-to venue for a wide-ranging and clean introduction to the cuisine. Delicious beef sets and the infamous and eminently popular ginseng chicken soup – all Kangnam style.

6B Le Quy Don, D3
3933 3589
kangnamga@gmail.com



Lee Cho

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

48 Hung Phuoc 2, D7
5410 1086



Seoul House

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

33 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3829 4297



Won's Cuisine

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

49 Mac Thi Buoi
3820 4085



THAI



Baan Thai

Stylish modern restaurant with a superb bar, Baan Thai serves authentic Thai cuisine with additional local and European twists. Friendly venue with large screen TVs for casual entertainment.

55 Thao Dien, D2
3744 5453
www.baanthai-anphu.com

Koh Thai

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

Kumho Linh, Hai Ba Trung, D1
3823 4423

Lac Thai

Hidden away down a narrow alley in the heart of downtown this unique Thai restaurant boasts authentic flavours and surprising character. Eat downstairs at tables in a cosy, themed environment - or be brave and climb the narrow

spiral staircase to the attic and crouch on cushions in true Thai style while attentive staff serve plates to share.

71/2 Mac Thi Buoi St. D1
3823 7506

Tuk Tuk Thai Bistro

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

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

The Racha Room

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

12-14 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
090 879 14 12

STEAKHOUSE



Au Lac Do Brazil

Au Lac do Brazil is the very first authentic Brazilian Churrascaria in Vietnam, bringing a new dining concept - an "All you can eat" Brazilian style BBQ where meat is brought to your table on skewers by a passador and served to your heart's content.

238 Pasteur, D3
3820 7157 | 090 947 8698
www.aulacdobrazil.com



El Gaucho

High end steakhouse with fine American and Wagyu beef steaks along with traditional Argentinian specialties. Outlets in Hanoi and Bangkok too. Expect to pay for the quality. Reservations recommended.

74/1 Hai Ba Trung, Ben Nghe Ward, D1.
5D Nguyen Sieu, D1
Unit CRI-12, The Crescent, Phu My Hung, D7
www.elgaucho.asia



Indaba

Indaba Steakhouse combines German style steak and Italian coffee under one roof. Expect fusion dishes like Indaba Spring Rolls, Mexican BBQ Spare Ribs, and Grilled Duck Breast served with sesame sauce, steamed rice and salad.

35 Ly Tu Trong, D1
3824 8280
www.facebook.com/indabacafe



New York Steakhouse

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

25-27 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D1



Nossa Steakhouse

A stylish restaurant featuring Italian cuisine and Western steaks with a wide selection of imported steaks from Australian and the US. Nossa brings food and decor together to create a cozy ambiance. With an attention to bringing authentic flavors, we provide good food, good prices and good taste. Special promotion for first year anniversary: Buy 1 steak get 2nd steak 50% off.

36 Pham Hong Thai, D1
0938 584 188 / www.nossa.vn

NOSSA
 STEAKHOUSE



Samba Brazilian Steakhouse

Serving the popular Brazilian buffet style, where enormous skewers of meat are circulated around the tables for diners to enjoy as much of as they can.

10C Thai Van Lung, D1
3822 0079

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VIETNAMESE



Com Nieu

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

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



Frangipani Hoa Su

Frangipani Hoa Su offers Vietnamese cuisine with a variety of dishes from different parts of Vietnam ranging from pho, bun bo Hue to mi quang. It serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. It also has an open space and a VIP air-conditioned room together which can hold a maximum capacity of 500 people, making it an ideal venue for different types of events and functions.

26 Le Van Mien, D2
frangipani.restobar@gmail.com



Papaya

Brightly-styled and perfectly lovely, this is a minimalist local venue with international appeal that features a menu designed by the former head chef of Hanoi's Sofitel Metropole. Refined and distinguished without a hint of being stuck-up about it and very affordable.

68 Pham Viet Chanh, Binh Thanh
6258 1508
papaya@chi-nghia.com
www.chi-nghia.com



Quan Bui

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

17a Ngo Van Nam, D1
3829 1515



Quan Na - Vegishouse

A Vietnamese vegetarian and vegan restaurant that uses the freshest ingredients to create dishes such as fresh spring rolls, sticky rice, curry specialties and coconut-based desserts. Decor is swathed in dark mahogany wood and red curtains.

796/7 Truong Sa, Ward 14, D3
Opening time: 10:30am-2pm; 5pm-9pm
9526 2958
Facebook: quanna.vegishouse



Red Door

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

400/8 Le Van Sy, D3
012 0880 5905
Facebook: "Reddoorrestaurant"

Also Try...

3T Quan Nuong

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

Top Floor, 29 Ton That Hiep, D1
3821 1631

Banh Xeo 46A

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

46A Dinh Cong Trang, D1

Cha Ca La Vong

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

36 Ton That Thiep, D1

Cuc Gach Quan

Deservedly one of the highest ranking Vietnamese restaurants in Saigon on

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

10 Dang Tat, D1
3848 0144

Highway 4

The menu reflects the ambiance of the north and wider Vietnam, although dishes are carefully selected to meet a more universal palate.

101 Vo Van Tan, D3
www.highway4.com

Hoa Tuc

Relaxing, airy indoor-outdoor venue serving gourmet-style local food. The ideal place to take visitors from abroad if you want to impress them with an authentic Vietnamese dining experience. Set in the refinery courtyard that formerly officially produced the region's opium.

74/7 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3825 1676

Hum

Hum is a vegetarian restaurant where food are prepared on site from various fresh beans, nuts, vegetables, flowers,

and fruits. Food are complemented with special drinks mixed from fresh fruits and vegetables.

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

May

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

3/5 Hoang Sa
3910 1277

Nha Hang Ngon

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

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

Temple Club

Named after the old-style Chinese temple in which the venue is located, the ancient stylings of this impressive

restaurant make for an unforgettable evening spent somewhere in Saigon's colonial past. Beautiful oriental art that will please all diners and great local cuisine.

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

Thanh Nien

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

11 Nguyen Van Chiem, D1
3822 5909
www.vnnavi.com/restaurants/thanhvien

Propaganda Bistro

Spring rolls and Vietnamese street food with a Western twist. Serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. The restaurant features hand-painted wall murals in an authentic propaganda style.

21 Han Thuyen, D1
3822 9048
www.facebook.com/Propaganda-Saigon

INTERNATIONAL



Boathouse

With a great view of the Saigon River, this restobar serves imported steak, healthy salads and much more in an alfresco environment.

40 Lily Road, An Phu Superior Compound, D2
3744 6790

www.boathouse.com.vn



MAY Restaurant and Bar

We have over 20 years experience in hospitality business in Vietnam with some famous Brand such as Shadow Bar & Café and MAY Restaurant & Bar.

MAY- short for 'Me and You', it is all in one premium casual kitchen & bar downtown. Located centrally on the historic Dong Khoi street with a fusion of Western and Asian cuisine and pride themselves in their wine list and international standard of service. Happy Hour from 3pm to 7pm. You can even receive a 10% discount by calling 091 711 1921 or make reservation at www.mayrestaurant.com.vn.

19 -21 Dong Khoi, D1 / 8am - 1am
6291 3686 / 0917 111 921
may.restaurant19@gmail.com
Facebook: "may.restaurant.bar"



Portofino

Portofino serves cicchetti - a tradition from Venice best likened to Spanish tapas, but usually served in larger portions, featuring cheeses, salad, pasta, prawns, pork, beef, salmon and seafood. Highlights for innovation: Trippa alla Romana - tripe with chickpeas, marinara sauce and fried egg; Slow braised pork belly served on mascarpone polenta; and Mozzarella in Carozza - breaded fresh mozzarella, anchovy and basil toasted with pomodoro sauce.

15 Dong Du, D1



Saffron

The first thing that will strike you when you enter Saffron is the terracotta pots mounted on the ceiling. Located on Dong Du, this restaurant offers Mediterranean food, some with a distinct Asian influence added for further uniqueness. Prepare to order plates to share and don't miss the signature Cheese Saganaki! Guests are welcomed with complimentary Prosecco, fresh baked bread served with garlic, olive tapenade and hummus.

51 Hai Ba Trung, D1
382 48358



TnT BBQ

TnT BBQ delivers authentic American BBQ right to your doorstep. This delivery only BBQ joint specializes in smoked ribs, chicken, beef brisket, pulled pork and turkey breast.

0166 666 7858
11am - 10pm
facebook.com/tnbbqvietnam



Zombie BBQ

Zombie BBQ is a modern American BBQ restaurant featuring smoked ribs over Beachwood smoke for 8 hours. Offerings include BBQ chicken specialties from around the world as well as Alligator, Fresh Jalapeño poppers, Mexican street tacos with grilled meats as well as Vegetarian food. A never ending parade of meats find their way into the spit roaster as well as new creations every week.

628A Vo Truong Toan, District 2
6685 3756 / 09 1851 0139
4pm - 11pm
Facebook: ZombieBarbequesaigon



Also Try...

Boomarang Bistro

Located in The Crescent by the lake, the spacious Boomarang Bistro Saigon serves Australian and other Western food in the most pedestrian friendly, relaxed part of town.

107 Ton Dat Tien, D7
3841 3883
www.boomarang.com.vn

Chit Chat

Daily menu change for their breakfast and dinner buffets, served in a relaxing atmosphere with eight live cooking stations with over 60 varieties of domestic and international dishes. A meeting place to enjoy a cup of coffee from selected premium blends and delicious homemade pastries and cakes.

Hotel Equatorial
242 Tran Binh Trong, D5
3839 7777
info@hcm.equatorial.com
www.equatorial.com

Corso Steakhouse & Bar

With an extensive wine menu, contemporary Asian cuisine and wide range of juicy, sizzling steaks cooked to your liking by our professional Chefs, Corso Steakhouse & Bar is the perfect choice for a special celebration or formal business dinner.

117 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3829 5368 ext 6614
www.norfolkhotel.com.vn

Deutsches Eck / German Corner

The restaurant is fast becoming known for its sausage, beers, and their Schweins Haxe or pork knuckles (served with white cabbage and mashed potatoes). A number of German beers to select from including Konig Pilsener, Bitburger, Koestritzer Black Beer, Benediktiner Weisse, HB-Hofbrau Weisse, Schwarzbrau Exquisit, and Schwarzbrau Weisse. A001 Nguyen Van Linh St., Phu My Hung, D7
54106695

Hog's Breath

An Australian family diner and bar concept. Renowned for steaks, seafood and other Western fare served in an informal environment. Smoke-free indoors.

Ground Floor, Bitexco Financial Tower
2 Hai Trieu, D1
www.hogsbreathcafe.com.vn

Khoi Thom

Khoi Thom has evolved into an authentic Mexican-style cantina serving home-style dishes, many from the Mexican chef's family. With bright colors, a large breezy outdoor deck with an open bar and a long street frontage, Khoi Thom has earned respect for its adventurous hues and style since opening.

29 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3
www.khoithom.com

La Fenetre Soleil

Literally 'window to the sun', LFS showcases a fusion of old-world fittings (exposed bricks, antique furniture and chandeliers) with new-

world elements (fur cushions, mosaic tiles and glass tables). Serves a range of cocktails, imported beer, coffee and smoothies together with a Japanese-Vietnamese fusion menu.

4 Ly Tu Trong, D1

Market 39

Market 39 unites the best of East and West in a buffet and a la carte dining experience, along with one of the best Sunday brunch buffets in town.

6am - 10pm
Ground floor - InterContinental Asiana Saigon
3520 9099
dine@icasianasaigon.com

Scott & Binh's

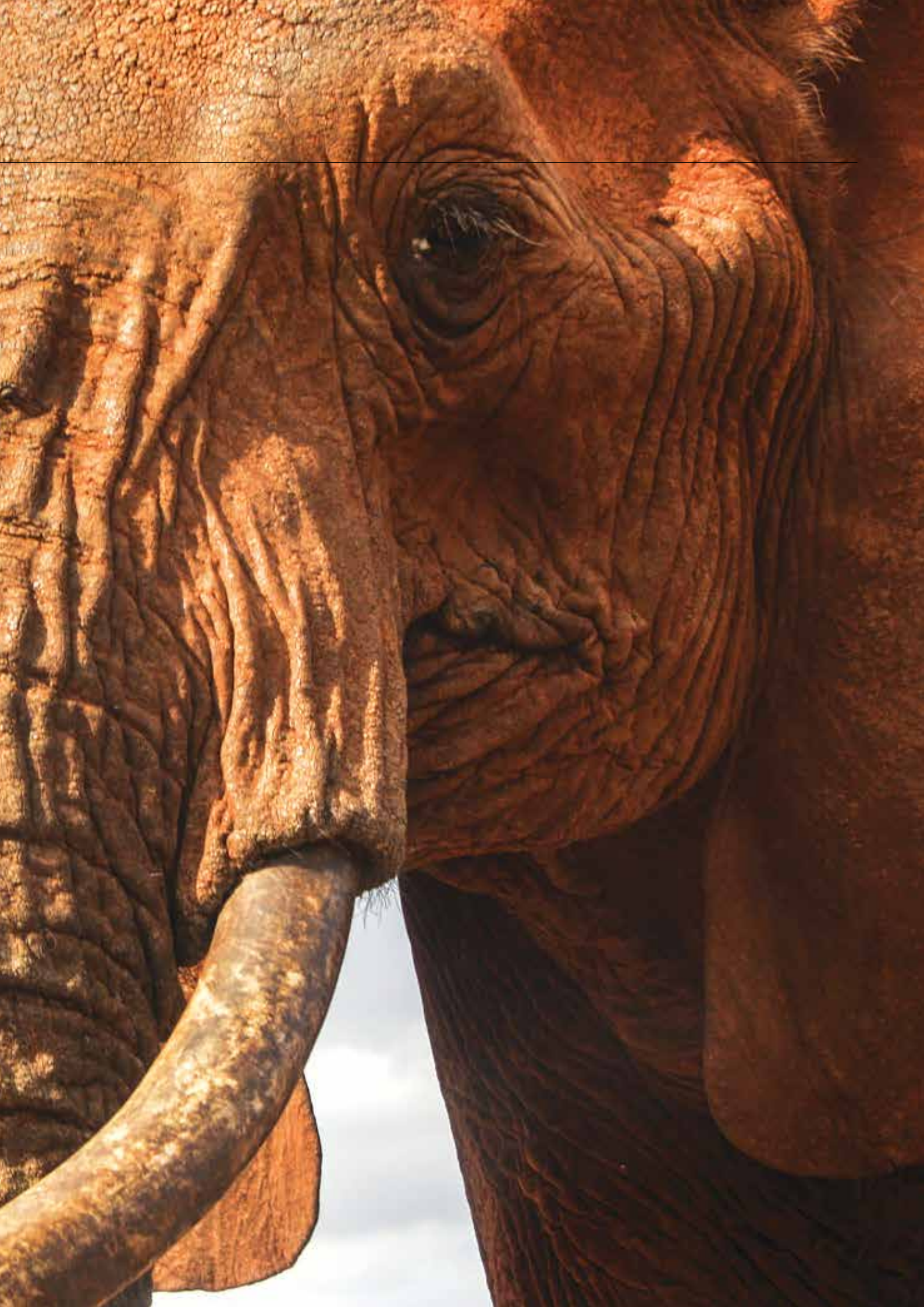
All-heart Western cuisine and family friendly venue in the D7 neighborhood. Scrupulous attention to good service and a commitment to great food that makes customers happy.

15-17 Cao Trieu Phat, D7

Travel & Leisure

IMAGE BY REBECCA JOHNSTON





Into Africa

Getting close to nature on a safari

TEXT BY ADAM PICKARD IMAGES BY REBECCA JOHNSTON



MANY PEOPLE DREAM of going on an African safari: seeing lions lazing in the sun, elephants herding their calves to watering holes and thousands of wildebeests and zebras sweeping across the plains. Much of what we know about African wildlife comes from what we see on TV shows and nature documentaries, however, nothing compares to seeing it in real life.

There isn't anything like seeing animals in their natural habitat. Everything they do is exciting to watch, from a giraffe stretching its long neck reaching for leaves on top of a tree to a pack of lions hunting their prey. Last summer we went to Kenya to discover why so many people travel here to go on an African safari.

"Safari" in Swahili means "journey" and Kenya has long been known as one of the

best places to go on one. The flat landscape and scattered trees make it easier to spot wild animals and East Africa is home to some of the most fascinating animals on the planet. Like many, we headed to Kenya in search of the big five - elephant, lion, buffalo, leopard and rhino, along with the lesser known ugly five - hyena, vulture, wildebeest, warthog and marabou stork.

On the way into the park we stopped off at a local shop to get water supplies for the day's trip. We spoke to a Kenyan customer there who was telling us the best times to see different animals. He also said we would be extremely lucky to see any lions at all but luckily he was wrong, we saw loads!

Being in the wild is an amazing experience. Waking up to the sound of birds singing with lions roaring in the distance, then looking

out of the lodge window to see zebras and elephants marching across the plain, all before heading out in a jeep to spot more wildlife. The most exhilarating thing about being in the wild is that anything can happen. On the second morning of our trip we all got into our jeep and headed off down a dirt path, turned a corner and all of a sudden there was an enormous elephant standing in front of us. The driver stopped the vehicle and we all froze as this massive animal twice the size of our jeep stared at us. It was scary but extremely exciting. He looked at us for a while and then went back to eating when he realized we weren't a threat.

There are many national parks and nature reserves throughout Kenya used to preserve the local wildlife. There is the Masai Mara, which has a great number of wildebeests

and zebras migrating across the Serengeti. Amboseli has spectacular views of Mount Kilimanjaro while Tsavo is famous for huge red elephants and lions. Visitors travel to these parks every year to get as close as they can to nature and you really can get close.

At one point we were only ten feet away from a herd of elephants taking a deserved drink from a small watering hole. They all stood in a protective circle around the calves as they washed each other using their trunks. Being this close to them was truly magical.

Tsavo is one of the largest game reserves in Kenya, so huge that it's split into an east and west side. We often felt like we were the only ones there as the reserve is so large. Tsavo west is the more popular section because of its magnificent scenery, black rhino sanctuary and Mzima springs, which has an underwater viewing platform where hippos and crocodiles can be spotted floating in the water. We went on a walking tour around the springs with a local guide who was wearing military gear and had a very large gun - apparently the crocodiles come onto land sometimes so you always have to be careful.

Eye Opener

A typical safari day starts with a 6am wakeup call to see the beautiful African sunrise. This is also when the animals are most active. Lions are just setting off on their hunt, elephants are leading their calves to find water and baby baboons are full of energy and causing mischief, and they do cause mischief. One morning we saw a baboon steal a lady's handbag just to get at her bottle of fizzy drink.

All the drivers in the tour group had radios so if a jeep spotted a group of lions bathing in the sun they would call in their location. We wouldn't have seen half the animals we saw if it wasn't for the other drivers on the radios.

We were driving along and heard a man on the radio speaking Swahili, the only word we understood was "*simba*," Swahili for "lion." Another driver had seen a pack of them not far from where we were and was telling us to get there fast. Our driver spun around and headed for their location, arriving just in time to see a pack sneaking in the bushes up to a herd of buffalo. We silently watched them, waiting for something to happen. All of a sudden they all sprung into action and chased the herd until one of the buffalo fell behind. It was over so quickly; the buffalo was down and the lions started resting after their hunt.

We felt like explorers. It is incredibly thrilling not knowing what or when you will see anything. Sometimes hours passed without a single sighting but it never gets boring. Most of the day is spent exploring the vast open land. Around lunch time the jeeps head over to one of the safari lodges for something to eat before heading back out until nightfall. In the private reserves some lodges have nighttime safaris, offering the chance to see nocturnal animals such as genets and hyenas.

The national parks have several lodges in the middle of the savannah, with nothing



around but nature. These lodges are extremely relaxing after a long day exploring. We sat for hours in the evenings, drinking cocktails and watching wildlife going about their everyday business.

Each lodge has its own unique element. We stayed in three different ones during our journey. Voi safari lodge is famous for its underground viewing hide. Elephants can be observed in their natural habitat as close as possible without disturbing them. Ngulia safari lodge gives you a chance to see a leopard up close. Every night they put out a huge piece of meat and very often a leopard comes looking for dinner, the leopard came as we were freshening up in our room. As we were getting ready we heard a man out in the corridor banging

on all the doors yelling “leopard, leopard, leopard!” We rushed out to the viewing area and saw the leopard devouring the chunk of meat that had been left. Then there is Salt-lick lodge which is by far the best. It has a series of round lodges set up high on stilts, allowing for a great view of the animals congregating around the water holes below and the elephants get so close you can almost touch them.

Traditionally safari goes travel by jeep but now there are plenty of other options to consider such as a fly in safari, a walking safari or even a ride in a hot air balloon - this will give you an entirely different view and experience. You can book one before you go and then once you arrive in Kenya, the safari tour company will pick you up

from your hotel and drive you straight to the national parks. We did our trip with Pollmans Safari. Even the drive to the park felt like an adventure; the journey was a great way to see what local life is like in Kenya. We were taken through several remote villages along the way. Kenya on the whole was a real eye opener and we recommend it for a first time safari.

BIO: Adam and Becky are a couple from England who enjoy traveling and exploring new places. They have traveled to a number of different places across the world and this summer will be embarking on a whole new adventure. You can follow their adventures on their travel blog adventureawaitsus.com or on their Twitter [@Adventure_Blog](https://twitter.com/Adventure_Blog). ■



The Third Korea

The autonomous prefecture of Yanbian is a slice of Korea in China

TEXT BY MICHAEL ARNOLD



EVERY SEASON IS the best time to visit Yanbian – I chose autumn, when the forestlands of Eastern Jilin are overcome by auburns and golds just days into the fall. It's as if the wind itself has laid the trees with copper leaf, spreading through the woods at the pace of ocean tides. They say that to see the old Korea, you really have to come here, to China. Seoul has been Starbuckified to a pulp, Pyongyang's had all its color permanently beaten out of it, and only Chinese Yanbian – the little-known third Korea – holds on to something of the traditional grace that invigorates this exquisite region. Beyond its current national borders, the old Korean nation survives in Yanbian, with its wood-framed homes roofed in rice straw, the old *kang* beds and shin-high dinner tables heated from below, the men in their white baggy pants and women in billowing *hanboks*, the same old folk dances and songs sung at dawn beneath the giant pines, just as they've always been sung.

Any train headed for Yanbian bursts into

the region from the industrial Manchurian northeast as the rail lines plunge into the untouched native pine forest, the bleak landscape of the Chinese hinterland suddenly vanishing behind them. Tigers and black bears still roam within those woods, and as I watched the watercolor hues of the forest strobing across the glass windows of my carriage, I could almost see them peering at me with their glassy eyes from beyond the treeline.

I was on my way to visit Changbaishan, the sacred mountain considered the birthplace of the Manchu and Korean peoples. Look at any photo of it and you'll just want to be there – the clouds reflected in the pure, turquoise lake enclosed by the jagged lip of the volcanic crater, perched high above the ocean-like forest that surrounds it in all directions. The destination is so unique that I'd have imagined it would attract hundreds of thousands of visitors every year, with people queuing up in airports all over the world to catch a flight just to go and see it. In fact, the

area is only mildly touched by the tourism industry, and despite there now being modern highway links to the region, it's still relatively remote and difficult to get to. As it stands, however, Changbaishan remains a destination that deserves the considerable effort it takes to reach it.

Antu

The train pulls in to Antu, one of the towns closest to the mountain, where I'll stay before making the ascent. Antu is Yanbian's major prefecture, but the residential precinct itself is modest in scale. Most of Antu is an official natural preservation zone for its unique forest and water systems, and for its rare variety of Korean pine tree, the Changbai Pine. Ethnic Koreans roam the woods in search of rare medicinal herbs, edible mushrooms, fruits and honeys – passing squirrels, otters and badgers along the way, ever watchful for forest beasts, lynx and leopard, tiger and bear.

If there was any doubt that I was in Korean China, a glance at any store or street sign

would confirm it. The older generation are fluent in Chinese but literate only in Korean – and so on public signs, Hangeul takes pride of place over Chinese, added almost as an afterthought for the benefit of the Han Chinese population who are present but outnumbered – many of whom have learnt to speak Korean anyway to improve communications between the two interwoven cultures.

I needed breakfast, and chose a small, turquoise hut that seemed to have a mixture of Chinese and Korean meals on offer. Most good, cheap Chinese restaurants have warm steamed buns and dumplings or a hot rice porridge for breakfast, but this had all that and more – plates of pickled vegetables and spicy green chilies to chew on as you swallowed down the mouthfuls of rice and doughy bread. Some officials from the railway station were all kneeling around one small table, sectioned off in a traditionally-raised side room with heated flooring and sliding doors that was filling slowly with steam and the smoke from their morning cigarettes. They spoke in rolling, chuggy syllables of Korean, and joked with each other in Chinese.

Antu town is worth exploring for its proximity to the forest. I wandered along the river bank, decorated with street lanterns in the shape of great red Chinese knots, and crossed the bridge over the river. Elderly Korean women were doing their washing along the bank on the opposite side, and carrying the baskets of clothes back across the bridge, balanced on their heads in traditional Korean fashion.

The dirt paths winding up the slopes of Er Long Shan Park passed beneath trees with lemon yellow and crimson leaves, red dragonflies and copper ladybugs flying up among the branches and down across the straw-colored grasses. Through the trees, the farmlands of Antu were clearly visible;

small old homes with wooden verandas all in line alongside broad fields, orchards and vineyards, and small cleared plots of land at the forest edge. Antu itself was an assortment of politely-angled roofs, small chimneys and brick walls, the unmistakable pastel-shade window frames you can see all over Chinese Dongbei opening onto small alleyways.

Night in Antu had to be celebrated with a real Korean feast. Just down from the railway station is a distinctively-decorated restaurant serving all the Korean Chinese favorites – bright red *kim chi* and tofu broth, hot potato cakes, mixed spicy vegetables and of course, Korean barbeque. I watched uncomfortably as fellow diners slurped their way through that most horrific of Korean delicacies – dog meat hotpot. Large posters of surgically-perfect Korean actresses holding bottles of potent *soju* smiled down approvingly from the restaurant walls.

The Mountain

I'd put aside the whole of the following day to experience Changbaishan itself. Getting to the summit of the mountain is done in a series of phases, each with its own admission fee. I agreed on a price for a three-hour taxi ride to the park gates, and immediately wished I hadn't as we sailed past the bus station with frequent services to the same destination. I regretted this decision again upon my arrival, as the entry ticket to Changbaishan Park is still 16 kilometers away from the mountain, and in order to be carried the final distance, I had to pay an entry fee for my driver as well.

I had to fork out a third figure for a pass to the mountain proper once I'd been dropped off – but at this stage I had far less concerns about the cost, as it was immediately obvious that the destination itself was worth everything I'd paid so far. I was approached by another tout to ask if I needed to be driven to the summit, but I wouldn't hear

of passing up the opportunity to take the stairs along a pathway that creeps upwards alongside the world's highest volcanic waterfall. Cascading 68 meters from the crater, the water tumbles from the self-replenishing crater lake at 2,189 meters above sea level, and is the source of three great rivers through Jilin Province: the Songhua, the Tumen, and the Yalu, the last of which divides China and North Korea to the south of the Changbaishan mountain range.

The mountain itself is a dormant volcano that has erupted six times since the beginning of the Qing dynasty, which, being a Manchu rulership, regarded it as the sacred crown of the holy Manchurian homeland. It also holds profound spiritual value for the Korean people, and the mountain (known to them as Paekdusan) forms part of their northern border that now bisects the lake. On occasion, foreign tourists wandering innocently around the crater are arrested for illegally crossing an international boundary line.

The hour-long climb to the summit is a challenge, especially considering the freezing late-autumn winds that blow through the covered passageways constructed about the long, stone stairway – but the arrival at the peak is breathtaking. A short hike along the river back from the falls (where the ground is a carpet of tiny towers of balanced stones laid by Korean visitors), and I was standing at the edge of the Lake of Celestial Bathing, no less captivating than the photographs suggest. They say the lake is a magical place – you can often see two different weather systems on each side of the mountain as if they're too respectful to pass over the peak. Others say there are monsters beneath the waters. It's true that the feeling is magical – more than deserving of the pilgrimage it takes to arrive, across kilometers of ancient forest, long, winding pathways, and many an unscrupulous ticket seller. ■

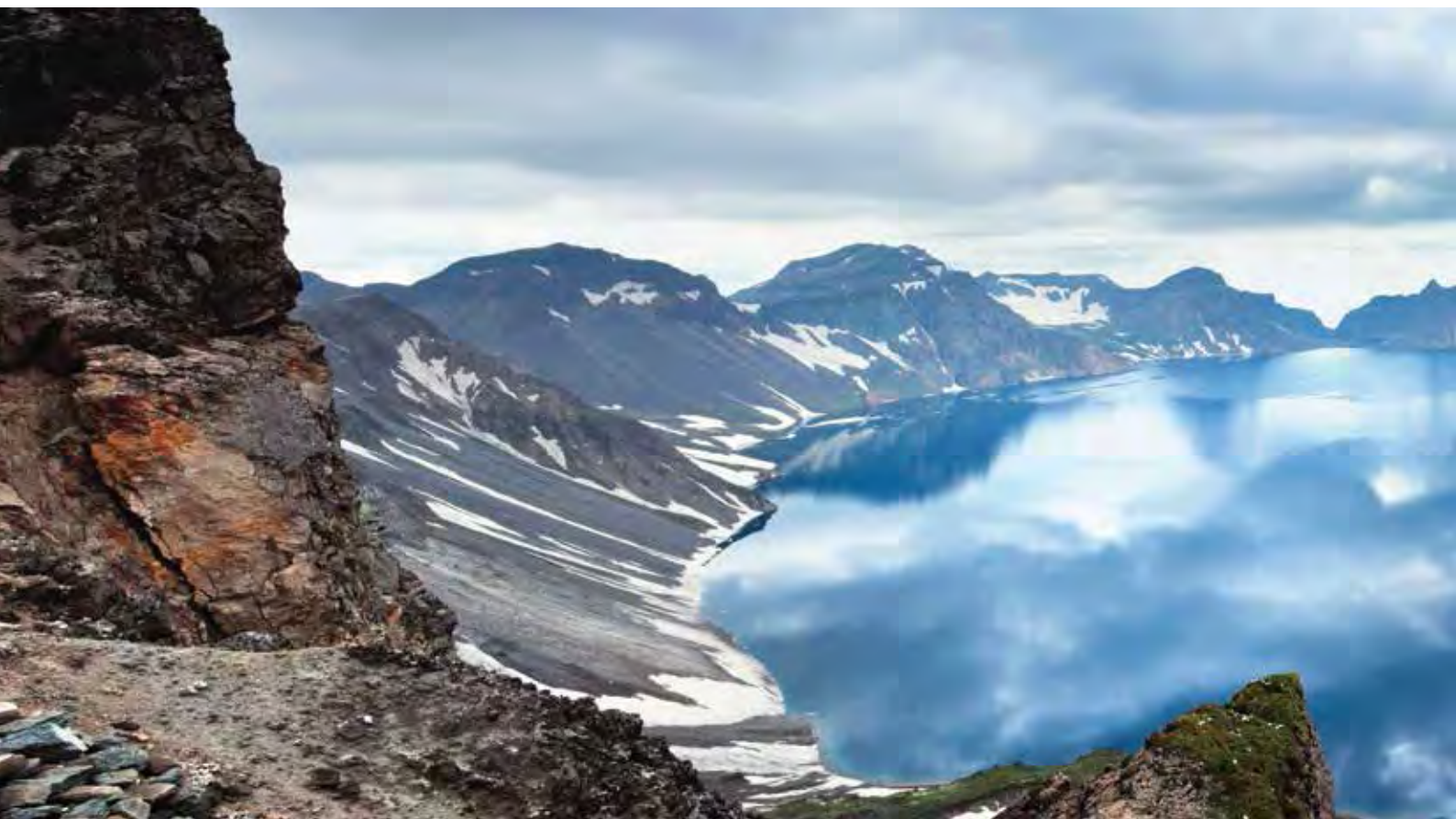




IMAGE BY AARON SORRELL



Ommmmm

Drawing and mindfulness brings beauty to the ordinary



A professional artist and author of *A Week in Hoi An*, Bridget March specializes in urban landscapes and aims to reveal the hidden treasures of city life and small town cultures through her illustrations. Bridget offers art classes and sketching tours in Ho Chi Minh City. For more of Bridget's work, visit bridgetmarch.co.uk

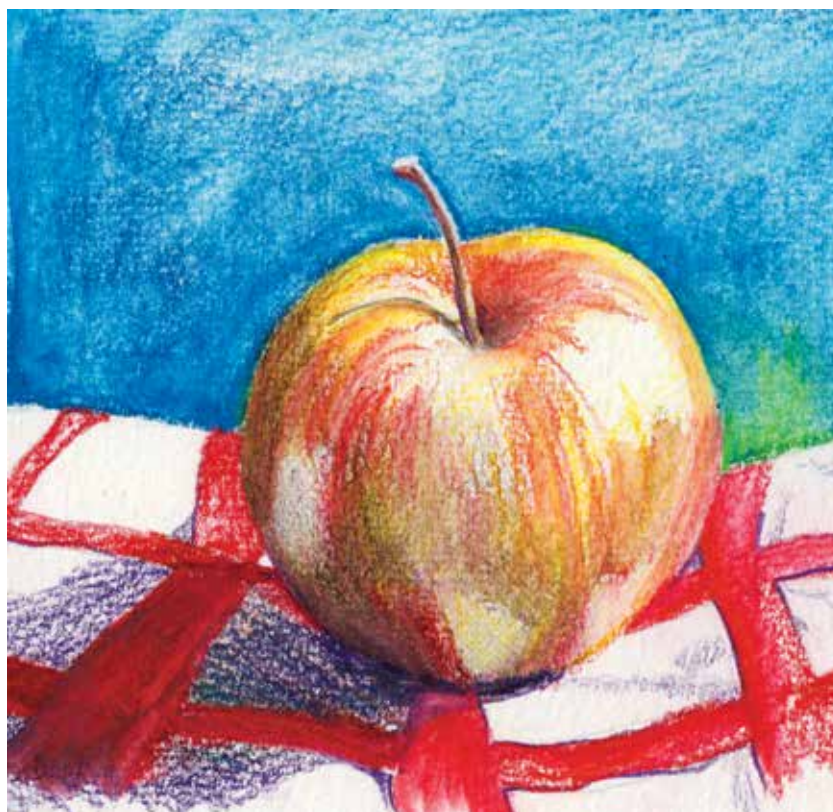


ILLUSTRATION BY BRIDGET MARCH

SINCE I WAS about 16, I enjoyed sitting within a landscape to draw it. However, I would often spend more time searching for the most picturesque view than I actually spent drawing. I was so keen to produce a perfect picture to please my audience that I didn't understand a beautiful drawing does not come from the object but from the heart and mind of the artist.

It is probable that anyone can draw an apple. It is possible that some can draw it perfectly in the style of a botanical drawing. For an artist to move you, however, it takes total immersion and complete surrender to create an image of an apple that evokes the summers of your childhood, the warmth

of harvesting in an orchard heady with the scent of ripening fruit. Russet and gold, plucked with a remaining stalk and a clinging leaf, falling into a generous basket brimming with sweet goodness. The painting of an apple sitting on a napkin casting a long shadow from the late afternoon sun might even make your mouth water.

This level of concentration comes when the artist is able to look at the apple as if he has never seen one before: to take in every tone, every curve, shadow and highlight and describe it using pencil, pastel, paint or collage. The artist must suspend all previous understanding on the color, texture and

shape of apples and simply draw what is seen.

While drawing, the artist may experience thoughts about the apple. He may wonder where it grew, what kind of landscape the tree stood in, what kind of person harvested it and how it arrived at the place where it now sits. If he picked the apple himself, he will experience the emotions and memories that the activity involved; emotions that do not evolve into words, emotions that can only be expressed by the movement of his hand and the manipulation of the materials. The result may be a work of art that we can call beautiful and it will be a beauty that each one of us experiences within, a beauty that doesn't need words to express.

A lifetime of drawing has revealed that drawing is similar to meditation. When I read about the practice of "mindfulness," I feel as if I am reading about the practice of drawing. Many of my students agree that they experience many of the same benefits through drawing as they do through meditating. To draw well the artist has to be completely 'in the moment,' to exclude all thoughts of the past and the future, to only be concerned with 'the now.'

I always found meditation to be very difficult. The act of concentrating on my breathing or staring at a single point in an attempt to count to ten to the exclusion of all other thoughts was more than I could manage. I was a failure! But these days I find it easy to slip into a state of sub-consciousness to quiet my mind. This is a technique I have learned through drawing rather than attending meditation classes. Apart from the obvious benefits to my mental health, I have also become more relaxed about my drawing practice and realized that it is better to bring out the beauty in ordinary things than it is to seek out beauty for its own sake. Ommmmm. ■

Documenting Your Travels

From Old School to high tech, how to preserve your travel memories

I LOVE EVERYTHING about travel, even the pre-travel planning — hours spent poring over guidebooks, websites and blogs to figure out what to do, see and eat while being sure to leave enough time for the serendipity. Then there's the actual travel where getting lost and spending hours people watching and soaking up the atmosphere are things I look forward to. But what happens when you come home? It'd be a shame to let all those travel moments fade into oblivion or run together into one big blur. What was the name of that hole-in-the-wall restaurant where you had that amazing slow-roasted Greek lamb? Or that boutique Beijing *hutong* hotel that had the friendliest staff and free cookies?

As someone who likes to savor every experience, I love documenting my travels so that I can relive them weeks, months or even years afterwards.

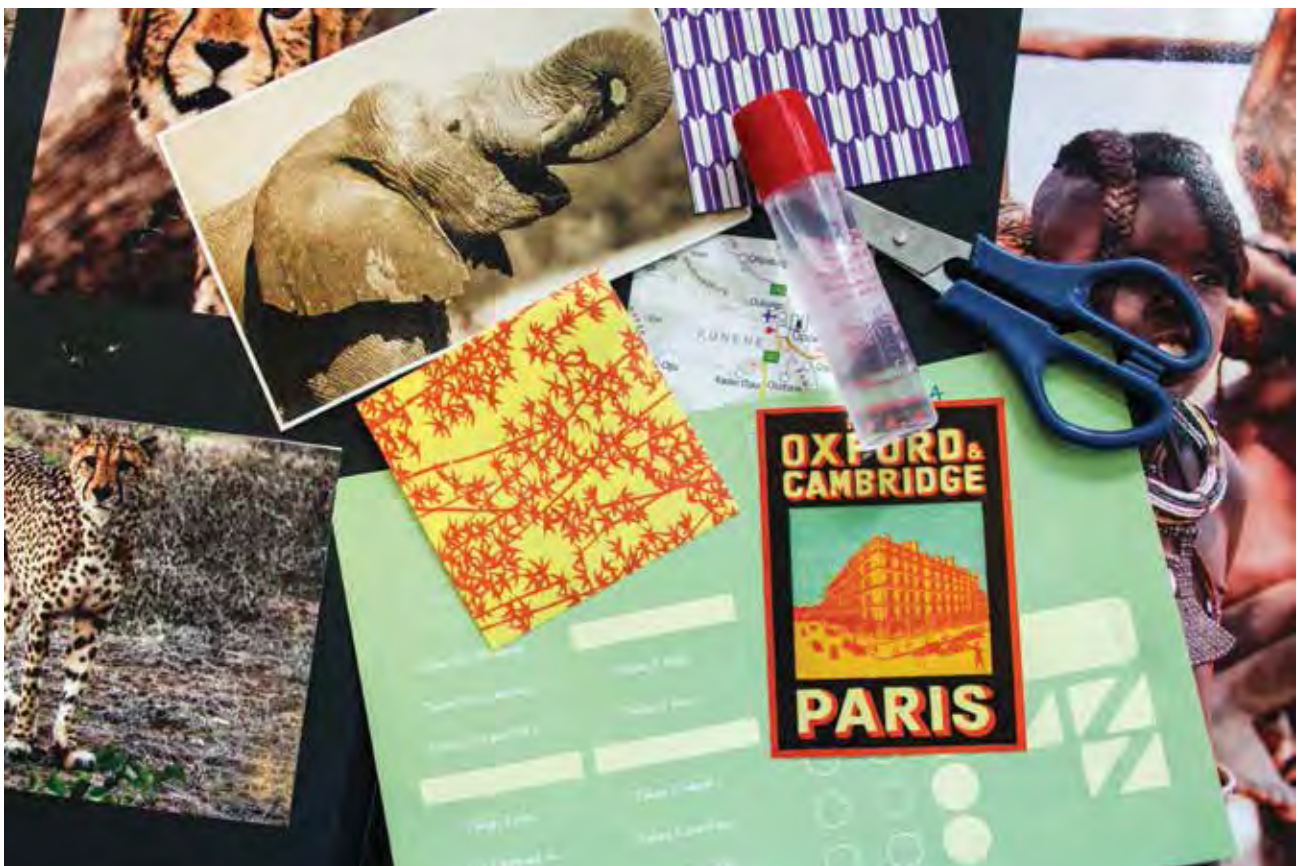
With even smartphones being able to take great *photos* nowadays, this one is a no-brainer. But how about giving your photos a twist by choosing a *theme*? Is there some weird skill you have? I've seen people do everything from dancing to toe touches in front of some of the world's most famous monuments. Or perhaps you have a *prop* that can find its way into your travel photos, anything from a teddy bear to a life-sized cutout, like one daughter brought along on a tour of Europe of her deceased father whose unfulfilled dream was to travel the world before he died. Her project, #formyfather, went viral and resonated with a lot of people. Or how about adding a *personal touch* to your photo? I was supposed to go on a long-awaited beach holiday with some friends but sadly, at the last minute, I couldn't make it. I was devastated. But when they came back and showed me photos of my

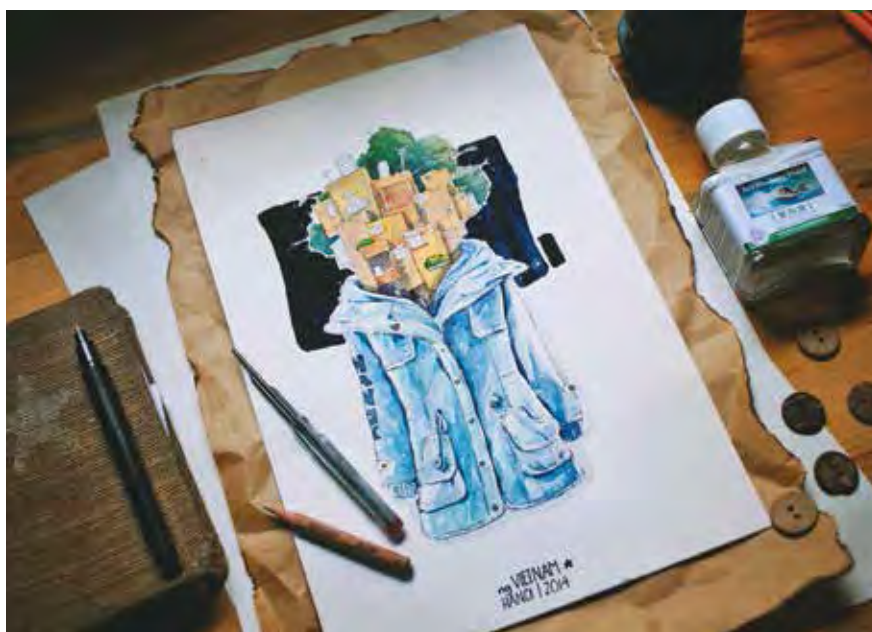


Having visited nearly 60 countries as a travel writer and award-winning photographer, James Pham blogs about his adventures at FlyicarusFly.com

name written in the sand amongst all my friends, it was the next best thing.

Once you've taken your photos, it's time to share. I had to be dragged kicking and screaming to join *Instagram*, but now it's my favorite way to share images (Follow me at www.instagram.com/flyicarusfly2014). I also like looking at other people's photos of where I am to see what they saw. Did they discover some great angle that I missed? Or perhaps a hidden nook somewhere? Try checking out a restaurant's IG feed to see what a dish looks like before you order it, as so many people are posting food photos nowadays. Throw in a free app like *Aviary*, that comes with tons of filters, funny stickers and photo editing, and your photos will be the envy of all your friends. I also use *IFTTT*, a free web-based service that automatically posts my Instagram photos to Facebook and embeds them into my Twitter feed as





full images instead of just links for maximum visibility.

A bit more Old School is creating online photo albums using **Facebook**, **Flickr**, **Picassa** or **Photobucket**. These are the digital incarnations of those old projection slideshows that our grandparents had. Avoid the same boredom-inducing pitfalls by carefully curating your photos before you upload them, though. Yes, that sunset may have been spectacular, but did I really need to see 17 nearly identical pictures of it? Less is more, and adding witty captions will make people actually look forward to viewing your albums!

There's always photo albums you can put together once home, but why not try making a **photo book**? Free online software from places like MyPublisher.com and Blurb.com make it super easy to drop your photos into a variety of templates and add captions. Upload it and within a few days, you'll receive a beautiful photo book that's easy to share. Send Grandma and Grandpa the link, and they can order their own copy. (Metro Writers, *Oi's* sister company, also provides a photo book service, including copywriting and professional photography. See www.metrowriters.com.)

If you're the artistic type, how about a **scrapbook**? This entails keeping little mementos along the way: menus, maps, business cards, paper currency, ticket stubs, etc. With the scrapbooking craze, there are even entire shops dedicated to scrapbooking tools and accessories, but you don't have to go that far. Just bits of meaningful souvenirs tucked behind photos instantly ups the interest factor of your albums. I've only ever made a few scrapbooks of epic journeys, but to this day, there's a satisfaction of slowly flipping through them and touching a 100 Billion Dollar note from Zimbabwe or a ticket stub to the Egyptian Museum that instantly brings back memories which can't be evoked from a screen. Closely related is starting a **collection** which can be a fun way to relive travel memories. Shot glasses, magnets, seashells and postcards are the norm, but I've known people to collect flowers wherever they go to be pressed into a book that can be continually added to, or even rocks which can be classified once you get home. Be careful, though, because once your friends find out about your collection, they'll likely try to add to it. My first international trip as a teen was to Mexico and I brought home a Coke bottle because I had never seen one with non-English writing before. That became my thing and pretty soon, I had dozens of Coke bottles with well-meaning friends adding more and more whenever they went abroad. I didn't have the heart to tell them that only the ones I collected myself were meaningful to me, so I just kept them all, crossing the line between kitsch and junk somewhere in the mid-80s.

Something that combines almost all of the above is starting your own travel **blog**. With free sites like WordPress and Blogger, you can have your own blog up and running within minutes. There are even sites designed specifically for travel blogging, like TravelPod,

which has nifty features like map pins (so people can easily see your whole itinerary and where you are at the moment), password protection (limiting who can read your blog), updating your blog via phone or tablet (even without an internet connection) and even collecting donations from your readers to fund your travels.

While technology is awesome for recording, sharing and storing your travel memories, sometimes, just a simple pen and a **notebook** is a traveler's best tool. I recently came across the sketches of 22-year-old, Hanoi-based freelance illustrator, Nguyen Viet Nam. (Yes, that's his real name. He was born on Vietnamese Independence Day.) He drew a series of illustrations called Viet.5 based on a school trip to five cities, from Sapa to Saigon. (It's also a play on words as the Vietnamese word for five is "năm", making the collection "Việt.Năm".) Nam brings his architectural training to his whimsical, beautiful drawings.

Where did the idea for Viet.5 come from?

At first, my idea was to just draw Hanoi. It was during the winter and I drew a neighborhood cloaked in a coat to keep warm. Then I thought it would be more "fair" to other cities to include them as well! I made those illustrations using details from memory, from photos and also checked the Internet so as not to miss any important elements. After brainstorming, I just started drawing without making too many drafts. There's something satisfying about adding layers and layers of color to paper. Each illustration took about 10-20 hours to complete.

Why draw places you visit as opposed to just photographing them?

Because of my architectural background, I tend to notice things more so than the average person, like the details of streets, spaces and trees. When I travel, I don't necessarily go to a lot of different places, but try to see more of each place. It's these feelings, these emotions [from paying attention to details] that inspire me to draw, rather than the other way around. Also, drawing is like an adventure. Although you have in mind what you want to draw, the final product is often a surprise. You can call it a "gift" in return for the time you've spent on the drawing. And unlike a photo, you can draw things that no one else can see, other than you!

Do you sketch when you're not traveling?

I always have a notebook with me whenever I go out, and draw whatever I see or comes to mind, usually when I'm sitting at a café. But I try not to spend too much time sketching, because I think we should always live in the moment!

For more of Nam's work, see www.mindbox.gallery ■

While technology is awesome for recording, sharing and storing your travel memories, sometimes, just a simple pen and a notebook is a traveler's best tool.



GEAR REVIEW

BULL & STASH NOTEBOOKS

As a travel writer, I'm constantly taking notes. When it's for work, I'm usually on a tablet with a wireless keyboard. But when I'm traveling for myself, nothing beats the visceral pleasure of putting pen to paper, instantly transforming me into a Hemingway-type taking up space in a noisy Parisian café somewhere. Part log (documenting where a photo was taken, info about a place I want to check out online, etc.), part journal (writing down random thoughts and doodles), a notebook is forever tucked into my bag. My library is lined with beautiful notebooks from all over the world, but sadly, when they get used up, there's not much left to do with them.

So when I heard of a Kickstarter campaign for an eco-friendly, refillable, leather-bound notebook that was billed as "your last notebook ever", I was intrigued by its beautiful simplicity: a thick, oiled leather cover that houses your choice of paper, attached using sturdy metal screws that make it easy to swap out refills. And it looks like I wasn't the only one. The crowd-funded campaign set a modest goal of USD5,000, but ended up with almost USD70,000 in pledges in just 30 days. It seems like simple things made well with quality materials still matter.

Bull & Stash's founder is Cameron Huber, a third-year architecture student at the University of Oregon (USA) with an interest in sustainable design. The "Bull" part of the company's name "is the high-quality leather used to wrap around the notebooks," and the "Stash" refers to "your stash of genius ideas, creations, and notes you keep inside," explains the website. There are multiple sizes to choose from, ranging from pocket-size to a generous but practical 22cm x 14cm, along with five types of paper (including grid, drawing and planner). I've been using the Stash, the largest size, filled with heavy art paper, which is great for sketching and freewriting, and the Reporter, a smaller vertical format notebook perfect for jotting down lists and short notes. Durable, beautiful, practical – if these are the last notebooks I ever own, I would consider myself lucky.

The first notebooks from the Kickstarter campaign have just recently begun shipping out, but the online store will soon have all the versions of the notebooks (between USD25-50) and paper refills (between USD5-7) available for purchase at www.bullandstash.com.

Fusion Maia Da Nang

For the ultimate in relaxation

TEXT AND IMAGES PROVIDED BY **FUSION MAIA DA NANG**



AWARD-WINNING FUSION MAIA DA NANG, located on the golden shores of My Khe Beach in central Vietnam, is a beachfront boutique resort that dedicates itself to the art of relaxation. It's the first resort in Asia where spa and wellness is included in the daily rate, guaranteeing a minimum of 2 daily treatments from the extensive spa menu, plus wellness program including the signature Fusion Flow Yoga (Yoga Alliance USA accredited), tai qigong, meditation and wellness discussions.

Relaxation at FUSION MAIA goes beyond daily spa treatments. Its surprising breakfast anytime anywhere concept whether in the privacy of the villa, at the restaurant, by the pool at noon or even on the beach at sunset, encourages an easy-going holiday feeling.

The architecture of this all-villa resort is inspired by Hue's Forbidden City but in an understated minimalist elegance. The low-rise structures and single-story villas provide luxurious intimacy. Simple modern décor add to the calm, zen-like atmosphere. All 87 villas boast their own pools within a private courtyard and garden, and are well-equipped with large four poster beds, coffee machines, his-and-hers amenities, deck chairs by the pool, free wifi and satellite TV, and a unique

spa-themed turn-down service.

The heart of the all-spa inclusive concept is at Maia Spa. Maia Spa has created a unique wellness plan (Natural Living Program) for holistic balance with 7 daily themes on which spa therapies and wellness activities are based. Spa products are locally produced, containing 100% natural ingredients and therapeutic-grade essential oils. Seventy skilled therapists provide pampering through treatments including scrubs, wraps, facials, and more. The magnificent spa complex is set in a tropical garden with swimming pool and waterfall. There are 16 treatment rooms, 2 outdoor massage pavilions, steam and sauna rooms, yoga studio, wellness library, private Jacuzzi and 2 beauty salons.

At FUSION MAIA wellness includes healthy eating. The delicious menus are full of fresh and local ingredients, fruits and vegetables for balancing natural vitamins, minerals and nutrients, and raw food elements to enhance digestion. Flavorful local and western dishes are served at Five Dining Room. For light dining, choose Asian-inspired tapas at Tonic Lounge, where high tea is also available. Near the main pool is Fresh, with a menu of healthy salads, flat breads and exotic juices.

Take the resort's free shuttle to neighboring Hoi An and breakfast at Fusion Café then explore this UNESCO listed ancient town. FUSION MAIA is ideally located between 2 other World Heritage sites, My Son and Hue, and 3 international golf courses: Danang Golf Course designed by Greg Normal, Montgomerie Links designed by Colin Montgomerie and Laguna Lang Co Golf Course designed by Nick Faldo.

The FUSION MAIA guest experience would not be complete without a heart-based hospitality approach, genuine care and real connections. The resort's "Fusionistas," warmer than butlers and more creative than concierge, channel their unique international personalities in concert with guests' needs and interests to create individualized stays. Living and breathing the resort's philosophies of relaxed luxury, Fusionistas want nothing more than for guests to take home the "Fusion" feeling.

FUSION MAIA DA NANG – ASIA'S FIRST ALL-SPA INCLUSIVE RESORT
Vo Nguyen Giap street, Khue My ward, Ngu Hanh Son district, Da Nang
0511 3967 999
www.fusionmaiaadanang.com





Fusion Resorts introduces the exceptional

Fusion Resort Nha Trang

TEXT AND IMAGES PROVIDED BY **FUSION RESORT NHA TRANG**

FUSION RESORT NHA TRANG, the new embodiment of the Fusion Resorts spirit, will be an exceptional beach resort on the beautiful pristine coastline along Cam Ranh -Nha Trang. Based on the Fusion philosophy, FUSION RESORT NHA TRANG will provide ultimate relaxation with an all-spa inclusive concept and breakfast any time any place.

Spread over 13.6 hectares on a 12 meter high sand dune overlooking the sea, Fusion Resort Nha Trang's 72 luxurious suites and pool villas are strategically laid out so every unit has an uninterrupted view of the sea. Custom-made suspended bathtubs and canopy-hammocks artistically complement the well-appointed modern interiors.

FUSION RESORT NHA TRANG offers a range of villa and suite options to suit guests' travel needs. The Chic Suites and Spa Suites offer guests uninterrupted 180 degree ocean views with the added comfort of a lounge or dedicated spa room. The luxury resort takes on a distinctively family-centric approach with Family Suites and Double Pool Villas. Both feature 2-bedroom units with a living

area and kitchenette - perfect for small families. The double pool villas have private swimming pools and an open garden space for the whole family to enjoy. The signature Ocean Front Pool Villas provide direct beach access, so guests can step straight from their private pool onto the golden sands of Cam Ranh Beach. Finally the Ocean Front Grand Beach Villa offers a level of luxury rarely found in South East Asia's beach resorts, with 2 king bedrooms and 2 twin bedrooms, all with spacious en suite bathrooms. It features a separate living area and dining area with a kitchenette, perfect for entertaining or hosting private parties. The beachfront courtyard hosts an enormous private swimming pool with a Jacuzzi, and plenty of relaxing spaces for outdoor lounging and al fresco dining.

The all spa inclusive concept at FUSION RESORT NHA TRANG is based on a Renewed Living Program, a specially designed wellness program that is built on 7 principles to balance the mind, body and spirit. It offers unique spa and wellness treatments termed Chamveda,

which are signature therapies created from a fusion of Ayurveda rasayana treatments with naturopathy using locally-grown herbs and essences and combining elements of the rich Cham culture in Vietnam.

Guests can choose from a selection of dining options including Fresh, the all day dining beach front restaurant serving healthy choice modern cuisine, highlighted by individual barbecue stations. Zen Bar, located in the picturesque welcome lobby, features stunning views, infused cocktails, tapas, juices and teas.

FUSION RESORT NHA TRANG is set to bring a new level of luxury to the coasts of southern Vietnam, while catering to the needs of the spa lover, the beach lover and your next family island getaway.

FUSION RESORT NHA TRANG

Nguyen Tat Thanh street, Cam Hai Dong ward, Cam Lam district, Khanh Hoa province
058 3989 777
reservations@fusionresortnhatrang.com
www.fusionresortnhatrang.com ■



>>The List Travel



Ana Mandara Villas Dalat

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

www.anamandara-resort.com



BEST WESTERN PREMIER Havana Nha Trang Hotel

Situated in the center of Nha Trang, the biggest five star hotel in Vietnam – Best Western Premier Havana Nha Trang will leave you an unforgettable experience. Spacious suites with breathtaking ocean-view, massive outdoor pool 3-faced to the sea, underground tunnel connecting to the beach from the hotel, Sky Bar on the roof of the City and more. Come and enjoy your time!

38 Tran Phu Street, Loc Tho, Nha Trang
T: (058) 388 9999 / Fax: (058) 388 9900
www.havanahotel.vn
info@havanahotel.vn



Bhaya Cruises

Bhaya combines oriental style with contemporary luxury to create an unforgettable experience cruising Halong Bay. The Bhaya fleet (Bhaya Classic, Legend Halong and The Au Co) offers a total of 178 luxury cabins and suites accommodating more than 400 passengers for Ha Long Bay cruises or hosted events (weddings, corporate retreats, incentives, meetings, and more).

www.bhayacruises.com
093 344 6542



Fusion Maia Danang

A unique and exciting fusion of resort and spa where spa treatments are inclusive and a part of daily living in this beach resort. It's the first all pool villa style resort in the destination and offers 87 pool suites, spa villas and beach villas each with modern, open-plan living and private courtyard with swimming pool. 'Freedom' options such as spa treatments and breakfast available at multiple locations are a few of the surprising offers in store.

maidanang.fusion-resorts.com



InterContinental Nha Trang

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

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



Novela Muine Resort & Spa

A 150-meter beach resort that offers luxurious accommodations, countless modern facilities and amenities with attentive services. A private and unique space in the heart of resort, Novela restaurant serves a daily breakfast, lunch, dinner and any other banquet with Asian and European cuisine. With two floors, guests can enjoy wining and dining and view the beautiful beach and sand hill.

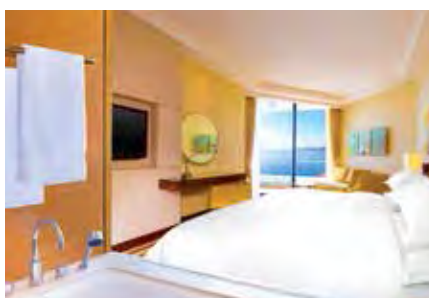
96A Nguyen Dinh Chieu, Ham Tien
Mui Ne, Phan Thiet
www.novelaresort.vn
(62) 374 3456



Pullman Danang Beach Resort

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

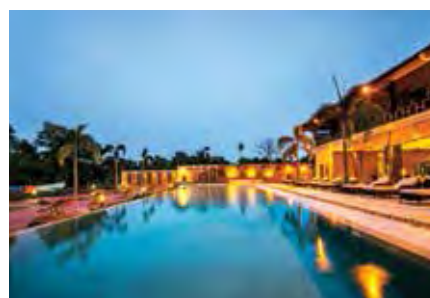
Vo Nguyen Giap, Khue My, Ngu Hanh Son, Danang
0511 395 8888
www.pullman-danang.com



Sheraton Nha Trang Hotel & Spa

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

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



The Island Lodge

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

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

>>The List

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2 Bis Cong Truong Quoc Te, D3

Westcoast International Dental Clinic

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27 Nguyen Trung Truc, D1
3825 748

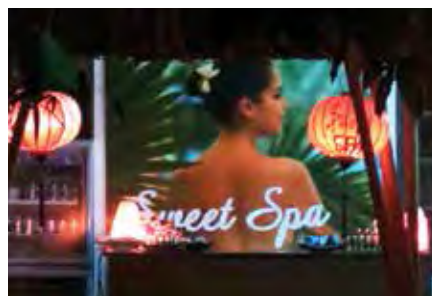
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www.sweetspa.vn



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

Kids & Education



Sound Affects

Encouraging kids to play music

TEXT BY **MICHAEL ARNOLD**



AS SOMEONE WHO spent a good deal of my university days hanging out with musicians and wishing I could be one, I've always wanted to make sure that my own kids are musical. That's a higher benchmark than you might think; one thing I know from having spent time with those crazy-talented undergraduate performers is that they had to sacrifice a huge proportion of their childhood to become proficient on their instrument of choice. I was astonished when I found that they couldn't remember half of the TV shows I'd watched as a kid, all that prime time entertainment having been skipped in favor of practicing their scales – I was left to wonder if I'd really gotten anything valuable at all out of having seen so many episodes of *Scooby Doo*.

Some of them were born to play; others had been forced into it by their overbearing parents who'd whacked their little fingers with wooden rulers every time their hands had strayed off the keyboard. None of them regretted having lost their early years to music, and most of them appreciated the sense of self-discipline that their parents had given them; at the same time, the descriptions of their relationships with their parents themselves were often rocky and miserable. To this day, I'm still left to wonder how to balance persistent encouragement and kindly discipline without becoming a lousy, overbearing parent.

My best friend's mom had the formula right. Her daughter was a gifted flautist with an impeccable technique; the mother hadn't so much forced as followed her into the realm of music, sharing her every discovery, delighting at the progress brought on by hours of practice. They always listened together to the classical greats and modern experimental performers, chatting and discussing the flourishes they could hear.

My friend's childhood revolved around the flute, and it had been a joy – she would spend an unbelievable eight hours every day focused on it, but not all of those with the actual instrument in hand. She would draw pictures with her mother while listening, they would both imagine themselves performing, running through the hand movements in their minds. Her mother even studied the recorder herself, just so that she could become good enough to accompany her in duets.

My friend had a sunny, beautiful childhood, and it was only as an adult that she'd realized her mother's musical journey

had been made consciously in the spirit of wholehearted support; that she'd been kept on task, not by harsh words and threats, but with enthusiasm and unconditional love.

Make Loud Noises

That's where a musical parenting style has to strike if it's going to be truly effective. In their zealously to inspire the next prodigy, many parents forget that music is one of the highest emanations of the human heart – and that a child's response to it is something pure and joyous. A regime of technical training does have its success stories, but there are far more young spirits crushed by this method than there are those who develop a disciplined talent. Of these, a good number reach the top solely in fear of disappointing their parents, something that not only affects their creativity, but that also gives rise to debilitating relationship issues when they reach adulthood.

To inspire a musical genius, music must first be given as a gift. Your immediate move should be to invest in a small but good-quality pair of headphones – while the key to musical awareness does come from a frequent exposure to beautiful music and pleasant sounds playing around the house, it's when a child experiences music as something personal that communicates directly to the silence of the mind that something wakes up within them in response. Music may not be quite the same thing as language, but it works in a similar way. A child's natural reflex to any form of language exposure is to answer in kind.

Buy musical toys, but don't scrimp on the cheap stuff. Learn to distinguish between toy instruments that are actually in tune and those that just make discordant noises. Get little percussion instruments that resonate properly such as bongos, gongs and cymbals. Don't buy pretend guitars with fishing-wire strings; get ukuleles and little harps, or even a Vietnamese zither. Woodwind instruments are too complex for very young children, but some whistles and simple ocarinas make beautiful notes, and can inspire an interest in the breathy pitches of flutes and clarinets for when they get older. If you have the means, buy a real piano, and let your kids make as much noise as they want on it before you start showing them their chords and do-re-mi.

Above all, be there next to your children as they embark on their musical exploration. Don't lock them in their rooms with a keyboard, banging loudly on the door whenever it goes quiet in there. Let their discoveries be yours too; get beside your kids and be as engaged as possible. If you have the time, learn as much as you can yourself – it's hard to be disappointed with their progress if the journey is one you're taking together.

Mozart would never have been the wunderkind he was without the passion of his father – and whether your kid turns out to be more of a Beethoven, Brahms, Beatle, Beyoncé, or none of the above, make sure you're the biggest fan they have.

Plato said music gives wings to the mind, but it's parents who lift their children into flight. ■

Academia

Understanding what an International Baccalaureate program means to students

INTERVIEW BY MORAY HEATHER



IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN

Dr Quynh Lam

GETTING A GOOD education starts with attending a good school that offers a recognized curriculum. The European International School Ho Chi Minh City (EIS) recently announced its accreditation of the International Baccalaureate program for all students at its Kindergarten through Year 12 campus. The IB Diploma Programme is in addition to the already accredited IB Primary Years Programme and IB Middle Years Programme. With successful accreditation of these programs, EIS has become an IB Continuum World School, offering IB education for children aged 3-18 years old.

This month *Oi* meets EIS President Dr. Nguyen Thi Quynh Lam and Michael Osswald, the CEO/General Director, to find out just what this means for students.

Tell me a bit about your backgrounds.

MO: I don't come from an educational background. I come from the communication and media industry, but when it came time to look for a school for my daughter, I realized there was a need for a true international school with a German program. I was not alone, and EIS was born.

NTQL: I have a PhD in Education and worked my way up through the ranks at ISHMC where I was the principal before moving over to EIS.

What does IB certification mean for students?

NTQL: The IB (International Baccalaureate) program is the only globally recognized qualification. Students at international schools are usually mobile, which means that they will have to continue their education in another international school in another country when their parents move to their next posting. This can mean very different curricula depending on the school. The IB eliminates that problem in that each IB school follows more or less the same program. The aim is to create global citizens

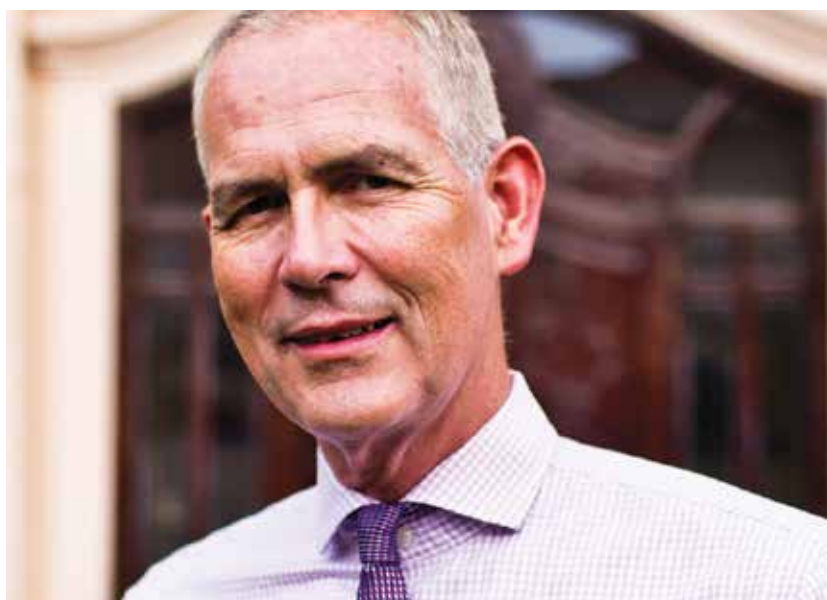


IMAGE PROVIDED BY EIS

Michael Osswald

who are aware of the benefits that different points of view can bring and who are practical thinkers and problem solvers.

MO: I should also add that the IB is a framework so schools can customize elements of the framework to meet local needs. We are also one of a few schools that offer IB continuum meaning that we offer IB programs all the way through and not just in high school as many schools do.

Why are international schools so much more expensive than public schools?

MO: Well, it has to do with the facilities and teacher development. Teachers have to be specially qualified to teach at international schools and the IB program requires teachers to be given ongoing professional development to best meet the needs of the students. Also, class sizes tend to be much smaller in international schools than in public schools

where you can have 30 students in a class.

What do you think of the local education system?

MO: There is not a lot of control of private schools which often call themselves "international" but don't follow a true international curriculum.

Do you offer financial assistance or scholarships?

MO: We are a Nobel Talent School so through the Nobel Education Network we offer scholarships to talented students. This year we have six scholarships available for students entering grade 11. Once they are awarded the scholarship they have to maintain their standard of performance to retain the scholarship in the following year. ■

Win, Lose or Draw

Why schools need competition in competitive sports

IT'S THAT TIME of year again when, traditionally, many schools will hold their annual sports day. For more than a decade now there has been an ongoing debate as to whether or not competitive sport has a place in schools. In schools, traditional sports day events such as the 100m sprint, sack race and egg & spoon race are disappearing in favor of more inclusive sports days where all children take part in a series of events, acquiring points for their team. The focus is now more on participation. No individual stands out as winning, but more to the point, no individual stand out as losing. This begs the question: Is competition in schools really so terrible?

Of course, there are strong arguments on both sides. The main argument against competitive sports days is that competition can embarrass the less able and even dent their confidence. Many teachers consciously hide from children their ranking in the classroom for fear that it could have a negative effect on their attitude towards learning. However, the sheer nature of sports and competition means that it is very difficult for teachers to hide winners and losers on the field. While most people would view that in a negative way, it could be argued that competitive sports provides valuable learning opportunities for children to develop important life skills within a safe, nurturing environment.

Most adults would agree that life is competitive at times, for example when applying for jobs. Through sports, we can teach children how to behave when they win, how to behave when they lose and how, sometimes, losing can spur us on to

try harder and do better next time: "You will never know how to fail if you have never been allowed to fail, and learning how to fail is important."

Moreover, taking part in competitions, regardless of ability, allows children to learn and develop attributes such as interpersonal skills, resilience, adaptability and a sense of fair play - all of which are qualities we want for the well-rounded children we are trying to mold. Another common argument for competitive sports in schools is that many children need opportunities to shine outside of the classroom, such as in music, art, drama or sports; particularly those who don't excel in reading, writing or math.

Again, it is about recognizing that each of us have different strengths and learning to respect those differences. One is not better than the other; they are just different. That is the message that needs to be communicated and learnt. Even children learn that we can't be good at everything, but we are all good at something.

Not Winning

Furthermore, the argument that some children shouldn't be subjected to competitive sports could be seen as limiting children's experiences. Granted, no one is good at every sport but, given enough opportunities, I believe every child can find at least one sport that they can enjoy and perform well in. Nobody enjoys losing but competing individually and winning can also be joyful, thrilling, even exhilarating. Even now, I still remember the excitement of competing in and, sometimes, winning athletic and swimming races at school. Are



Brendan Hearne is a senior teacher at Saigon Star International School. He moved to Vietnam in 2013, having previously taught at two award-winning schools in the UK

we depriving some children of that?

Recently, the term "healthy competition" has been introduced. Exactly what that means is open to interpretation. Pessimists might say that it is just a way to 'dress up' the same thing, but for me it is about adults being increasingly focused on how to ensure competitive sports remain fun and a successful learning experience for all. Adapting the language we use in front of children is just one way to ensure that competition remains 'healthy,' for example, using phrases such as "not winning" rather than "losing" or "failing."

My personal belief is that schools should provide opportunities for both competitive and non-competitive sports. It doesn't have to be all or nothing.

Non-competitive sports days are great because they allow every child to enjoy being physically active, to participate equally and to feel they are contributing something towards their team. However, as someone who has enjoyed sports from a very young age, I also see the need to provide competitive opportunities for those who show particular sporting skills and interests (and a desire to test themselves against others). That is just some people's nature.

How schools can find the right balance between the two is perhaps the more pertinent question. Inter-school sports fixtures and links with sports clubs in the community are just two of many possible solutions. What we can say is that there is no easy answer and that this debate will most likely continue for many years to come. ■





ILLUSTRATION BY MATTHEW KERSHAW
(for more mazes, visit mazzeworld.com/amazing/)

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Learning Loss

Avoiding the summer slide



Aubrey Fowler is currently the Elementary Principal at The American School (TAS) in Thao Dien, District 2. She is proud to have been part of the school since its inception in 2010.

IT IS HARD for me to believe that another school year is coming to an end. As we look ahead to the summer, it's important for parents and students to think about ways they can continue their learning over the summer break to ensure that we are all prepared for the next school year.

For some students, summer months are long and boring, for others they are packed full of fun vacations. Whichever type of summer you and your family might experience, I would like to pass along some tips on how to help students minimize any academic losses during their time off.

Attend Summer School or Camp

Many schools and programs throughout the city offer summer programs that are both fun and academically challenging. These are opportunities not just to continue their education, but also to learn life and social skills, creative activities, or fun new hobbies. If your child will have a lot of unstructured time at home this summer, consider signing them up for summer school to avoid both boredom and academic losses.

Read. Read. Read

I cannot emphasize enough how important it is for children to read every day. They can read quietly on their own, they can listen to books online, you can read to them or they can read to you. They can read in English, Vietnamese or any language that you prefer. The simple act of reading will help keep students from falling behind. Discussing what they read with parents or friends will put them even further ahead.

Write Every Day

Writing is an important skill for students to practice every day. Formulating and organizing thoughts and ideas is an ability that must be learned and practiced. Keeping a journal is an ideal way to practice these skills. Journaling could include drawing then labeling pictures, writing letters back and forth with a

friend, sibling or parents, telling stories or simply writing about thoughts, feelings and daily activities.

Limit Screen Time

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children spend less than two hours per day using screen-based media (TV, computers, tablets, phones, etc.) for entertainment. Any time in excess of this has been linked to health problems and difficulties in school. So what can kids do instead? They can read, play with friends, go outside to walk or ride bikes, swim, play sports, cook or bake, make art, sing, learn music, write a story, amongst others. Children can do all of these activities on their own at home, attend classes for them or play together with their friends. It doesn't need to be complicated, but we should all encourage children to be more active and to create while spending

less time in front of screens. You can enforce this by earning screen time by completing other activities (www.yourmodernfamily.com/no-screen-time-until-free-printable/).

Make Screen Time Count

Don't waste time on the computer or tablet but instead encourage your children to use their allotted screen time to play educational games, explore websites where they will learn new things or to read online. *Razkids.com* and *IXL.com* are wonderful websites to practice reading and math but these are certainly not the only options. The websites found at www.ayearofmanyfirsts.blogspot.com are a great place to start for elementary-aged students.

The most important thing to remember is that the more active children are the better. An active body means an alert brain - so get up, go out, have fun! ■



>>The List Education

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS



ABC International School (ABCIS)

Inspected and judged an outstanding school by British Government Inspectors (October 2013), the ABCIS is one of the few schools worldwide awarded this Department for Education rating. Progress of students puts the ABCIS among the top 8% of schools in the world. Providing education for 2-18 year olds in a supportive and friendly environment, it delivers a culturally adapted version of the British National Curriculum supported by Cambridge & AQA IGCSE and AS/A levels. Students are prepared for Universities in the UK, USA, Australia, Korea and Canada.

Foundation & Early Primary Campus:

4, 1E Street, KDC Trung Son, Binh Hung, Binh Chanh, HCMC
Primary & Secondary Campus:
 2, 1E Street, KDC Trung Son, Binh Hung, Binh Chanh, HCMC
 5431 1833/34/35/36
 office@theabcis.com
 www.theabcis.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.

An Phu Primary Campus

225 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
 3744 4551
 apprimary@bisvietnam.com

An Phu Secondary Campus

246 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
 3744 2335
 apsecondary@bisvietnam.com

Tu Xuong Primary Campus

43-45 Tu Xuong Street, D3
 3932 0210
 txprimary@bisvietnam.com
 www.bisvietnam.com



Deutsche Schule Ho Chi Minh City International German School

Deutsche Schule (IGS) offers a German curriculum from Early Years to Grade 12 which is approved and supported by the German government. IGS is staffed by native German, Vietnamese and English speakers who have many years of teaching experience.

We offer a link between Vietnamese and German culture, an international program with German standards and the immersion of German culture into everyday life.

12, Vo Truong Toan, An Phu

08 37 44 63 44
 info@igs-hcmc.de
 www.igs-hcmc.de



Science behind play

EtonHouse International Pre-School Ho Chi Minh City

Following an international curriculum for children aged 18 months to six years, in the early years, an Inquire-Think-Learn approach is followed, inspired by the Reggio Emilia Project of Northern Italy. It is a play-based, inquiry model in which children co-construct their learning in close, respectful collaboration with their teachers. This helps us provide an environment where children take responsibility for their own learning, allowing them a head start in life.

1st and 2nd floor, Somerset Vista, Hanoi Highway, An Phu, D2
 08 6287 0804
 www.etonhouse.vn/schools/hcmc
 info@etonhouse.vn



EUROPEAN International School Ho Chi Minh City

The EUROPEAN International School Ho Chi Minh City is an IB World School offering an academic and supportive English language education for students aged 2-18 years. EIS is committed to educating students to become creative critical thinkers and problem solvers. Students are immersed in a multicultural learning environment which values multilingualism. Language programmes at EIS include Spanish, German, French and Vietnamese.

730 Le Van Mien, Thao Dien, District 2, HCMC
 www.eishcmc.com



International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP)

International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP) is an elementary school catering for ages 18 months to 11 years. With 90% of our teachers having master's degrees, we are able to promise a vigorous American curriculum whilst including specialist subjects such as music, art, sport and the languages. ISSP focuses on developing the whole child within a purpose built campus.

92 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh
 2222 7788 / 99
 www.issp.edu.vn



International School



The Montessori International School of Vietnam

For children 6 months to 9 years old. A registered member of the American Montessori Society. Montessori uses an internationally recognized educational method which focuses on fostering the child's natural desire to learn. The aim is to create a sense of self and individuality through an encouraging and learning environment. Available are Extra-curricular Activities, Summer camp and immersion programs in Vietnamese, French and Mandarin.

Thao Dien Campus:

42/1 Ngo Quang Huy, Thao Dien Ward, D2

An Phu Campus:

Ground floor, Block B, An Khang/Intresco Apartment, No. 28, Duong 19, Khu pho 5, D2

3744 2639 / 0903 858659

montessorivn@gmail.com

www.montessori.edu.vn



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.

74 Nguyen Thi Thap, D7
3773 3171 ext 120/121/122

www.renaissance.edu.vn



Saigon Star International School

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

Residential Area No.5,
Thanh My Loi Ward, D2
3742 STAR / 3742 7827

www.saigonstarschool.edu.vn



The American School

The American School (TAS) is an international school that has been granted candidacy by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), representing 20 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.

177A, 172-180 Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien, D2

08 3519 2223 / 0903 952 223

admission@tasvietnam.edu.vn

www.tas.edu.vn



The International School Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC)

The most established international school in HCMC and recently celebrating 20 years of success. ISHCMC is a fully accredited IB World School, authorized to teach all 3 programs of the International Baccalaureate curriculum to students aged 2 to 18 years. ISHCMC is fully accredited by both the Council of International Schools (CIS) and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), two of the most prestigious international accreditation organizations. ISHCMC has over 1000 students from over 50 different nationalities.

28 Vo Truong Toan, D2
(08) 3898 9100

admissions@ishcmc.edu.vn

www.ishcmc.com



Also...

American International School

Founded in 2006, American International School (AIS) is a private, coeducational, university-preparatory school for students from preschool to grade 12. The language of instruction is English. The school offers standard American curriculum with a complement of performing arts, visual arts, music and sport programs.

Elementary School (102C Nguyen Van Cu, D1)

Middle School (35 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh)

High School (781/C1-C2 Le Hong Phong, D10)

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)

190 Nguyen Van Huong, D2

Thao Dien Campus (Kindergarten & Primary School)

APSC Compound

36 Thao Dien, D2

Thu Thiem Campus (Kindergarten, Primary, Middle & Senior School)

East-West Highway, D2

3742 4040

www.aivietnam.com

The French International School Saint Ange

Saint Ange welcomes children for their Kindergarten and Primary School. The school follows the program of the French Education Ministry, and includes English lessons every day. Activities and subjects such as arts, sports and school trips are also an important part of their curriculum.

188A2, Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien, D2, HCMC

0120 304 8875
saintange2.vn@gmail.com
www.sa-saigon.com

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.

78 Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
www.ssis.edu.vn

Faces & Places



What Remains

Presented by the French Institute of Ho Chi Minh City, contemporary circus O Ultimo Momento performed their one-night only show "What Remains" featuring Chinese acrobatics with elements of dance, music and theater.

IMAGES BY **NGOC TRAN**



Grand Entrance

More than 300 guests turned out for the Grand Introduction Night of the Eastin Grand Hotel Saigon. Guests can expect numerous upgrades to the five-star property in the upcoming months.

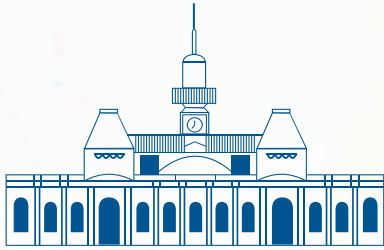
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Continuing Education

The American School (TAS) held a press conference to announce its WASC accreditation along with launching its new Admissions Incentive and Scholarship Programs.

IMAGES PROVIDED BY **TAS**



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Email: admissions@ishcmc.edu.vn

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