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VIETNAM

MAY 2013

FROM NAPALM TO PALM TREES

How 'that photo'
changed Nick Ut's life

PAGE 20

BIA

9 local beers in
blind taste test

PAGE 44

SSSH... IT'S SECRET BANGKOK

Discover Bangkok's
hidden intrigue

PAGE 62

TALKING HEADS

An 'unconference'
for techies

PAGE 88

Discovering

Chợ Lớn



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Hair and Makeup: Kenny Lieu

Ao Dai: Genero Dinh

Shoes: Saigon Socialite by

Fashion4Freedom

Venue: Ha Chuong Hoi Quan Pagoda

Ở VIỆT NAM

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Biên tập: Nguyễn Giang - Quang Hùng

Thực hiện liên kết xuất bản:

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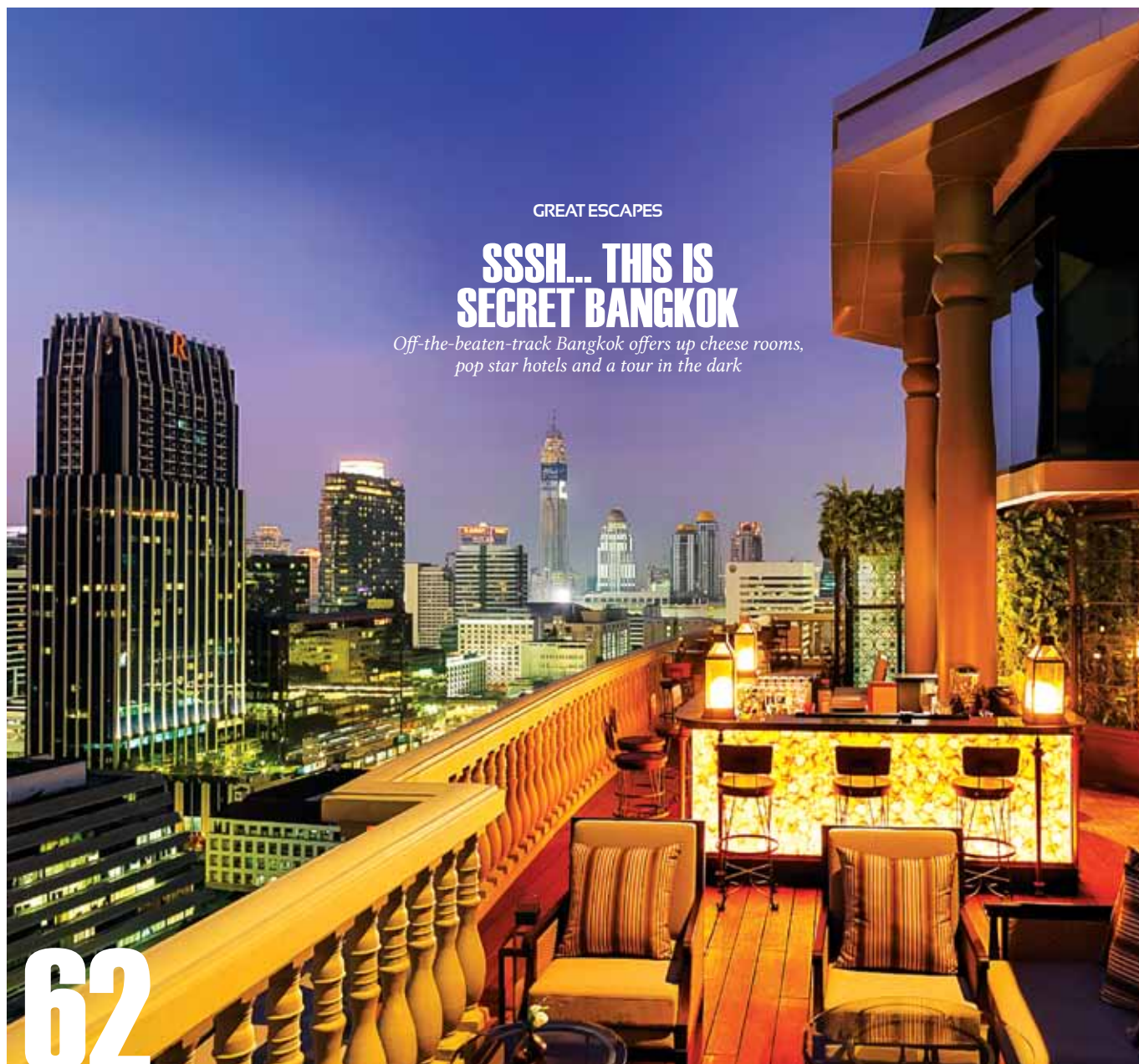
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Contents



GREAT ESCAPES

SSSH... THIS IS SECRET BANGKOK

Off-the-beaten-track Bangkok offers up cheese rooms, pop star hotels and a tour in the dark

62

FEATURES

P10 DATEBOOK

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

P13 TROI OI

See why icy lemon tea, children standing on motorbikes and Vung Tau vs Mui Ne make it on to our Hot & Not list

P15 THE BULLETIN

What new and exciting places have opened this month?

P16 ABANDONED

Deserted structures left to decay

P20 FROM NAPALM TO PALM TREES

Vietnam's most famous photographer talks about "the" photo, Paris Hilton, and why Photoshop is cheating

P22 POINT AND SHOOT

The extinction of the 'instant photographers'?

P24 INTO THE WIND

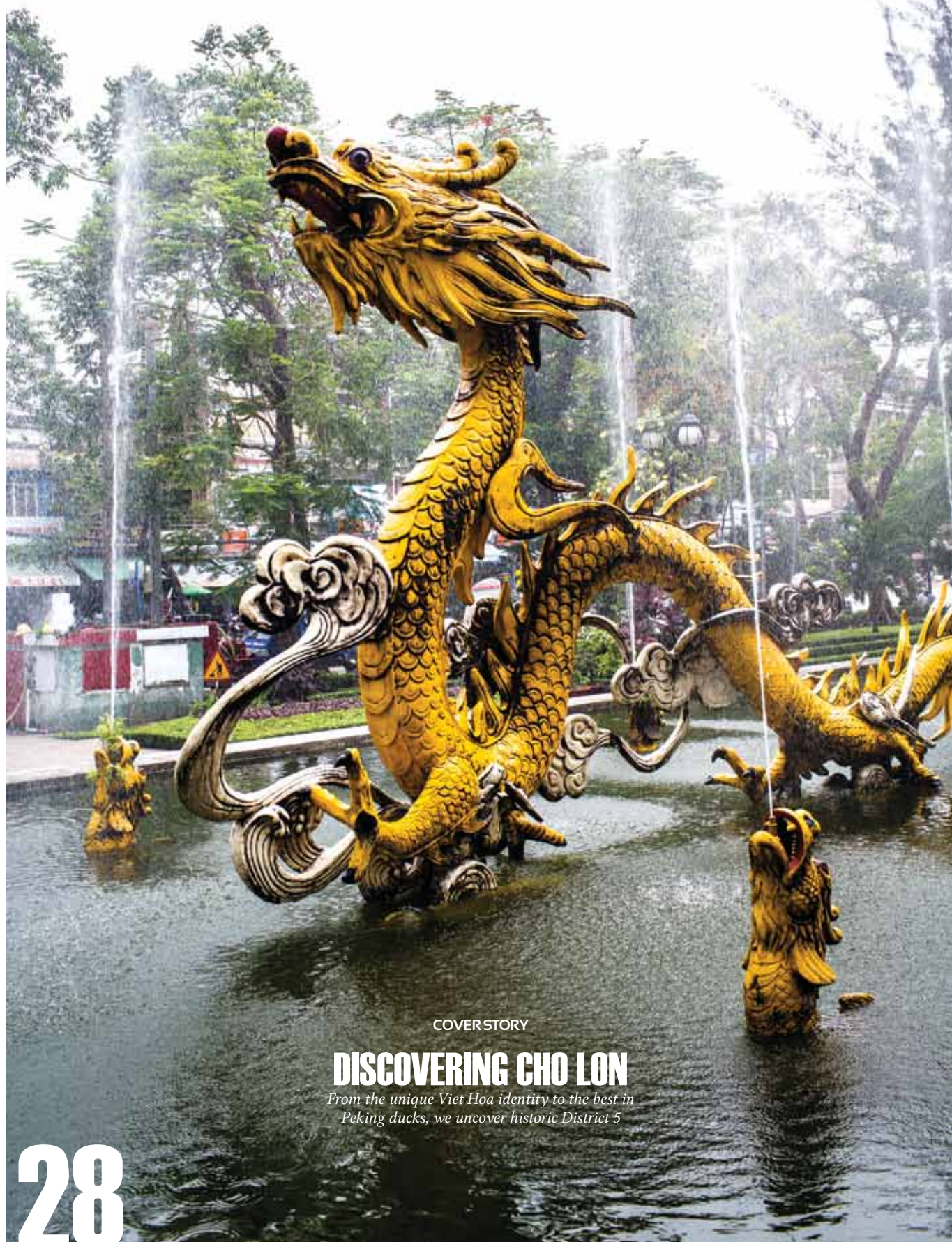
Sail away on the Saigon River

P34 DIP IN

From the mundane to the sublime, Vietnamese sauces bring out the best in food

P42 MADE OF IRON

Iron Chef Vietnam contestant Gabe Boyer believes "a love of food is a love of life"



COVER STORY

DISCOVERING CHO LON

*From the unique Viet Hoa identity to the best in
Peking ducks, we uncover historic District 5*

28

RESTAURANT REVIEWS

MOLTO BENE!

La Cucina and Lucca are reviewed



46

FEATURES

P44 BIA

Oi's pundits decide once and for all which local beer reigns supreme

P68 HISTORIC HOTEL

Oi joins Angelina, Brad and Fidel in praising the Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi

P79 MAIKO-NO-KIMONO

A collection inspired by Japan's geisha culture

P94 AN AFFAIR FROM DOWN UNDER

The Australian Consul General speaks of Vietnam's growing voice

P96 FRANCHISING IN VIETNAM

How giant brands like Starbucks, Domino's and Burger King break into Vietnam

P98 TALKING HEADS

BarcampSaigon is a community of 'unconference'

COLUMNS

P26 SAIGON MYTHBUSTERS

Are there any turtles in Turtle Lake?

P27 JOIN THE CLUB

These neighborhood tennis clubs are equal parts social and smash

P49 FLAVOR OF THE MONTH

Remembering Dien Bien Phu with French-inspired Vietnamese dishes

P71 LIFE'S A TRIP

Tips for scoring unbelievable deals on cruises, flights and hotels

P86 FASHION FORWARD

Responsible wedges to give you a lift

P100 LEGAL EASE

Thinking of buying a property here in Vietnam? You'll want to read this first

P101 FOUND 404

An aggressive e-commerce market emerges in Vietnam and why Fuzel is our app of the month

P102 MONEY TALKS

Convert money into dong or leave it as other currency?

P108 THE SYLLABUS

A case for learning a second language from infancy

P110 POSTCARDS FROM VIETNAM

Full moon over Hoi An

THE OUTER DISTRICTS

P106 MUCH ADO ABOUT A PARTY

From clowns to cakes, planning the perfect kids' party in D7

Editor's Note

ISSUE NO. 3
MAY 2013

READER FEEDBACK

FLUFFY EXPERIENCES IN
HCMC ARTICLE ON
WWW.OIVIETNAM.COM

Laura says: "In Australia we call the fluffy 'babychinos' and they are definitely on the kids menu at Boomerang (Crescent Mall area in Phu My Hung). Good luck, I have two daughters and always on the hunt for a satisfying kid drink and food menu!"

Hans says: "I was really impressed by your coverage of Vietnamese funerals (*April, pg 22*). Being new to HCMC, I've gotten glimpses of them but have always wondered what happens at one. The images were really powerful as well!"

Sarah says: "As a single mom raising a son in Vietnam, I appreciated the **Two Tongue Tied** (*April, pg 32*) article. I firmly believe it will be an advantage for my son to grow up bilingual no matter where we end up."

Elizabeth says: "I was floored when I got to Vietnam and saw how high fashion it was. I was totally not expecting that. I'm trying to come to terms with the gap between the haves and have nots, though."

Liza says: "I am loving your articles on the outer districts. As a Phu My Hung resident, I'm always happy to hear of new places. Flying yoga (*April, pg 118*) sounds like a lot of fun, and a little bit scary."

WHERE ARE YOU?

Jesper asks: "Can you please inform me where I can buy or pick the April issue? I live in HCMC - D7. Thanks!"

Oi replies: "Hi Jesper, *Oi* is free of charge and you can find our publication at the locations listed on our website: oivietnam.com/oimagazine-locations. We're thrilled to be adding locations almost daily so chances are great that there's a pick-up point near you!"

Eat Drink Man Woman

I DISTINCTLY REMEMBER my first visit to Cho Lon a few years ago. Crossing into District 5 and seeing the signs suddenly change from Vietnamese only to a combination of Vietnamese and Chinese was almost like stepping into an exotic locale. This impression was bolstered by the feeling of spaciousness, thanks to rows of low-rise merchant houses full of age and character, devoid of the claustrophobic newly built skyscrapers typical of downtown Saigon. When I was younger, my father had always told me of his forays into An Dong Market to find wooden handicrafts, but it took a promise of the best dim sum I would ever have to finally lure me into the boundaries of Cho Lon. Now, my weekend brunches at an amazing *dim sum* place (my secret spot) is one of the highlights of my week. True, it has terribly slow, unfriendly service but it makes up for it with some of the best and cheapest Chinese food I've ever had. The fact that it's almost always filled with a loud, Chinese-speaking crowd simply adds to its begrudging charm.

This month, *Oi* focuses on this vibrant district, so seldom visited by many of the expatriate crowd and even less so by tourists. Our team of writers uncovers the face and soul of Cho Lon. Lottie Delamain goes on a tour of the area and discovers the best places to sample highlights from the Chinese culinary repertoire - everything from Peking duck to dim sum to off the menu delights, in her article *Happiness is Eating Chinese Food*. Just a friendly word of advice, though: Do not read the

article or look at the luscious photos on an empty stomach. You have been warned. Jonathan Rebours demystifies Eastern medicine in *The Healing Power of Energy* and NPĐ Khanh educates us on the history of Cho Lon, from when it was one half of the city called Saigon - Cho Lon, and finally Michael Arnold takes us behind the restoration of the Chaozhou Temple and how it represents the hopes of preserving the essence of their heritage and identity for future generations.

On a more lighthearted note, we organized the Mother of all Beer Showdowns, pitting Vietnam's finest ales against each other in a blind taste test. Find out which beers were panned by our experts as tasting "like Ghandi's flip flop" or being "good for a tramp". How did your favorite brew do? The results in our simply titled *Bia* may surprise you. In our travel section, James Pham sets out to create a quirky, whimsical, thought-provoking Bangkok itinerary that doesn't involve shopping, movies or clubs in *Sssh... This is Secret Bangkok*. For the record, a Cheese Room with 75 kinds of cheese is now officially on my travel bucket list.

All of us at *Oi* hope you will be inspired to go out and experience some of the places in this issue, whether it's a brunch outing to Cho Lon or a long weekend in Bangkok. Happy exploring! ■

CHRISTINE VAN

Managing Editor

Datebook

Fill up your calendar with these exciting events

MAY
9



What: Art Talk

Where: 6.30pm at VinGallery, 4 Le Van Mien, D2

About: Art Talk is about discovering the creative process through the works of three exciting young artists: Pat Bradbury, Will Whitehouse and Zbyszek Dabrowski. They come from different countries, have different life experiences, but are united by their love and passion for art. In lieu of an entrance fee, bring a bottle or nibbles.

Contact: Email info@vingallery.com or phone 090 772 9846

MAY
10-11



What: 24 Hour Relay

Where: Schools of North America, 5A St, Trung Son, Binh Chanh

About: SNA will host a 24 Hour Relay to support Agent Orange victims. The charity event has been made possible through the support of the Lang Tre Em Hoa Binh (Peace Village) in Tu Da Hospital. Events will include: Student vs. Faculty sporting events, drama performances, all-night cinema, dunk tank and treasure hunts. SNA invites the Saigon community to join in and help.

Contact: Donations or volunteering, email Robert Wilson at counseling@sna.edu.vn



MAY 9

What: O Dau?

Where: Broma, 41 Nguyen Hue, D1.
Starts 9pm.

About: New Saigon music collective O Dau? returns for another night of alternative music.

Contact: For information, visit facebook.com/lodausaigon



MAY 10 - JULY 10

What: BB FOREVER - Brigitte Bardot, la légende

Where: Sofitel Saigon Plaza

About: Conceived in collaboration with journalist and writer Henry-Jean Servat, the exhibition features a collection of close to 30 photos of Brigitte Bardot. Through never-before-seen snapshots, visitors can see the different facets of the actress, who throughout her career distinguished herself through her beauty, spontaneity and carefree spirit. Sofitel will introduce a cocktail inspired by the icon: BB cocktail at the intimate Boudoir Lounge in her memory. Launched in the US in 2012, the show has been hosted by Sofitel hotels in New York, Chicago, Washington and Los Angeles.

Contact: Phone 090 616 8761 for more information



**MAY
11**

What: Artwork is Work:
ASEAN Music Festival

Where: 2pm at 19-21 Hai Ba
Trung, Hanoi

About: The United States
Embassy Hanoi and CAMA
Vietnam are organizing the
inaugural Artwork is Work:
ASEAN Music Festival.
This celebration of creative
Asian youth culture in Hanoi
will feature bands from the
ASEAN region as well as art
and community groups. The
festival seeks to highlight the
importance of intellectual
property rights enforcement in
ASEAN countries. Tickets will
be available at the door priced
at VND300,000 or VND100,000
for those holding a valid ASEAN
passport.

Contact: Visit www.camavietnam.org
for more info
or email press@camavietnam.org

**MAY
16**



What: PechaKucha Night - Volume 3

Where: 7pm at Cafe GOC PHO, 48 Hoa Hong, Phu Nhuan

About: PechaKucha, meaning 'chitchat' in Japanese, is a
presentation guideline based on the format of 20 images in
20 seconds. Two architects in Tokyo created the PechaKucha
format in 2003 as a way for designers and creative minds to
meet and share their work and ideas in a social setting. They're
now held in over 630 cities. Join in a night of creative sharing
and good company.

Contact: www.pechakucha.org



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MAY 16-19

What: The Hand That Rocks The Cradle

Where: 4pm (Art Exhibit) and Live Performance (6.30pm) at McSorley's Ale House, 4 Thao Dien, D2

About: Saigon Players and McSorley's Ale House present the second HCMC Visual and Performing Arts Festival. Features include an art exhibition by local and international visual artists, live performances from The Saigon Players, teachers and students from Inspirato Music Centre and The Performing Arts Academy of HCMC, local and international musicians, poets, dancers and choreographers. VND300,000 per ticket includes one drink. All proceeds go to local charities.

Contact: Inquiries and bookings, email saigonplayers@gmail.com

MAY 17

What: Perception and Reality: How true is your perception?

Where: Bobby Chinn, 39 Le Duan, D1

About: The talk on Perception and Reality: A Neuroscience Perspective by Dr. Elisha Rusch, clinical brain researcher. Elisha has studied the brain for almost a decade and will share his unusual knowledge and give a simple illustrative presentation about how the outside world is perceived by our brain. Tickets for DBAV, NLV co hosting members are VND100,000, non members VND250,000 and at the door VND300,000 for all. Pre-purchase by May 15.

Contact: Email support@dbav.org.vn or visit www.dbav.org.vn



MAY 18

What: Saigon Charity Bazaar

Where: The Deck, 38 Nguyen U Di, D2. From 9am till 3pm.

About: Over 45 vendors bring their newest collections to sell in support of Heartbeat Vietnam charity. Buy gifts for others or treat yourself.

Contact: Email saigoncharitybazaar@gmail.com

Troi Oi

The city by the numbers

27,000

more hotel rooms are needed, according to the tourism authority in HCMC, to accommodate some 7 million international tourists and 24 million domestic visitors that are forecast to visit this city by 2020.

Truong Vinh Tho, who heads the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism's Hotel Division, told local media the city is "gravely short" of hotel rooms.

The current growth is around 10 percent a year for international arrivals and a slightly lower growth for domestic tourism. However, the calculation is already off pace as it was based on growth rates of eight percent and six percent for international and domestic tourists and performance in both categories has exceeded the most optimistic estimates.

The city currently has around 40,900 rooms, with 4,622 rooms in 61 three-star hotels, 2,114 rooms in 15 four-star hotels and 4,587 rooms in 14 five-star hotels. The majority of the city's rooms are in no-star hotels of low quality.

Around 11 more hotels were supposed to open last year but only two materialized.

VND53.8 Trillion

was the total in lottery revenue last year, with VND30 trillion of that handed out as payment to winners, VND16 trillion was used to pay taxes, VND17 trillion was paid to lottery agents, and about five percent was used to cover the cost of printing and management and to establish funds. Lottery revenue has been used to invest in healthcare, education and welfare projects. Various lottery products are now available, including traditional tickets, customized lottery and scratch-off lottery.

USD10,700

was paid to a Vietnamese-American woman for a failed cosmetic breast surgery performed on her five years ago. The plaintiff in the suit is Lisa Nguyen, 45, and the defendant is Dr. Lai Cong Hiep of HCMC.

Lisa, who had had three breast enhancement procedures in the US, returned to Vietnam and asked Dr. Hiep to remove two silicon bags of 360 cc from her breasts and implant two smaller silicon bags, of 260 cc, as a replacement.

Three days after the operation, Lisa found that her right nipple had swelled up and turned black. About a week later, after the stitches were taken out, the incision split, exposing the silicon bags inside.

After nearly a month of treatment, she was discharged with numerous scars on her now flattened breasts and her right nipple lost due to the infection.

1 IN 400,000

is the ratio of alcohol distribution licenses to people in Vietnam, the population of which now stands at approximately 87.8 million.

Licenses to alcoholic drink retailers, traders and distributors in Vietnam will be issued on a limited basis, in accordance with the population of the country and the localities where they operate.

The rate is set at one in every 100,000 in a province for traders, while the number of licenses to retailers is restricted to one in every 1,000 people in a district or town.

Alcoholic beverages will be banned from being sold at vending machines and online.

USD96 MILLION

the amount approved by Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung for a plan to train officials and young talents abroad in the next seven years.

Under the plan, Vietnam aims to provide Master's degrees to college lecturers at higher education institutions, employees of research centers, and those working for government ministries and other state agencies.

The country will also send young people with special talents for science and other specializations to undergraduate programs in foreign countries. Priority will be given to universities in the US, the UK, Canada, and Australia.



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HOT

What's Hot & What's Not

NOT

HOT: HCMC's suddenly most-fashionable drink *tra chanh*, icy lemon tea, appeared out of nowhere and is now being sold on streets throughout the city. The delicious combination of tea-flavored syrup and fresh lemon juice shaken over ice will put you back less than VND10,000.



NOT: The cheap, nasty ingredients local media have revealed goes into the making of some *tra chanh* syrup to make it so cheap. Street vendors make a massive profit even from the low prices they charge, which is what makes it such a popular business.

HOT: The clamp down on dodgy motorcycle helmets due to take effect from May, including an exchange program and new rules requiring children to wear helmets too.



NOT: The number of children allowed by their parents to ride on motorbikes standing up - or unrestrained in cars. Granted, cars can rarely exceed 50kph in HCMC, but that's still fast enough to turn a kid into a projectile in the event of a head-on collision.

HOT: Vung Tau: Cleaner and more modern by the month with warm, friendly locals, inexpensive accommodation and a slowly growing number of modern air conditioned or al fresco restaurants with menus to suit every taste. Fast becoming the ideal weekend city escape.



NOT: Mui Ne: Can someone please take charge of cleaning the beaches and hinterland? Picturesque sand dunes and beaches with tall trees as a backdrop - nature at its finest but for the mountains of rubbish discarded by locals who apparently have little care for the environment or their backyards. Foreigners and Vietnamese alike are complaining, but no one seems to care...

HOT: Cyprus gold sale rumors in mid-April caused a sudden, massive drop in the international price of gold, allowing low-key Vietnamese investors to flock to the gold market in great numbers.



NOT: The cost of USD10 billion to Vietnamese banks during their April gold auctions brought on by the price drop - overnight.

HOT: Alan Phan, *Viet Kieu* public hero who took on the real estate conglomerates last month to give voice to widespread concerns about grossly-inflated real estate prices.



NOT: The exorbitant prices that remain on local properties - it's been observed that local Vietnamese families would have to work for 25 years without spending a single dong just to be able to afford one.

The Bulletin

New in HCMC...



Saigon River Express Presents Les Rives

Launched in 2010 with just one speedboat, Saigon River Express has now taken delivery of its eighth customized luxury modern speedboat. Saigon River Express and Les Rives offer personalized journeys at international service standards. The fleet will cruise to hidden destinations in southern Vietnam, on half and one-day tours. For more information visit www.LesRivesExperience.com.

Wedding Venue Opens

The Adora – Grand View will open at 421 Ngo Gia Tu, D5 in August 2013. The Adora provides a modern venue for wedding ceremonies and receptions. Bookings have already been taken for weddings from August. A presales office will open on May 1, with prices from VND3,850,000/table for a 20-table booking. For more information, email info@theadora.vn or phone 3588 6666.



Trigin Fugo

An herbal libido enhancer called Trigin Fugo, with active main ingredients such as *tribulus terrestris*, *fructus schisandra* and *panax ginseng*, is being marketed as the natural alternative to Viagra.

Manufactured under GMP in Dalat and produced by Ladophar (Lam Dong Pharmaceuticals under license from CML Technologies Corporation), the product is available at all My Chau pharmacies: 389 Hai Ba Trung, D3; 334 Le Van Sy, D3; 73 Thuan Kieu, D5; 122-124 Truong Chinh, Tan Binh; 97 Le Quang Dinh, Binh Thanh; 220 Khanh Hoi, D4; and 401 Hai Ba Trung, D3.

Meet Your Match

A young Vietnamese entrepreneur has launched a matchmaking agency for those who prefer to find their soul mate offline rather than on dating websites. Ms Anh created Love in Vietnam after hearing of bad mismatch experiences from her friends and dubious online profiles. Acting as matchmaker, Ms Anh will personally interview all candidates and pair together the best couples.

"Many foreigners are unattached and hope to find a partner or even a future wife in Vietnam," she says. "So we will meet men and ladies discreetly, recommend potential partners with similar interests or relationship goals, with no internet presence at all. And hopefully eliminating those with ulterior motives along the way."

Visit www.loveinvietnam.com for more info; contact Ms Anh directly at 090 814 5206 or anh@loveinvietnam.com.

Readers can receive a 20 percent discount on membership fee by quoting "Oi".

New Place for Burger Fans

Delivery only outlet Burger Dude offers a mouth-watering line-up of burgers ranging from Buffalo Bacon Chicken Ranch Sandwich to the Cowboy Burger, all of which use imported sauces and are cooked the American way. All burgers are only VND79,000. Call 090-BURGER6 for delivery.



Con Dao Diving

Rainbow Divers, which runs PADI dive centers throughout Vietnam, has reopened its Con Dao center after relocation. From May 3, there will be daily diving trips, Try-Dives, snorkeling and all PADI diving courses. The centre will be managed by PADI professionals Gary Storey, Kha Mai and Marina Gavriluk. Between them they speak and teach in English, Russian, Vietnamese and German.

For inquiries, email cd@divevietnam.com or ru@divevietnam.com or phone 090 557 7671.



Photo Contest for Holland Village

The Netherlands Consulate General will be relaunching Holland Village 2013 to commemorate and strengthen their ties with Vietnam. This 10 day event is planned from November 7-17 in the center of Ho Chi Minh City. Photographers are challenged to capture a scene that reflects the distinctive elements of the two countries in one photo. Holland Village is seeking the most interesting images to share and celebrate during the 40th year of bilateral relations. Submit photos with a short profile and contact details to contest@holland-village.org by August 15. Selected photos will be published and exhibited during the Holland Village. Details at www.holland-village.org.

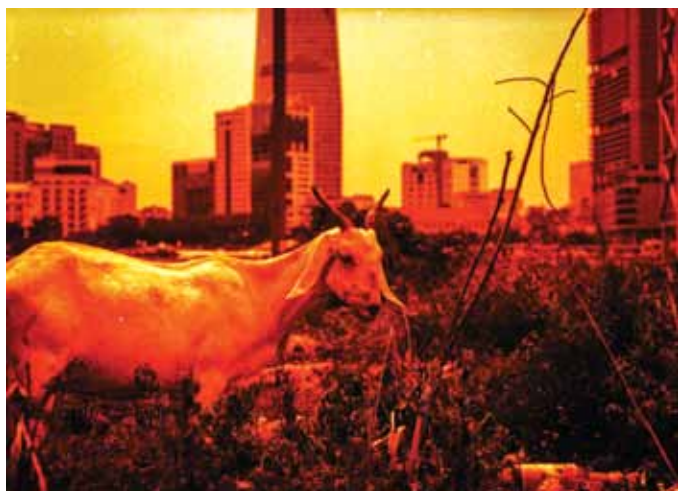
Cider Promotion

La Creperie Saigon (17/7 Le Thanh Ton, D1) is holding an apple cider promotion until May 10: Buy two bottles of Val De Rance Sweet, get one free. Everyone can take a sip for a try before deciding to purchase. More information on "La Creperie Saigon" Facebook page.

Lunch for VND25,000

The Green Bamboo Shelter for less-fortunate boys will begin serving lunch in an effort to raise funds for the boys' education and the shelter's continued operation. The chefs are three former residents who have all gone on to attain positions in some of the city's finer establishments, and now want to give something back.

Each day offers a choice of different set menus at VND25,000 each for dine-in, a minimum of 5 sets can be delivered to offices in Districts 1 or 4. Find them at 40/34 Calmette, D1, on the side of the Calmette Bridge. Phone 3821 0199 or 0986 779 873 for more information.



Abandoned

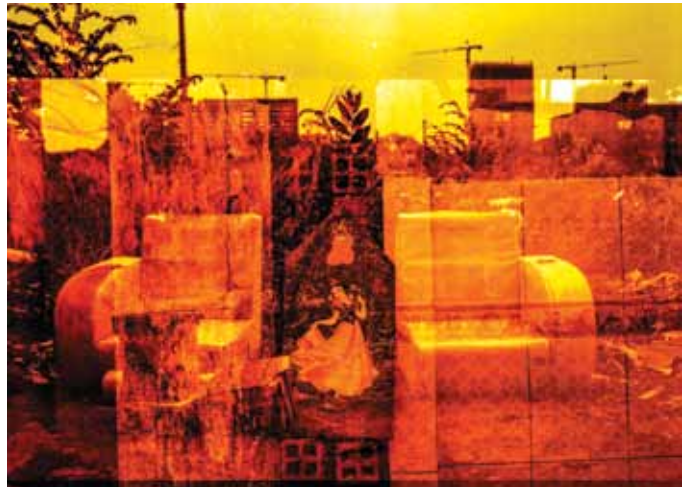
IMAGES BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY

WHAT IS IT ABOUT the cracking paint, the crumbling brick and the ominous silence of deserted buildings that intrigues us so? They become more complex and interesting as the natural processes of decay take over and as layered debris tells more and more stories as the years go by. Different kinds of structures

are forsaken for various reasons - sometimes disaster strikes and there is no funding to rebuild or in other cases a building's use simply expires.

The Thu Thiem area (*pictured*) in District 2 across the river from downtown Saigon has an array of barely standing houses mostly on

the streets of Luong Dinh Cua and Tran Nao. On the following pages, some are fortunate enough to get a second life like the one in Daegu, South Korea - a burnt apartment block in the city center turned into a makeshift art space by local youth, and sometimes as a home for squatters. ■









From Napalm to Palm Trees

On June 8, 1972 then 21-year-old AP photographer Nick Ut took a history-changing photo that will forever be known as "Napalm Girl". *Oi* sits down with Nick to talk about the photo, Paris Hilton, and why Photoshop is cheating

TEXT BY JAMES PHAM

The "Napalm Girl" photo has been widely praised as the photo that stopped the war. Was it luck or skill? Or simply being at the right place at the right time?

Nick Ut: My brother was a very good photographer. He wanted to have a picture to stop the war. He also wanted to win a prize for his photography. But God never gave it to him. He was only 35 when he died. God gave it to me. That day there were a few photographers there. There was a guy from UPI [United Press International] and he was loading film when the villagers came running towards us. That was 40 years ago. Cameras weren't like now. It took three minutes to change film. His hands were big and slow. My hands were small so I could change the film quickly.

My brother was brother number seven. That photo was number seven on the negatives. Whenever I think about that photo,

I put my hands together and say "thank you" to my brother.

It's well documented how you put Kim Phuc [the "Napalm Girl"] into your car and got her to the hospital, using your press credentials to demand that she be treated. Inherent in being a photojournalist is the ethics of reporting the news versus helping those in need. How do you balance the two?

N: During the war, I saw thousands of people dying. I wanted to help so much. When you see people get shot, or injured people, or people who need help, you don't just watch and let people die. People like Carter took the photo and didn't help at all. [Nick references Kevin Carter who famously captured the scene of a Sudanese child being stalked by a vulture. Carter similarly won the Pulitzer in 1994 but

committed suicide that same year.]

The photographer who took the photo of the guy in the subway being pushed also called me for advice. [Nick is speaking of freelance photographer R. Umar Abbassi who in December last year was highly criticized for taking a photo of a man being pushed onto the New York subway tracks just moments before being crushed by the train.] No way the train could've stopped. He said there were 50 people there and he was 30 yards away, running towards the man. But now everyone is angry at the photographer. I told him there's no good answer. Keep cool. Don't get involved. But I know that if I took the picture of Kim Phuc and didn't help her and she died, I would have killed myself too.

Winning the Pulitzer is the peak for any photographer. Was it a blessing or a curse for it to have happened so early in your career, at the age of 22?

N: When I was a teenager, I was always thinking about what would be the perfect picture. Others who saw the photo knew how powerful it was. People told me that it was one of the best photos of the 20th century. At the time, I didn't even know what the Pulitzer was. But I was happy.

Over 40 years later, people are still talking about the photo. Warren Beatty told me he cried when he saw my photo. I meet veterans all the time who say, "Thank you, Nick. I didn't go to war because your photo." Other people have said they came back early because of it.

For almost 40 years, you've been based in Los Angeles as an AP photographer. People there know you as Hollywood Nick. How has your career evolved to this point?

N: When I cover stories, people know who I am. Everyone knows the Napalm photographer. They all want me to take their picture. "I only want Nick," they say. I don't know why they want me. Joan Collins told me, "I know your pictures. I don't believe you took that," while she was opening champagne [after her win against publisher Random House]. Marlon Brando hated the media, but became a good friend. He always said "no" to everyone else. I think I have the best job in the world.

Your two most famous photos have been of "Napalm Girl" and of a crying Paris Hilton on the way to jail. A coincidence?

N: There were almost 400 people around her house. I saw her mother and father standing at the gate, so I stood there thinking they would say good-bye to their daughter. I didn't even know I had a picture. I had just gotten back from vacation in Vietnam the day before. I didn't have time to charge my flash. The battery was low. Somehow, I got off two flashes. It turned out to be the same photo 35 years later. Paris Hilton opened her mouth big almost exactly like Kim. Her hair was the same. God gave me clouds just like on napalm day. It was the same day [June 8], same time.

When I was at the county jail, waiting for Paris Hilton's arrival, my friend said, "Your photo is everywhere! It's on CNN!" I didn't think I had a picture; the [car] window was dark. God set up for me those two pictures.

How has photography changed since the time you started?

N: With film you have to make every picture count. Today it's too fast. Before, when we took photos, we'd have to wait a couple of hours to see what we had. Now, you can take a photo and five minutes later, it's on Yahoo or Google. Photography is too fast now. Cameras come with chips so you don't even need a computer to beam photos somewhere. It's hard to get overtime pay now. [laughs]

Is Photoshop cheating?

N: With my "Napalm Girl" photo, AP [initially] said we couldn't use a photo of a nine-year-old girl, naked. AP didn't allow us to retouch or crop the photo.

I don't like Photoshop at all. Never liked it. Journalists don't use Photoshop. If you use Photoshop [for anything other than toning

the colors], you lose your job.

My friend from LA Times photoshopped an image of an English soldier [in Iraq] with refugees. The next day, he lost his job. Out of all the photographers I've met in Vietnam, I think 70 to 80 percent of them Photoshop.

When you're back in Vietnam nowadays, what catches your eye? What kind of photographs do you take?

N: I love Vietnam. I'm almost at retirement age. I might retire to London or Los Angeles or maybe even Vietnam. When I take photos now, I take them of business and peace. I want to show how the country has changed. Beautiful photos of the Vietnamese landscape from south to north and how busy Vietnam is today. The war was too long. I don't want to show war anymore. I don't want to talk about war. I don't like war photos anymore. ■

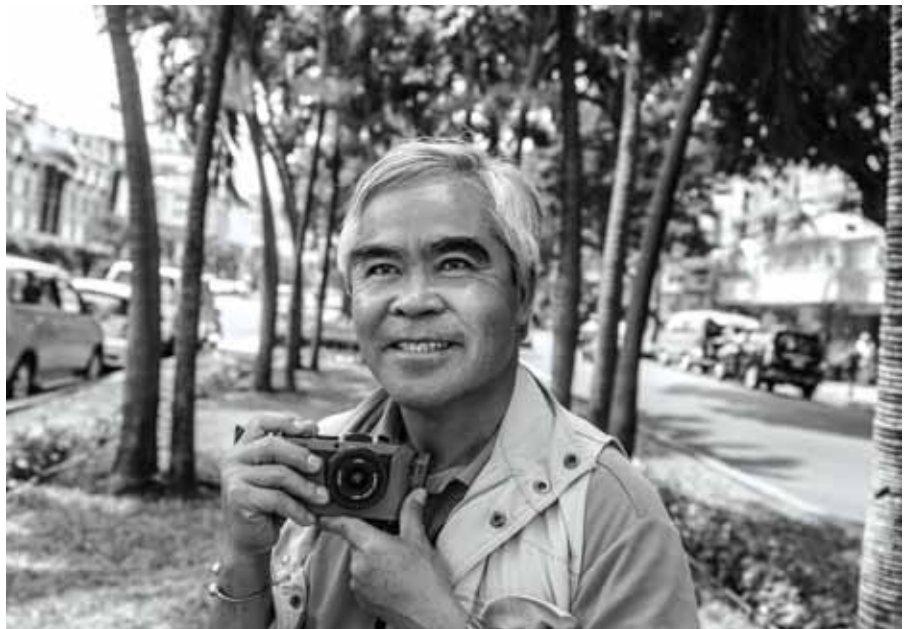


IMAGE BY QUINN RYAN MATTIGLY



Nick with Kim Phuc in Washington D.C.

“There’s not as many of us as there used to be. All the full-timers are old guys like me. The young ones do this freelance. They only come here when they’ve got nothing else to do”

Point & Shoot

As an ‘instant photographer,’ Moi tells us how the digital revolution is phasing out his job

TEXT BY **NPD KHANH** IMAGES BY **NAM QUAN**

MOI WALKS THE street every day taking pictures of tourists and the occasional Vietnamese couple who can’t afford a camera. For each successful picture delivered on time, he’s paid VND15,000. He is an ‘instant photographer,’ and his kind is what many call a dying breed. At a time when almost everyone owns a camera or a camera-worthy smartphone clients are hard to come by.

Moi isn’t bothered. “I make enough,” he says.

But how much is enough? He answers by showing his camera roll and shutter count for the day - two. He has taken two shots the whole day from 7am to 7pm, VND30,000, enough for a bowl of *pho*.

“I make enough for a new guy,” Moi insists. “I’ve only worked this job for the last 10 years or so.” In this profession, 10 years of experience is still considered a rookie.

He points out a fellow photographer who circles Ho Chi Minh monument garden with him every other day. “His name is Hong. He’s the oldest one here. He’s 76 and he’s worked here for 30 years. I don’t think he got any shot today.” Moi is 65, hardly a spring chicken himself.

While there aren’t many old school photographers like Moi and Hong around the city anymore, don’t consider them extinct just yet. “We signed ourselves up under the District 1 Mobile Photographer Cooperative Club. Every week or so we have a meeting with 20 to 30 people, young and old, in one

tiny sweatshop.”

They operate on a rotating roster where Moi and a handful of his colleagues have the monument garden to themselves for one day. Then the following day, a different group occupies the space and Moi’s free to go anywhere he wants to until the next shift comes.

“It’s a free job. It’s not your nine-to-five office work. I like it,” he says.

Small Beauties

This, however, has not always been his job. Before working as a photographer, Moi was a soldier, a veteran of the Khmer Rouge Cambodian war and the 1979 border disputes. He was originally stationed in Tra Vinh. “I was 24 when they gave me guns, told me to go over the Cambodian border and shoot some Khmer Rouge.”

When he was released from the army in the 1990s he found he didn’t know how to do anything else but be a soldier. “I didn’t know how to work the rice fields, but I knew how to use a knife and how to throw grenades,” he reflects sadly.

Eventually Moi left Tra Vinh for Saigon. On a comrade’s advice he took a class at the city Photography Association, and that was how he became a photographer. From the onset, he knew the job was not for those looking to get rich. “I was on the government’s veteran list. My family received all sorts of subsidies. I

didn’t need to work. I wanted to.”

It’s a much better kind of shooting that he does now, Moi says. Back in the 1990s and 2000s, it used to be better because not many people had a camera of their own then. A photographer’s service could turn in serious money but over time, things changed.

“Every other month, I see a tourist with a better camera than mine,” he laughs. His customers these days are the occasional Vietnamese couples and tourist companies. Apparently, tourist companies pay big for souvenir pictures of their clients. “Japanese tourists like them big. The Japanese tour guides always order the biggest size. There’s also Taiwanese, Chinese...”

“There’s not as many of us as there used to be. All the full-timers are old guys like me. The young ones do this freelance. They only come here when they’ve got nothing else to do,” Moi explains.

It’s a smaller pool than it was but despite this, Moi has no plans to change jobs or to go back to his hometown of Tra Vinh.

“The first half of my life is all ugly things. The second half is trying to find the small beauties, trying to see things in different ways. I’ve lost count of the number of camera rolls I used to shoot this garden or the People’s Committee buildings,” he says. “I prefer the second half. Only happy people come to me for a photograph - people in love, people wanting to keep a good memory.” ■





Into the Wind

The best way to beat the summer heat is to get onto the water and do some sailing as our writer discovers

TEXT BY **JULIAN AJELLO** IMAGES BY **QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY**

NOT FAR FROM downtown Saigon awaits the most unlikely of activities for those willing to brave the drive to Cat Lai, just beyond Ho Chi Minh City's boundaries. Less than an hour from the city's center, and happening every Saturday on the water, are sailing sessions.

Established in 2005, High Tide Sailing is the brainchild of Frenchman Bruno Ury. Bruno recently hired Noelle Iles, who spearheaded the effort to get the Saigon Yacht Club established, to run and promote the sailing program. Word is getting around, as they recently hosted 32 sailors on the water in a single session, the highest number yet.

"We're building interest here; it's not Phuket or Hong Kong, but every single Saturday we have people on the water," Noelle exclaims. "We have 22 boats, and we get enough participation that we are now sailing every week instead of every other week."

The greatest obstacle to enjoying a day on the water, she says, is getting to the venue. The traffic, to be polite, can be daunting. Once you arrive at the dock, which sits adjacent to the site for a yacht club that is about to break ground and is scheduled to open in mid-2014, the rigors of traffic slip away. The excitement for a day on the water, where the greatest worry is capsizing, takes its place.

High Tide's flagship boat, the Bao Kha, encompasses 20 plus meters of charm and comfort, ready to ferry sailors and a small armada of dinghies into the open expanses of the Saigon River. After a pleasant ride to a wide spot in the river, she moors and High Tide's staff rigs the fleet of one- and two-man boats. A generous windward-leeward course marked with inflatable buoys offers a full day of fun, provided Mother Nature supplies a bit of wind. Despite the occasional day where there is no breeze to be found, a typical afternoon can see 10-12 knots of wind which is more than enough to make small boats go fast while still allowing crews to keep control of their vessels.

Sitting in a dinghy puts one only inches from the water, until the sails fill and the boat heels over at 30 degrees. All of a sudden you're several feet above the surface and traveling at a speed that feels much faster than it really is. The exhilaration of sitting on the high side of a small boat while directing it where to go by adjusting the tiller and sails is pure joy for the initiated. With the wind in your ears and the spray of water in your face, the only regret you will carry away from a day of sailing is not applying more sunscreen.

Get Carried Away

Most of the participants are expats from countries that have familiarity with the sport, such as France, Australia, and New Zealand. Marie, who has lived in Vietnam for two years, discovered High Tide last year and has been a regular over the last three months.

"I started sailing in Thailand about three years ago when we lived there," she explains. "Friends told me about High Tide and my husband and I have alternated weekends taking our kids along to get them involved."

Ten-year-old daughter Collee sums up her feelings after just her second time on the water. "It's so cool," she beams. "My favorite part is when we flip over!"

Indeed, capsizing a dinghy is all part of the experience, but warm water and plenty of help nearby take the worry out of such eventualities. With two chase boats on the water, and more to come to help right capsized dinghies, High Tide will soon also offer a water taxi service to bring people from the Saigon Bridge directly to where the Bao Kha is moored.

Tacking up a long course in a boat without instrumentation of any kind offers ample opportunity for humility. It takes only a few mistakes to come to grips with how out of practice living far away from a sailing venue can make even an experienced sailor. Simple things

like scurrying to the high side, or getting the trim right on a sail, can prove challenging until the rust shakes off. And it's going downwind with the centerboard up and accidentally sailing just a bit too far to the lee when the certainty of capsizing hits you in the face, along with the surface of the river. It's these very things that bring sailors back to the water, and lure people to give the sport a try.

Pascal, a recent arrival from France, is quick to share his happiness at finding somewhere to sail regularly without having to wrestle with the logistics of getting to the coast and back in a weekend. "I love getting away from the noise of the city," he says. "I used to sail quite often, until I met my wife, who gets very seasick on boats." That's a fate that has claimed more than a few sailors around the world.

For those without such obstacles, High Tide is equipped to handle any level of sailor, children and adults alike. Rigging, life jackets, some food and refreshments, and all the bottled water you need, are provided. Whether you're a sailor without a home, or someone who has always waxed romantic about what it's like to participate in one of the most storied activities in human civilization, there's a place, and a dose of reality, awaiting you every Saturday.

Visit www.hightidesailing.vn for more info. ■



THE MYTH:

Why is Turtle Lake roundabout called that? Did turtles really use to live in the water there?



IMAGE BY NAM QUAN

THERE WERE NEVER live turtles in Turtle Lake. That's not even its official name, but rather, the folk name for the artificial pond built between 1965 and 1967 at the junction of Vo Van Tan, Pham Ngoc Thach, and Tran Cao Van in D1. The site has been associated with turtles since long before there was a lake there – The very first structure to stand there was the gate of old Qui City – 'Qui' meaning 'turtle'. In the French colonial era, it was a water tower, and after that a monument to French power.

But the real source of the name today is the metal alloy turtle bearing a stone plaque that once resided on the bridge over the 'lake'. It was put there under the order of Nguyen Van Thieu, who came into office in the 1960s. Thieu invited a famous *feng shui* master to oversee the structure and layout of Saigon. The master praised the location of the Presidential Palace (now the Reunification Palace) saying that it sat right on top of the head of an earth dragon that would bring wealth and power to the owner. At the same time, he also warned Thieu that the tail of the dragon, unpinned and uncontrolled, would bring about great discord and destroy the wealth created by the dragon's head. This 'dragon's tail' just happened to sit right under the French Soldier Monument.

So plans were made for something new to control the earth dragon. The blueprint was created by architect Nguyen Ky, and the new structure was to feature sword-like columns to pin down the dragon's tail, and a large metal turtle to seal away its power. Take a close look at the monument today, and you'll see its resemblance to the hilt of a sword thrust deep into the earth.

So what happened to the turtle? In 1978, it was destroyed by a group of protesters. The event gave rise to multiple rumors and wild theories about a secret chamber that might be hidden beneath the structure – discrepancies in the official construction record did suggest that there could be an underground vault that would account for a missing national treasure: two tons of solid gold. The theory was the subject of a book entitled *The Curious Case of Turtle Lake*, which was published in 1982 – decades later, many questions remain. The turtle, however, is history. - **By NPD Khanh**

Do you have a myth you want us to bust? Email us at saigonmythbusters@oivietnam.com. ■





WHILE A DISTANT second in popularity to football (along with other racquet sports like badminton and ping pong), tennis in Vietnam has been around for the larger part of the 20th century, thanks to the influence of the West along with that of regional tennis powerhouses India and Australia.

Usually attached to sports clubs or residential areas, tennis courts are the stage for informal tennis associations that are part sport, part camaraderie.

Each association usually has 6 - 12 members, with one acting as the treasurer collecting monthly dues which vary depending on the frequency, duration and time of day of the sessions. Courts in Ho Chi Minh City usually cost VND60,000 - VND80,000 per daylight hour including a ballboy and VND220,000 - VND240,000 per hour for lit night play. Association members will split the cost of courts, balls, refreshments and miscellaneous with any extra going into a common fund. While most associations are men only, a growing number are becoming co-ed. Last month, my association admitted a woman for the first time and the whole dynamic has changed for the better. There's slightly less (good-natured) cursing and more fruit platters.

Much more than simply a sports club, these associations are a social outlet. Getting together for beers after a hit is common, as is sharing stories on family, work and current affairs in between sets. One member recently lost his father and the whole group rallied

10SNE1?

If the only socializing you do is on Facebook, then it's time to grab a racquet and hits the courts

TEXT BY JAMES PHAM
IMAGE BY NAM QUAN

together to take up a collection, attend the funeral and share a few drinks afterwards. Due to their informal nature, almost anyone can join.

Hoa, the treasurer for my association says, "We welcome anyone who can play, whether they're Vietnamese or foreigners."

Quang, who works in food imports, talks about the benefits of being part of his tennis group which plays three times a week. "I've been a member for four years and it's fun. It's a good way to reduce stress and get some exercise."

Some, like bar owner Luan, are members of multiple associations. "I play tennis 13 times a week," he says proudly.

Love-Love

The best way to join a club is to first do some scouting. Visit some nearby courts and find an association that plays on the days / times you want and at your level. The best sources of information are the court managers and the ballboys (some of whom double as coaches or hitting partners). Typically, the associations will allow prospective members to play for free for the first session as both sides feel each other out. Additional hits are paid per session until you commit to being a regular member. Be forewarned that even if you take a short break from playing (for holidays or health reasons), you'll still be expected to pay the dues.

Most associations play mainly doubles and for the sake of time use no-ad scoring (called *vang* in Vietnamese, literally 'gold') with the exception being at 5 - 5 in a set (first to six games wins, with no tiebreaker) when regular scoring applies (*bac*, or 'silver'). Expect there to be blatant foot faulting, reaching over the net and very quick calls of "out" for any ball remotely near a line (which after vigorous arguing usually results in a replay). So dust off your racquet, practice your backhand, learn some good-natured Vietnamese trash talking and join the club!

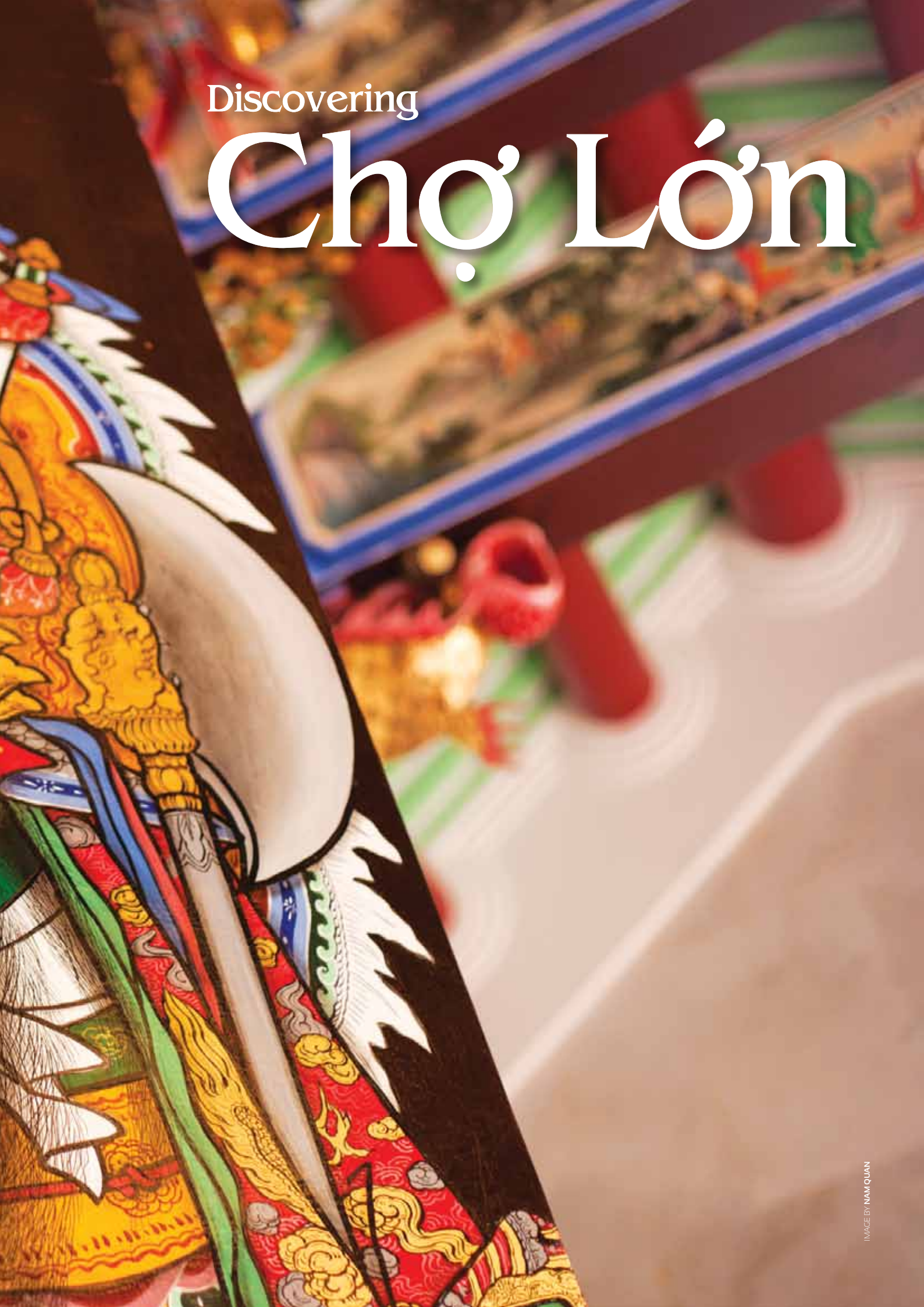
This space is dedicated to featuring various special interest groups around the city, some traditional and others not as much so.

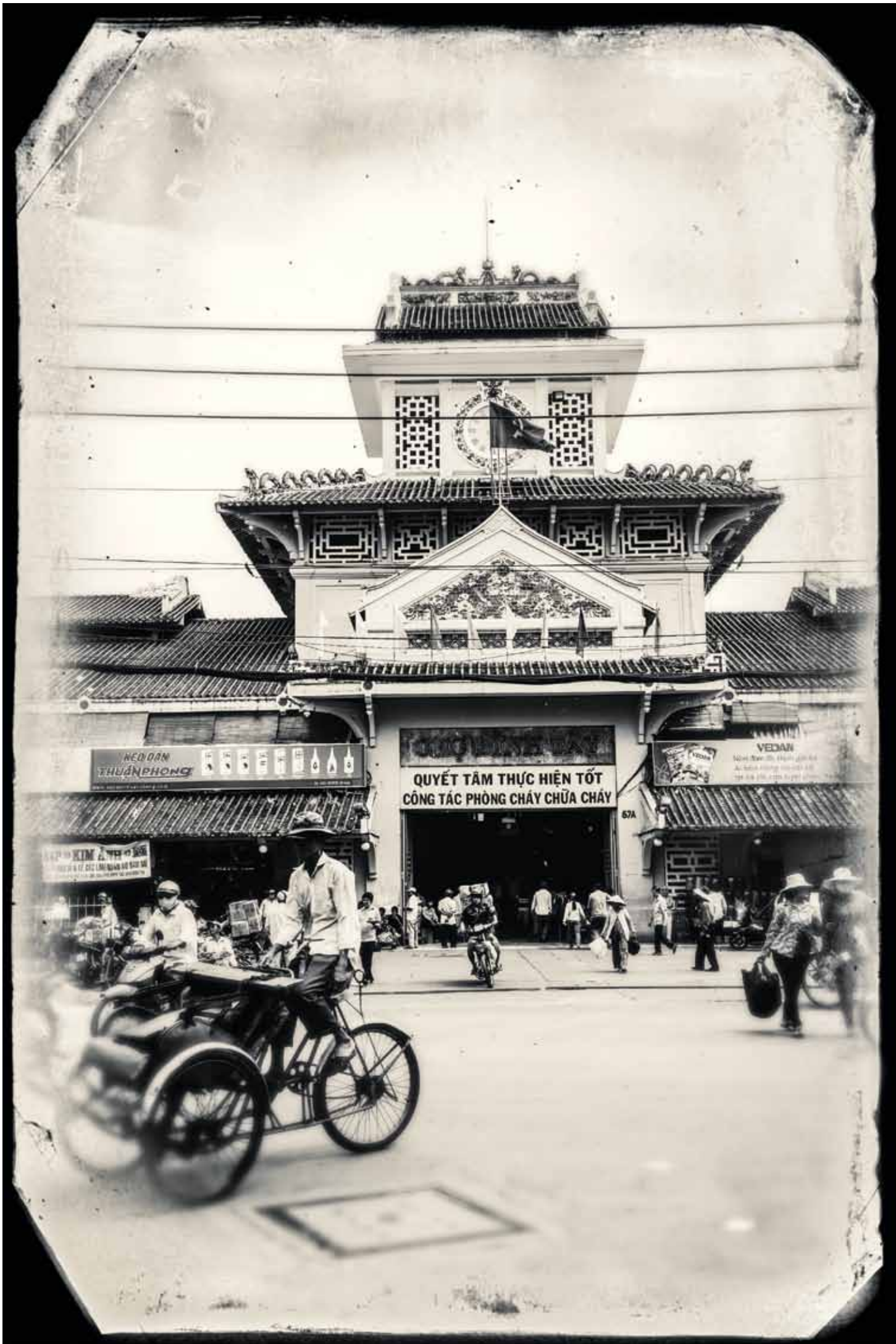
Would your club like to be featured in Oi? Email us at jpham@oivietnam.com ■



Discovering

Chợ Lớn





A Brief History of Chợ Lớn

With a past dating back over 200 years,
find out how Chợ Lớn came to be

TEXT BY NPD KHANH
IMAGE BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY

WHAT MOST PEOPLE don't know is that '*cho lon*' literally means 'big market' and originally doesn't actually have anything to do with District 5. But what most people don't know, however, is that Chợ Lớn, with its large population of Viet Hoa (Vietnamese-Chinese) inhabitants, was once a city in its own right.

Chợ Lớn is not even the name its denizens call it. The proper name is *Thay Ngon*, the Cantonese word for embankment, given to the young settlement and accompanying market by Chinese refugees back in 1778. Over time, the area grew in size, scope and population and in 1865 became Chợ Lớn City. In 1879, it was acknowledged by governor Le Myre de Villers as a city on par with Phnom Penh and Da Nang.

In 1930, Chợ Lớn met the city of Saigon at what is now Nguyen Van Cu Street. A year later, a new city was born called Saigon - Chợ Lớn under a decree from French president Gaston Doumergue. Then in 1965, Saigon - Chợ Lớn became simply Saigon.

Reinventing an Original

At the heart of Chợ Lớn the district lies Chợ Lớn the market. There were once two Chợ Lớn markets, with the first and original market founded in 1778 at the same time as the settlement. Because of its prime position, where the Ho Chi Minh City Post Office now stands, and surrounded by rivers and canals, this original Chợ Lớn was a trading

hotspot for locals and traveling merchants, rivaling even the iconic Ben Thanh Market. Over time, it grew too crowded and decrepit for the brisk traffic and bustling trading it housed so a plan was designed for a new, bigger and better 'Big Market'.

Sensing a rare opportunity, Quach Dam, a Chinese merchant well known for his wealth and business acumen, constructed a new market called Chợ Bình Tây, and gifted it to the French governor in return for exclusive construction rights of selected areas around the market. Chợ Bình Tây, while built with French architectural technology, was steeped in Chinese aesthetics.

In 1928, Chợ Bình Tây opened to staunch competition from Chợ Lớn. Despite the new market's larger space and better facilities, Chợ Lớn still enjoyed a superior location, the patronage of many loyal merchants, and a far larger local population. It wasn't until a blaze brought down Chợ Lớn that the new market truly prospered. At the time of the fire, rumors of foul play abounded, but none could be pinned on Quach Dam for the simple reason that the creator of Chợ Bình Tây had already died in 1927, a year before his life's work met with success. It took only a few more years for Chợ Bình Tây to take over the name and identity of its predecessor and became the Chợ Lớn market we know today.

Fast forward 85 years and Chợ Lớn stands as an integral part of Ho Chi Minh City, a unique fusion of Chinese and Vietnamese culture. ■



The Healing Power of Qi

An insight into the ancient practice of healing through herbs and needles

TEXT BY JONATHAN REBOURS
IMAGES BY NAM QUAN

“EASTERN MEDICINE IS for everything, not one specific problem,” explains Dr. Le Van Canh, who studied at the Ho Chi Minh Medicine and Pharmacy University, and who now owns a small practice in the heart of Cho Lon. His clinic is like any other with an examination bed, a small desk, and a pad for writing prescriptions. The one exception is the anatomical chart hanging on the wall showing where needles must be applied on the body for acupuncture.

Where Western medicine works by attacking the source of the problem, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) works in a more universal way. Practitioners believe that problems arise from blockages of *qi*, energy, in one’s body and you must unblock this to get back to a proper state of health. There are many different theories and beliefs associated with *qi* - chief of which is that the energy works in conjunction with your blood. Its two main functions are to transport

the blood around the body as nourishment and to protect against harmful imbalances within the body.

To keep *qi* flowing as it should, the medicine must remain 100 percent natural rather than relying on chemicals or other substances which may have adverse side effects.

Trust Thy Doctor

“People come to me based on trust. I am



personal, I have been here a long time and I know my patients," says Dr. Canh, who feels that trust is key when treating people's health.

He believes this personal approach is something that can be lost - albeit unintentionally - in modern hospitals where the patient is treated after a fair wait by the next available doctor on duty, in often over-crowded conditions. "My aim is to bring people back to their real self."

Dr. Nguyen Thi Le also emphasises the need for trust between patient and doctor. "I have been practicing Eastern medicine since 1992, and for any emergency, as soon as I detect it, I refer the patient to a hospital. First and foremost is my duty to the patient and their well-being."

Both doctors, who have over 40 years' experience between them, assert there must be compatibility between Eastern and Western medicine. Dr. Le's patients predominantly complain about bone and joint problems, not cancerous livers or tumors. She believes treating these problems with acupuncture is more useful than treating them with modern medicines or physiotherapy. "Acupuncture has been used for centuries to release blockages in the body and Western medicine doesn't have this understanding yet."

Dr. Canh agrees. "The body, and in particular the nervous system, is like a sewage system in a city. It is of course necessary for the health of the whole city, but occasionally blockages do occur, and we must unblock them quickly and efficiently. This is what Eastern practices do for the nervous system."

Canh is 43-years-old and began visiting Dr.

Le for nerve pain from his spine to his feet. He places his trust in acupuncture and the doctor. "She knows my symptoms and treats me personally, instead of like any other patient. Having acupuncture really helps me feel more mobile."

Herbal Healing

However acupuncture is only a part of Traditional Chinese Medicine. The other involves hundreds of various herbs, fungi, seeds, nuts, plants, barks and animal parts - all stored in wooden drawers behind the counter.

At Dai An Duong herbal medicine shop, Hue Lien can concoct any herbal remedy out of her 1,000 plus ingredients. "I get these ingredients from all across Asia - Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Taiwan... the list goes on," she says.

Asking for something to help a cold, brought on by the recent intense humid weather, no fewer than 11 ingredients are mixed whole or crushed as required and all wrapped in a tidy book sized package.

At only VND50,000 it seemed a bargain and with instructions to drink four cups as a first dose and three cups as a second, all mixed with warm but not boiling water, I was hopeful for a quick recovery. Although the final instruction of "don't make in metal pan," seemed like overkill, Lien's instructions were followed to the letter.

The cold symptoms began disappearing the very next day and although the sniffly nose persisted, the chesty cough and sore throat were gone completely. However, on paying Lien, a bottle of Vietnamese mass produced cough medicine was also added to my bag, with advice

to take as needed, and this may well have made the real difference in the gravelly chest.

Over at Vinh Phat, Le recommends dried artichoke and Linh Chi mushroom as go-to ingredients for boosting your immune system. She goes the furthest of all those interviewed to declare that Linh Chi mushroom can help fight against cancer and HIV. She does then add, however: "But I am only the pharmacist, not a trained doctor."

While all the doctors, pharmacists and patients interviewed were extolling the benefits of TCM, none took the leap to say that it is better than Western medicine.

It is evidently true that most feel they gain something from TCM, but should anything serious arise, don't take the gamble on exclusively TCM treatment. Even doctors in the know will tell you so. ■

ADDRESSES

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Dr. Nguyen Thi Le
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Dai An Duong
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Vinh Phat
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An Enduring Light

The restored Chaozhou temple will become one of the most authentic Chinese heritage pieces in the Cho Lon area, preserving the cultural legacy of the local Chaozhou community for years to come

TEXT BY MICHAEL ARNOLD
IMAGES BY NAM QUAN

FEW OF CHO LON'S historic structures are as ancient or as beautiful as the Chaozhou Association Hall and Temple, hidden from the busy stream of traffic along Nguyen Trai by a pale gray spirit wall, and rarely visited by tourists or local urban explorers. Currently undergoing its fifth and most wide-ranging renovation in over two centuries, the complex is the cultural heart of the Chaozhou community, one of the five principal Chinese ethnicities that make up Ho Chi Minh City's District 5. To the members of the Chaozhou Association, the restoration work is more than cosmetic – it's a chance to preserve the essence of their heritage for future generations. With the Chaozhou culture now largely eclipsed in the region by that of the Cantonese, it is perhaps the last such opportunity they will have.

Vuong Quoc Quang, who manages the association office, isn't at all disturbed by the relative prominence of the Cantonese culture in Cho Lon. "Cantonese is one of the most important Chinese dialects in the world, and we take it as a common language here. They're the most populous group in the district, so it's only natural that their dialect has become the most well-established over the course of time. If you're Chinese and you're born here, you really need to understand Cantonese to get along."

According to official estimates, there are 300,000 ethnic Chinese people living in Cho Lon, a third of which are Cantonese. Chaozhou people number at around 60,000, most of them second, third, or even fourth generation descendants of the original Chaozhou immigrants who settled in the area.

"We don't think of ourselves as Chinese in the same way that mainlanders do," says Vuong. "As overseas Chinese, we're Vietnamese first. We're just one of the 54 Vietnamese ethnic groups in the country. We're still Chinese descendants, but the real Chinese people of my father's time have all passed away now. I'm second generation – born and raised here, like most of us in Cho Lon."

The younger generation of today, however, has markedly less of a Chinese identity than previous generations had. "It's different for the fourth generation," says Vuong. "They're not as familiar with their mother language as their parents are. After liberation, a lot of Chinese people left the country for places like Guangxi, Australia, New Zealand, the

States – everywhere. A large number of the people left behind were those who'd married Vietnamese spouses."

"Before the war, Cho Lon was almost totally populated by ethnic Chinese. After the exodus, Vietnamese families started to move into the empty houses, and pretty soon everyone was speaking Vietnamese. After a while, the younger generation – like my own son – couldn't really understand much Chinese at all. If you speak to them in Chinese, they'll answer in Vietnamese."

Preservation for Education

The point of the association is to preserve the original culture and dialect of the Chaozhou people, as well as to protect any artifacts passed down from earlier times. The association is a resource for a community that many believe will inevitably converge with other ethnic groups in the area. There are five such associations in Cho Lon, each originally established to assist their respective members with any difficulties they might face; to preserve their dialects; and to provide a meeting area for their gatherings. Beyond this, each association had a free hospital funded by its members out of their own business profits, as well as a cemetery, a number of schools, and a sports events committee.

"This was all before liberation. All the associations had those functions. Nowadays, fourth generation Chaozhou people rarely speak their dialect, so it's important to keep the association going to preserve the language, especially now that we don't have the schools anymore," he adds.

Chaozhou people, according to Vuong, are extremely warm-hearted. "We're prone to gathering together, and those who've been successful in business are usually very charitable. We provide a great deal of scholarships for Chaozhou youths to make sure they can afford to take their studies to university level. At the same time, we're ruthless in business – we hate to lose – so we've become very capable when it comes to making money."

"We also place a great deal of importance on remembering where we come from. We focus a lot on protecting our community, partly because we don't want to forget or dishonor previous generations. We place a high value on

education. Of course, it's still important for us to learn Cantonese, and Vietnamese is essential – after all, we're Vietnamese people now. We have a Chinese background, sure, but as an ethnic group, we've already made the transition into Vietnamese society."

The reconstruction work going on now is a fairly complete overhaul of the association and temple structures. "We're not exactly certain when it was first built," says Vuong, "but we think it's older than 200 years, probably closer to 230. The temple connects us with the early immigrants, who were Buddhists. For those of our ancestors who came here to find work, it served as somewhere they could sleep, and as a place to celebrate our forefathers back in China, which is very important in our culture. It was originally a thatch building, but as each member of the community became successful, they'd contribute to its improvement."

The current restoration is being overseen by professional traditional architecture experts flown in from Chaozhou itself to ensure that the work done is as close to the original design as possible. There is strong attention to detail evident in the construction work; with the intricate sculpting necessary in recreating the traditional Chaozhou style – which recalls the architecture of some of the earliest Chinese dynasties – only highly-trained specialists can provide the level of authenticity that the association hopes to achieve.

"The last time it was restored was in 1963. That was wartime, so it was impossible to travel back to Chaozhou to compare with examples of the original architectural style. This time we're able to fill in the gaps in the record with genuine details. There's a lot of gold in the coloring, for example – we're using pure gold foil in the traditional Chaozhou style rather than gold paint."

He adds: "We want to protect the original artistic elements in the structure and make sure they last another century without needing any further restoration work done. We want to make sure our descendants will have their heritage close at hand while those of us who can remember it are still here. As long as we have the ability, we need to make sure this is done."

*Chaozhou Association Temple
Hien Trang Chua Ong
678 Nguyen Trai, D5 ■*

Happiness is Eating Chinese Food

There's a Vietnamese saying that "happiness is eating Chinese food, having a Japanese wife and living in a Western house." Our insider tips will start you on your journey to eternal bliss

TEXT BY LOTTIE DELAMAIN
IMAGES BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY



Royal Garden

IN CHO LON, the air is alive with the smell of suckling pig, steaming bowls of aromatic soups and chrysanthemum tea. Whether there are throngs of people queuing for Peking duck from a roadside BBQ joint or vast restaurants of diners enjoying long lazy lunches over dim sum and tea at some of the city's most prestigious eateries, Chinese food is firmly on the menu in this part of Ho Chi Minh City.

The Chinese have had a presence in Vietnam for two millennia, and their culinary traditions and techniques have made an indelible mark on the foodscape here. From a shared passion for noodles, a reverence for soup (some go as far as to say local dishes

such as *pho* were influenced by Chinese precursors) or even the use of chopsticks, cross-border culinary exchange has been continuous throughout the centuries.

And perhaps the most iconic dish in the Chinese culinary repertoire, the poster boy of Chinese food, is Peking duck which can be seen hanging glistening and glorious in Chinese restaurant windows around the world. In Cho Lon, a fantastic Sino-Vietnamese take on Peking duck can be found on the intersection of Phan Van Tri and Bui Huu Nghia where it's served roadside in a *banh mi*. But for the real deal, the Royal Garden at the top of Hung Vuong Plaza just around the corner, has hired Chinese BBQ

chef So Kwok Wing to make sure it's done properly.

Royal Garden has been open since 2008, serving up high-end Cantonese cuisine to local Chinese and Taiwanese businessmen and entrepreneurs enjoying Vietnam's growing economy. Although Peking duck was born in Nanjing, it found favor among the imperial courts of the Ming Dynasty and has been the centerpiece of Chinese cuisine ever since. As the famed bird is proudly wheeled to our table, chef So Kwok Wing explains that the only way to eat Peking duck is to leave the meat and only eat the skin. This is because of the implicit understanding the Chinese have for balance – the skin, so



intensely rich, should be eaten only with the cooling properties of cucumber and spring onion and the sweet, sticky hoisin or plum sauce to complete the balance. The meat is left and used in other dishes.

This respect for balance plays to the heart of the Chinese culinary tradition – to understand Chinese food, you have to understand Chinese medicine, for “he who takes medicine and neglects diet wastes the skill of the physician.” Long before we discovered superfoods the Chinese understood the connection between what we eat and how we feel.

Every meal pays homage to this understanding – from the simplest of broths to more complex dishes such as the head chef’s signature dish of crab rice with lotus leaf. Chinese born Yu Kam Chuen spent months perfecting the flavors and balance – the sweet meat of the crab, the five-spice scented rice, studded with dried shrimps and stir fried *kai lan* (VND480,000). And the result is pretty spectacular.

Off the Menu

Back down from the air-conditioned heights of Royal Garden, but still with feasting food on the menu, is Tan Nha, hidden away on the first floor on the corner of 100 Tran Tuan Khai. Run by the Tang family, this unassuming little restaurant has been serving authentic Chinese food from Guangdong Province since 1975. Much of what they serve is not on the menu – it is requests from locals who know Chinese chef Sang, who has been working there since it opened.

On the quiet Tuesday I was there an elderly lady and her daughter were sitting down to a casual platter of pigeon followed by a giant crab. Another favorite is the suckling pig, which has to be ordered in advance and is handpicked by the team from a supplier in Binh Duong who specializes in grass-fed suckling pigs. Tri Tang, whose parents own the restaurant, tells me that suckling pig was traditionally reserved for high days and holidays, and is one of the few items in the litany of Chinese dishes that’s not eaten for its medicinal qualities but for “pure unadulterated indulgence.” Other specialties at Tan-Nha, (that is if you know what to ask for), include crabmeat and pig brain soup, crab in tamarind sauce, and roast pigeon.

Food of Kings

If you really want to go to town, Ngan Dinh on the sixth floor of the five-star Windsor Plaza Hotel has a menu that would make emperors sing (and wildlife lovers cry). The gilt lobby is lined with aquariums, home to all manner of marine life – mantis prawns, poisonous rockfish, and a rather sad looking giant grouper. And in the cabinets opposite sit dried shark fins, abalone, sea cucumbers and fish maw – the swim bladder that help keep fish afloat. Here, Chinese dedication to good health whatever the cost, slips gluttonously into flamboyance and extravagance. In case there was any doubt, charismatic head chef Andy Xian, confirmed that “this is the food of kings... it’s only natural that a rich country like China, should acquire a taste for rich foods.”

But this is not everyday food, the food that feeds China’s vast population. Contrary to popular belief, the majority of authentic Chinese food is simple and virtuous – baked fish, springy hand-rolled noodles, silken tofu and hot steamed dumplings are what the



From top: Ba Con Cuu Mongolian Hot Pot, Street-side Peking Duck, Pig Brain Soup



Vua Dau Bep Dim Sum

Chinese eat at home. In Hainan, an island off the southern tip of China, they make a dish known as Hainan chicken – simple, wholesome and healthy, and replicated all over Southeast Asia.

Dong Nguyen on Nguyen Trai has been serving this Hainanese classic since 1946 when the current owners' parents emigrated to Vietnam from Hainan. Walking into the low-key open-fronted shop you're greeted with a distinct waft of chicken stock brewing and rice cooking. The dish - chunks of pure, white braised chicken with a sliver of yellow skin served over rice - is disarming in its simplicity but as comforting and delicious as a good Jewish mum's chicken soup.

Vi, who now runs the shop with her husband, says the exact recipe is a closely guarded secret, but traditional recipes involve braising a castrated (thus plumper) rooster in a master stock, and cooking the rice first by frying in the said rooster's fat before cooking it in chicken stock. In Hainan it would be served with a soy and ginger dipping sauce, but at Dong Nguyen it is accompanied with a Vietnamese style sauce of chili, ginger and garlic – a legacy from when the shop was closed post reunification and the family decided to reopen with a more Vietnamese orientated menu. Alongside chicken, the place serves a roll call of soups from pig brain to black-skinned Silkie chicken, and lotus root and pork. All these have found their way onto the menu thanks to the Chinese belief that soup quells the inner heat, and restores the body's energy to balance.

Something for Everyone

For the ultimate Chinese master class in balance, it's got to be *yum cha*, or *dim sum* and tea. The practice originated in southern China, was perfected in Hong Kong, and

is now alive and well anywhere with a Cantonese-speaking population. A *Viet Kieu*, Ben Chow has recently opened an excellent diner-style *dim sum* restaurant on Huynh Man Dat. Having lived in Hong Kong for 20 years, he missed proper *dim sum* so he's hired a top Canton *dim sum* chef to start his chain of restaurants.

Ben explains that for the full experience you need variety, and "in variety there is balance" – something steamed, something baked, something fried, something chewy, something crispy, something savory and finally something sweet. All the lovingly hand-shaped morsels we tried were superb – the generous chunks of prawn in the *ha cao tom* (VND45,000), the soft sweet taro in the *banh bao khoai mon* (VND36,000), and the juicy pork and prawn of the *xiu mai tom thit* (VND45,000). But the jewel in the crown was the *banh bao kim sa* (VND36,000) – a pale sweet steamed bun filled with a soft duck-egg custard. In its bamboo basket, it's the perfect imitation of a duck egg in its nest.

"It took the head chef weeks of practice and I wouldn't let him put it on the menu until he perfected it. Eventually the trainee chef mastered it first, so he's now in charge of them," says Ben.

Across Cho Lon a new breed of 'Chinese' restaurants are opening – Mongolian hotpots are the new *plat du jour*. Motivated by the success of other restaurants, the Golden Gate Group has recently opened two branches of Ba Con Cuu catering to the Vietnamese's growing taste for Chinese inspired food. Manager My says "it took a while for people to get used to the flavor of lamb, but now they can't get enough!" The lamb-based menu is a modern take on the staple diet of Mongolian horsemen. Not able to carry proper cooking equipment while traveling across the high mountain

steppes, they rigged their shields over campfires to sear meat and nestled upturned helmets in the embers to simmer soup. In the trendy surrounds of Ba Con Cuu, fragrant hotpots of Mongolian spiced stock have replaced the helmets, and groups of young Vietnamese dip lamb into the steaming pot to cook (prices from VND149,000 per hotpot).

In immigrant communities, food has always been a vital part of life and Cho Lon, is no exception. So it's little wonder that the cultural melting pot is championing Saigon's food scene. Whether it's traditional *dim sum*, high-end Sino-Vietnamese hybrids or hip Mongolian hotpots, in Cho Lon there's always a feast happening. ■

RESTAURANTS

Royal Garden

6th Floor, Hung Vuong Plaza, 126 Hung Vuong, D5

Ngan Dinh

5th Floor, Windsor Plaza Hotel, 18 An Duong Vuong, D5

Tan Nha

First Floor, 100 Tran Tuan Khai, D5

Dong Nguyen

801 Nguyen Trai, D5

Vua Dau Bep

38 Huynh Man Dat, D5

Ba Con Cuu

48 Nguyen Chi Thanh, D10
106a Cao Thang, D3

Wine & Dine

IMAGE BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY



Lucca

Dip In

But before you do that, know what food goes with what sauce

TEXT BY BENNETT DAVIDSON IMAGES BY MINH HOANG LY



Dark & Smooth

Tuong is a unique dipping sauce comprised of fermented soybean paste. The paste is concocted by adding a special type of fungus to roasted soybeans, and the ingredients are allowed to ferment in a jar until the sauce achieves its signature salty, savory flavor. *Tuong* is popular in vegetarian dishes, especially those enjoyed by Buddhist monks. Known for its dark brown color, this smooth, mellow sauce is often mixed with peanuts, finely sliced vegetables, or fish sauce to provide a smooth, crunchy backdrop for summer rolls (*goi cuon*) - a Vietnamese specialty consisting of pork, prawn, vegetables, and rice vermicelli all wrapped up in rice paper.

You can find *goi cuon* and warm homemade *tuong* with peanuts, along with many other traditional Hue dishes, at Ngu Binh (82 Nguyen Van Troi, Phu Nhuan).



The Sunshine Sauce

Mam tom, or fermented shrimp paste, requires lots of sunshine and plenty of time to mature. To start the process, small shrimps caught during the rainy season are dried in the sun for three months, then mixed with salt and ground into a powder. The new talc-like substance, along with sugar, gets aged over the course of about two and a half months resulting in a liquid form. From there the mixture is again left to dry in the sun for another ten days and becomes a pinkish-gray sauce. The smell is pungent and is an acquired taste, but first-timers can temper the sauce with a little bit of lime juice.

Mam tom goes well with vegetables, noodle soups, grilled meats, and hot pot ingredients. Sample the combo at Cha Ca La Vong (36 Ton That Thiep, D1).

Chinese Cheese

Chao (aged bean curd) is sometimes referred to as 'Chinese cheese' because its strong flavor and chunky texture are similar to blue cheese. *Chao* is made from curds of coagulated soy milk where cubes of tofu are air dried and slowly fermented with aerial bacteria and fungal spores. Once the tofu is dry, it is soaked in brine (a simple salt solution) and complemented by other ingredients like vinegar or chili peppers.

A little bit of this sauce goes a long way (definitely not for the faint of tongue), and is often served with grilled goat or goat hot pot to play down and offset the gaminess of the goat meat. Vietnamese also often eat it simply with rice for a quick meal. Try goat hot pot or goat barbecue, at Lau De (105 Truong Dinh, D1).



Fat & Rich

Kho quet is a unique dipping sauce with its own history. During wartime, it used to be made by the locals as a way to maximize the flavor of their dishes with whatever ingredients available when they couldn't afford much else. Back then, the sauce consisted of a mixture of pan-fried pork fat, chili, pepper, sugar, fish sauce and salt - and dried shrimp if you were fortunate enough to have it. *Kho quet* is made by combining different ingredients like dried shrimp, pork fat, chili, pepper, sugar, and fish sauce into a frying pan. Now its modern incarnation is not as fatty and acts goes well with boiled greens, cauliflower, okra, carrots, and bitter melon. The rich salty sauce is also served with fried fish from time to time.

At Huong Lua 3 Restaurant (196 Street 48, D4), a big bowl of *kho quet* will be served with fried mung fish, a delicious deep fried fish served with rice paper, noodles, and pineapple.



All in One

Nuoc Mam Xoai (fish sauce with mango) is deliciously complex. Fish sauce is definitely the most popular condiment in Vietnam; you can find it served at all Vietnamese restaurants with nearly every dish. Alone, fish sauce is extremely salty but when you add the sourness of unripened mango to the mix, the liquid takes on a different character. This light sauce is great to drizzle over fried catfish or any kind of fresh seafood. It is sweet, sour, and savory all at once.

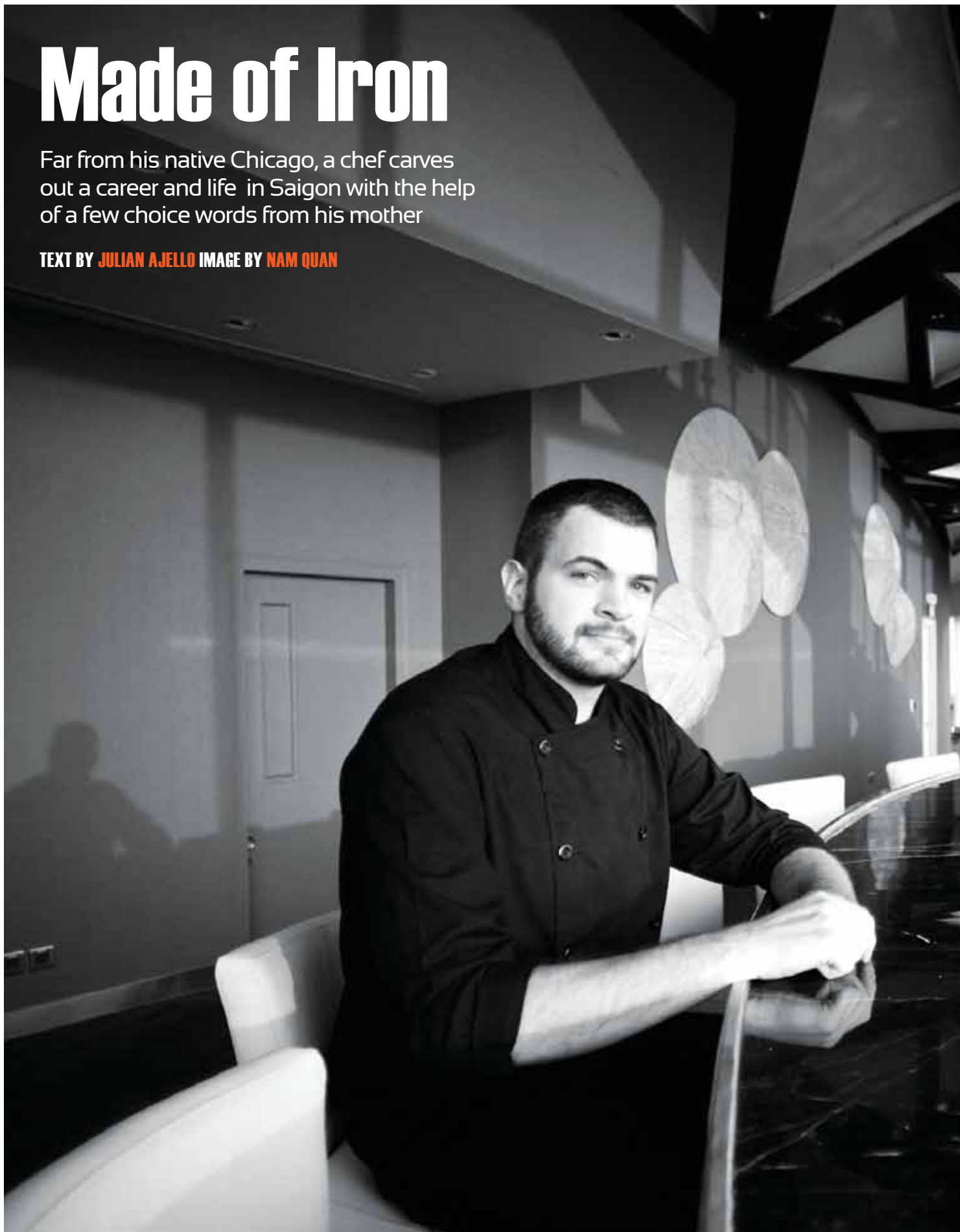
At Com Nieu Saigon (6C Tu Xuong, D3), they do their own take on the sauce by adding diced ginger and chili to the mix and it ends up taking on the extreme sourness of the unripe mango, the spiciness of the diced ginger and chili, and the sweetness of the sugared fish sauce. ■



Made of Iron

Far from his native Chicago, a chef carves out a career and life in Saigon with the help of a few choice words from his mother

TEXT BY **JULIAN AJELLO** IMAGE BY **NAM QUAN**





GABE BOYER'S MOTHER once said to him: "A love of food is a love of life." That simple phrase guided him throughout his career as a chef. "It's the one thing we all need several times a day, and it's important," says Gabe. "A bad meal is soul killing."

However, when Gabe Boyer arrived in Vietnam in September of 2010, cooking was the furthest thing from his mind, let alone competing on the television show *Iron Chef Vietnam*. He came to take a break from working in kitchens, wanting to teach English and get away from the chaos of restaurants that had been his entire working life until that point.

After more than a year of teaching English, he decided to return to Chicago. It didn't take long in a Chicago winter for him to miss riding his motorbike in the warmth of Vietnam. "I realized how much easier it is living here, and I had people [in Vietnam] begging me to work for them," he explains. "So I hopped on a plane and when I got back I was hired as the sous chef at Chill Bar." From there he was quickly promoted to executive chef, and not long after he transitioned over to Cirrus/Strata/Alto as their executive chef.

It was there where he was asked to compete on the cooking show. He was flattered, but initially turned down the offer. "Curiosity got the best of me," Gabe admits. "I thought it would be good for my reputation and for business. I also thought I could do very well and wanted to find out."

The show schedule proved rigorous as contestants were required to meet the crew at 5am each day to be transported to a new location to shoot an episode. "It was challenging, because I had to work until 10pm every night as well," he recalls. "You're exhausted and you have to be sharp to pull off the challenges. And they try to push you to get a reaction, or make you angry."

Aided by a translator, the show marginalized him at first, but when he started to win challenges he earned more and more camera time as they drew closer to the final episodes. In the challenge that catapulted him into the final episode he created a durian stuffed squash blossom which he tempura fried and served with a spicy tamarind dipping sauce. The judges were so impressed they declared it the best creation of the competition to that point, and one judge, who owns Pho 24 among other restaurants, asked to put it on one of his menus.

No Glory

For the final show, the contestants were asked to make a five-course meal with a romantic theme using lobster as the main ingredient. It was pouring that morning and they were forced to cook under a canopy, which only increased the difficulty. In the end, Gabe lost a heartbreakingly close competition. A tidy VND20 million prize as runner up helped soften the blow. He says the experience cemented his resolve to one day own a restaurant, the theme and style of which he keeps close to the vest.

"I'm generally disappointed by the upscale Western restaurants here," he laments.

When asked to recommend his favorite fine restaurants in HCMC Gabe is reluctant but says he would tell people to visit the obvious three, The Deck in District 2, La Camargue, and Opera and Square One in the Park Hyatt. His personal favorites, though, are the snail restaurants in District 4 (along with a few others he prefers to keep secret).

Despite the long odds against having a successful restaurant - 95 per cent close within four years - it remains his dream. "Restaurant people. I love their personalities, their energy; true restaurant people are the same everywhere. I love going into a kitchen and getting ready for service, it charges me up."

Of course the cooking was and is first. "Taking raw ingredients from the earth and turning them into a dish for people to enjoy, from wild chaos to a composed meal. It's art."

Even though he has cooked in a three-star Michelin restaurant, he claims that he wouldn't want to create that type of food again. While a terrific experience, the level of complexity and pretentiousness required is over the top. The stress and worry that comes with acquiring, and keeping, those stars prevents many chefs from enjoying their lives and Gabe's desire to make his life a rich one outweighs his desire for glory. Keeping his priorities clear, his mother's early lesson is his beacon: A love of food is a love of life. ■

Bia

The variety of local beers can be surprising, and the best of the bunch depends on who you ask. So this month we've decided to ask a few experts to help flush out the winner

TEXT BY JONATHAN REBOURS IMAGES BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY

MEET THE PANEL



Adam Zakharoff

Director of Operation for Boomerang Bistro Saigon, Adam has been in Vietnam for nearly three years. He has worked in bars all his adult life, having opened bars in his native Australia, the UK and in Asia.



Andy Jones

As Brand Manager for Pepperoni's in Saigon, Andy spends a lot of his time in the Spotted Cow in District 1. His favorite beer is Saigon Red and he is sure he can spot it a mile away.



Nguyen Thanh Nguyen

Regional Sales Manager of HCMC for San Miguel Vietnam, Nguyen has an understanding of what a good beer brand needs, taste being of utmost importance. With five years experience in the industry he is direct and truthful.

BASED ON OFFICIAL CAMRA (Campaign for Real Ale) tasting notes and relying on the taste buds and vast experience of our esteemed judging panel, *Oi* is getting to the bottom of Vietnam's local beers. Our panel of experts tasted nine Vietnamese beers, rating each from zero to 10 with 10 being the best, in controlled blind tasting. Commenting on color, smell, taste and drinkability, they offered their thoughts and the results proved very interesting. Is Saigon the best or will 333 shockingly prevail? Onto the beers...

Zorok

A pale lager hailing from Binh Duong Province, SAB Miller set up the brewery in late 2007. Like most of the beers being judged today it's yellow in color with Alcohol by Volume (ABV) of five percent. While appearance and smell left the panel as a whole nonplussed, its taste and drinkability met mixed reactions, with Adam being far more forgiving than our other two judges.

Adam Zakharoff: "It's got a chemically finish but mild yeast flavour. Not bad." - 7.5

Andy Jones: "It tastes like Ghandi's flip flop." - 6

Nguyen Thanh Nguyen: "Tastes good." - 6.5

An average start to get the judging process going and the judges into their stride.

Saigon Export (Red)

The favorite amongst expats and locals, Saigon Export should rate highly. Its appearance is

light, deceptively so, as it packs a strong punch at 4.9 percent ABV. Its lack of aroma mystified the judges but they were impressed by it retaining more head than the first beer.

AZ: "It's definitely got a corn flavor. Is this made using corn?" Adam was unimpressed mainly by its harsh finish, slashing the drinkability factor for him. - 6

AJ: "It tastes like Doritos! It really does, you get the corny flavor. Why doesn't it have a smell?" - 5.5

NTN: "It's all right, acceptable. I think it's 333." - 6

BGI

Brewed in Tien Giang Province and with a history that dates to 1875 according to its label, this Pilsner style beer is generally cheaper than most of the brands at this tasting. It has 4.5 percent ABV and impressed the judges on its appearance and smell. Out of the three beers



tasted so far it was agreed that this was the closest look and smell of a 'proper beer'.

AZ: "Definitely the best one yet. It tastes good and drinkability factor is great." - 8.9

AJ: "Really nice and smooth, quite quaffable." - 8.4

NTN: "Very easy to drink, qualified taste." - 7

Beer three has set the standard by its distinctive characteristics. High scores on all areas by all judges.

Bia Hanoi

As the name suggests, this originates in Hanoi and is a light beer with 4.2 percent ABV. It should be enjoyed with a large 2cm head and has a slightly bitter quality, in theory making it taste more akin to real ale than some of the other lagers.

AZ: "The third one was better but I can drink more of this one than the first two." - 7.5

AJ: "Saigon Red, guaranteed. I am ashamed if that's not Saigon Red, I know that taste anywhere!" Andy is sure of his favorite beer; little does he know he has chosen possibly its biggest rival. - 8.6

NTN: "Tastes like Saigon Red." Nguyen is unimpressed with this beer and also makes the prediction that it's Saigon Red, with less enthusiasm than Andy. - 4.5

Low scores across the board except on its appearance.

333

Originating as 33 in 1893 in France it changed its name to 333 in 1975 after moving production to Ho Chi Minh City. Known as a rice lager beer, and its use of Australian malt and hops this beer sounds appealing, yet most drinkers pass it off as poor quality. It's strong at 5.3 percent ABV.

AZ: "I think this is 333. I would drink it on holiday, but then everything tastes better on

holiday. If I was on 333 island I'd probably love it." - 6.5

AJ: "100 percent *ba ba ba*!" Andy is quite fair to the beer he originally stated would be the worst scoring. - 6.2

NTN: "It's 333." - 4

Unsurprisingly maybe, 333 gets the lowest score so far.

Saigon Special

This 4.9 percent ABV lager is becoming increasingly popular in the upmarket bars and restaurants around the city. Made from 100 percent malt and "fermented with tradition," this beer definitely aims at the more distinguished palate.

AZ: "A little bit harsh on the palate, tastes quite alcoholic." Adam gave this beer a good drinkability score and was pleased with its darker color and "clean" smell. - 7.4

AJ: "I'd have a guess that it's BGI, it's quite strong. It'd be good for a tramp." - 7.7

NTN: "It's a little hard to drink; I don't think I could drink more than one." - 4.1

So, possibly not deserving of the higher price it commands compared to other local brands, Saigon Special was deemed enticing with its look and smell but falling short of delivery on taste.

Biere La Rue

Made by the same brewery as BGI in Danang, this pale lager was the 'tiger beer' in Vietnam before the Singaporean Tiger beer became more prominent. A well-regarded beer with a light pale color and crisp scent.

AZ: "A little tastier than the last one but still decidedly average... Ah, that aftertaste is terrible!" - 6

AJ: "Really light, yet golden as if it were fired on the breath of angels. I reckon this is BGI." The eloquent recommendation may have to

do with BGI (his guess) being a staple of his establishment, Andy rates this beer high on taste and drinkability. - 7.9

NTN: "Hard to drink." - 3

Saigon Lager (Green)

The final beer from the Sabeco company, Saigon Green is the lighter, slightly weaker version of its Red brother at 4.3 percent ABV. Brewed since 1992 with modern brewing techniques the Sabeco claims "won't make you dizzy." Our panel are dubious as to that claim but what do they make of the taste?

AZ: "Different palate, I can't drink it. It bizarrely tastes like corn again." - 6.7

AJ: "It tastes like Doritos, again!" - 5.8

The similarities with its stronger brother aren't missed by our two judges.

NTN: "It's easy, light and acceptable, nothing more. It's alright." - 6

Huda

A subsidiary of the global brand Carlsberg, but originating from the Hue Brewery Ltd, this Pilsner style lager has a light and refreshing style. At 4.7 percent ABV it is about mid-range in strength and is growing in popularity amongst expats, but hard to get a hold of outside of restaurants like Bread and Butter (40/24 Bui Vien, D1) and Khoi Thom (29 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3).

AZ: "Very drinkable and not too hoppy. Very clean and crisp." Adam's second favorite beer then after BGI, he liked the ease on the palate and its thirst quenching quality. - 7.9

AJ: Nice and smooth, really light and refreshing. It's definitely an afternoon beer. It's not going to seduce you like a proper evening beer." - 7.5

NTN: "Refreshing beer, a little bit fruity." - 6.5

All the judges are agreed on the final beer, a nice refreshing lager, clean and crisp, a fitting end to an intriguing contest. ■

THE RESULTS

1. BGI - 24.3
2. Huda - 21.9
3. Bia Hanoi - 20.6
4. Zorok - 20
5. Saigon Special - 19.2
6. Saigon Lager (Green) - 18.5
7. Saigon Export (Red) - 17.5
8. Biere La Rue - 16.9
9. 333 - 16.7

Taking the top spot is BGI. Our judges were shocked at how low Saigon Export fared when put to the test and its characteristics were dissected. Thankfully for most though, was that 333 took its place at the bottom of the pile - they had all agreed to quit their day jobs had it come out on top!

A special thanks to Boomarang for supplying the venue for the experiment.





Bistecca al fiorentina

Molto Bene!

A New York feel combined with a taste of Italy in downtown Saigon

TEXT BY ROBERT STOCKDILL IMAGES BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY

HO TUNG MAU in downtown District 1 is the city's emerging dining strip offering a growing number of European restaurants and cafes, expat-oriented bars and a collection of local street food and eateries as well. One of the recent arrivals on this strip is Italian restaurant Lucca (88 Ho Tung Mau, D1), in the site previously occupied by Flow Restaurant and Bar. Lucca has a cozy cafe on the ground floor serving coffee, breakfast and light lunch from early morning - and serving, in *Oi's* opinion, one of the best cafe lattes in town.

Walk to the back of the cafe and you'll find a huge wooden stairway leading steeply to

a sprawling restaurant area spanning three traditional shop widths. On first visit, many diners are surprised by the size and feel of the upstairs dining area, its rich dark wooden paneling and furniture a stark contrast to the lemon pastel walls downstairs.

Lucca was created by Brian McNally, one half of the duo responsible for famous New York eateries Odeon and Balthazar, amongst others. Brian has since moved on to another project in Europe, but his influence remains through the unique decor reminiscent of family-owned Brooklyn eateries which had traded for several generations. It's all very new, tastefully decorated and with a New

York-Italy authenticity you simply do not expect to find in the sweltering climate of Southeast Asia.

Curved booths with high back benches create a romantic dining space for two, or there are larger more central tables for groups. A separate bar with polished timber and a backdrop of glass and bottles towering ceiling-wards offers a place for a pre-dinner drink. Despite its expanse, Lucca has a surprisingly intimate feel, whether crowded with diners or during a quiet evening spell early in the week.

Since opening in July 2012, Lucca has been attracting a steadily growing crowd of local



Clockwise from top: Seafood Salad, Lucca Interior, Linguine Porcini with Seafood



Europeans and tourists alike, the latter drawn by favorable reviews on Trip Advisor, or merely stumbling on the cafe while walking to or from their hotels.

Our Meal

Three of us (two Lucca regulars and a first timer) descended on Lucca in a last minute decision on a Tuesday night last month. We invited Chef Alessandro Ferretti to serve several dishes he recommended that we could share - and we were served up a treat.

Lucca's menu is Italian by nature, but with an international influence. There are no less than seven salads on the starters menu, along with baked clams, beef *carpaccio* and polenta, and all of the extensive pasta dishes are served in starter or main sizes.

Meat lovers will enjoy the *salume*, a mix of cold cuts served with homemade *gnocco* bread - moorish salty, crunchy hot mini bread sticks to balance the cold ham and black olives (VND260,000).

Chef Ferretti recommended the seafood salad (VND220,000) from the specials menu, with chubby moist shelled prawns on a bed of greens with marinated baby octopus, clams baked with melted cheese on top and an herbaceous Italian dressing. The greens were

very fresh and the citrus infused dressing a great balance for the tender seafood. The serving size was generous for a starter.

Next came a new dish just added to the regular menu - Linguine Porcini with Seafood (VND240,000). Tender pasta mixed with large prawns, sliced calamari and mixed with a porcini mushroom sauce which gave the pasta a dark gray color. The pasta was tender and the mushroom sauce added an almost caramel flavor to the dish.

Impressive as the first two courses were, it was the main dish that created a wow factor. *Bistecca al fiorentina* is possibly the largest steak dish available in Saigon. Designed for two, the dish comprises a massive 800 gram US angus prime rib, cooked in a cast iron pan and served at the table still sizzling, before being sliced by the chef. It is accompanied by small round roasted tomatoes and crispy baked potatoes.

Even for two this is a massive undertaking if you've already had a starter (or two). The meat was tender, relatively lean, cooked medium rare. For VND600,000, it represents good value (it's a meal for two remember) and there's nothing like a little theater at your table when dining out. Other guests all turned their heads to spot the source of the sizzle and

watch the chef's grand entry. Diners wanting their own more modestly sized steak can order a ribeye for VND400,000.

The dessert menu here is much more limited than the range of starters, mains and pasta dishes, but those with room should find something to sweeten the finish: passionfruit panna cotta, classic tiramisu, apple strudel are all VND100,000 each, or there is ice cream at VND30,000 a scoop, or a cheese platter for VND250,000.

The wine list is extensive - to the point it is about to be trimmed - but the choices range from an inexpensive Cono Sur Bicycle red or white by the glass or bottle, right up to options in the VND2 million + range.

We chose a bottle of Organic Pinot Noir from the boutique Martinborough region of New Zealand's lower North Island on special at VND1.1 million. Light, woody and distinctively New Zealand in flavor, it was a surprise to find such a rare and unique wine from such a little known place on a Saigon wine list.

Lucca is possibly one of Ho Chi Minh City's best kept secrets - a distinctly New York-Italian oasis in a busy Asian city which delivers everything it promises: great *trattoria* food, coffee and wine in a classy environment at a very reasonable price point. ■



Buon Appetito!

The Crescent area gets a new dining option

TEXT BY **ROBERT STOCKDILL** IMAGES BY **QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY**

LA CUCINA (Block 07-08 CR1-07, 103 Ton Dat Tien, D7) is a new addition to the al fresco dining strip at the Crescent in District 7. Owned by the same operators as the El Gaucho steakhouse concept, it adds another welcome dining niche to both D7 and the broader Ho Chi Minh City dining offer - Italian with a seafood focus.

Oi visited on a Tuesday night, not the busiest day of the week for any of the restaurants in this area - but as the only diners we certainly got exceptional attention and the opportunity for an enjoyable chat with the chef. Chef Reuben is a New Yorker who worked at Bobby Chinn's in District 1 before helping found La Cucina.

La Cucina is a modern, airy restaurant with floor to ceiling glass to make the most of the view over the lake and to watch the locals exercising their pets or strolling in the twilight. Despite the negative press this location has been unfairly subject to in other publications, The Crescent is one of our favorite destinations in Ho Chi Minh City to escape the chaos of the

city. So airy and open, you can literally feel like you're in Singapore or Southern California and as the sun sets on a hot summer's day, there's usually a light breeze coming off the lake to make it comfortable to sit outdoors.

This night we chose inside where we could have the best of both worlds - the view over the lake on one side and the appetite-nurturing sight of takeaway pizzas being prepared in the moon shaped brick wood fired ovens in the center of the dining room.

La Cucina was still new when we called by, with some fine-tuning being completed. In that spirit, perhaps we could suggest a review of the complimentary bread - it was too dry and salty and even dipping it in olive oil failed to make it appetizing.

After seeking the counsel of the waiter, we chose two starters - a light arugula salad (VND135,000) with sundried tomato and parmesan and the *carpaccio di polpo* (VND155,000) - raw octopus sliced thinly and served with roasted garlic and olive oil.

The salad was moorish with a fine balance

between sweet dressing, salty parmesan flakes and peppery rocket. The *carpaccio* was a revelation. The octopus was creamy, very tender and surprisingly full of flavor. It was served with freshly cut lemon which made it even tastier.

My dining companion is a fan of both pasta and seafood so this was the perfect venue for her.

The imagination was quickly captured by *calamario inchiostro fettuccine* (VND195,000) - squid ink fettuccine with seafood. I ordered the *merluzzo al forno* (VND450,000) - oven roasted snow fish with capers and rock salt. Coloring fettuccini with squid ink is a brave mission, and certainly unique. Black pasta is not that common, especially in a mainstream form such as this. I am reliably informed it passed in terms of quality, if a tiny bit firmer than is her usual preference. It was served over plump shell fish, calamari and other saltwater-raised fish tossed in a tomato broth.

My snowfish was a winner. Reuben made a point of coming out to apologize to us that the capers had not been delivered on time and asked if we minded him selecting an olive substitute which he felt would do the fish justice. This is Vietnam; such things happen on an almost daily basis in the dining industry so we did not mind a bit, and the chef was true to his word - the olives were divine.

So, too, the fish which was tasty and soft, served on a creamy sauce with oven roasted potatoes and a generous serving of colorful, tender vegetables.

The wine list is equally broad.

It's a warm, inviting venue with an international brasserie style outlook and friendly, engaging staff. It deserves to do well. ■

The French Factor

How Vietnam's colonial period has influenced some of the country's signature dishes

IMAGES BY MINH HOANG LY

ONE NIGHT MY Vietnamese husband surprised me with a new dish.

"La goo," he pronounced proudly, "It's French."

His *la goo* was a flavorful stew of pork, potato and carrot, served with rice.

"La goo," I repeated, incredulously. "That doesn't sound very French."

My husband, who does most of the cooking, conceded that the name of the Vietnamese staple could have been garbled a bit over time. After all, it's been nearly 60 years since the French left Vietnam.

Say "*la goo*" to a French-speaking person and they would immediately correct your pronunciation to "*ragout*", the French word for stew, with the swallowed-up French 'r' sounding very similar to an 'l'.

My husband's *ragout* is just one of many Vietnamese dishes that draw on French cooking techniques shared during the years that Vietnam was part of French Indochina.

I am much more of an experienced eater than a knowledgeable cook, so I decided to pick the brains of people who really know Vietnamese and French cooking in my quest to identify some of the French influences on the local cuisine.

First up is David Thai, winner of the first season of *Iron Chef Vietnam* and head chef at Le Bouchon de Saigon (40 Thai Van Lung, D1), an amazing French bistro.

David, a *Viet Kieu* who grew up in France, says he can see the French influence throughout Vietnam, in the coffee shops and restaurants, in the way certain things are eaten as well as how various dishes are prepared.

When David says *pot-au-feu* in his silky-smooth French accent, it does sound very much like *pho*. And David says he can see how the slow-cooked peasant dish *pot-au-feu*, literally pot-on-the-fire, could end up 13,000 kilometers away and a few decades later as *pho bo*. Both dishes feature oxtail and stewing beef cooked with herbs and spices in a clear broth. Add some ginger, star anise and fish sauce and you'd get a very pho-like *pot-au-feu*.

Other famously French-influenced dishes include *bo kho*, which could be described as *boeuf bourguignon* without the red wine. Both are served with crusty baguettes, or *banh mi* in Vietnamese.

David's peer, Thai Tu-Tho, owner of May (3/5 Hoang Sa, D1) restaurant, says the French influence on Vietnamese cooking extends to all the claypot dishes as well.

Tu-Tho, who grew up in Paris, says that before the French came to Vietnam, the local claypot dishes were quite dry. The Vietnamese cooks learned of the wonders of meat-and-gravy-type dishes and claypot cooking gradually evolved to their modern stew-like forms, she adds.

On one of our food tours this week we discovered that the most unlikely Vietnamese sweet snack is also very French.

A French customer took a bite of *banh chuai* (banana cake) and waved her arms around in a very French manner, exclaiming "*Far Breton, zis is Far Breton!*" She went on to explain that *Far Breton* is a dense flan from France's Brittany region that's studded with pinkish-purplish prunes instead of the pinkish-purplish bananas in the Vietnamese version. Our French customer said the local adaption was just as *delicieux* as the French original.

Extraordinaire! ■



IMAGE BY NAM QUAN

Having lived off and on in Vietnam since 2007, **Barbara Adam** now works online as a corporate communication consultant while blogging about food and other things at TheDropoutDiaries.com, and runs street food tours through **Saigon Street Eats** along with her Vietnamese husband



FROM TOP: La Goo, Pho Bo, Banh Chuai, Bo Kho

>>The List

Wine & Dine



Atexpats is Ho Chi Minh City's first truly comprehensive insider's guide for foreign residents - website launching 2013

bakeries

Bread Talk

With a mission to revitalize the once-stale business of bread, Singaporean BreadTalk now has outlets throughout Asia and has established itself in several HCMC locations. A brand partnership with Gloria Jeans has seen a wide range of bakery goods available in the cafés, with both brands sharing the premises at this location.

106 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D3
3930 3181

Brodard Bakery

Brodard Bakery has been operating in Saigon for over 30 years. It provides finely crafted cakes for all occasions in addition to ice cream, pastries, chocolate and tarts.

95 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 2416
6am - 10pm

Cakewalk Cupcakes

Small boutique cupcake shop offers cupcakes with panache. Traditional cupcakes as well as new, creative flavors are sure to satisfy everyone who is compelled to bend to the will of their sweet tooth.

84 Nguyen Cong Tru, D1
6295 9087
10am - 9pm

Givral

The cakes and tradition of this unique cake shop have captivated generations of Vietnamese customers. With many outlets throughout the city, this particular store was reopened in 2010 on its original site at Vincom A, built on the old Eden complex.

171 Dong Khoi, D1
3822 8659
www.saigongivral.com
6am - 10pm

Gourmand Shop

A traditional delicatessen shop featuring freshly baked baguettes, croissants, chocolate breads, charcuteries, pastries, finest macaroons and other French delicacies prepared daily. Special products imported from France are also available such as French oysters, Damman Freres luxury tea, and a range of authentic products.

Ground floor, Sofitel Saigon Plaza
17 Le Duan, D1
3824 1555

Harvest Baking

Harvest Baking offers a delivery-based bakery service with a charitable focus, teaching young Vietnamese hopefuls how to bake delicious breads and cakes through their food training program.

30 Lam Son, Tan Binh
3547 0577
harvestbaking@yahoo.com
harvestbaking.net
7am - 5pm Monday-Saturday

Kinh Do Bakery

Kinh Do Bakery makes reasonably priced baked goods to-go, such as cakes and cupcakes, tarts, sandwiches, Vietnamese "banh bao", Western-style hamburgers and mini-pizzas and gelatin-based

desserts.

128A Hai Ba Trung, D1
3829 6552
kinhdobakery.vn
6am - 10.30pm

La Doree

Providing patrons with over 50 varieties of cakes, along with a rich sandwich menu from luxurious French-designed premises. La Doree is the best place in town for macaroons.

216 Ly Tu Trong, D1
3822 1718
www.ladoree.com
7am - 9.30pm

Nhu Lan Bakery

One of the most famous and prestigious local brands of bakeries in the city, Nhu Lan Bakery supplies bakery products, cakes, bread, ham, sausage, poultry, roasted pork, and dried foods.

50 Ham Nghi, D1
3829 2970
www.nhulan.vn
4am - 12am

Pacey Cupcakes

This cozy little bakery features elegant décor and offers 12 kinds of cupcakes daily, located near the cathedral in a hip, modern setting.

53G Nguyen Du, D1
3823 3223
nguyen.tran@paceycupcakes.com
www.paceycupcakes.com
9am - 10pm

Pat'a Chou

French-style bakery with charming décor. Specializing in baguettes, fresh croissants of various varieties, small quiches, and cakes for every occasion.

74B Hai Ba Trung, D1
3824 8179
nglivan@gmail.com
www.pat-achou.com
5am - 10pm

Savoure Bakery

Shops have a wide selection of cookies, sweet and savory breads and cakes including cashew chocolate, taro and orange. Custom cakes can be ordered for weddings and holidays.

Unit E3, 1st Floor, Saigon Tax Trade Centre,
135 Nguyen Hue, D1
3914 3773
www.savourebakery.com

Schneider's Cafe & Tea Corner

The bakers at Schneider's offer fresh, healthy, delicious breads, cakes, and pastries, introducing Ho Chi Minh City to eight centuries of German baking tradition.

27 Han Thuyen, D1
2229 6910
www.schneiders-finest.com
9.30am - 9pm

Tous Les Jours

A Korean owned French-style bakery franchise serving fresh baked bread and popular pastries, all baked on-site.

180 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3823 8302
6am - 11pm

offers a wide range of beers, shakes, spirits, cocktails and food throughout the day.

187 Pham Ngu Lao, D1
6291 5424
allezboo@hcm.fpt.vn
24 hours

Alto Heli Bar

From the 52nd floor of the Bitexco, you can enjoy sweeping panoramic views of the city's skyline. Try the tapas tasting platters, sip on French Champagne, or choose from the selection of fine wines, local and international beers available.

Level 52 Bitexco Financial Tower, 2 Hai Trieu, D1
6291 8752
info@altosaigon.com
www.cirrusaigon.com

Bernie's Bar & Grill

An Irish bar and restaurant serving international cuisine like pizza, burgers, pasta and more. Celebrates happy hour from 5 to 7pm, and frequently provides live music.

19 Thai Van Lung, D1
3822 1720
www.berniesbar.com.vn
7.30am - 11pm

Blue Gecko

Blue Gecko provides a classic bar experience complete with a pool table, darts board, cold beer and friendly staff. Guests can watch live sports and relax in the comfortable ambience of the bar.

31 Ly Tu Trong, D1
3824 3483
simon@hcm.vnn.vn
www.bluegecktoisaigon.com
4.30pm - 12am

Bootleg DJ Café

Modern, moody, and minimalist cafe bar with reasonable prices by day, chic lounge with DJs playing by night. Has a limited menu of sandwiches and other health-conscious Italian fare.

9 Le Thanh Ton, D1
090 760 9202
dortudose@gmail.com
9.30am - 1am

Boston Sports Bar

Located in the heart of the backpacker area, Boston Sports Bar is open 24 hours and provides guests with a modern bar-going experience. The bar boasts a pool table, live sports on LCD TVs, and western food.

28/4 Bui Vien, D1
6656 6338
bostonpizzavn@gmail.com
24 hours

Carmen Bar

Carmen Bar features a small cavern-like entrance with rough rock walls decorated with ambient lighting. With an exclusive range of drinks and cocktails, guests can relax while enjoying tunes from an excellent Flamenco band.

8 Ly Tu Trong, D1
3829 7699
5pm - 11.30pm

Charm Bar

Unassuming expat bar in the central city with table soccer and an upstairs floor for private functions. Charm holds an understated air of class within the expat

bar district, and is the favorite of its series of regular patrons.

58 Huynh Thuc Khang, D1
3915 3826
thecharmsg@yahoo.com

Boudoir Lounge

Designed to look like a lived-in yet immaculately styled Parisien home with plush leather sofas, silk cushions and velvet armchairs, Boudoir Lounge serves up everything from afternoon tea to evening cocktails along with signature dishes for any occasion from informal meals and business lunches to gourmet canapés accompanying evening drinks.

Ground floor, Saigon Sofitel Plaza
17 Le Duan, D1
3824 1555

Brotzeit German Bier Bar & Restaurant

This boisterous establishment is a franchise that originated in Singapore back in 2006, which now operates in several Asian destinations. The HCMC venue is in the flashy Kumho complex on the edge of the central district, and features a wide 24-meter restaurant frontage on the mezzanine level and a contemporary and chic setting with German-inspired wooden benches and a long wooden bar counter. Serving authentic Bavarian cuisines and premium beers, Brotzeit is a high-profile restaurant that has fast become a favourite amongst the expat community for this category.

39 Le Duan, D1
9822 4206
enquiry@brotzeit.vn
brotzeit.co/kumholink

Chilli Pub Saigon ✓ Oi's Pick

A fun place to unwind, with cold drinks, good music (customers can choose the music) friendly staff, light pub food, weekly quiz night (Mondays), darts and televised sport. Try a challenge shot from the big Chilli on the bartop.

104 Ho Tung Mau, D1
09 8376 3372
ff291182@yahoo.com
4pm-4am

Chu Bar

At this beautiful, 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
3822 3907
7am - Midnight

Cloud 9 Rooftop Lounge

Located near Turtle Lake, this stunning bar offers panoramic views of Saigon. Guests can peruse an extensive international wine list or choose from an array of creative cocktails and international beers.

Level 667, Hai Nam Building, 2 Bis Cong Truong Quoc, D3
090 944 5544
12pm - Late

The Drunken Duck

One of Saigon's most notorious inner-city expat bars proper, Drunken Duck is the favourite den of many of the city's barflies, if for no other reason than being better-lit and slightly larger than other venues of its ilk. Ranking rather favourably on the

bars

Allez Boo

A popular bar in Saigon featuring tropical bamboo decor, multiple levels and a DJ spinning funky beats. This unique bar

seediness scale from whichever point of view required, Duck has two floors, the upstairs lounge area with a large pull-down projector screen a pleasant addition to the more ubiquitous downstairs pool tables and long bar for the waitresses to lean on.

58 Ton That Thiep, D1
3915 2835
ducksaiagon.com

Ginger 60

A low-key expat bar with an extensive drink menu and live music in a friendly atmosphere.

60 Ton That Thiep, D1
093 772 1011
4pm - 12am

Go2

Go2 is a popular nightclub in the backpackers area. This two level bar offers dancing, shisha, and a streetside view with comfortable seating. The bar also has a pool table and extensive western food menu.

187 De Tham, D1
3836 9575
9am - 5am

Hard Rock Café

Memorabilia from Hard Rock's iconic collection adorns the walls of Hard Rock Café Ho Chi Minh City and there is live music most nights. Located in the Kumho Plaza complex.

39 Le Duan, D1
6291 7595
www.hardrockcafe.vn
11.30am - 2am

Heaven Bar Saigon

Standing out from other nightclubs, Heaven Bar impresses their guests with nice decor in tone of red and blue, a broad range of sparkling drinks, Ladies' night, awesome DJ at weekend, and many exciting events for expats.

8 Le Quy Don, D3
090 534 3316
barsaigonheaven@yahoo.fr
www.barsaigonheaven.com
5pm - 2am

Ice Blue

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
3822 2664
icebluepub@yahoo.com
3pm - 1am

Kim's Tavern

An expat bar on the edge of the downtown shopping district renowned for friendly, attractive staff, cold beer, and a relaxed 'local pub' environment.

20 Huynh Thuc Khang, D1
090 777 5141
4pm - 1am

Last Call

A fine hole-in-the-wall cocktail bar in the centre of town opposite the Sheraton Hotel, Last Call is a 70's themed lounge with a permanent neon glow. Now one of the most popular expat/hip local late evening bars, with a small deck from which to overlook the nightlife set on Dung Du.

59 Dong Du, D1
3823 3122
lastcallsaigon@gmail.com
facebook.com/lastcallsaigon

Lo Pub

In a brawny Australian snub to the effete vestiges of French Colonialism that

pervade in Saigon, Le Pub is a hearty Oz-styled pub proudly located in a small alleyway between Pham Ngu Lao and Bui Vien st, Opposite the Chua Au lac arch, where it is a magnet for backpackers and blokey expats. The manager and staff are friendly enough too, I suppose.

175/22 Pham Ngu Lao, D1
3837 7679
www.lepub.org

Lindo

Cozy sports bar with big screen TVs and restaurant quality meals. The Sunday afternoon "Sausage Sizzle" and other weeknight events make this an appealing venue for expats any day of the week.

149 Ton That Dam, D1
3915 3149
4pm - 11pm

Long Phi

One of the staples in the backpacker district, Long Phi is a no-frills bar that doubles as a cheap diner serving some fairly decent French and European cuisine.

207 Bui Vien, D1
3837 2704
6pm to very late, Tuesday - Sunday

Lush

Another of Saigon's more infamous night venues, this have-to-go/love-to-hate club is still as popular as ever, attracting a pumping Vietnamese and foreign crowd on a nightly basis – if the reports from local events websites are to be believed. Lush has a highly distinctive, modern look, with different areas catering to different needs, including a VIP space with plush couches for chatting with hot new friends.

2 Ly Tu Trong, D1
www.lush.com.vn

M52 Bar

A bar catering primarily to foreigners. Offers a simple setting for a night of drinking in the company of friends.

34 Ton That Thiep, D1
3821 0151
5pm - 12am

Number Five Bar

Number Five Bar has become notorious for its "all you can drink" draught tiger beer offer. Attractive waitresses are always enthusiastic contestants on the billiards table.

44 Pasteur, D1
3915 3150
heinzvn@gmail.com
3pm - 1am

O'Brien's

Two-storey Irish-themed bar & restaurant furnished to high standard. O'Brien's promotes a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere. Known for its excellent food menu, this is a fun place to socialize while shooting pool, playing darts, or chatting with the friendly staff.

74/A3 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3829 3198
www.irish-barsaigon.com
11am - 1am; Sundays 4pm - 1am

Olive Bar

Spanish-influenced restobar specializing in cocktails, wine, tapas and finger food. Modern, stylish decor and fusion-influenced menu make this a trendy destination for young business executives and fashion-conscious tourists alike.

17A6 Le Thanh Ton, D1
090 973 3304
pierehanh20@yahoo.com

Phatty's

A sports bar offering a selection of ice-cold local and imported beers as well as a complete range of tasty pub food. Central features are the TVs, connected to an extensive sports channel network.

46-48 Ton That Thiep, D1
3821 0796
info@phattysbar.com
www.phattysbar.com

9am to midnight

Red Bar & Restaurant

Popular nightclub and networking event venue near Bitexco Tower. Serves Aussie pub food and hosts a live Filipino band.

3rd Floor, 70-72 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
2229 7017
8am - 2am

Saigon Saigon Bar

In wartime Saigon, the rooftop of the Caravelle hotel was one of the most popular drinking holes in the city for foreign journalists and expat embassy staff – and it remains one of the most sought-out casual tourist attractions in the city today. Panoramic views of Saigon can still be obtained on the garden terrace despite all the construction, and efforts have been made to preserve the original character of the venue with its multiple ceiling fans, subdued decor, and quietly romantic atmosphere with oil candles on the table tops.

19 Lam Son Square, D1
3823 4999
www.caravellehotel.com/en/1/15/325/products.aspx

Saigon Retro

One of the newest expat bars on the block, offering home-cooked western fare upstairs and friendly bar service downstairs. Live sport on screen, including English Premier League.

113 Ho Tung Mau, D1
6278 2349
4pm - 2am

Sheridan's Irish Pub

Offering traditional Irish food like biscuits and sausage, along with British dishes like fish and chips or bangers and mash and even local menu items.

24 Ngo Van Nam, D1
3823 0793
8am to midnight

Slate

Slate takes its name from the dark grey slate tiling that covers the floor of the entire establishment. A modern, relaxing spot for an after-dinner drink with an extensive martini list and delicious BBQ menu. A tad difficult to find above a BMW dealership, but accessible from the hotel it is worth the effort.

3rd Floor, Moevenpick Hotel, 253 Nguyen Van Troi, Phu Nhuan
3844 9222
5pm - 11pm

Spotted Cow

Hearty breakfasts, great pub grub, cheap drinks and the latest sport on TV make this an appealing destination for tourists of all budgets. Located in the heart of the

backpacker district.

111 Bui Vien, D1
3920 7670
spottedcow@alfrescosgroup.com
11am - 12pm

Storm P

Storm P restaurant and bar is named after the famous Danish cartoonist Robert Storm Petersen, and it's the only Danish restaurant in Vietnam.

5B Nguyen Sieu, D1
3827 4738
Storm-saigonvn@yahoo.com
www.storm.vn
10am - late

Vasco's

Stylish bar, restaurant and cocktail lounge in a converted colonial style house. European and Asian fare downstairs with extensive wine list and cocktails. DJs perform upstairs at night.

74/7D Hai Ba Trung, D1
3824 2888
www.vascosgroup.com

cafés

Achaya Cafe

Achaya Cafe have two floors providing a nice atmosphere for meeting, relaxation or party. The menu is extensive with drinks and Western, Japanese, Vietnamese food from sandwiches, spaghetties, pizzas, steak and special Japanese sweet desserts.

90 Le Loi, D1
093 897 2050
11am - 10:30pm

Aisha Lounge

Secured away in a small alleyway on Pasteur, Aisha lounge is a fascinating Turkish-style coffee shop designed with an Arabic architectural theme. The ground floor is washed in a Mediterranean blue tone, and seating is on plush cushions of the kind you'd expect to spend the evening lounging around on in a haze with an exotic pipe. Rather incongruously, however, Aisha offers a menu studded with various Vietnamese drinks and food – although the belly dance show does evoke the spirit of the interior design.

63/1 Pasteur, D1
6660 9040
aishalounge@aishalounge.com
www.aishalounge.com

AMI Café

A dimly-lit atmospheric venue hosting live music and with a fully-stocked bar.

133 Hai Ba Trung, D1

Angel-in-us Coffee

A sophisticated and classy coffee franchise with exemplary attention to detail, Angel-in-us has a pretty angel wing



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www.LoveInVietnam.com

motif and a quality coffee menu.

145 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3827 8588
facebook.com/angelinuscoffeevn

AQ Coffee

Beautiful café situated in one of the city's oldest French mansions, serving coffee made with traditionally-roasted coffee beans.

32 Pham Ngoc Thach, D3
3829 8344
7.30am - 11.30pm

Bobby Brewer's



A contemporary cafe in the backpacker area set over three floors, the cafe features a large free cinema, a great place for couples.

45 Bui Vien, D1
3920 4090
www.bobbybrewers.com
6.30am - 11pm

Boulevard Cafe



This Parisian-style cafe has a fine, white tone and a warm ambience that attempts a look of luxury with its plush sofas and chandeliers. Effectively, this makes it one of the more international-looking Vietnamese cafes and a very pleasant venue in an area away from the city centre.

98 Phan Xich Long, Phu Nhuan
3995 9876
09 0909 0052

Café Ban Sonate

Café Ban Sonate is a peaceful haven, tucked away from the boisterous noise of the city. This cafe offers elegant decor along with indoor and outdoor seating options.

53 Dang Dung, D1
3290 6004

Caffe Fresco



A new player on the scene currently battling for supremacy in the coffee chain market, Fresco offers a wide range of espresso and local coffees, juices and smoothies.

121 Le Loi, D1
3821 1009
info@fresco.com.vn
www.fresco.com.vn
6am - 12am Monday through Saturday

Café Terrace



Café Terrace is a popular modern cafe/restaurant in the chic Saigon Center. This cozy, dimly lit cafe offers customers a long outdoor terrace with views of the bustling pedestrian and traffic scene. A second cafe is located on the first floor amongst fashion stores.

Ground Floor & First Floor, Saigon Centre,
65 Le Loi, D1
3821 4958
8am - 10pm

Cafe Vuon Kieng



Cafe Vuon Kieng is a quiet, casual cafe near the banks of the Saigon River, boasting relaxing views and refreshing breezes. This riverside cafe offers jasmine tea, coffee, ice cream, beer, even cocktails.

10B Ton Duc Thang, D1
3823 3279
7.30am - 11pm

Centrofarms Coffee

This recently opened cafe, located near the airport, sells its own eponymous brand of Centrofarm organic roasted beans direct from Dalat with indoor and outdoor seating that's perfect for people watching and getting your daily dose of caffeine.

19 Ut Tich, Tan Binh

Chi's Cafe



Chi's Café is a restaurant serving both Western and Vietnamese food

in the backpacker area. The menu is extensive, with everything from sandwiches and pizzas to their popular baked potatoes with filling.

40/31 Bui Vien, D1
3836 7622
9am - 10pm

Ciao Cafe



An icon in downtown HCMC, Ciao cafe features two floors serving simple food, coffee, smoothies and ice cream – and an opulent lounge bar on the top floor. Antique tiles mix with velvet curtains and stylish paintings to make this a memorable chill out environment.

74-76 Nguyen Hue, D1
40 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
38231130
ciaocafe.vn/en/brand/1-ciao.html
7am - 11pm

The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf



Offering over 22 varieties of coffee and 20 kinds of tea, The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf has been serving the best coffees and teas from around the world for more than 40 years in its cozy, handcrafted oak paneled stores.

www.coffeebean.com.vn
7am - 11pm
39 Le Duan, D1
Ground Floor, Crescent Mall
Ton Dat Tien, D7
157-159 Nguyen Thai Hoc, D1
39 Le Duan, D1
12-14 Thai Van Lung, D1
94 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D3
235 Nguyen Van Cu, D1
235 Dong Khoi, D1
1-5 Le Duan, D1
60-62 Cach Mang Thang 8, D3
1-3 Phan Chu Trinh, D1

Cosmo Lounge



Cosmo Lounge is a popular location for stylish and trendy locals and expats alike. Chill out in a bold blue and white environment with local and European cafe food and a broad selection of coffees and drinks.

86 Bis Le Thanh Ton, D1
3823 5848
8am - 9pm

Cooku's Nest



Cooku's nest has a clean, artsy vibe offering drinks and snacks.

13 Tu Xuong, D3
2241 2043
cookucafe@yahoo.com
8am - 10.30pm

Crêperie & Café



Inexpensive Western fare targeted mainly at locals, delivering some fairly decent low-cost sandwiches.

Galaxy Co, 5 Han Thuyen, D1
7am - 10.30pm

Elle Cafe



Keeping in line with the sense of style that comes along with the Elle fashion label brand, the menu and décor of Elle Cafe sets it apart from the competition.

Ground Floor, Bitexco Financial Tower, 45
Ngo Duc Ke, D1
6291 8766
7am - 11pm

Geisha's Coffee and Tea House



Experience a funky, relaxed atmosphere with a refreshing drinks & delicious snack at Geisha Coffee and Tea House. A retreat away from the hustle and bustle of the streets of Saigon.

85 Pasteur, D1
3829 4004
enquiry@geishacafe.com
www.geishacafe.com
8am - 10pm



Hatvala



This tea house, coffee shop and restaurant offers selected, quality Vietnamese tea and coffee to drink or to buy as leaves and beans. They also have a delightful all day casual dining area in their stylish bistro.

44 Nguyen Hue, D1
3824 1534
8am - 11pm
hatvalavietnam@gmail.com
www.hatvala.com
www.facebook.com/hatvala

Hi-End Coffee



Located near the leafy Tao Dan Park, Hi-End Coffee is one of a few venues serving up just as much music as caffeine.

126 Suong Nguyet Anh, D1
3824 1004
Open to 10pm

Gloria Jeans

Australia's most popular coffee franchise now has a solid presence in Ho Chi Minh City with multiple locations in the inner city. While the favourite Dong Khoi address has now been given over to a Sony store, new venues in Vincom A and at CMT8 prove this favourite brand with locals and expats alike is steadily growing in Vietnam.

2 bis Cong Truong Quoc Te, D3
3825 6045
www.gloriajeanscoffees.com/vn

Hi-End Coffee



Visiting here is less for quiet chatting and more for the audio feast, unless you're not a fan of what happens to be on the playlist.

126 Suong Nguyet Anh, D1
3824 1004

Highlands Coffee



With over 50 cafes in Vietnam, Highlands Coffee serves up international and traditional Vietnamese blends. Coffee lovers can also find Highlands premium quality blends in selected hotels and supermarkets.

Saigon Center, 65 Le Loi, D1

i-Box Cafe



iBox cafe is a unique, cafe with aristocratic decor. This decorative cafe specializes in red wine, Asian dishes and spaghetti. They also offer an extensive selection of ice cream creations.

135 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3825 6718
8am - 10pm

ID Café



Separated from the bustle of nearby Ben Thanh Market by a tiny alleyway, ID is a retro café opening a door to an earlier Saigon.

34D Thu Khoa Huan, D1
7.30am - 11pm

Kesera



A cozy and friendly café/bar serving coffee, beer, wines, freshly-baked homemade cakes and delicious Western food.

26/1 Le Thanh Ton, D1

3827 0443
cafebarkesera@gmail.com
keserakesera.com

6am - 11pm Monday through Friday; 7.30am - 11pm Saturday

Kita Coffee



This three-storey establishment provides patrons with Lavazza coffee along with a unique Mediterranean menu.

39-41 Nguyen Hue, D1
3914 0683
kitacoffee@gmail.com
7.30am - 10pm

Kopi Beans



Kopi Beans Cafe is a favorite among high school kids. It's a small takeaway coffee shop with cheap espresso and iced coffees.

206 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D3
6684 4788
kopibeans@yahoo.com
www.kopibeans.com.vn
8am - 10pm

L'Anmien Dining Cafe



Linked to the luxurious Mui Ne hotel of the same name, this internationally-styled sidewalk café is a place to relax and enjoy the cool air and watch the busy inner-city traffic from a more refined vantage.

76A Le Lai, D1
38212718
7am - 10pm

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 stationary and home ware 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
9am - 9pm

The Living Room



The Living Room has two floors providing a laid-back atmosphere for meet-ups or after-work relaxation over drinks and Western and Vietnamese food.

40-42 Dong Du, D1
3822 0377
robert.clark@thelivingroom.com.vn
10am - 3am

L'Usine



Proof that international, independent retail is possible in Ho Chi Minh City, l'Usine serves top-quality espresso coffee and great European café food. Guests can also peruse clothing and art deco items.

First Floor, 151 Dong Khoi, D1
6674 3565
info@lusinespace.com
www.lusinespace.com
9am - 9pm

Lo Tokyo Baum



Popular Japanese cake cafe with quiet seating area, specializing in orange cakes.

46 Nguyen Van Trang, D1
3926 0388
8am - 10pm

NYDC



NYDC offers a modest selection of wholesome western dishes and desserts - steaks, burgers, fish and chips - and gourmet caffeine addicts will cue up for the enormous elephaccino.

Ground Floor, Metropolitan,
235 Dong Khoi, D1
3822 7955
marketing@nydc.com.vn
www.nydc.com.vn
7am - 11pm

May Coffee

A superb, friendly, and inexpensive little café most notable for its perfect view of the Cathedral tower bells and close proximity to the post office.
1 Cong Xa Paris, D1
3827 7099
www.maycoffee.com
7.30am - 11.30pm

Paris Deli

A French style café serving some of the best pastries in Saigon, this cheerful spot is a real slice of Parisian life. Many European drinks and dishes.
Ground Floor, Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, D1
3821 6127
9am - 10pm

Passio Coffee to Go

Passio Coffee offers its guests fine Italian style coffee made from the finest ingredients. Since Passio's inception in 2006, this enthusiastic team of coffee brewers has become recognized by international coffee drinkers.
112 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D3
3930 0100
093 346 8007
hdd310@gmail.com
www.passiocoffee.com
6.30am - 11pm

Princess and the Pea

A fairytale-themed venue for the dreamers of Ho Chi Minh City, hidden away in a tiny alleyway off Pasteur. Discover it if you can.
63/18 Pasteur, D1
093 635 3179
princess.and.the.pea.pasteur@gmail.com
8am - 10.30pm

Regina Coffee

A popular hangout for hip, young Vietnamese around Nguyen Du, serving

western coffee in a vintage, artsy environment.

84 Nguyen Du, D1
3824 4204
www.facebook.com/coffeeregina/info
7am - 11pm

Soho Coffee

Two level local café chain serving light meals, coffee and local chilled drinks.
185 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3839 5038
gopy@soho.vn
www.soho.vn
7am - 11pm

Starbucks Coffee

This Seattle-based coffee chain recently opened in Feb 2013 with a large, open ground floor space with ample seating in booths and tables, and a smaller space upstairs with views out on the busy Nga 6 Phu Dong roundabout. Also has outdoor seating. Expect to pay Western prices.
76 Le Lai, D1

Stella Restaurant & Cafe

Providing authentic Italian and Vietnamese food using fresh imported and local premium-quality ingredients. Where else can you find such good coffee/cuisine at such reasonable prices?
119-121 Bui Vien, D1
3836 9220
www.stellacaffe.com
7am - 11.30pm

Tram Coffee ☑️ O's Pick

A unique romantic café experience hidden well off the beaten track, but close to District 1 in neighbouring Phu Nhuan District. Sip a coffee, juice or beer or indulge in good café food over candlelight in a dark, intimate environment hidden amongst trees and trickling streams. Relax

in an air conditioned room or dine alfresco amongst the greenery. The perfect spot to impress a date with your local knowledge.
100 Tran Huy Lieu St, Phu Nhuan
2240 5306
7am - 11pm

Trung Nguyen Cafe

One of the most ubiquitous coffee brands in Vietnam. With a burgeoning presence throughout the city, it's hard to go anywhere without tripping over a Trung Nguyen café – serving gourmet Vietnamese street coffee.
26B-C Le Loi, D1
3825 1270
office@trungnguyen.com.vn
www.trungnguyen.com.vn
7am - 10.30pm

The Serenata Cafe

The Serenata Cafe is a peaceful, relaxing oasis in a French Colonial house. This café embraces nature with plants, fishponds, and small fountains, and offers music in the evenings.
6D Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3
3930 7436
7am - 11pm

Windows

A highly fashionable café near the cathedral. For many years, this eye-catching venue has remained a place to see and be seen, often frequented by the famous, the well-to-do, and the ne'er do well.
12 Alexandre De Rhodes, D1
38238408
7am - 12am

Zoom Cafe

This distinctive Vespa-themed Café has been a popular fixture in D1 for ten years. Today, the café serves as the place for

Vespa enthusiasts and tour veterans to swap stories over ice-cold beers and what many claim is the best selection of mouth-watering burgers, paninis, and baguette sandwiches in town.
169A Bui Vien, D1
3920 3897
vscotterguy@yahoo.com

chinese

Dragon Court

Dragon Court is a large restaurant opposite the Opera House in Saigon's bustling District 1. Enjoy Chinese dishes from many regions with dishes like glass noodles, hot pot, and a large dim sum collection.
11-13 Lam Son Square, D1
3827 2566
10am - 2.30pm; 5pm - 2am; Sundays from 8am.

Dynasty

New World hotel's in-house Chinese restaurant is certainly a venue of fine contemporary Chinese dining. The chef offers a variety of authentic Cantonese dishes along with classic dim sum under a high lantern/chandelier-lit ceiling, in a broad dining room decorated in classic Chinese style. VIP guests can dine in one of four semi-private or three totally private rooms.
New World Hotel
76 Le Lai, D1
3822 8888
www.saijon.newworldhotels.com

Hung Ky Mi Gia

Hung Ky Mi Gia is a famous and long-standing restaurant with more than 13 years of operation. It serves traditional Chinese cuisine with authentic dishes such as roasted chicken, duck, and pork.



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20 Le Anh Xuan, D1
3822 2673
8am - 1am

Kabin



Kabin is a Cantonese restaurant specializing in exotic dishes such as baked duck tongue, grouper cutlet, and lobster soup. Located in the five star Renaissance Riverside Hotel, this restaurant offers a wide variety of dim sum.

Renaissance Riverside Hotel,
8-15 Ton Duc Thang, D1
3822 0033
www.marriott.com
12pm - 2.30pm, 6pm - 10pm

Li Bai Chinese Restaurant

Located in the Sheraton Hotel, Li Bai offers a selection of over 50 dim sum dishes as well as traditional Chinese and Cantonese specialties. Diners will enjoy the relaxed, upscale ambiance provided by the wood paneling and oriental art.

Level 2, 88 Dong Khoi, D1
3827 2828
www.libaisaigon.com
11am - 2.30pm; 6.30pm - 10pm

Ming Court



Since the Nikko Hotel graced the Saigon skyline, the venue has managed to set the standard for classy, five-star dining with its bold grey modern decor and Japanese-style efficiency. Ming Court, on the hotel's third floor, is a large Chinese restaurant with all the expected graces of the Orient belonging to the exotic fantasy of the dynastic era.

3rd floor, Nikko Saigon Hotel
235 Nguyen Van Cu, D1
3925 7777
hotelnikkosaigon.com.vn

Seven Wonders (Bay Ky Quan)

It's worth traipsing out to D6 for this one. Not only are the Dim Sum, Peking Duck, and pan-China home-style cuisine exemplary, but the venue design, with its architectural flourishes from the seven wonders of the world (including the Great Wall, the Taj Mahal, and the pyramids) makes for a highly distinctive dining experience.

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

Shang Palace Restaurant



The slightly off-centre, high-class Norfolk Mansion Hotel on Ly Tu Trong is home to one of Saigon's most well-respected Chinese restaurants outside of Cho Lon. Located on the 1st floor, Shang's dark intricate wooden tables and chairs with white linen and deep red carpeting make for an atmosphere of moody opulence; there is seating for over 300 guests, and private rooms are available.

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

Shi-Fu Dim Sum



Shifu Dim Sum House is a restaurant specializing in dim sum, with modern Chinese décor and over 68 dim sum dishes.

139A Nguyen Trai, D1
3925 1111
info@shifu.vn
www.dimsunhouse.vn
7am - 12am

5 Nguyen Sieu, D1
3825 6257
ask@alibi.vn
www.alibi.vn
10am - late daily

Au Manoir de Khai



Au Manoir de Khai is an authentic, first class French restaurant. Guests can enjoy traditional French cuisine in this classic 100 year old villa. Their menu is extensive and features dishes like Kobe beef, foie gras, red grouper, and truffle mushrooms.

251 Dien Bien Phu, D3
3930 3394
aumanoir@khaisilkcorp.com
www.aumanoirdekhai.com
9am - 10pm

Bon Appetit



A small French-Vietnamese fusion bistro on Pham Ngoc Thach with a simplistic charm enhanced by a fine selection of old-style French music.

78 Pham Ngoc Thach, D3
090 789 8345
9am - 2.30pm; 5pm - 10pm

Bonjour Restaurant



Bonjour serves up international dishes with a French flair. The large menu of main courses feature roast duck, salmon, lamb and steak with specialties being ostrich and venison.

150/26 Nguyen Trai, D1
3926 0699
bonjourresto.com
7am - 10pm

Cordon Blue



A unique French venue decorated with blue and green shades serving high-quality French cuisine on the outskirts of the inner city.

38 Mac Dinh Chi, D1
3822 5216
www.cordonblue.vn
10am - 2pm; 5pm - 10pm

La Brasserie de Saigon



Set in a trendy space featuring art nouveau décor and intricate iron spiral staircases, La Brasserie de Saigon presents authentic French cuisine with a modern twist under the eye of Iron Chef Vietnam David Thai.

38 Dong Du, D1
012 046 99154
contact@labrasseriendesaigon.com
11.30pm - 2.30pm; 6pm - 12am

La Camargue



Known for its high food quality, reasonable prices and a fine selection of wine, the long running La Camargue serves up home-style French cuisine in an open plan 1st-floor terrace.

74/17 Hai Ba Trung, D1
11am - 2pm; 6pm - 10.30pm

La Creperie



La Creperie serves up typical food from the Brittany region like savory galettes, crepes, ciders and fresh oysters, in a relaxed atmosphere.

17/7 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3824 7070
hochiminhcity@lacreperie.com.cn
www.lacreperie.com.cn
11am - 11pm

La Cuisine



This ultra-fine little bistro is an exercise in minimalism with its twenty seats and bare, chic-rustic interior of wooden furnishings and black & white photographs on whitewashed walls. Its warm lighting and clean atmosphere belies a certain sophistication, however, and the price of the fare is significantly damaging enough

to make this a rare treat for those not in the restaurant's fabulously wealthy target market.

48 Le Thanh Ton, D1
2229 8882
info@lacuisine.com.vn
www.lacuisine.com.vn

La Doree

La Doree provides its patrons with over 50 varieties of cakes, as well as a rich sandwich menu. They are located in the heart of District 1 in a building with a luxurious French design. In addition to sweets and snacks, this eatery also serves coffee, cocktails, and their speciality: green tea tiramisu.

216 Ly Tu Trong, D1
08 3822 1718
www.ladoree.com

La Fourchette



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

9 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
3829 8143
www.lafourchette.com.vn
12pm - 2.30pm, 6pm - 10pm

La Nicoise



A small, friendly French bistro with about a dozen tables, La Nicoise serves up typical French dishes under the watchful eye of its French-Vietnamese owners.

56 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
3821 3056
7am - 9pm, closed Sunday evenings

Le Bordeaux



Set in a French colonial-style mansion, Le Bordeaux serves southwestern French cuisine in a beautiful setting. Known for its foie gras and large selection of wines, Le Bordeaux is worth the trip to Binh Thanh district.

72 D2 Street, Binh Thanh
3899 9831
090 393 6633
restaurant-lebordeaux.com.vn
11.30am - 1.30pm; 6.30am - 9.30pm

Le Bouchon De Saigon



Red and white checked tablecloths and closely set tables make Le Bouchon de Saigon the place to go for a casual, classic French bistro experience.

40 Thai Van Lung, D1
3829 9263
contact@lebouchondesaignon.com
www.lebouchondesaignon.com
11am - 2.30pm; 5.30pm - 10pm

Le Jardin

A restaurant that effectively shuts out the Asian hubbub outside, Le Jardin is a gorgeous enclosed garden space that allows eaters to follow the example of the French colonists a century ago and pretend they're actually in Paris. Whether dining outside under the shaded terrace or within the old, warmly-lit villa, the cuisine, decor, and general mood of the place is like a Stargate direct to France.

31D Thai Van Lung, D1
3825 8465

L'Olivier



L'Olivier is a restaurant serving authentic Mediterranean cuisines, located on the 2nd floor of the Hotel Sofitel.

Sofitel Saigon Plaza, 17 Le Duan, D1
3824 1555
www.sofitel.com
11.30am - 2pm; 6pm - 10pm

The Refinery



This Parisian bistro hidden away in its enclave on Hai Ba Trung is an exceptional

venue, making for an elegant repatriation of the sins of the past. It was here in French Colonial days that opium was manufactured, bringing ruin to the people of Asia; it is here that a far softer side of the French culture now exercises its influence over present-day Saigon, serving modern European cuisine in its tastefully decorated dining area and airy outdoor patio.

74 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3825 7667
www.therefinerysaigon.com

Ty Coz



An unpretentious venue focused only on serving great cuisine. Ty Coz provides a fine balcony view of the cathedral, intimate atmosphere, and affordable prices.

178/4 Pasteur, D1
3822 2457
www.tycozsaigon.com
11am - 2pm; 6pm - 9.30pm Tuesday through Saturday

Vatel Saigon Restaurant



This is a fine, well-managed, and even luxurious dining venue serving authentic French cuisine in a Franco-Viet design space. There's red carpet along the entrance way, gallery-standard art on the walls, and an overall atmosphere of refinement and good service.

120 bis Suong Nguyet Anh, D1
08 5404 2220
vatelsaigon.com

Indian

Baba's Kitchen



Baba's Kitchen, also known as the best Indian restaurant on Bui Vien, is familiar among expats and locals alike, rating 4.5 out of five stars on Trip Advisor.

164 Bui Vien, D1
3838 6661
www.babaskitchen.in
11am - 11pm

Bombay Indian Restaurant

Located in D1 opposite the local mosque serving Indian & Halal cuisine. The ambiance is relaxed thanks to Bombay's easy-going, family kitchen vibe.

35 Dong Du, D1
090 386 3114
9am - 10.30pm

Ganesh



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

15B4 Le Thanh Ton, D1
8223 0173
www.ganeshindianrestaurant.com
11am - 2.15pm; 6pm - 10.15pm

Indus Indian



Indus Indian is a relatively new Indian restaurant in Saigon providing all the classic Indian favorites. Operated by a dedicated husband/wife duo, this restaurant specializes in Halal food.

2G Thi Sach, D1
3521 0324
indusindian_saigon@gmail.com
9am - 2pm; 5pm - 10pm

Mumtaz



With bona-fide Indian owners and chefs, authenticity at Mumtaz is guaranteed. While the service and setting is relatively basic, the food is amongst the best of its type in the city in terms of taste alone. The brand has a second branch in Da Nang city if you're ever on holiday and missing your curries.

226 Bui Vien, D1
3837 1767

french

Alibi Restaurant and Bar



Centrally located a stone's-throw from the Opera House in downtown D1, this is a warm, appealing lounge environment with modest prices.

muntaavn@gmail.com
11am - 11pm

The Punjabi



Authentic North Indian cuisine prepared in a home-made tandoori oven makes Punjabi a popular spot for budget conscious eaters who crave Indian standbys like spinach naan and chicken tandoori.

40/3 Bui Vien, D1
3508 3777
11am - 11pm daily

italian

Basilico Restaurant



Trattoria-style Italian eatery Basilico specializes in homespun recipes. Contemporary décor, casual ambience, and casual yet attentive Bistro-style service makes it a relaxing dinner venue. Ground floor, on the Corner of Nguyen Du & Le Van Huu, D1
3520 9099
6.30am - 10.30pm

Capricciosa



Despite its being a chain restaurant, Capricciosa's special touch is that the restaurant decor tries to capture something of the Italian home – not exactly authentic, but better. You'll find the standards here – pizza, pasta, soups, salads, with a few special dishes such as calamari and onion in squid ink sauce. They're all prepared according to strict Japanese standards, and the result is actually really good. Booth B3-03A, Level B3
Vincom Tower, 70 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3993 9786
www.capricciosa.com.vn
Casa Italia



Italian owned & run, Casa Italia's menu ranges from home-style cooking that includes steaks, seafood, a large variety of homemade pastas, jumbo salads, appetizers and the best pizzas. 86 Le Loi, D1
3824 4286
www.casaitalia.com.vn
10am - 11pm

Ciao Bella ✓ Oi's Pick



Hearty home-style Italian food served with flair and excellent service ensures this is one of downtown Ho Chi Minh City's most popular restaurants. An extensive permanent menu is complemented with daily blackboard specials and frequent wine promotions. Arriving guests are greeted with a complimentary glass of Prosecco to set the mood. Diners sit in a cosy setting upstairs or down under the watchful gaze of famous film stars whose portraits line the walls. Groups are advised to book as this restaurant often has to turn diners away. 11 Dong Du, D1
3822 3329
info@saigonrestaurantgroup.com
www.saigonrestaurantgroup.com/ciao

Good Morning Vietnam



Italian restaurant with a unique menu including traditional Italian dishes. The restaurant is conveniently located in a beautiful old house in the heart of Saigon, well integrated in the local architecture. 197 De Tham, D1
3837 1894
www.thegoodmorningvietnam.com
9am - 12am

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

Lucca ✓ Oi's Pick



A Brooklyn-style Italian eatery upstairs with an adjoining bar. Downstairs is a relaxing cafe offering generous breakfasts, simple cafe fare for lunch and some of the best espresso coffee you'll find in the city. 88 Ho Tung Mau, D1
3915 3692
8am - 11pm

Margherita



Well-reviewed overseas, Margherita is a familiar place to tourists trawling the nooks of Ho Chi Minh City. This is partly a result of its agreeable price, sumptuous Western-style pizzas, English-speaking staff, and more than average customer service – and for some, Margherita doubles as an unofficial expat rendezvous, great if you can swat away the hawkers. 175/1 Pham Ngu Lao, D1
3837 0760

Opera Restaurant



A contemporary, casual trattoria-style Italian restaurant overlooking the Opera House, Opera is located within Park Hyatt Saigon specializing in authentic pizza baked in a wood-fired oven, pasta and homemade Italian dishes. 1st floor Park Hyatt Hotel,
2 Lam Son Square, D1
3824 1234
www.saijon.park.hyatt.com
6am - 11pm
Pizza 4P's

A little treasure hidden away at the top of an out-of-the-way alley off Le Thanh Ton, this Japanese pizzeria is a major hit with those in the know. Highly attractive premises and some extraordinary toppings catering to all tastes make this an unmissable pizza experience. 8/15 Le Thanh Ton, D1
012 0789 4444
info@pizza4ps.com
www.pizza4ps.com
11am - 11pm

Pomodoro



In this family-style, simply-decorated trattoria restaurant with an arched ceiling and an all-brick interior, a fine Italian menu pleases diners with 12 different pizzas along with pasta dishes, parma ham with a spicy tomato chutney, and a highly-recommended French onion soup. Ideal option for a simple, reliable, and thoroughly pleasant night out with no complications. 79 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3823 8998
www.pomodoro-vietnam.com

Sarpino's Pizzeria



Sarpino's Pizzeria provides authentic Italian pizzas made from gourmet ingredients. 125 Ho Tung Mau, D1
3821 6677
yvonne.trinh@sarpinos.vn
www.sarpinos.vn

japanese

Aka Taiyo



A fine Japanese restaurant featuring wooden furnishings, tatami mats, bamboo-lined corridors, sliding doors, and all the other intoxicating graces of the land of the rising sun, Aka Taiyo

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serves traditional and exotic Japanese cuisine with an extensive menu featuring more than 200 dishes. Also stocks a surprisingly comprehensive range of Japanese alcoholic beverages.

74B Hai Ba Trung, D1
3824 4295
contact@akataiyo.com
www.akataiyo.com

Ajisen Ramen



One of the more authentic Japanese venues in the area with ingredients imported from Japan, this restaurant is best-known for its tasty "white" soups. The restaurant serves at least 250 traditional dishes.

120 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D1
3822 0522
info@ajisen.com.vn
www.facebook.com/Ajisen.Vietnam
10am - 10pm

Aki Japanese Restaurant



A small Japanese restaurant with a cozy and comfortable atmosphere, Aki serves over 100 authentic Japanese dishes.

15/9 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3827 9083
11.30am - 2pm; 4.30pm - 11pm

Blanchy Street



Once hidden upstairs at the Blanchy's Tash bar, Blanchy Street now has its own location in the courtyard of eateries on Hai Ba Trung, offering authentic Japanese food mixed with fusion cuisine and the occasional additional Southeast Asian dish. Run by an ex Nobu (London) chef with his own signature dishes, it has wide appeal. Food is designed to be shared and is backed by an extensive list of sakes and wines.

74/3 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3823 8793
blanchystreet@gmail.com
www.blanchystreet.com
*** Reviewed by Oi in April 2013**

Blanchy's Tash



The mix of Japan's tradition of raw, fresh seafood with the spices and staples of Amazonia (tubers, maize, chilli and tomatoes) gives rise to a nicely subtle and filling light cuisine in this extraordinary venue. The upstairs dining area is refined and modern, and provides a refuge from the wonderful chaos of the nightlife downstairs – which is Blanchy's intriguing dark side, with its movement, smoke, frenetic crowds and the constant pulse of modern electronic dance shuffling people insistently about the floor.

95 Hai Ba Trung, D1
090 724 2757
events@blanchystash.com
www.blanchystash.com

Cam On Restaurant



Cam On specializes in Japanese health food, with a dedication to helping men and women maintain their beauty and health by providing quality cuisine with natural ingredients.

30 Thai Van Lung, D1
3823 3955
www.cam-on.asia
11am - 2pm; 5pm - 10pm

Dragon Hotpot



Dragon Hotpot blends fine taste with the healthy ingredients of Japanese cuisine. Drinks include Japanese favorites along with fine international wines.

122-124 Ho Tung Mau, D1
3825 8842
info@dragonhotpot.vn
dragonhotpot.vn
11am - Late

Dragon Noodle



A rather small but pretty restaurant with

warm tones and a nice series of murals depicting old Saigon, Dragon Noodle focuses on the Japanese staple – ramen noodle soups – although their version is a little less spicy than is traditionally served, increasing perhaps the international appeal of the dish. There are a total of four soup bases to accompany the noodles.

29 Dong Du, D1
3521 0008
info@rame.com
www.ramen.vn

Dragon Steak



A striking Japanese restaurant tucked away off Saigon's central street, Dragon steak specialises in thick wagyu cuts and tenderloin that could well have been cut off a beast the size of a dragon. They're so enormous that the restaurant once ran a cheeky competition – guests who finished one within half an hour dined free.

138 Ton That Dam, D1
3821 0288
www.steak.vn

Ebisu



Ebisu serves neither sushi nor sashimi – instead, the menu 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
ebisu-vn.asia

Fuji Restaurant



The cuisine is exceptional – fresh seafood and vegetables flown in direct from Japan and Dalat. A preferred venue for those staying at the hotel, and worth trying if you're living local.

Ground Floor, Nikko Hotel Saigon
235 Nguyen Van Cu, D1
3830 8123

Hanayuki



A Japanese-style restaurant on Ton Duc Thang with a sushi bar on the ground floor and a fine mezzanine level, Hanayuki serves more than 200 exquisite Japanese dishes with more than 30 kinds of sushi and sashimi. Private, traditional Japanese VIP rooms are available on the top level.

21C Ton Duc Thang, D1
3824 2754
hanayuki@yahoo.com

Inaho Restaurant



This unique venue specializes in traditional sushi & sashimi as well as hot pot dishes. Couples can retreat to the upstairs area; it's far more private than the downstairs bar.

4 Chu Manh Trinh, D1
3829 0326
11am - 2pm, 5.30pm - 10pm

Kabuto Tokyo



One of the more exuberant Japanese venues in this city, Kabuto Tokyo on Mac Thi Buoi specialises in both traditional and fusion fresh Japanese seafood cuisine. It's a vibrant venue with its manga murals, carp lanterns, giant samurai warrior, and large aquarium – and in the evening it becomes a respectable upmarket bar. For a quirky beverage there, try a sake served in a bamboo tube.

45 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3822 2351
kabuto.com.vn

K Cafe



K Cafe Sushi is a large Japanese restaurant; an ideal place to gather for a business lunch or for a social dinner.

74A4 Hai Ba Trung, D1
38245355

090 391 2522
www.yakatabune-saigon.com
11am - 2pm, 5pm - 11pm

La Fenetre Soleil



The perennially popular La Fenetre Soleil is one of the inner city's most distinctive character venues, with its exposed-brick and antique-furniture vibe, chandeliers and fur cushions. Glass tables with mosaic tiles and wooden floors set off large comfy sofas and high ceilings, and diners can look out over the busy Ly Tu Trong though 11 large French windows. Its sense of personality attracts artistically-inclined expats to return often, and many of these profess it as their favourite hangout in Saigon. Cuisine is Japanese-Vietnamese fusion.

44 Ly Tu Trong, D1
3824 5994

Mus Mus



This is a particularly bright and simple Japanese health food bistro where the cuisine is based on straightforward hotpot recipes. Customers choose a total of twelve ingredients from the selection on offer, which are then added to a bowl of boiling broth on the tabletop. Flavours are essentially Japanese seafood.

117 Vo Van Tan, D3
3930 9185
info@musmus.net
www.musmus.net

Osaka Ramen



Traditional Japanese noodle restaurant offering traditional Ramen dishes as well as Japanese/Vietnamese fusion cuisine.

67 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D1

10am - 10pm

Sakura Vietnamese-Japanese Restaurant



Cozy, friendly and modern Japanese restaurant near all of the attractions in the city center.

99 Suong Nguyet Anh, D1
6291 1036
info@sakurasaku.vn
sakurasaku.vn
11am - 2pm; 5pm - 11pm

Sumo BBQ



Sumo BBQ is a rising star amongst Japanese venues in Saigon, offering smokeless table BBQ and a unique buffet/ a la carte concept: get whatever you want from the menu, as much as you like. Free birthday beer specials on arrangement.

300 Le Van Sy, Tan Binh
3991 4757
sumobbq.com.vn
10.30am - 10.30pm

Sushi Bar



Of several Sushi Bar outlets in Saigon, this is the favourite by a long shot, right at the crown of the Little Tokyo area on Le Thanh Ton. Brightly-lit with dark, traditional furnishings, the restaurant is somewhat Borgesque in that there always seems to be another dining level up the stairs. There are plenty of dining spaces – large and small rooms, floor-level Japanese dining on tatami mats, private areas, and the eponymous large sushi bar on the ground level.

2 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3823 8042
www.sushibar.vn.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

Sushi World



The Japanese presence in HCMC has ensured a wealth of sushi for both themselves and the rest of us here, Sushi World being one specialty venue with a more casual atmosphere that's also a comfortable place to eat for local diners. A four-storey restaurant in a Japanese-style, the first and second floors feature an open sushi bar, while the upper levels contain 15 VIP rooms decorated in a traditional Japanese style with tatami matting.

28 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3911 0147
www.sushiworld.com.vn

Tokyo Deli



Tokyo Deli's menu consists of a wide range of distinctive and delicious meals, prepared by specialists to create pure Japanese flavor. The menu is always being changed and improved.

240 Le Thanh Ton, D1
5404 2244
info@tokyodeli.com.vn
tokyodeli.com.vn
11am - 11pm

Uraetel BBQ Restaurant



Uraetel serves yakiniku grill, a variant of the popular Korean dish bulgogi. The restaurant itself is attractively done, with a nod to feng shui in its selective placement of ponds and rocky pathways outside.

6673 9373

Vicki's Teppanyaki & BBQ



It provides a fusion of Asian cuisines with dishes from Japan, Singapore, and Vietnam. Their menu is interesting and diverse, with many delectable seafood options.

42 Le Anh Xuan, D1
3823 3232
vickis.com.vn
10.30am - 3pm; 5pm - 10pm

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

Yuki



Yukie is a popular Japanese restaurant located in the backpacker area of District 1. Offering authentic Japanese cuisine at affordable prices.

99 Nguyen Thai Hoc, D1

3824 2754

10am - 2pm; 4pm - 10pm

korean

Dae Jang Gum

All the theatrics of a traditional Korean experience are part of the service at Dae Jang Gum, named after an historic figure, but more pertinently after a wildly popular Korean drama focusing on her life – photos from the series appear throughout the venue. From waitresses in hanboks to vast plates of kimchi, this is the most authentic introduction to the cuisine available outside of District 7.

1st Floor, Kumho Asiana Plaza

39 Le Duan, D1

3825 7974

www.daejanggum.vn

11am - 10pm

Hana Restaurant



Japanese-Korean fusion in the heart of

DI. Hana has contemporary decor with a private, open feel. Its broad menu includes both cooked and raw fish in addition to traditional hot pot with fish eggs, rice and vegetables.

8 Cao Ba Quat, DI
3829 5588
9am - 10pm

Kimsine

A place to enjoy Korean style dishes in the city center. Kimsine's menu is extensive; offering everything from instant noodles to chicken's feet.
8A/5D2 Thai Van Lung, DI
7306 4045
094 467 2281
jymimil@hanmail.net
10am - 3am

Mi Han Quoc

This franchise has gained popularity in Ho Chi Minh City for having successfully adapted the spiciness of Korean cuisine to the local Vietnamese palate, serving perfectly balanced noodle dishes.

92 Ham Nghi, DI
3914 1565
info@mihanquoc.vn
www.mihanquocvn.com
8am - 11pm

Mr. BBQ – Korean Chicken & Hof

This unusual Korean import famous for extraordinarily spicy chicken is an odd phenomenon on the HCMC culinary landscape, serving up a version of KFC that's actually painful. Lovers of spicy food rejoice. The restaurant itself is clean and modern in design, and there are another 50 Korean dishes on offer beyond the signature dish, including some tasty bibimbap mixed rice dishes.
20 Ho Huan Nghiep, DI
3823 9000
9am - 11pm

Seoul House

Seoul House is a well-known two-story Korean restaurant with a simple, cozy atmosphere. Its menu contains Korean favorites like Banchan, hotpots, grilled meat, clay pot mixed rice, and kim chi tofu soup.
33 Mac Thi Buoi, DI
3829 4297
091 979 5033
seoul.house@yahoo.com.kr
7am - 10pm

steakhouses

Corso Steakhouse and Bar

Corso Steakhouse and Bar operates under an open kitchen concept, bringing together an exciting menu of Asian and European dishes with a focus on grilling. Guests can choose from a wide variety of wines and spirits.
117 Le Thanh Ton, DI
3829 5368
www.norfolthotel.com.vn
6pm - 11pm

Dragon Steak

Specializing in generous portions of Wagyu cuts; they're so enormous that the restaurant runs a cheeky competition - finish one within half an hour, and it's free.
138 Ton That Dam, DI
3821 0288
info@steak.vn
www.steak.vn
11am - late

El Gaucho ✓ Oi's Pick

Serves great Argentinean steaks, hamburgers and more. A great place to entertain clients or friends from overseas. With outlets in Hanoi and

Bangkok too.
5D Nguyen Sieu, DI
38251879
www.elgaucho.asia

New York Steakhouse

While situated in a fairly laid-back area, New York Steakhouse is definitely in the upmarket category and serves exclusive American imported beef dishes, with a whole range of steaks from rib eye, New York strip steak, and tenderloin being popular options.
25-27 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, DI
3823 7373
contact@steakhouse.com.vn
www.steakhouse.com.vn

Pho 99

Not a traditional steakhouse per se, but Pho 99 is known for its excellent filet mignon steaks made out of Cu Chi beef. Also serves great pho.
139 Nguyen Trai, DI
3925 2791
6am - 2.30am

Samba Brazilian Steakhouse

This is certainly Saigon's most visible and colourful restaurant 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 swallow. While the cuisine is likely to be a heavy night out – they'll be able to make actual sausages out of your intestines after dining here – the vibrant atmosphere and sheer variety on the menu will ensure a positive experience right up until that moment where you decide you can't ignore your body's "tummy's full: stop" signals any longer.
10C Thai Van Lung, DI
3822 0079
www.samba.vnnhahang.com

Wild Horse Salon

Cowboy-themed western steakhouse with an impressive exterior on trendy Thai Van Lung, Wild Horse serves high-quality Tex Mex/American cuisine with enormous servings.
8A/1D1 Thai Van Lung, DI
3825 1901
10am - 2pm; 4pm - 11.30pm

thai

Coriander

A small Thai joint pleasingly decked out in natural materials with cork walls and sedge-lined floors. The resulting ambience is nicely authentic, and the same goes for the cuisine – try the green shrimp curry, the fried noodles in Thai style, or the squid vermicelli for a taste of the Gulf of Thailand. The restaurant is also known for its almost embarrassingly cheap beer.
185 Bui Vien, DI
3837 1311

Golden Elephant

A cozy and relaxing Thai style restaurant, serving an extensive collection of Thai specialties including noodles, curries, rice, stir-fries, soups, and a good range of seafood.
34 Hai Ba Trung, DI
3822 8554
11am - 10pm

Jasmine Thai

A quiet, candle-lit affair complete with the ethereal tones of traditional music, guests can enjoy variations on dishes prepared in the Thai culinary tradition.
85 Quoc Huong, D2
35190038
5pm - 9.30pm Tue-Sun

Koh Thai

Stunning Thai-chic decor and unique Siam cuisine make Koh Thai one of Saigon's most authentic and memorable Thai restaurants. Located in the Intercontinental complex, Koh Thai serves Asian inspired cocktails in a trendy lounge environment with chill music.
1st floor, 39 Le Duan, DI
3823 4423
091 233 9138
www.kohthai.com.vn
11am - 10pm Daily

Lac Thai

Lac Thai is a large, three-floor restaurant offering a wide range of Thai cuisine with signature dishes like Pad Thai, Tom Yum Koong, Chicken Satay and many others.
71/2 Mac Thi Buoi, DI
3823 7506
9am - 9pm

Mai Thai

Mai Thai is a Thai restaurant offering an extensive menu with many Thai favorites. This two-storey restaurant features traditional decorations and friendly service.
13 Ton That Thiep, DI
3821 2920
11am - 2pm, 5pm - 10pm

Malee Thai

A cute, central Thai venue decked out in royal purple decor, Malee is an intimate restaurant serving a wide range of consistently tasty dishes, although without the full effect of Thai cuisine's signature burn.
37 Dong Du, DI
3829 3029
dthimphung2003@yahoo.com
11am - 2pm; 5pm - 11pm

Spice

Spice Thai restaurant has been a favorite among the locals in Saigon since 2003. This multicultural eatery offers Thai food & seafood in a décor fusing Oriental & Mediterranean artifacts.
27C Le Quy Don, D3
3930 7873
www.spicevn.com
11am - 2pm; 5.30pm - 10pm

Thai Express

Thai Express is the world's largest Thai restaurant chain. Enjoy fantastically authentic Thai cuisine at reasonable prices in a relaxed, contemporary atmosphere.
8A Le Thanh Ton, DI
6299 1338
www.thaiexpress.com.vn
10.30am - 10pm

vietnamese

3T Quan Nuong

With hanging oil lamps and wooden statues lining the stairs, this venue above the Temple Bar has a touch more atmosphere than most of its kind, but the otherwise simple décor with bamboo tables and chairs are fitting enough. The broad barbecue grill menu features classics of its kind.
Top Floor, 29 Ton That Hiep, DI
3821 1631

An Khue Quan

This pleasant little establishment out by the New World hotel is simply decorated with plain wooden furnishings and minimal, albeit tasteful, decorations. This is appropriate for the restaurant's style, serving a well-selected series of dishes from both northern and southern regions

of Vietnam in an area where international diners are likely to be in abundance – and therefore well attuned to the foreign palate.
92B Le Lai, DI
3925 9583

An Vietnamese Bistro

An Restaurant offers exquisite dishes from the North, Central, and South of Vietnam, served by well-trained waiters and waitresses dressed in traditional Southern clothing.
71/5-6 Mac Thi Buoi, DI
3825 8275
11am - 10pm

Banh Xeo 46A

Although known for a wide range of Vietnamese specialties, the local pancake stuffed with herbs and prawns is its tastiest dish.
46A Dinh Cong Trang, DI
3824 1110
10am - 9pm

Banh Xeo An La Ghien

This franchise emphasises ethnic Vietnamese traditions with the rustic decor of the countryside, featuring thatched roofing and red tiles, bamboo chairs, and an open, natural ambience. The fare on offer is traditional Vietnamese, specialising in the Banh Xeo filled egg pancake, a favourite with foreigners with its light crispy shell and fragrant herbs and meats inside the pancake pocket.
74 Suong Nguyet Anh, DI
3833 0534
www.banhxeoanlaghien.com.vn/en

Barbecue Garden

The venue features all open-air dining and the atmosphere is distinctly festival-like, relaxing, and casual, becoming congenially boisterous in the evenings. The restaurant specializes in Western-Vietnamese fusion dishes such as beef with cheese, 5-spices beef, squid with satay sauce, and shrimp kebabs.
135A Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, DI
3823 3340
www.barbecuegarden.com

Beefsteak Nam Son

This local steak restaurant specialises in Vietnamese-style iron-plate meat dishes rather than the American steaks often popular with expats – but while these two varieties have their differences, the local version of the dish has a fresh, light character and is served with some good, delicate Vietnamese sauces.
188 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D3
3930 3917
www.namsonsteak.com

Bo Ne Le Hong

Bo Ne Le Hong is a popular Vietnamese restaurant specializing in beefsteak. It has a rich, diverse menu, and also offer fresh fruit juices.
489/27/39 Huynh Van Banh, Phu Nhuan
3990 5106
11.30am - 22.30pm

Bun Sai Gon

This franchise positions itself firmly in the local market with the slogan 'the bun noodles of the Vietnamese people' – indicating a concerted dedication to the authenticity of its noodle soup staples. In reality, the flavour comes at a compromise between the hygiene standards of a franchise operation and the hearty but far riskier varieties you'll find on the street – this is not a bad thing, as for those members of the foreign element about town, it provides a nicely mediated experience while staying true to the spirit of the local cuisine.
73 Ly Tu Trong, DI

6276 2609
www.bunsaisaigon.com.vn

Cha Ca La Vong

This venue only serves Cha Ca, a traditional Hanoian dish. Cha Ca is a salad made out of pieces of fish and spring onion stir-fried in a hotpot.

36 Ton That Thiep, DI
3915 3343
7.30am - 10pm

Crazy Buffalo

Expect a soundtrack of rock, pop, soul, hip hop, and house - and ladies' night comes around every Friday. Full of backpackers and locals.

212 De Tham, DI
3836 9946

Cuc Gach Quan

Fine cuisine with a rustic touch hidden away in the extreme reaches of the inner city. Set inside a restored French colonial mansion with antique wooden furniture and a central staircase, this Vietnamese venue serves traditional, country-style foods, a mixture of street food dishes made with fine ingredients together with a selection of more contemporary options.

10 Dang Tat, DI
3848 0144

Ganh

With green suspended lanterns, simple and elegant furnishings, all touched off with bamboo baskets of fruit, flowers, and reed grass, the atmosphere is just as smooth and well-defined as a more modern-styled venue.

58/4 Pham Ngoc Thach, D3
3829 5243
www.nemnuongganh.com

Gold Fish

Gold Fish offers a slice of authentic Vietnam with a genuinely rural cuisine.

73 Mac Thi Buoi, DI
3822 5229
www.goldfish.vn

Highway 4

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

101 Vo Van Tan, D3
3602 2069
www.highway4.com

Hoa Tuc

Set in what used to be Saigon's opium refinery, Hoa Tuc serves up contemporary Vietnamese cuisine in a Parisian, art-deco atmosphere.

74 Hai Ba Trung, DI
3825 1676
hoatuc@gmail.com
www.hoatuc.com
10.30am - 10.30pm daily

Hoi An Restaurant

Elegant restaurant in the style of the ancient town of Hoi An, specializing in the cuisine of that area.

11 Le Thanh Ton, DI
3823 1049
hoian.orientalstarsgroup.com
www.orientalsaigon.com.vn/hoian
11.30am - 2pm; 5.30pm - 10.45pm

Lemongrass

The vibe aims at a harmony between modern styling and the Vietnamese traditional arts, and the dining room with its tile floors and wooded wainscoting effects a comforting natural environment.

4 Nguyen Thiep, DI
3822 0496
info@lemongrasssaigon.com

Luong Son

Exotic beer garden style eatery famous for its barbecue beef. Luong Son also serves fear factor items such as scorpions, grubs, ostrich meat and crickets.

31 Ly Tu Trong, DI
3825 1330
www.facebook.com/LuongSonQuan
10am - 10pm

Mandarine

Mandarine is an elegant Vietnamese restaurant serving predominantly foreign clientele in a quiet, centrally-located side street. Its award-winning menu is influenced by French and Vietnamese cuisine.

11A Ngo Van Nam, DI
3822 9783
www.orientalsaigon.com.vn/mandarine
11.30am - 2pm; 5.30pm - 10.45pm

Marina Saigon

Marina Saigon is one of the leading seafood restaurants in Ho Chi Minh City. This restaurant provides a luxurious environment with French/Vietnamese fusion cuisine.

172 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D3
3930 2379
marinaseafood@ngocsuong.com.vn
ngocsuong.com.vn
10am - 11pm

Maxim's Nam An

Large and lavishly decorated, Maxim's Nam An restaurant serves Vietnamese cuisine in style. The carved wooden booths, completed with silk curtains, are a romantic hideaway for couples or small groups.

13-15-17 Dong Khoi, DI
3829 6676
10am - 10pm

Nghi Xuan

Lost down one of the less noticeable alleyways of the inner city, if you do happen to chance upon Nghi Xuan, the sheer grace of the venue will come as something of a surprise. Decorated as a high-class traditional Vietnamese mansion, Nghi Xuan is perfectly fitting for a venue serving the finest of Vietnam's classical cuisine – the imperial dishes of Hue. Service is courteous, fast, and quintessentially elegant.

5/9 Nguyen Sieu, DI
3823 0699
nghixuanrestaurant.com

Nha Hang Ngon

Famous restaurant serving easy Vietnamese cuisine to foreigners and tourists with more than 400 traditional dishes.

160 Pasteur, DI
3827 7131
quananngon@hcm.vnn.vn
www.quananngon.com.vn
8am - 10pm

Papaya Restaurant

A petite, clean, and brightly-coloured Vietnamese restaurant with simple décor serving a light, healthy, northern-style cuisine. There's no fuss in the layout here – green walls with black & white artworks, brown wooden furnishings, and lanterns above every table make for a very pleasant atmosphere – and it's casual without being messy, and refined without any trace of pretentiousness.

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

Pho 2000

Pho 2000's Ben Thanh Market branch

was famously visited by former US President Bill Clinton in 2000. The chain serves up variations on pho as well as noodle and rice dishes.

4 Phan Chu Trinh, DI
3822 2788
6am - 10pm

Pho 24

PHO24 is a popular Vietnamese noodle restaurant chain with 70 outlets across Vietnam and throughout Southeast Asia.

71-73 Dong Khoi, DI
3825 7505
info@pho24.com.vn
www.pho24.com.vn
7am - 11pm

Royal Revolving Restaurant

The Royal Revolving Restaurant is a unique restaurant experience. Experience stunning views of the city while you spin around in the sky. The restaurant offers more than 50 Hong Kong inspired dishes and a bar that serves coffee and cocktails.

3823 2232
nhahanghoanggia@yahoo.com
6am - 10am; 11am - 2pm; 5pm - 11pm

Saigon Vegan

Saigon Vegan is located in a casual and inviting space with high ceilings, dark wood tables, and lots of natural light. Guests can choose from over 100 vegan dishes, all of which are either soy or vegetable based.

378/3 Vo Van Tan, D3
3834 4473
8.30am - 2pm; 4pm - 10pm

SH Garden restaurant

Established in the 1930s, the Terrace restaurant is located at the corner of two of the oldest boulevards of Saigon, Nguyen Hue and Le Loi, where romantic memories of Saigon float around. This restaurant offers a variety of delicious traditional Vietnamese dishes.

4th floor, 98 Nguyen Hue, DI
6680 0188
shgarden@gmail.com
shgarden.com.vn
10am - 11pm

Song Ngu

There are eight different rooms capable of seating a total of 350-400 guests, each warmly-lit with dark wooden furnishings. On a small stage, a traditional chamber orchestra with ladies wearing classical Ao dai costumes perform Vietnamese music on genuine old instruments.

70 Suong Nguyet Anh, DI
3832 5017

Temple Club

Usually regarded as one of central Saigon's most authentically Vietnamese venues, this historic and good-looking features classic Indochinese decor, broadly interpreted as a blend of the old French colonial style with pan-Asian graces that appeal more to Asian exoticism than reflect actual Vietnamese styles. With antique furnishings and ceiling fans, the atmosphere is certainly pretty.

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

Thanh Nien Restaurant

With its attractive home-style layout, pretty garden for outdoor dining, and warm, yellow-toned interior for the buffet, it's a charming venue for tourists and a familiar favourite for long-timers. It's intentionally

decorated like a private home, walls decorated with floral artworks, and the garden surrounded by bamboo.

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

Tib Restaurant

This fine Vietnamese Hue-style restaurant looks almost like a temple, and it's considered one of the city's premier settings serving imperial cuisine. Although the fare is relatively inexpensive, Tib is so well-reviewed that it wound up as the venue of choice for former US President George Bush upon the occasion of hosting Australian Prime Minister John Howard for dinner in November 2007 – in terms of PR, Tib never had it better.

187 Hai Ba Trung, D3
3829 7242
www.tibrestaurant.com.vn/home.html

Tin Nghia

A charming little venue serving vegetarian cuisine. Its quaint appearance hides the fact that it was the first international vegetarian restaurant in Ho Chi Minh City and an important center of the city's vegetarian culture.

9 Tran Hung Dao, DI
3821 2538
7.30am - 1.30pm, 4.30pm - 7.30pm

Vietnam House

Vietnam House is a high quality restaurant specializing in both local Vietnamese and international cuisine. This restaurant is set in a restored French colonial house offering stunning views of the street.

93-95 Dong Khoi, DI
3829 1623
vietnamhouse@vietnamhousesaigon.com
www.vietnamhousesaigon.com
7am - 11pm

(other) asian

Lion City

This is a Singaporean franchise to watch with interest – since its humble beginnings in 2006 with the rather more unpleasant name Singapore Frog Porridge, it has risen in strength to become the most prominent representative of the cuisine in the city, and its growth has continued to be remarkable.

45 Le Anh Xuan, DI
3823 8371
www.lioncityrestaurant.com

Long Monaco **Ol's Pick**

Long Monaco operates throughout the city under various brand names – this outlet is a standalone restaurant in the busy Etown office complex in Tan Binh district. You'll probably only visit if you're working nearby or visiting on official business, but you'll find the restaurant serves some great Asian business lunches.

Ground Floor, Etown I
364 Cong Hoa, Tan Binh
3812 2242
www.longmonaco.com.vn

western/international

Al Fresco's

Offering a mix of Tex-Mex, Italian, and Australian food along with cold local & imported beers and a wine list featuring Australia's finest whites along with affordable South American reds.

16 Nguyen Thi Nghia, DI
3926 0036
alfrescos-hcm@alfrescosgroup.com
www.alfrescosgroup.com
8.30am - 11pm

Annam Gourmet

An upscale deli and grocery chain offering gourmet groceries, cheese, organic products, gluten-free products, fruit and vegetables, gourmet deli, wine and other beverages. All locations, in District 1, 2 and 7, have a coffee lounge that serves breakfast, lunch, drinks and early dinner.

16-18 Hai Ba Trung, D1. 3822 9391
41A Thao Dien street. D2. 3744 2630
5B2-1 My Khanh 4, Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
5412 3263 / 5412 3264
www.annam-gourmet.com

Au Parc

It's only fitting that this Mediterranean-styled restored villa with its original tiles, old window frames, plush cushions, and opium-themed art collection sits in one of the most gorgeous streets of central Saigon. Au Parc is an unforgettable venue with a décor that manages to simultaneously capture the grace of the old Colonial architecture and the mood of west-Asian exoticism that transfixed Europe in the Romantic period.

23 Han Thuyen, D1
3829 2772
auparcsaigon.com



Bakdja
Algerian restaurant serving north African delights such as couscous, tajines and desserts. Unique Mechoui set dinner is a popular choice and perfect for groups (available with prior notice).
87-89-91 Ho Tung Mau, D1
093 787 2010 (French, Arabic, English, Finnish)
0122 763 1261 (English, Russian, Vietnamese)
Mon - Fri 11:30 - 2pm
Mon - Sat 6pm - 11pm

Beirut Shisha Bar

The Beirut Shisha bar offers fine Middle Eastern cuisine with imported meat to guarantee impeccable flavor. Shisha is the perfect way to relax after a long day in the city.

74/13D Hai Ba Trung, D1
38222188
beirutbar.com
4pm - late

Black Cat Restaurant

Originally envisioned as a fast food Vietnamese sandwich place, Black Cat Saigon now serves international food with a focus on burgers, most famously its "Big Cheese" featuring 500g of beef.

13 Phan Van Dat, D1
3829 2955
www.blackcatsaigon.com
7am - 11pm

Blu Bar and Grill

Blu Bar provides a wide range of Asian and Mediterranean specialties for breakfast, lunch, and dinner along with many unique beverage options.

53 Vo Truong Toan, D2
3744 4111
7am - 11pm

Bobby Chinn's

This is TV celebrity and experienced international chef Bobby Chinn's showcase restaurant adjacent to Intercontinental Asiana Hotel in the Kumho Link. Stylish lounge environment offers fine dining with a separate lounge bar area. Extensive cocktail menu and wine list backed by artfully created western dishes. Ideal venue for launch

functions - and possibly features the most luxurious restaurant restrooms in HCMC.

39 Le Duan, D1
6291 7788
www.bobbychinn.com

The Burger Corner

Tasty, fresh homemade burgers with a range of ingredients aimed at satiating both foreign and local palates. Menu includes local 'rice burgers' and prices are well below those of international chains.

43 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 0094
www.theburgercorner.com.vn
8am - 9.45pm

The Elbow Room

The Elbow Room on Pasteur is an American-style bistro with a long bar, exposed brickwork, white walls, and whirring ceiling fans - making for a casual, contemporary space with an international vibe. More of a diner than a restaurant, Elbow shoots at a cool, relaxed atmosphere, pleasantly decorating its warmly-lit walls with evocative black & white photos and subtle lighting.

52 Pasteur, D1
3821 4327
www.elbowroom.com.vn

Hog's Breath Café

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

Ground Floor, Bitexco Financial Tower,
2 Hai Trieu, D1
3915 6066
090 381 8700
www.hogsbreathcafe.com.vn
8am - 12am

Jaspas Restaurant

An easy-on-the-tongue and easy-on-the-eyes restaurant, stylish interior decorations and friendly service have led many patrons to rate this Australian-managed venue as being well-suited for family and business dining.

33 Dong Khoi, D1
3822 9925
012 262 68641
g.murphy@alfrescosgroup.com
alfrescosgroup.com
7am - 11pm

Jaspas Wine & Grill

Jaspas Wine and Grill provides an extensive wine list along with many "reinvented" Jaspas dishes, new creations, and mouthwatering steaks. Japas also offers a wide array of delectable dessert options.

74/7 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3827 0931
jaspas-hcm@alfrescosgroup.com
alfrescosgroup.com
8.30am - 11.30pm

Khoi Thom

Khoi Thom, which translates to "fragrant smoke" features bright, colorful, Latin-American decoration inspired by renowned Mexican architect Ricardo Legorreta. This unique eatery offers a hybrid of Vietnamese and Mexican flavors.

29 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3
3930 0233
khoithom.com
10am - 11pm

La Habana

Offering authentic Spanish cuisine and a wide choice of tapas, as well as Cuban cocktails, La Habana is a den of Cuban-Spanish inspired architecture located on inner-city Cao Ba Quat.

6 Cao Ba Quat, D1

3829 5180
www.lahabana-saigon.com

Ly Club

Often used as a venue for gatherings, networking meetings, and events where an air of wealth and sophistication is useful, Ly Club is a sure bet for making an impression on a date or business lunch. Built into a traditional French villa with wide elliptical arches, the atmosphere of naked opulence persists throughout the property.

143 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D3
3930 5588
www.lyclub.vn

Margherita

For some, Margherita doubles as an unofficial expat rendezvous, partly a result of its agreeable prices and sumptuous Western-style pizzas and foods.

175/1 Pham Ngu Lao, D1
3837 0760
8am - 11pm

Mogambo Bar & Grill

Mogambo is a dark, African-styled restaurant with some of the finest US & Tex-Mex and exceptional burgers.

50 Pasteur, D1
3825 1311
mogambo@saigonnet.vn
7am - 11pm

Pacharan - Tapas & Bodega

The city's best-known Spanish restaurant with a sports bar on the ground floor, two floors of dining space, and an open rooftop deck for cocktails and live music. Serving tapas, paella, and an extensive Iberian wine list.

97 Hai Ba Trung, D1
090 724 2757
andres@pacharan.com.vn
10am - late

Parkview Restaurant

This restaurant is best known locally for its seafood buffet, with a wide variety of international specialties freshly-prepared at the live cooking stations. Local and imported seafood includes oysters and prawns, molluscs and organic lobsters.

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

Pasha

Pasha on Dong Du is a particularly engaging Turkish venue laid out with dramatic traditional designs, including classic floral patterning on the bar and ceiling and enigmatic artworks depicting Egyptian beauties on the walls. Serving Turkish and Mediterranean cuisine, the kitchen is headed by Chef Ismet with over 30 years of experience in similar restaurants.

25 Dong Du, D1
6291 3677
info@pasha.com.vn
www.pasha.com.vn

Shri Restaurant and Lounge

Visitors to Shri are regularly astonished to discover such an international-standard venue secreted away on top of a plain-looking bank tower, serving a catalogue of exotic recipes, and while prices are as to be expected, the fare is an impressive collection of dishes guaranteed to suit the palate of Western diners as well as pleasing those with an Asian culinary background.

Rooftop, Level 23, 72-74 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D3
3827 9631
www.shri.vn

Skewers

An open-air kitchen at the front of the restaurant and a small cigar lounge upstairs set off the atmosphere and mark this venue as one with a unique presence in Saigon. The purely Mediterranean cuisine is appropriately authentic.

9A Thai Van Lung, D1
38224798
www.skewers-restaurant.com

Subway

Subway is now in Vietnam, offering its internationally-renowned range of subs sandwiches and cookies. World travelers can expect the same high quality of ingredients regardless of what nation they are visiting.

121 Ho Tung Mau, D1
3914 4118
7.30am - 12am

Strata

Located on the 50th floor of the Bitexco tower, Strata offers a stunning dining experience with views over the city and a dessert bar with coffee and tea. Popular with tourists and locals seeking a unique location for a special occasion.

Level 50, Bitexco Financial Tower,
2 Hai Trieu, D1
086 291 8750
www.cirussaigon.com
10am - 10pm

Swiss Chalet

Authentic Swiss, German and Austrian home-style dishes served in a distinctively Swiss design environment with masses of polished pine and checked table cloths. Comprehensive wine list and moderate pricing make this a home away from home for Europeans.

54 Pasteur, D1
3915 3983
heinzvn@gmail.com
9.30am - 11pm

Warda

Warda is a Middle-Eastern style bar and restaurant headed by a renowned Syrian chef. Guests can enjoy authentic middle-eastern cuisine indoors and outdoors while enjoying an almond cigar or shisha.

71/7 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
info@wardavn.com
8am - 12am

Xu Restaurant Lounge

The venue is well-known for its pork wantons, bun cha, seared beef crostinis, bo luc lac diced beef and 'Xu-style' chicken rice. Xu is an elegant venue that works as a restaurant or a high-class bar for the upper echelons.

71-75 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3824 8468
www.xusaigon.com

ZanzBar

Long-standing modern European restaurant renowned for its dark amber interior design, unique European-inspired cuisine and varied wine list. Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

41 Dong Du, D1
3822 7375
info@saigongourmetgroup.com
www.zanzbar.com/index.php
7am - 1am

Zoom Cafe

Zoom cafe serves Tex-Mex and Vietnamese cuisine as well as running a Vespa tour service from within the café.

169A Bui Vien, D1
3920 3897
vscooterguy@yahoo.com
7am - 2am daily



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IMAGE BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY





The Museum of Floral Culture



Sssh... This is Secret Bangkok

Best known for colorful weekend markets, glitzy malls and seedy after-dark activities, Nima Chandler reveals another side of Bangkok that most visitors never get to see

TEXT BY **JAMES PHAM**

"I USED TO walk past this restaurant that was just disgusting. They had blackened rice cookers outside and dirty floors. No *farang* would ever go in there. But a friend took me there and it was just fabulous. Everyone was there from the hi-so (high society) grandmother, to a funeral group, to a grandson who just became a taxi driver and an older *mamasan*, who was made up every time. The first time I ate there I got violently ill, probably from one bad garlic shrimp. But it was so good, the next day, I said, 'We're going back.' The place stayed open during the protests as a sign of faith, even when staff had to walk through the Black Shirt front lines. It's now one of my favorite Chinese seafood places."

The testimonial above for Ngwan Lee is just one of hundreds of insider locations recommended by Nima Chandler on the Nancy Chandler's hand drawn map of Bangkok.

Arriving in Bangkok in 1969, Nancy took advantage of her Art History background to illustrate her new surroundings, including whimsical Christmas cards for fellow expats. When she and her friends kept getting lost in Bangkok's bustling open air markets, Nancy started drawing market maps with notations of

landmarks to help them find the way back to their cars. When the American Women's Club of Thailand asked Nancy to draw a one page map of the city showing where the markets were, an idea was born.

Now semi-retired in San Francisco more than 40 years on, the business of running Nancy Chandler Graphics is left to Nancy's eldest daughter, Nima. Born in Nepal and raised in Bangkok, Nima knows the city like few people do. As we make our way to Yummy Tummy for lunch, a colonial-era house now converted to a small restaurant with a serendipitous garden incongruous amongst the surrounding luxe high rise buildings, Nima cuts through some small *sois*, pointing out places where she used to play as a child that have now given way to steel and concrete.

After attending university in the US and five years of writing travel trade news, Nima found herself on a beach contemplating her next career move. "Mother came down and asked if I would help her with the business while I was deciding what I wanted to do. She needed help in distributing the map. She was terrified at the idea of growing the business."

Nima now spends most of her time researching off-the-beaten-path gems. "It's second nature to me now. I'm constantly looking. Bangkok changes in a blink of an eye. I keep paper notes, electronic notes and notes on my phone of places I stumble across in between printed editions. It takes stamina to do the research, to withhold judgment when judgment needs to be withheld."

The small company of eight works feverishly to produce updated editions of the printed maps while Nancy, now in her mid-70s, is still the sole illustrator, working from her home in the US. "My mother's not a prolific artist; she's not commercial. If I beg and plead, I can maybe get three or four [new illustrations] a year. But for her, it's not financial. She loves Bangkok."

For Nima, the maps are not about making lists of top tourist attractions. It's about self-discovery. "We're not going to tell you what the Top 10 things are. But if you study the maps, you'll find out what's the Top 10 for you. It's different for everyone. It's like seeing a movie you've already seen but now with locals and seeing where they laugh. I saw *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* with Thais and they couldn't understand why you would be a transvestite and not look better than that!"

For the Chandler women, these beautifully functional maps are a labor of love. "People don't realize how much work goes into them because there's so much content," Nima says of the ad-free maps, the pocket directory and the website which is updated monthly with new finds. "Each [new edition] takes about six months of research, calling everywhere again to make sure it's still open. There's so much undated stuff out there on travel websites. Places move and websites never get updated. People must go to the wrong place all the time. The maps are so much work, but we've made it work for 16 years now. It's not quite the time to move on yet."

With help from Nima and the Nancy Chandler map, I set out to create a memorable two day Bangkok itinerary that went beyond the normal movies, shopping and eating experiences typical of a trip to Bangkok.

Closing Your Eyes to See

What happens in Bangkok after dark is

legendary. But for another, more wholesome in-the-dark activity, I headed to the National Science Museum. Walking past the plasma globe and interactive displays, my destination was the Dialogue in the Dark exhibit. Originally created by German journalist / documentarian Andreas Heinecke in 1998 after conducting a training session for a blind colleague, this social franchise pairs blind guides with small groups, working their way through several common settings in absolute darkness. The exhibit has now been shown in over 120 cities in more than 30 countries, Bangkok being one of 19 permanent venues worldwide.

The 60 minute tour, billed as "the greatest experience you'll never see," takes visitors through 500 square meters of pitch black galleries including a public park, a bustling city street, a *tuk-tuk* ride and a cafe. The feeling of disorientation is at first terrifying. Changes in flooring from carpet to paved roads to pebbles had me taking pathetic baby steps. Gentle slopes and small steps became trip hazards. I found myself irrationally waiting for the lights to come on as leaves slashed at my face and common objects like bus signs and mailboxes blocked my path. Then it dawned on me that for the blind, the lights would never come on. Navigating city streets, strange neighborhoods and even the subway were in themselves superhuman feats. Nya, my young guide, left home at the age of 17. "My parents always encouraged me to be independent," she says. Nya patiently answered my questions, questions that I otherwise would never have dared ask a blind person.

Chanida Sirisub, Science Educator at the National Science Museum, explains, "This exhibit is about diversity, how to live with others who are disabled. Blindness cannot be spread. We want to teach people not to discriminate between 'us' and 'them'. If you're talking to someone in the dark, you don't know that you're talking to a blind person. Your voice doesn't automatically get softer."

I used to scoff at the word "brave" when used to describe people who got on with life despite being disadvantaged. After all, what would the alternative be? But this exhibition impacted me far more than I thought it would and I understand why 100 percent of visitors surveyed remembered their experience even five years later.

Dialogue in the Dark is located within the National Science Museum, just at the Sam Yan MRT station. Admission is THB90 (USD3.10) for adults and THB50 (USD1.72) for children. See www.facebook.com/didthailand.

Up Close and Personal

The streets of Bangkok are visual overload with golden temples, vibrant markets and endless displays of food. Another way to take it all in is through a camera lens under the tutelage of accomplished photographer Jonathan Taylor. With two *Time* magazine covers to his name, Jonathan is known for his gritty photojournalism and social documentary photography. He's done everything from shadowing a special police unit trained to deliver babies on the gridlocked streets of Bangkok, to working alongside Muslim fishermen fighting for survival against heavy trawlers to traveling with malaria doctors in the jungles of Burma.

Jonathan's typical students at Photography School Asia are travelers interested in an activity holiday and range from the absolute amateur to the semi-professional. His tours

often combine photography lessons with travel in the region. "I've taken people to the stilt villages on the Tonle Sap in Cambodia and to the hillsides of northern Laos. I try to strike a balance between how keen my students are on straight photography and how much they want to experience Southeast Asia. That said, I'm not a tour operator, but have run about 30 - 40 different types of workshops, each with a narrow focus, involving going out and taking photos followed by critique sessions."

On one of his popular Bangkok Photography Walks, students might find themselves putting into practice what they learned about exposure, depth of field and compositional awareness in the Pak Khlong Talat Flower Market or in one of the city's back alleys. A lesson might focus on how to approach someone on the street.

"Some people are so nervous taking someone's photo that they stand far away and zoom in like they're in the zoo. But asking someone for a photograph should be no different than going into a 7-11 and asking for a bag of vinegar crisps," he explains. "They have the right to say 'yes' or 'no', but there should be no embarrassment. I encourage my students to get into the zone of awareness. You've got to step into their life, at least to a certain degree, for the viewer to feel like they're participating in the photograph. I like the Robert Capa quote, 'If your photos aren't good enough, then you're not close enough.'"

The Bangkok Photography Walk is USD270 for a private lesson, and USD150 for each additional student. Jonathan's studio is easily accessible via the Hua Lamphong MRT. See www.photographyschoolasia.com.

Cheese and Cheesy

Whether because it overwhelmingly reminds us of home or simply because it tends to be exorbitantly priced, we can never seem to get enough of cheese. Enter the Cheese Room at the Millennium Hilton. With over 70 kinds of cheese, many of them artisanal, and 40 on display at any given time, it's three times as large as the next one of its kind. A walk into the climate-controlled room, off of the ground level FLOW restaurant overlooking the Chao Phraya River, is like entering a 'cathedral of cheese'. Soft, semi-soft and hard cheeses from around the world are represented, the display broken up by arrangements of condiments ranging from fresh strawberries and grapes to dried guava and apricot to caramel, honey, jams and fresh baked bread.

"The Cheese Room offers the largest selection of cheeses in Bangkok," says Executive Chef Lorenzo Rosso. "We take pride in providing not only the best cheese, but the most renowned and unique cheeses available worldwide."

Cheeses include Reblochon de Savoie, a classic soft cheese from Savoie, France, Colston Basset Stilton, blue cheese from Nottinghamshire, England and Testun al Barolo, a semi-firm Italian cheese coated with pressed grapes used to make Barolo wine. Labels announce the country of origin, how long the cheese has been ripened, fat content and from what kind of milk the cheese was made.

The daily Dinner Buffet at FLOW is THB1,800 (USD61.94) nett per person which includes access to the Cheese Room. Additionally, experienced wine and cheese butlers are on hand to help you find the perfect pairing.



Dialogue in the Dark



The Cheese Room at the Millennium Hilton



MAPPING IT OUT



Nima Chandler

IMAGE BY JAMES PHAM

The Nancy Chandler line of maps cover Bangkok, Old Bangkok, Chiang Mai and soon, Hanoi, and are USD15.95 including international delivery from www.nancychandler.net. During the month of May, *Oi* readers purchasing a Bangkok map will receive a free copy of the Old Bangkok map by mentioning "Oi Vietnam" in the special requests field.

For an altogether different cheesy experience, The Royal Dragon does not fail to deliver. Opened in 1991, this Chinese seafood restaurant earned a place in the Guinness Book of World Records for being the largest restaurant in the world, with 5,000 seats spread over 33,800 square meters comprised of more than 30 buildings, including open air tented pavilions, banquet rooms and even a seven-story pagoda. The grounds are so extensive that waiters outfitted in purple satin zip around on roller skates. A twice nightly show features Thai traditional dancing and opens with the "Flying Caterer", a waiter hooked up to a zip line delivering a smoking bowl of what is presumably Tom Yam the entire length of the complex.

While mainly catering to tour groups (having 3,000 lunch guests is a regular occurrence), the extensive 200 item menu yields surprisingly tasty dishes, specializing in live seafood like drunken squid, curry crab and sea urchin in red gravy.

The Royal Dragon is located a short taxi ride away from the On Nut BTS station. See

www.royal-dragon.com.

Flower Power

Visitors cannot help but notice the profusion of flowers on Bangkok's streets. From jasmine garlands hanging from taxi rearview mirrors to bouquets adorning altars in front of every major shopping mall, the bulk of these flowers come from Pak Khlong Talat, Bangkok's largest flower market. Open 24/7, the hub of the market is a huge bustling warehouse filled with blossoms of every hue and variety. Think of it as a much better smelling Tsukiji, with sprays of orchids, carnations and marigolds replacing tuna, crab and octopus.

Originally a floating market over 200 years ago, Pak Khlong Talat is now a one-stop shop for street sellers buying up jasmine buds and rose petals by the kilo to thread into the ubiquitous fragrant garlands, florists stocking up for the day, housewives looking to spruce up their homes, and everyone in between. The activity in the market spills out into small shops in the surrounding blocks, carrying fresh fruit, flowers and other items



LEFT: The Chinese Villa at The Siam



for the devout.

Locals like to visit the market near midnight when it's cool and quiet. Photographers might find the early dawn hours especially appealing, just after fresh shipments of flowers arrive from northern Thailand and the money trees are set out, a hopeful harbinger for good sales to come.

For a more in-depth look at how flowers and Thai life are intrinsically intertwined, visit the Museum of Floral Culture in the Dusit area. Opened last August by engineer turned author, designer, and Thai floral artist Sakul Intakul, the private museum consists of six exhibits in a gorgeous golden teak house (previously the Royal Guard House). Exhibits highlight the floral cultures of neighboring Asian countries, as well as how flowers figure into everyday Thai life.

"In the Buddhist religion, flowers represent respect. If you give food to monks, you will be well-fed in the next life. If you give flowers, you will have beautiful appearance," says Patcharachai Laohakul, the museum's coordinator. "Every activity of [Thai] life, from birth until death, uses

flowers - from the ordination ceremony for monks, to when people get married to the death ceremony. Flowers mark every step of life."

Admission is THB150 (USD5.16) for adults, THB75 (USD2.58) for children, inclusive of a guided tour in English. See www.floralmuseum.com.

Where History Meets Luxury

Many travelers to Bangkok visit the Jim Thompson House, a museum dedicated to the man who practically single-handedly introduced the world to Thai silk. While no photos are allowed, the next best thing, or actually better, is a stay in an actual Jim Thompson home.

In the 60s, Jim Thompson was friends with socialite Connie Mangskau; the two of them collected antique teak houses in Ayudhya and rebuilt them in Bangkok. Connie's home hosted legendary parties courting guests like Jacqueline Kennedy, John Rockefeller, Henry Ford and Roger Moore. What was Bangkok's most famous private residence is now the centerpiece of The Siam, a collection of 39 suites and villas set right on the Chao Phraya River.

Owned and operated by the Sukosol family, Thailand's entertainment dynasty who is involved in music, television, books and films, The Siam is the pinnacle of contemporary meets traditional living. Open for only nine months, the back story of the property garnered much attention during its three years of construction.

"The valuation without the antique collection is around USD60 million," says General Manager Jason Friedman. "That's about USD1.5 million per room."

The family contributed their personal collection of antiques, freely on display throughout the deceptively large property. "Building around antiques and for antiques was a construction challenge. The Ban Chiang pottery is between 3 and 5,000 years old. The Chinese horse is priceless," says Jason of the galleries spread all about the property which includes a piano conservatory, an English garden, a private theater and a Muay Thai training gym. "[The Sukosols] built this as an art project. They built it for people's reactions. I advised them, 'Don't share so much! This isn't a public park,' but they wanted Thais to be able to come see it."

The Siam is located in the historic Dusit District, home to Vimanmek Mansion, a former royal palace and numerous other off-the-well-worn tourist path sights. "Just by staying in Old Town, there's so much more to see and do within walking distance or along the river. The trip between here and the Skytrain is spectacular. That's what other people do for their river tour. For us, that's our commute," says Jason of the 30 minute private boat trip between The Siam and the Saphan Taksin Pier.

Additionally, all guests receive the Nancy Chandler Bangkok map to ensure they get the most out of their Bangkok stay. Doubles start from USD561++ including breakfast. See www.thesiamhotel.com. ■

ART DECO CHIC

The Speakeasy



Trendy rooftop bars are *de rigueur* in Bangkok and The Speakeasy is Nima Chandler's favorite hangout spot. Taking up the entire 24th and 25th floors of the Hotel Muse, the Speakeasy harkens back to a worldlier, sophisticated time, when travel was synonymous with luxury. Revelers can choose between cozy nooks filled with tufted club chairs under an art deco glass dome and open air seating with unimpeded views of the glittering city.

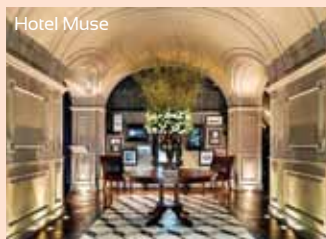
On the Old Siam design scheme of the hotel, General Manager Nicolas

Peth says, "King Rama V was the first king to really travel thanks to the introduction of railways, cruise liners and airplanes. He brought back a lot of what he saw of art deco from Europe, especially France. We've kept that thread alive throughout the hotel." The unique Old Siam meets *fin de siècle* France theme is evident in everything from the decorative pith helmets and vintage suitcases to the old Bogart movie playing silently in The Salon and the art deco clawfoot tubs. The mood lighting and trendy yet low-key music curated by French DJ Plaisir de France creates the aura of being in a very exclusive club.

In a crowded hotel market like Bangkok, dominated by either budget guesthouses or sterile business hotels, The Hotel Muse, looking very much like the classy love child of the Westin and edgy designer Ed Hardy, is a refreshing standout.

Hotel Muse is a five-star hotel, just 5 minutes' walk from the Chidlom BTS. Doubles start at USD130++ including breakfast. See www.hotelmusebangkok.com.

Hotel Muse



IMAGES PROVIDED BY HOTEL MUSE





Historic Hotel

It has built a reputation as the most luxurious city hotel in Vietnam, one steeped in intrigue and history. But just how good is The Sofitel Legend Hanoi?

TEXT BY ROBERT STOCKDILL

IT WOULD BE hard to find a place to stay in Vietnam with a higher reputation preceding it than Hanoi's Sofitel Legend Metropole. Not only has it hosted an exhausting list of celebrities over the years, but its role as a refuge for foreigners during the American War and its recently rediscovered and reopened bomb shelter have created a legend in more ways than one.

Even walking past the building, one cannot escape a sense of history, with its 1950s era vintage cars lined up outside and distinctive French classic architecture.

The Metropole spans two wings, the historic one dating back to 1901 with 106 rooms and three suites, each bearing the name of a famous former guest - Graham Greene, Charlie Chaplin and Somerset Maugham. Management must have had a tough task choosing which three VIPs to name the suites after given the roll call -

Fidel Castro, George Bush, Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt, Gerard Depardieu, Jacques Chirac, Michael Cain, Mick Jagger, Queen Noor of Jordan, Robert DeNiro, Angela Merkel, Tony Blair, Bill Clinton, Dmitri Medvedev... OK, enough name dropping; suffice to say *Oi* was in good company.

Choosing the wooden staircase instead of the tiny lift, just for the experience, our reception attendant agrees it's a beautiful environment to work in. Other staff tell me that many of them have worked for many years, "It's like a family." Few seem to want to leave because, quite frankly, when you work in a place as grand and rich in history as this, where you're likely to bump into people you've only read about in glossy magazines, where else would you go to?

Entering the Metropole wing is more than just an escape from the noise of downtown Hanoi - you seem to step back in time, getting a very strong sense of what life must have

been like in the era when the French ruled with their aristocratic convention and the opulence which imperialism brought with it.

Inside, my room has polished wooden floors and dark wooden furniture throughout. Sitting at the antique-style writing desk typing into a Mac laptop, one can imagine Graham Green sitting in the same place decades earlier with a fountain pen and pad, writing what would one day become a famous novel.

Modern aluminum framed doors insulate the room from the sound of traffic outside, but also opens onto a small, traditionally shuttered deck from which one can look down on the twin vintage Citroens lined up before the main entrance. The cars date back to the 1950s and have a few patches of rust showing through their shiny black skins, yet they unashamedly draw attention away from a shiny new black BMW 7 series limousine

which one can take to the airport for VND2.6 million - one way.

A small coffee table bears four delicious handmade chocolates and a pair of sapodilla. According to the accompanying card, in part a warning not to eat the seeds from the centre, the sapodilla is native to Mexico and Guatemala and is known to lower blood pressure and detoxify. Probably the ideal tonic after a day dodging motorbikes, speeding taxis and cyclos clogging the tree-lined streets of downtown Hanoi.

But the Metropole experience is much more than the room. As essential as trying out the al fresco Bamboo Bar by the pool is to take the complimentary hotel history tour. In less than an hour, a historian will explain some of the hotel's history and the background to the souvenirs of yesteryear stored in a large glass cabinet in the reception area - a signed album from US folk singer Joan Baez, local French language newspapers from the pre-American War era and other curiosities. The tour concludes in the hotel's bomb shelter, a 40sqm, damp concrete bunker sealed off soon after the war ended in 1975 and rediscovered during renovations in 2011 before being reopened in May last year. The bunker has been preserved in its original bleak state and tour participants can squeeze into one of its rooms and listen to Joan Baez's poem set to music and a real soundtrack recorded when nervous hotel guests, including Jane Fonda, gathered beneath the ground while air raid sirens sounded outside. Baez talks of a mother crying out "Where Are You Now, My Son?" after the planes have departed the skies and local Vietnamese take tentative steps out of their own shelters to see if they still have a home.

Chocolate & Surprises

After a sobering excursion back 40-odd years, what better way to lighten the mood than with a truly decadent chocolate buffet in Le Club. For VND646,800 chocoholics can order a coffee or tea and set themselves loose on a veritable mountain of chocolate served in every imaginable form and an equally tempting array of other non-chocolate dishes - pralines, macaroons, tarts, cakes, truffles are laid out on tiered displays. A chef can prepare a fresh crepe suzette or you can dip skewers of fruits and marshmallows into the free-flowing chocolate fountain.

As politely and discreetly as possible I overindulged with glee. The discretion must have worked because when my stomach was stretched to capacity with sweet temptations the maitre'd expressed concern I had not eaten enough... they must be used to guests shrugging off diets here with reckless abandon.

As a mark of respect to my stomach a walk was in order and the Metropole is perfectly located to take in the most historic and grand of the capital's colonial era architecture. From the hotel take a left and you are a mere block away from the giant roundabout onto which face the city's Opera House and other French era buildings. An equally short distance away lie the city's most luxurious shops, including the stunning new Hanoi Dior store just opened at the Trang Tien Plaza shopping centre.

Come the evening and the most difficult choice to make is not what to eat, but where to eat. Metropole has five large restaurants. Angelina is an Italian restaurant and lounge in the newer wing, Le Beaulieu, specializing in French fare, and Spices Garden is for those who prefer to try Hanoi-influenced Vietnamese food. For lighter fare you can try the Bamboo



IMAGES PROVIDED BY SOFITEL LEGEND HANOI

Bar overlooking the pool, and eat beneath plantation era-style giant fans or at Le Club for live jazz and dinner.

La Terrasse, inspired by French sidewalk cafes, is an indoor-outdoor restaurant overlooking the street and a leafy city park. I tossed a coin a few times and Angelina emerged the winner. It proved a stark but enjoyable contrast from the antique opulence of the Metropole with its stark white and red contrasting decor and modern house music which, while possibly a little loud for some older customers, I loved as a backdrop to the fine Italian wine and food.

A delicious eggplant stack entree followed by house specialty veal Milano, two glasses of Planeta Rosso and a bottle of water came to VND1.796 million after tax and service charge, but it tasted authentic, was suitably filling and the service was as attentive as the best I've experienced in any restaurant in Vietnam.

Too many smokers may deter some from lingering in the lounge bar after dinner for more wine and DJ-driven music so it was time to put that sumptuous bed to the test.

Back in the room, the turn down service had been executed while I dined. A water bottle wrapped in a cloth jacket was on either side of

the bed, slippers lined up on the bedside (how did they know which side?!) and two fresh macaroons were a delightful closing touch for the day. But the final surprise was yet to come.

Mid-morning, while working on the laptop, the phone rang and reception enquired what time I was checking out and whether I was flying out that day. When I said yes and advised the time she arranged a complimentary late checkout and booked a taxi so the transition from room to airport was seamless.

The Metropole is not an inexpensive escape but for those with the means, it represents an oasis in the capital city. It is filled with mystique, intrigue, history and guilty pleasures. It's the ultimate city destination for a luxury escape, a place to pamper and reward yourself or surprise your partner. Its antique style breeds romantic enchantment. Its vast food offer satisfies any culinary craving. If that is your thing then the value is indisputable.

Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi Hotel

15 Ngo Quyen, Hanoi 10000.

Room rates online run from around USD200 to USD360 a night, depending on the season.

Go to www.sofitel.com and locate Metropole using the Destinations tab. ■

Travel More For Less, Part 2

Tips on how to travel around the world on the cheap



IMAGE BY NAM QUAN

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

TRAVELERS IN ASIA should count ourselves fortunate. While the rest of the world is bemoaning a decrease in airline comfort, nasty ancillary fees and poor customer service, 6 of the top 10 Airlines of the Year are from Asia (including Thai Airways, Cathay Pacific and Singapore Airlines). That's according to the latest rankings from Skytrax, using data gathered from over 18 million customers from over 100 countries.

Asian airlines also swept the top three spots amongst Best Economy Class Airline and three of four for The World's Best Low-Cost Airlines, with AirAsia taking the number one spot for the fourth consecutive year. Yet while we have a leg up on the rest of the world, setting yourself up for the best deals still requires a bit of effort.

Be Ready to Make Decisions Fast and Early

Deals, whether they be cruises, flights or hotels, often come with tons of restrictions and the window to buy may be extremely small. So, if you want to travel well on a budget, you'll need to be ready to make quick decisions (and have your traveling partners on speed dial!). I've seen amazing deals on airfares but in the 15 minutes it took to confirm the trip with a friend, the session expired and the flights were no longer available. But if you're fast, deals are to be had. I'm happy to have snapped up free seats to Bangkok twice this year for just over USD70 return, taxes included. At times, you'll have to make decisions fast *and* far in advance. The trip I booked to New Zealand (for less than USD400 return) was made eight months in advance, but that just gave me more time to meticulously plan.

Be Flexible

Another way to travel when you have more time than money is to look at alternate routings. For a recent trip to Laos, I was looking at a USD350 fare via Vietnam Airlines with a short layover in Phnom Penh. But with a bit more research, I came up with a USD137 fare, buying two separate tickets through Kuala Lumpur. Yes, I had to kill seven hours, but I was armed with music, movies and my favorite travel pillow,

and the USD200 I saved paid for a few luxuries at my destination. On another flight to Africa, I was able to use my frequent flyer miles, except for one leg (Saigon to Hong Kong) where there was no availability. At the time, a one-way flight was close to USD300. Instead, I jumped on a USD70 flight to Macau before taking a cheap ferry directly to the Hong Kong airport. If you're doing alternate routing, just be careful to factor in all the additional expenses like an overnight stay or money spent at the airport on long layovers.

Check Out Social Buying

The US site Groupon started the social buying craze, generating global spinoffs. My favorite site hands down is Travelzoo. com with their legendary weekly Top 20. They even have curated deals specific to Asia. I recently went on a 14 night

transatlantic cruise from Barcelona to Miami for USD399. Last year, I picked up an amazing deal for the JW Marriott in Khao Lak, Thailand for USD89 per night, including one of the most amazing breakfast buffets I've ever seen (made-to-order Smoothie Station!) and four massages for the week. While I don't stay at the Marriott very often, I still registered as a member (as I recommended in last month's column), which means I found out about a "stay twice, get a free night" promotion. I broke up my stay into two legs, spending a couple of nights on the gorgeous Similan Islands in between, and wound up with a free night to use at any Marriott property, which made an awesome deal into an unbelievable one.

Share your best travel tips with us at travel@oivietnam.com ■



airlines

Air China

7th Floor, Sun Wah Tower, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1
3823 3888
www.airchina.com

Air France

130 Dong Khoi, D1
3829 0981
mail.hcm@airfrance.fr
www.airfrance.com.vn

Asiana Airlines

39 Le Duan, D1
3822 2622
www.ea.flyasiana.com

Air Asia

No official office in Vietnam
www.airasia.com
Address of sales office: Noibai Airport, Terminal 1, International Departure Hall, 3rd Floor, Ha Noi
Website of agent: www.airasia.biz.vn
Phone: 04.37478953
95G - Ly Nam De - Phuong Cua Dong - Quan Hoan Kiem - Ha Noi
Tel: (04).37478953

Cathay Pacific Airlines

R502, 5th floor, 72-74 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, Ward 6, D3
3822 3203
sgn#mt@cathaypacific.com
www.cathaypacific.com

China Southern

21-23 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3829 6800
passengerservice@cs-sgn.com
www.csair.com

Emirates

15 Nguyen Hue, 14th Floor, Dist.1, HCMC
Email: ehvietnam@emirates.com
Phone: 08 39113099
www.emirates.com/vn

Etihad

etihadairways.com

EVA Airlines

2A-4A Ton Duc Thang, D1
3822 4488
www.evaaair.com

JAL Japan Airlines

4F Hotel Nikko Saigon, 235 Nguyen Van Cu, Nguyen Cu Trinh, D1
3830 6231

Jetstar

112 Hong Ha, Ward 2, Tan Binh Dist., HCMC
Tel. 08 38450092
servicecomments@jetstarpacific.com.vn
www.jetstar.com

Korean Air

Unit 909, Floor 9, Diamond Plaza, 34 Le Duan, D1
3824 2878
www.korean-air.vn

Lufthansa

14th Floor, Bitexco Building, 19-25 Nguyen Hue, D1
3829 8529
lufthansa.vn@dlh.de
www.lufthansa.com

Malaysia Airlines

37 Ton Duc Thang, D1
3829 2529
www.malaysiaairlines.com

Qantas Airways

186 - 188 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3910 5373

Qatar

Suite 8, GF, Petro Vietnam Tower
1-5 Le Duan St., room 4, Floor 8, AB tower, Dist.1, HCMC
84 8 38273888
reservations@vn.qatarairways.com
Working hours: Mon-Fri: 8-17, Sat: 8:30am - 12:30pm
Hanoi phone No: 04 39336767

Singapore Airlines

29 Le Duan, D1
3823 1588
www.singaporeair.com

Thai

29 Le Duan Blvd, D1
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Phone: (84-8) 3822 3365
E-mail: reservations@thaairways.com.vn
Monday - Friday: 08:00 - 16:30 (excluding holidays)
Saturday - Sunday: Closed

Turkish

Sales office in Vietnam
76 Le Lai St., room 4, Floor 8, AB tower, Dist. 1, HCMC
84 8 39360360
marketing.sgn@thy.com
Working hours: Weekdays: 8am-12pm / 13-17; Sat: 8-12, Sun: closed

United Airlines

Unit 708, 7th Floor, Sun Wah Tower, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1
3823 4755
www.united.com

Vietnam Airlines

16F Sunwah Tower, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1
3832 0320
www.vietnamairlines.com.vn

Vietjet

CT Plaza Building 8th Floor, 60 Truong Son St., Tan Binh Dist., HCMC
84 8 35471866 / Hotline: 1900 1886
www.vietjetair.com
19001886@vietjetair.com

hotels

HO CHI MINH CITY

TWO STAR

Bali Hotel

★★
Ideally-located for attendees to any exhibitions held at the Saigon Exhibition and Convention Centre, Bali Boutique is flash and modern in style - with a little touch of the plush thrown in for good measure.
39 - 41 Hung Phuoc Villas, D7
54104747

Calmette Hotel

★★
Charming hotel on one of the most attractively-named streets in the city, although slightly out-of-the-way. Quality, elegant furnishings and modern amenities.
151 Calmette, D1
39144951

Cat Huy Hotel

★★
Cat Huy is the best-kept secret of the backpacker district, located in a

peaceful and very local-looking alley close to the downtown area of Ho Chi Minh City, but culturally part of deep suburban Saigon.

353/28, Pham Ngu Lao, D1
39208717

Ken Hotel

★★
A surprisingly well-designed hotel, this budget establishment looks anything but from within, although the location in a side alley off CMT8 is quite deceiving.
285/7 Cach Mang Thang Tam, D10
0906699371

Little Saigon Boutique Hotel

★★
A small, value-for-money boutique hotel with 18 air-conditioned, non-smoking rooms, Little Saigon Boutique Hotel is an easy walk to Ben Thanh Market and other D1 sights. Hidden away in a quiet back alley right in the central area.
36 Bis/2 Le Loi, D1
35218462

THREE STAR

ACEM Hotel - 8A Thai Van Lung

★★★
Local accommodation chain that aims at the classy mid-level market; still budget, but with a touch of dignity about it.
8A/1D2 Thai Van Lung, D1
38224495

Blue Diamond Hotel

★★★
A cut above the multiple nearby 2-star properties, this hotel has been officially recognized for its quality décor and service, including high accolades in international publications.
48-50 Thu Khoa Huan, D1
38236167

Bong Sen Hotel

★★★
Located in the heart of D1, The Bong Sen Hotel offers luxurious accommodation for guests who wish to relax or get a little work done.
117-123 Dong Khoi, D1
38291516
reser@bongsenshotel.com
www.bongsenshotel.com

Catina Saigon

★★★
Hotel Catina Saigon provides 3 star accommodation in large, boutique rooms that include free, high-speed internet access and city views.
109 Dong Khoi, D1
38296296

Tan Hai Long Hotel & Spa- Nguyen An Ninh

★★★
The Tan Hai Long Hotel and Spa offers award winning 3 star service and stunning views of Ben Thanh Market and downtown Saigon. 3 star Hotel and spa located in the heart of Ho Chi Minh city with 160 rooms and suites, also providing professional spa services by skillful and experienced staff
15-17-19 Nguyen An Ninh, D1
38272738

FOUR STAR

Hotel Continental Saigon

★★★★
One of Saigon's oldest hotels, most

graceful colonial properties, and historic places to stay, it is perhaps most famous as the location where much of Graham Greene's The Quiet American was written in room 214.

132-134 Dong Khoi, D1
38299201
continentalhotel@vnn.vn
www.continentalsaigon.com

Kimdo Royal City Hotel

★★★★
Nestled in amongst the commercial buildings at the top of District One's central business strip, the posh-looking Kimdo is right in the heart of the administrative, business, shopping, and entertainment district.
133 Nguyen Hue, D1
38225914
royalcity@kimdohotel.com.vn
www.kimdohotel.com

Liberty Central Hotel

★★★★
Liberty Central has a very prominent brand and is a particularly stylish, eye-catching property right in the centre of the tourist district.
179 Le Thanh Ton, D1
38239269
libertycentral@libertycentralhotel.com
www.libertycentralhotel.com

Norfolk Hotel

★★★★
Chic, warm exterior with boutique charms within, this property is an ideal escape for business travellers from the plasticity of chain hotels.
117 Le Thanh Ton, D1
38293415
nifo@norfolkhotel.com.vn
www.norfolkhotel.com.vn

Novotel Saigon Centre

★★★★
One of HCMC's newest hotels, Novotel is located on busy Hai Ba Trung St, just within walking distance of downtown attractions. It's everything you'd expect from the international brand with 24-seven guest services and a broad dining offer.
167 Hai Ba Trung, D1
38224866
H7965@accor.com
www.novotel.com

Oscar Saigon Hotel

★★★★
French colonial hotel in District 1 offering stunning panoramic views and 4 star amenities.
68A Nguyen Hue, D1
38292959
oscarsaigonhotel@oscar-saigonhotel.com
www.oscar-saigonhotel.com

Palace Hotel Saigon

★★★★
One of the tidier properties of its class within the vicinity, with 144 deluxe guest rooms of contemporary design well-equipped with modern facilities.
56-66 Nguyen Hue, D1
38292860
reservation@palacesaigon.com
www.palacesaigon.com

Park Royal Saigon Hotel

★★★★
Park Royal Saigon Hotel is an ideally placed conference hotel which caters to all MICE needs. The hotel offers a wide array of banquet services and can accommodate 30 to 300 guests.
309B-311 Nguyen Van Troi, Tan Binh

38421111
enquiry.prsgn@parkroyalhotels.com
www.parkroyalhotels.com

Thao Dien Boutique Hotel

Set in a secluded, verdant garden occupying 1.2 hectares along the Saigon River, Thao Dien village is a tropical hideaway that's just 20 minutes from the city centre.
195-197 Nguyen Van Huong, D 2
37442222
sales@thaodienvillage.com
www.thaodienvillage.com

FIVE STAR

Caravelle Hotel

Part of the city's modern history since 1959, few properties in Saigon are quite as iconic. A major center for foreign correspondents during the war, it has emerged as a plush and vibrant luxury hotel in the present era. Caravelle Hotel is one of the city's classiest icons and represents a true slice of Saigon's history while remaining one of its most luxurious places to stay.
19 Lam Son Square, D 1
38234999
hotel@caravellehotel.com
www.caravellehotel.com

Equatorial Ho Chi Minh City

An international hotel located where the borders of the city's four main districts meet. The city's major commercial and entertainment area is only an 8-minute drive away.
242 Tran Binh Trong, D 5
38397777
info@hcm.equatorial.com
www.equatorial.com/hcm

InterContinental Asiana

Located in the heart of Ho Chi Minh

City, the InterContinental Asiana Saigon is dedicated to providing local, authentic, and enriching travel experiences. Decorated in tasteful oriental flair, the hotel is dedicated to representing the charms of Asia and evokes the mystique of this beautiful continent and its cultures. Right next to Saigon's key landmarks, this hotel is ideally placed for high-class travellers and groups seeking a high standard of accommodation. Full MICE areas and facilities are on-site.
Corner Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan, D1
3520 9999
saigon@ihg.com
www.intercontinental.com/saigon

Legend Hotel

Classic hotel offering 5 star amenities along with a scenic view of the Saigon River, and providing a unique culinary experience with many options for fine dining.
2A-4A Ton Duc Thang, D 1
38233333
www.legendssaigon.com

Majestic Saigon

One of HCMC's oldest and most characteristic hotels, the Majestic on the Saigon River with its grand French architecture is just a few steps away from Saigon's premiere attractions.
01 Dong Khoi, D 1
38295517
www.majesticsaigon.com.vn

Moevenpick Hotel Saigon

An international hotel chain with Swiss roots, this comfortable hotel caters to both businesspeople and families with fine dining options, a fitness centre, and multiple conference rooms.
253 Nguyen Van Troi Apartments, Phu Nhuan

38449222
hotel.saigon@moevenpick.com
www.moevenpick-hotels.com

New World Saigon Hotel

One of the most impressive business hotels in Ho Chi Minh City, with stunning views and 5 star amenities. 533 luxury rooms and suites offering the perfect ambience for concentrated work and undisturbed relaxation.
76 Le Lai, D 1
38228888
saigon@newworldhotels.com
www.saigon.newworldhotels.com

Nikko Saigon

One of the city's newest accommodation jewels, this lavish hotel is designed to make the maximum impression of austere Japanese-style class from the lobby upwards. This is one of the most luxurious hotels in HCMC, with classic, precise and elegant decor.
235 Nguyen Van Cu, D 1
39257777
www.hotelnikkosaigon.com.vn

Park Hyatt Saigon

Without a doubt the city's most luxurious hotel, Park Hyatt Saigon features French colonial inspired rooms, two award-winning restaurants, an outdoor pool and a stylish contemporary bar. The exterior is the result of meticulous research into the colonial architecture of the region.
2 Lam Son Square, D 1
38241234
saigon.park@hyatt.com
www.saigon.park.hyatt.com

Rex Hotel Saigon

Rex Hotel has consistently won awards

for being one of the best hotels in Asia. Impeccable dining options, great location, and 5 star amenities make this recently refurbished hotel a preferred destination for travellers with generous budgets.

141, Nguyen Hue, Ben Nghe, D 1
38292185
www.rexhotelvietnam.com

Saigon Domaine Luxury Residences

High-class getaway hotel located out of the city centre on exotic Thanh Da Island, allowing guests to escape from the chaos of the city life while remaining close to the action. More hotel than apartment complex, The Domaine's private residences are classic and luxurious, making the most of the natural surroundings.
1057 Binh Quoi, Binh Thanh
35561145
www.saigondomaine.com

Sheraton Saigon Hotel And Towers

Located in the heart of Ho Chi Minh City vibrant business and entertainment district, Sheraton Saigon Hotel & Towers is a 5 star haven of convenience, connecting guests with colleagues and friends.
88 Dong Khoi, D 1
38272828
sheratonsaigon@sheraton.com

Sofitel Saigon Plaza Hotel

The Sofitel Saigon Plaza is located in the city center, in the heart of the business district and close to Notre Dame Cathedral and Reunification Palace. 275 elegant rooms and 11 suites, a swimming pool, and a fitness center.
17 Le Duan, D 1
38241555
H2077@Sofitel.com

HOTEL MUSE
BANGKOK LANGSUAN

HOTEL REVOLUTION HAS BEGUN

A new spirit in passionate, independent living has evolved. Inspiring and individual, join the Hotel Muse revolution and change the way you experience hospitality.

Please visit us www.hotelmusebangkok.com or facebook.com/hotelmusebkk.

www.sofitel.com/gb/hotel-2077-sofitel-saigon-plaza/index.shtml

Windsor Plaza

Located in the heritage area of old Cholon, the Windsor offers authentic Vietnamese and Chinese hospitality with a mix of commercial, cultural, and retail experiences - and they put on a fine buffet.

18 An Duong Vuong, D 5

3833 6688

www.windsorplazahotel.com

CON DAO ISLAND

Six Senses Con Dao

True to the Six Senses philosophy of selecting remote (but accessible) destinations in areas of outstanding natural beauty, Con Dao is an untouched and breathtakingly beautiful area. Con Dao has been built with the very lightest ecological footprint, with villas set up along a mile of sandy beach, sheltered by the green forested hills behind and with stunning vistas of the deep blue sea and the curve of the bay.

Dat Doc Beach, Con Dao, Con Son

06 4383 1222

reservations-condao@sixsenses.com

DALAT

Ana Mandara Villas Dalat

Ana Mandara Villas Dalat comprises seventeen restored French-style villas from the 1920's and 1930's, preserving the original design, décor and charm, is 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.

Le Lai, Phuong 5, Dalat

06 3355 5888

reservation-dalat@anamandara-resort.com

Sofitel Dalat Palace

Hotel Sofitel Dalat Palace is one of the most beautiful and amongst the few remaining historical hotels in Southeast Asia. Built in 1922 and meticulously restored in 1995 to its original grandeur, the Sofitel Dalat Palace offers individualized service in the finest tradition of Vietnamese hospitality.

12 Tran Phu, Dalat

06 3382 5444

info@dalatresorts.com

DANANG

Furama Resort Danang

The Furama Resort enjoys a stunning beachfront location on one of Vietnam's finest beaches, fringed by natural pines and coconut palms. Two four-storey wings overlook the ocean on one side and a freshwater swimming lagoon and manicured tropical gardens on the others.

Truong Sa, Ngu Hanh Son, Danang

051 1384 7333

reservation@furamavietnam.com

Fusion Maia

Incorporating the spirit of our time, Fusion Maia Danang is a unique fusion of resort and spa where spa treatments are inclusive and a part of daily living in this beach resort. It is 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. Customize-your-stay options and breakfast available at multiple locations are a few of the surprising offers in store.

Truong Sa, Ngu Hanh Son, Danang

051 1396 7999

reservation-dn@fusion-resorts.com

Life Resort Danang

Sitting on the Bac My An beachfront only 31km from downtown Danang, and 30km from Hoi An. A pair of four-storey hotel blocks house most of the resort's rooms, with villas flanking one side of a long pool corridor splicing the middle of the resort. Its proximity to three UNESCO World Heritage sites as well as the former colonial French hill stations at Bach Ma and Ba Na make this ideally placed for incentive excursions.

Truong Sa, Ngu Hanh Son, Danang

051 1395 8888

reservations@lifestyle-resort-danang.com

HALONG BAY

Novotel Halong Bay

A glimpse into contemporary Vietnam with echoes of the country's intricate past through its elegant interior décor. Sturdy polished stone, glass and marble stand against the delicate Asian textures of silk, wickerwork and carved wood. With sweeping windows and large mirrors, the hotel captures panoramic views of Halong Bay and its spectacular seascapes at every turn.

Ha Long Road, Bai Chay Ward, Ha Long City

03 3384 8108

info@novotelhalong.com.vn

TUAN CHAU RESORT

Tuan Chau Resort is constructed in the style of classical French and modern Vietnamese architecture. This is the ideal place to find white sands, blue ocean, and the rejuvenative energy of the Vietnamese tropical sun.

Tuan Chau Island, Ha Long City

03 3384 2999

info@tuanchauresort.com.vn

HANOI

Hilton Hanoi Opera

This landmark of Hanoi was inspired by the famous Opera House located nearby. A hotel of great beauty and luxury, the Hilton stands in the city's fashionable and elegant French Quarter, and is within close range of the charming Old Quarter and bustling Business District.

1 Le Thanh Tong, Hoan Kiem, Hanoi

04 3933 0500

frontofficeadmin.hanoi@hilton.com

Intercontinental Westlake

Superbly situated on the serene waters of Hanoi's West Lake and adjacent to the famous 800-year-old Golden Lotus (Kim Lien) Pagoda. Conveniently located and yet able to offer a retreat from the hustle and bustle of downtown Hanoi, the combination of spacious luxurious accommodations, facilities, and attentive Vietnamese hospitality make this the perfect place to stay for both the corporate and leisure traveller.

la Nghi Tam Tay Ho, Hanoi

04 6270 8888

Reservation.Hanoi@ihg.com

Sheraton Hanoi

Perfectly located by the shores of the largest lake in Hanoi and surrounded by a beautifully landscaped garden and courtyard, the hotel provides the perfect balance between tranquillity and convenience. Take in panoramic views of Hanoi's largest lake and enjoy great comforts in the 299 spacious guest rooms and suites, specially designed

for relaxation.

K5 Nghi Tam, 11 Xuan Dieu, Tay Ho, Hanoi

04 3719 9000

Reservations.Hanoi@Sheraton.com

The Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi

*****  O's Pick

Located at the heart of Hanoi since 1901, Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi has a long history as a luxurious place for prestigious events and popular rendezvous. Features include 364 rooms and suites, excellent French cuisine at Le Beaulieu, Vietnamese specialties at Spices Garden, and Angelina - Hanoi's most "avant garde" Italian Restaurant & Lounge. Seven function rooms, a swimming pool, fitness centre and the Le Spa du Metropole are also available in the hotel.

15 Ngo Quyen, Hoan Kiem, Hanoi

04 3826 6919

h1555@sofitel.com

HOI AN

Life Heritage Resort Hoi An

Rooms are designed along Japanese themes, each having a personal porch with couches for reading and relaxing. Spacious bathrooms feature stand-alone showers or recessed baths, and many bathrooms enjoy views of a private garden. Ideal for events where participants will be enjoying the colourful ancient town area.

1 Pham Hong Thai, Hoi An Town, Quang Nam

051 0391 4555

hoian@life-resorts.com

The Nam Hai

A stunning all-villa resort located on the pristine China Beach featuring 60 one-bedroom retreats as well as 40 privately-owned two-to-five bedroom residences each with a private infinity pool.

Hamlet 1 Dien Duong Village, Dien Ban,

Quang Nam

051 0394 0000

reservations@thenamhai.com



Palm Garden Resort

Set on five hectares of landscaped tropical garden with over 400 species of palm trees and plants right along the beach and near the World Heritage Hoi An Ancient Town.

Lac Long Quan, Cua Dai beach, Hoi An

0510 3927 927

www.palmgardenresort.com.vn

HUE

Ana Mandara Hue

The quiet sounds and vistas of the sea welcome guests to the first unique luxury beach resort with private pool villas in the area. Located a scenic 15km drive from central Hue, this is spacious resort with the largest villas and rooms in the area. The property includes private pool villas, beach villas, duplex and deluxe rooms in a wide range of styles and decor designed with complete and modern facilities.

An Hai Village, Thuan An Town, Hue Phu

Vang

05 4398 3333

rsnv@anamandarahue-resort.com

La Residence Hotel & Spa

This former French Governor's residence dates to 1930 and is a masterpiece of art deco design. Its incredible location overlooking the Citadel and the Perfume River brings this 122-room hotel a total and serene tranquillity. The hotel features a 40m outdoor salt swimming pool at river height giving the illusion of merging into the Perfume River. Ideal for executive retreats and exotic incentives programmes.

5 Le Loi, Hue

05 4383 7475

resa@la-residence-hue.com

Pilgrimage Village

Pilgrimage Village offers the harmony of a soothing natural environment and fascinating local culture. Delicious meals, sound sleep, and the peaceful life of the quiet countryside refresh the spirit. Pilgrimage Village is also a place where skilful artisans carve, polish and weave to create authentic works that reflect the traditional culture of Hue.

130 Minh Mang, Truong An, Hue

05 4388 5461

info@pilgrimagevillage.com

NHA TRANG

Evason Ana Mandara

Reflecting the style of an old Vietnamese village, with warm hospitality, rich culture and unique tastes. The exclusive location affords city-centre access to Nha Trang's only beachfront resort. It is surrounded by private tropical gardens, offering simplicity, serenity and refinement together with spectacular views of Nha Trang Bay. Unforgettable incentive experience.

Beachside Tran Phu Boulevard, Nha Trang

05 8352 2222

reservations-nhatrang@evasonresorts.com

Six Senses Hideaway Ninh Van Bay

The resort is one of Asia's most exclusive and intimate beach escapes, sitting on dramatic Ninh Van Bay, with its impressive rock formations overlooking the South China Sea, white sand beach and towering mountains behind.

Ninh Van, Khanh Hoa

05 8372 8222

reservations-ninhvan@sixsenses.com

Sheraton Nha Trang

Sheraton Nha Trang Hotel & Spa offers ten categories of accommodation - from spacious, deluxe rooms to 70m2 executive suites and a huge presidential suite. With exemplary conference facilities, this is the number-one MICE resort in the region.

26-28 Tran Phu, Nha Trang

05 8388 0000

reservations.nhatrang@sheraton.com

PHAN THIET

Anantara Mui Ne Resort & Spa

The new face of the former l'Anmien, this resort offers an exclusive haven of luxury and relaxation in a spectacular beachfront location right in the heart of Mui Ne. The only property in the Mui Ne district with full conferencing facilities and a range of exclusive villas - and it has an impressive wine cellar.

Mui Ne

06 2374 1888

muine@anantara.com

Princess d'Annam

The look of the resort is classical, bright, and impeccably clean and private. The two Empress Suites are the pinnacle of luxury accommodation in Vietnam – they are mini millionaire's mansions in themselves, fully-equipped, bright and spacious, and possessing of the same ethereal design quality that pervades this whole resort. Set in the remote Ke Ga Bay, wordlessly beautiful.

Hon Lan, Binh Thuan
06 2368 2222
info@princessannam.com

PHU QUOC ISLAND

Chen Sea Resort & Spa

Located in a quiet bay, this resort allows guests to enjoy the peace and natural beauty of Phu Quoc while also enjoying the exclusive atmosphere that the location suggests and the resort offers. The resort was born from a long and passionate study in order to be integrated and to respect the uncontaminated nature of the bay and of the coastal zone.

Bai Xep, Phu Quoc
07 7399 5895
cpv@chr.co.th

Saigon Phu Quoc Resort

Located on a hill of coconut palm trees, Saigon Phu Quoc is a beautiful, quiet seaside resort with plenty of sunshine. Just 10 minutes from the airport, the resort is an ideal haven for relaxing, fishing, trekking, snorkeling, and scuba diving.

62 Tran Hung Dao, Phu Quoc
07 7384 6999
sgphuquocresort@hcm.vnn.vn

La Veranda

The most distinguished of Phu Quoc

Island's hotels and guesthouses, La Veranda sports paddle fans, butter-yellow exteriors, whitewashed louvers, and tropical gardens recalling a colonial plantation. Freestanding deluxe villas are notable for their sea-facing porches, spacious bathrooms, and cathedral ceilings.

Tran Hung Dao, Duong Dong Beach, Phu Quoc
07 7398 2988
contact@laverandaresorts.com

QUYNHON

Life Wellness Resort Quy Nhon

A hide-away style spa and beach destination set in 135 hectares of private mountainous land and beach. The tranquility, splendid views, Cham-inspired architecture and surroundings are so far unmatched in Vietnam. This resort was awarded Best Wellness Resort in Vietnam in 2005, 2006 and 2007 by the Vietnam Economic Times.

Ghenh Rang, Bai Dai Beach, Quy Nhon, Binh Dinh
05 6384 0132
quynhon@life-resorts.com

Bai Tram Resort and Spa

Bai Tram is based on holistic ideals and the search for environmental balance embodying the trend towards seeing ourselves, the natural world, and the man-made environment as one.

Hoa Loi, Xuan Canh, Song Cau, Phu Yen
05 7372 2563
rm@bai-tram.com

serviced apartments

Avila Serviced Apartment

These serviced apartments combine an excellent location with luxurious amenities.

20-20bis Thi Sach, D I

35218365

Bella Serviced Apartments

Affordable, classy apartment living in a tidy alleyway residence styled with white classical flourishes, Bella offers good living and proximity to the city without succumbing to the lures of the expat bubble. Facilities include a small but well-equipped gym on the top floor and pleasant terraces on front-facing apartments.

56/4 Nguyen Thong, D3
3526 0020

Cantavil Daewon Apartment

High-luxury complex with libraries, research center, and cultural information center on site. Also features an outdoor swimming pool. One of the most luxurious towers in the central area.

600A Dien Bien Phu, Binh Thanh

Central Garden Apartment

These luxurious apartments offer stunning views of downtown Saigon along with western style accommodations and excellent location.

Clean, inner-city luxury compound close to the Ben Nghe River.

225 Ben Chuong Duong, D I
091 654 2598 / 093 347 6556

City View

Located in the prime business and residential district, only minutes away by car from downtown area, City View is the perfect place for home and/or business in Ho Chi Minh City.

12 Mac Dinh Chi, D I
38221111

Hung Vuong Plaza Apartment

Hung Vuong Plaza Apartments above the D5 Parkson are comprised of two 29 floor buildings with many luxurious apartments in bustling Cho Lon.

126 Hong Bang, D 5

Jasmine Court Serviced Apartment

A boutique property with only 12 apartments, comprised of one and two-bedroom suites of various sizes. All apartments are designed in a fresh contemporary style and finished in a pleasing neutral colour scheme.

307/29 Nguyen Van Troi, Tan Binh
38446639

Lancaster Serviced Apartments

Lancaster Serviced Apartments Le Thanh Ton enjoys a commanding position over the nightlife, culture, and business hub of Ho Chi Minh City, offering a sweeping panoramic view of the city skyline from virtually every window.

22 Bis Le Thanh Ton, D I
38246666

The Landmark

The Landmark is a prestigious development of residential accommodation and office space situated in the heart of HCMC. The 16-storey complex, located on a prime waterfront site, was one of the first of its kind in the city.

5B Ton Duc Thang, D I
38222098

Mai Ha Lan II Serviced Apartments

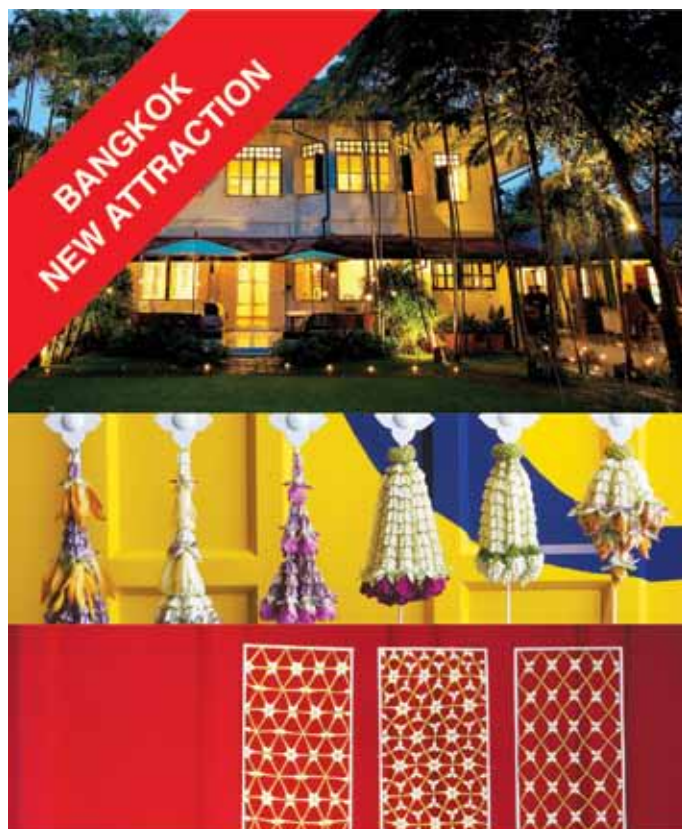
Mai Ha Lan II offers a sweeping panoramic view of the city skyline from virtually every window. It offers 33 luxurious and graciously furnished apartments with studio and two bedroom options.

8A/1C Thai Van Lung, D I
62990992 0909868052

Norfolk Mansion

A comfortable serviced luxury apartment in the city center, the Norfolk features an outdoor pool, gym & sauna, and high-class Cantonese restaurant.

17-19-21, Ly Tu Trong, D I
38226111



THE FIRST AND ONLY OF ITS KIND IN THE WORLD!

The brainchild of internationally renowned Thai floral artist Sakul Intakul, The Museum of Floral Culture is Bangkok's newest tourist attraction. Created specially for lovers of flowers, nature and those with an interest in Thai art and culture, it focuses on Thai floral culture – an important part of the Thai way of life. The museum also features unique exhibits of important floral cultures from civilizations across Asia such as India, China, Japan, Laos and Bali/Indonesia.

The Museum of Floral Culture is located in the quiet residential area of Dusit. Built in the reign of King Rama VI, it is housed in a beautifully preserved, 100-year-old teak mansion with colonial architecture, covering a total ground area of 1,800 square meters that has been transformed into an impeccably-landscaped Thai-meets-Zen-style garden.

THE MUSEUM OF FLORAL CULTURE
#TheMuseumOfFloralCulture



Hours & Admission: We are open from Tuesday to Sunday, 10.00am to 6.00pm. Admission is 150 baht for adults and 75 baht for children, inclusive of a guided tour.

315 SAMBEN ROAD SOI 28, YAEK SOI ONGKARAK 13, DUSIT, BANGKOK 10300 THAILAND
T +662 669 3633-4 F +662 669 3632

WWW.SAKULINTAKUL.COM WWW.FLORALMUSEUM.COM
facebook.com/floralmuseumthailand facebook.com/TheMuseumOfFloralCulture



THE MUSEUM OF FLORAL CULTURE

พิพิธภัณฑ์วัฒนธรรมดอกไม้

Saigon Court

Since its opening in 1998, Saigon Court has become well-known amongst the expatriate community for exceptional standards of service. This 12 storey building is among the highest in the area, offering its tenants commanding views of other parts of the city.
149 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D 3
39306466

Saigon Pearl Apartment

Ho Chi Minh City's largest five star apartment complex, Saigon Pearl comprises six 37-story residential towers located on the banks of the Saigon River in Binh Thanh District, about five minutes by taxi from downtown. Pool, gym, supermarket and dining facilities all on site.
92 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh
38219999

Saigon Skygarden

A 15-storey building located in the Saigonese Little Tokyo on Le Thanh Ton, offering 172 international-standard Serviced Apartments for lease.
20 Le Thanh Ton, D 1
38220002

Saigon View Residences

Saigon View Residences offer a range of Deluxe, Superior, and Executive room types in distinctive one and two bedroom apartments.
117, Nguyen Cuu Van, Binh Thanh
38404966

Sedona Suites

With a fantastic location in District 1 and rooms offering all of the comforts of home, this award winning serviced apartment complex caters to businessmen and families alike.
65 Le Loi, D 1
38229666

Sherwood Residence

Serviced apartments available for short or long term bookings, located in Pasteur, within walking distance of downtown Ho Chi Minh City, international schools, shopping centres, etc. Pool, sauna, gym, mini-cinema onsite.
127 Pasteur, D 3
38232288

Somerset Ho Chi Minh City

Designed with families in mind, it provides relocating executives the space and security to build a warm and comfortable home. Friendly staff are always on hand to help with local knowledge. You can join in a wide range of social, cultural and lifestyle activities, especially designed to help you integrate into the local culture.
8A Nguyen Binh Khiem, D1
3822 8899
www.somerset.com/vietnam

Somerset Chancellor Court

Each of these 172 spacious serviced apartments in District 1 is fully-furnished with an open kitchen concept, contemporary western style décor, and a large balcony.
21-23 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D 1
38229197

V-Star Apartment

Good proximity to the Saigon River and FV International Hospital, as well as international schools and the Tan Thuan export zone.
Go O Moi, Phu Thuan, D 7
37733151

travel agencies

Asiana Travel Mate

Offering tours to magnificent scenic areas in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, and India - the firm has strong purchasing power in these

regions, allowing it to offer heavily discounted rates.

92-96 Nguyen Hue, D1
3825 1358
090 780 0432

Aquarius Booking Office

With access to a global network of leading travel specialists, Aquarius is a domestic & international air ticketing agency committed to offering low-cost flights, travel insurance, and accommodation.

4th Floor, Yoco Building, 41 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3823 1905

Amazing Thailand Tourism Office

Funded by the Thai tourism board, this office is loaded up with travel resources and advice for travellers to Thailand, an invaluable source of help for travelers on their way to the land of smiles. Travel resources and advice for travelers to Thailand.

5th Floor, Empire Tower, 26-28 Ham Nghi, D1
6291 3887

Ben Thanh Tourist

One of the better-known tour agencies in the city, Ben Thanh Tourist is 20 years old and specializes in domestic and foreign travel, MICE, tourist transportation, and air ticketing.

51 Dong Khoi, D1
3914 3921
090 611 1121

Clé Voyages - Xuan Viet Travel

Xuan Viet Travel has been providing travel services and advice for nearly two decades.

Unit 1105, Harbour View Tower, 35 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 4942

Fiditour

Fiditour offers a wide range of tours to the southeast Asian region, including unique cultural trips, adventure trips, beach holidays, cruises, and culinary trips.

129 Nguyen Hue, D1
3914 1414

Hoi An Express

Preferred by many five-star hotels in Ho Chi Minh city such as Windsor Plaza Hotel, Duxton Hotel, Legend Hotel Saigon, and Equatorial Hotel, this privately owned travel agency offers a wide range of services.

94 Mac Thi Bui, D1
3939 0135
090 803 9699

Refine Asia

Representing class, creativity, and absolute professionalism in Asian corporate and luxury travel services, Refine Asia is the first-class and luxury arm of the well-known regular travel services operator Focus Asia.

138 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, Ward 6, D3
3932 0732
Saigon River Tour

Established in 1998, Saigon River Tour provides speedboat services and speedboat tours (ecotourism, Cu Chi Tunnels, Mekong Delta) from Bach Dang Pier.

10b Ton Duc Thang, D1
6290 9410
098 936 8508

Sinh Cafe

Sinh Cafe started out as a coffee shop, but later expanded to cater to the needs of tourists and travelers. This unique travel agency offers tours within Vietnam, and also to Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand.

246-248 De Tham, D1
3836 7338

Viet Journey

Viet Journey was founded by dedicated

travelers of the southeast Asian region, and they strive to provide quality, time-efficient service for travelers from around the world.

18-19-20 Ton Duc Thang, D1
3823 7152
090 809 7008

bowling

The Bowling Center

The Bowling Centre is a smaller venue with 12 lanes located in the International Club.

285B Cach Mang Thang Tam, D10
3864 3784

Bowling Pacific Garden

Small bowling alley at the Pacific Garden apartments complex, ideal for a more private game away from the crowds of teenagers.

8 Bis Ba Thang Hai, D10
3863 7944

Diamond Superbowl

An electrifying bowling experience featuring a 32 lane centrally-located bowling alley with fluorescent bowling balls and high-tech scoring.

4th Floor, 34 Le Duan, Ben Nghe, D1
3825 7778

PowerBowl 388

This is a 10 lane, 10 pin bowling alley with a games section attached, located on the 4th floor of the Parkson Saigon Plaza building.

Level 4, 35 Le Thanh Ton, D1
38295388

Powerbowl Hung Vuong

12 lane 10 pin AMF bowling alley with a games section located on the 3rd floor of the Parkson Hung Vuong Plaza building - a Bud's ice-cream station awaits indoors.

126 Hong Bang, D5

Saigon Superbowl

Formerly the coolest venue in HCMC and opened to great aplomb in the early noughties, this tired old complex in the wrong part of town still retains its international-standard huge bowling alley.

43A Truong Son, Tan Binh
3848 8888

charities

Education For Development Vietnam

An international organization that works with Vietnamese partners to improve and expand their educational services for disadvantaged children and youth.

305/30 Le Van Sy, Tan Binh
3991 6033

International Organization For Migration

The organization is concerned with the welfare and quality of life of the Vietnamese people, particularly migrant and mobile populations.

1B Pham Ngoc Thach, D1
3822 2057

Loreto Vietnam Australia

Dedicated to the reduction of poverty through beneficial, qualitative and responsive educational opportunities for underprivileged and disabled students.

17c Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3910 6364

Mekong Quilts - Ngo Duc Ke

Founded in 2001, Mekong Quilts employs women in communities northeast of Ho Chi Minh City, to create high quality, hand-crafted bed covers, accessories and gift wares. All profits from the sale of the quilts are reinvested into the community through the NGO Mekong Plus.

1st Floor, 35-37 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
2210 3110

mekong.quilts.creations.hcmddl@gmail.com

S17- Sky Garden 1, Nguyen Van Linh, D7
6271 7758

Saigon Children's Charity

Saigon Children's Charity was founded in 1992 to help disadvantaged Vietnamese children to get an education and a fairer start in life.

Their programs aim to help the most disadvantaged children of Vietnam to escape from poverty through education and training.

59 Tran Quoc Thao, D3
3930 0503

The Little Rose Shelter

The Little Rose Shelter is a refuge for young girls who have been sexually abused or trafficked for the purpose of labor or sexual exploitation. It offers psychological rehabilitation, opportunities to go to school, free healthcare and a supportive, loving environment to grow.

Hem 30, 55/2 Bis Lam Van Ben, D7
3872 0308

Unicef Vietnam

UNICEF Vietnam provides support in policy development, legal reform, and improving social services. Following reunification in 1975, the charity launched a nationwide programme to meet the basic needs of Vietnam's girls and boys.

Unit 1406, Suh Wah Tower, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 9413

Waifs Of War Foundation

The Waifs of War Foundation was established in March 2004 by a group of individuals concerned with improving the lives of the children born to Vietnamese mothers and American War servicemen fathers.

24 Le Loi, D1
3913 0439

cinemas & theatres

The Ballet and Symphony Orchestra

Ho Chi Minh City's local classical music venue with regular programs & performances.
212 Nguyen Trai, D1
3925 2265

Ben Thanh Theatre

Once the cultural center of District 1 when it was built in 1995, this is a good air-conditioned theater for Vietnamese shows & cultural activities that can accommodate over 1000 people.

6 Mac Dinh Chi, D1
3823 1652

CT Plaza Megastar

This theater complex offers close proximity to shops for shoppers and many other attractions. Large cinema complex on the 7th floor with 3D theatres and VIP room.

Level 10, 60A Truong Son, Tan Binh
6297 1981

Galaxy

Vietnamese cinema showing international and domestic films.

116 Nguyen Du, D1
3822 8533
230 Nguyen Trai, D1
3920 6688
246 Nguyen Hong Dao, Tan Binh
3849 4567

Golden Dragon Water Puppet Theater

Vietnamese water puppet show with live Vietnamese traditional music, this is an original performing art preserved and handed down for nearly a thousand years. Daytime performances by special arrangement.

55B Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3840 4027
098 937 9873 (Mr. Lam)

Ho Chi Minh Conservatory Of Music

One of three conservatories in Vietnam, offering world class musical education and performances.

Concerts at the local Ho Chi Minh City Music School.

112 Nguyen Du, D1
3822 5841

Hung Vuong Megastar

This theater complex offers close proximity to shops for shoppers and many other attractions. Large cinema complex in the CT Plaza building with 3D theatres and VIP room.

126 Hong Bang, D5
3222 0388

IDECAF Drama Theatre

IDECAF is a theater holding French cultural exchanges as well as offering courses in French.

31 Thai Van Lung, D1
38295451

Le Thanh Theatre

Experimental art space for dance and exhibitions, with regular performances of leading-edge artistic theatre.

25 Phan Phu Tien, D5
2242 4622
090 580 4820

Lotte Cinema Diamond

Fine cinema complex in one of the most iconic department store buildings in town. Ride up the elevator to the top floor to catch a flick.

13th Floor, 34 Le Duan, D1
3822 7897

Lotte Cinema Nam Saigon

The district 7 branch of Lotte cinemas features the Charlotte VIP lounge with 6 modern cinema rooms and a luxury coffee shop.

Level 3, 469 Nguyen Huu Tho, Tan Hung, District 7
3775 256

Saigon Opera House

No mere historical museum piece, the Municipal Theater is a thriving performance centre with regular musical and cultural shows - predominantly of the classical, high-brow, and top-dollar variety.

7 Lam Son Square, D1
3825 1563
098 987 4517

The Soul of Vietnam

The Soul of Vietnam showcases traditional Vietnamese music shows with voice and traditional instruments. Be sure to check out the three-part Legend of the Trung Sisters' with accompaniment of stone musical instruments, gongs and two lifelike elephants.

7 Lam Son Square, D1
2229 9414

gyms

California WOW

The first and largest international fitness company to open in Vietnam. Provides world class fitness services and products in a state-of-the art 5-star fitness and entertainment facility.

126 Hong Bang, D5
3222 0299
28-30-32 Le Lai, D1
6291 5999
5 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4
3826 0999

Crescent Wellness Group

Directly targeting foreign customers, especially Phu My Hung residents, CWG is equipped with the latest modern facilities and fitness equipment, selectorized strength training stations, plate-loaded machines and free weights.

3rd Floor, 103 Ton Dat Tien, D7

5412 1277

Get Fit Gym

Located on the 3rd floor in the H3 Building, this international-standard, gym offers a steam bath and sauna, yoga, kickboxing, rumba, salsa, merengue, cumbia and reggaeton classes.

384 Hoang Dieu, D4
6261 6169

K1 Fitness & Fight Factory

A well-known brand name founded by a group of professional kickboxers and now present in France and Southeast Asia, including Montpellier and Phnom Penh as well as here in Saigon.

14 Duong 38, Nguyen Thi Thap, D7
091 833 7111

Nutrifort Fitness

Aiming to be the voice of health and fitness in Vietnam, Nutrifort provides clientele with proper tools and teaching methods to keep the mind and body fit and healthy. Clients also learn about nutrition to nourish and maintain their health.

281 Chu Manh Trinh, D1
3825 8560

Rex Health Club

This spa was designed for both men & women, integrating traditional Vietnamese, Indian, and Chinese herbal remedies and techniques. Situated on the rooftop of the Rex Hotel, it features two outdoor swimming areas.

141 Nguyen Hue, D1
3825 1814

Saigon River Club

Located in Ruby Tower at the Saigon Pearl, Saigon River Club is equipped with the very latest in fitness technology. It has a fully-equipped sauna and steam room and a large outdoor pool with jacuzzi.

Ruby Tower, 92 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh
3514 9009

Star Fitness Bitexco

Located in The Manor Tower, this gym is not only a fitness center it includes other specialized classes such as yoga, belly dancing, kick boxing, zumba, body toning, and so on.

Level 1, 91 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh
3514 0255

museums

Fine Arts Museum Ho Chi Minh City

With a collection housing more than 21,000 pieces in various displays, the Fine Arts Museum Ho Chi Minh City highlights traditional and modern works of HCMC artists as well as other artists from the south of Vietnam.

97A Pho Duc Chinh, D1
3821 3508

Geological Museum

A fittingly dull-looking building at the corner of Nguyen Binh Khiem and Nguyen Huu Canh, the museum has over 20,000 samples of interesting rocks.

2 Nguyen Binh Khiem, D1
3829 8146

Ho Chi Minh Campaign Museum

Small military museum dedicated to the Ho Chi Minh Campaign that led to communist victory over southern Vietnam.

2 Le Duan, D1
3822 9387

Ho Chi Minh City Museum

An old French Colonial palace, the museum has a wide and varied collection and some interesting modern history of its own.

65 Ly Tu Trong, D1
3829 8250

Ho Chi Minh Museum

Three stories dedicated to Ho Chi Minh, the museum features an assortment of artifacts from his personal life, including a radio, sandals and clothes. After exploring the more than 3,000 Ho Chi Minh portraits, take a walk in the lovely gardens around the old building nicknamed the Dragon House' for its ornate roof and hybrid Franco-Chinese architecture.

1 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4
3940 2060

Museum of Southern Vietnamese Women

The Museum of Southern Vietnamese Women has become a place of interest for both locals and tourists alike. The museum was set up in order to educate future generations of women about patriotism and the national traditions of Vietnamese women.

202 Vo Thi Sau, D3
3932 7130

Reunification Palace

Formerly known as the Independence Palace, the Reunification Palace marked the end of the Vietnam War, when a North Vietnamese Army tank crashed through its main gates. Roped-off showrooms, exactly as they were in 1975, include the presidential office, bedroom, and reception.

135 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D1
0808 5008

Vietnam History Museum

This long-running historical museum offers a chronological display of many items and artefacts, and has been showered with multiple awards by the local administration.

2 Nguyen Binh Khiem, D1
3829 8146

Vietnamese Traditional Medicine Museum

The Museum of Traditional Vietnamese Medicine contains nearly 3,000 items informing guests about the subject dating all the way back to the Stone Age.

41 Hoang Du Khuong, D10
3862 7812

War Remnants Museum

Attracting more than 500,000 visitors a year, the War Remnants Museum shows the grim reality of war, focusing mainly on the American phase of the Vietnam War. The multi-building museum includes a courtyard with military equipment including a "Huey" helicopter, an M48 Patton tank and an F-5A fighter.

28 Vo Van Tan, D3
3930 6325

parks

Cong Vien Van Hoa Park

This former French recreational space has been converted into one of the city's favorite sports parks.

115 Nguyen Du, D1

Dam Sen Park

This beautiful park was constructed on reclaimed marshland and is widely considered to be Vietnam's most exciting cultural theme park.

3 Hoa Binh, D11
3963 3073

Ky Ho Park

Large tourist area in the inner suburbs with many lakeside entertainment activities.

12 Ba Thang Hai, D10

Le Thi Rieng Park

A large park in D10, Le Thi Rieng park is a well-known spot for casual exercise, a friendly game of badminton and early morning birdwatching.

875 Cach Mang Thang Tam, D10

3862 6655

Phu Lam Park

Gentle park on a small lake amidst busy back streets of outer Cholon, popular with locals for fishing and exercise.

121 Kinh Duong Vuong, D6
3751 3313

September 23 Park

One of the largest parks in the city center. It's a great place to exercise, see free music performances, attend public events, and enjoy food from street vendors.

Pham Ngu Lao, Pham Ngu Lao, District 1

Suoi Tien Theme Park

Enormous amusement park on the outskirts of the city with multiple themed attractions demonstrating Vietnamese culture.

Xa Lo Ha Noi, D9
3896 0260

Van Thanh Park

This expansive park located on the banks of the Thi Nghe River offers myriad culinary options in addition to stunning views and natural atmosphere.

48/10 Dien Bien Phu, Binh Thanh

Zoo and Botanical Gardens

One of the world's oldest zoos, with a modest collection of animals and a botanical garden, with many rare orchids, ornamental plants, and over a hundred species of mammals, reptiles and birds.

28 Nguyen Binh Khiem, D1
3822 8309

places of worship

Ba Chuong Church of St Dominic

Ba Chuong Church was redesigned in 2003, and now this visually stunning house of worship features a blend of traditional oriental and western architecture.

190 Le Van Sy, Phu Nhuan
3844 8206

Bac Ha Church

Built in 2008. The name Bac Ha is the combination between the two names of their original dioceses, Bac Ninh and Ha Noi. The church has two bell towers at 42m high, and there's a room dedicated to looking after kids to let their parents join the mass.

419 Ly Thai To, D10
3839 1032

Central Mosque

Built by South Indian Muslims in 1935 on the site of an earlier mosque, this was originally constructed for worshippers from southern India then-resident in Saigon. Now Muslims from all over the world come here to worship.

66 Dong Du, D1
3824 2903

Cha Tam Church

Cha Tam Church is an old catholic church built in 1900. The church was named for priest Cha Tam in honor of his great sermons and contributions to the community.

25 Hoc Lac, D5
3829 8914

Cho Quan Church

An old church built on the foundations of earlier churches that have stood here for centuries, Cho Quan Church was constructed in 1887 in the Gothic tradition, with large stone pillars and a red tiled roof. The massive bell tower consists of three floors and provides stunning views.

120 Tran Binh Trong, D5

Cholon Mosque

Built by Muslims from South India in 1932, the Cholon Mosque Serves Cholon's Muslim community, including

Malaysian, Indonesian as well as South Asian worshipers.

641 Nguyen Trai, D5
3855 5350

Dieu Phap

Almost half a century after Dieu Phap pagoda was founded, it has continued to provide a home and food for the poor, helpless, and homeless elderly people.

188 No Trang Long, Binh Thanh
3553 3267

Giac Lam Pagoda

Probably Ho Chi Minh City's oldest pagoda, Giac Lam features a rare bodhi tree and seven-storied stupa containing Buddhist relics. The 32 metre-high stupa, facing East, is one of the most distinguished towers of the city.

11, Lac Long Quan, Tan Binh

Hoa Khanh Temple

A tall, colorful, and oddly out-of-place temple, sticking up prominently from the homes and businesses that surround it.

215 Phan Van Tri, Binh Thanh
3843 1699

www.chuahoaokhanh.com

Hung Phuoc Pagoda

Quiet and unassuming active Buddhist pagoda situated behind the Saigon Railway Station.

540/23 Cach Mang Thang Tam, D3

3993 4113

095 806 3311

Huyen Sy Church

One of Saigon's oldest churches convenient to the backpacker district, and built by the grandfather-in-law of the last king of Vietnam.

1 Ton That Tung, DI
3882 3858

Jade Emperor Pagoda

An ancient temple built by the city's Cantonese Chinese community, the interiors are filled with paintings portraying Taoist and Buddhist mythical stories and sculpture depicting the ten levels of hell and the apocalypse from Chinese mythology.

73 Mai Thi Luu, DI

Jamiul Islamiyah Mosque

Highly stylistic Mosque near the central police station, servicing a sizeable local Muslim community, it is also known as the Nancy Mosque.

459B Tran Hung Dao, DI

3920 3325

Loc Uyen Meditation Chamber

In stark contrast with the pagodas and temples that dot the city landscape, Loc Uyen Meditation Chamber is a place dedicated to seeking inner peace and the study of Buddhism. A colorful D6 pagoda with resident monks, daily devotional instruction, and a free traditional medical healer on Thursdays and Sundays from 8-11am.

121 Kinh Duong Vuong, D6

3875 1155

093 868 0935

Marlamman Temple

This small Hindu temple is frequented by both Saigon's tiny Hindu population along with residential Vietnamese. The temple was built in the late 19th century by traders from Tamil Nadu and is dedicated to the Hindu Goddess Mariamman.

45 Truong Dinh, DI

Nga Sau Church / Saint Jeanne d'Arc Church

Dedicated to St. Joan of Arc, this salmon-pink church is built on the site of a former Chinese cemetery.

116B Hung Vuong, D5

3855 7616

090 835 6266

Quan Am Pagoda

An impressive pagoda dedicated to the popular Goddess of Mercy, with a beautiful interior and large fish and turtle pond.

12 Lao Tu, D5

Quoc Tu Pagoda

Prominent seven storied pagoda with colorful statuary in D10, the main complex of the pagoda spans seven stories with the first two open to the public.

Ba Thang Hai, D10

3865 2700

Saigon Notre-Dame Basilica

Ho Chi Minh City's foremost tourist attraction, this beautiful cathedral dates from the 1860s and is built with bricks from Marseille. In front of the cathedral stands a Virgin Mary statue, which is said to have been shed tears in 2005, causing thousands of people to stop around the Basilica.

1 Cong Xa Paris, DI

3824 2903

St Joseph Seminary

This stunning complex of old colonial-period buildings a few blocks to the east of Notre Dame Cathedral is looking its age after significant tropical weathering, but it's slowly being restored and has been training new seminarians since 1986.

6bis Ton Duc Thang, DI

Subramaniam Swami Temple

One among the city's only two South Indian Hindu temples, it was the first Hindu temple ever built in Ho Chi Minh City and the largest. Located a mere five minutes' walk from Ben Thanh Market.

98 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, DI

Tan Dinh Church

Built by French colonists in the late 19th century, Tan Dinh Church is renowned for its distinctive pink facade and decorative designs. A popular photography subject for visitors to Ho Chi Minh City regardless of their religion.

289 Hai Ba Trung, D3

3829 0093

Thien Hau Pagoda

One of Cholon's most popular pagodas, this temple was originally built as an expression of gratitude by 19th century Chinese immigrants for Thien Hau's protection during their initial trip to Saigon by sea. Its many hanging incense coils make for superb photographs.

710 Nguyen Trai, D5

Tran Hung Dao Temple

One among a series of temples and pagodas dedicated to the Vietnamese folk hero Tran Hung Dao, who freed ancient Vietnamese people from the Mongolians in the 13th century.

36 Vo Thi Sau, DI

Vinh Nghiem Pagoda

Sitting next to the canal at the end of Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, this structure draws its inspiration from traditional Vietnamese culture and a touch of the Japanese architectural style. The largest and most impressive Mahayana Buddhist pagoda in the city.

339 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D3

3843 9901

Xa Loi Pagoda

The largest pagoda in Ho Chi Minh City and known for a brutal 1963 raid, Xa Loi was built in 1956 following the drawings of the architects Nguyen Van Duong and Do Ba Vinh for worshipping Buddhist relics.

89 Ba Huyen Thanh Quan, D3

3930 0679

social clubs

Brogolf Bar Wars

Group of barflies who meet regularly for golf, open to new members. First Saturday of each month, breakfast, brunch, and 18 holes with a caddy.

46-48 Ton That Thiep, DI

090 927 3997

Dat Nam Friendly Club

While it may ring of a bingo association, this is a fairly well-respected venue for entertainment and cultural exchange amongst foreigners and entrepreneurs - a very casual networking opportunity.

Basement Level, 116 Nguyen Du, DI

5404 3618

Go Go Go Club

Japanese Go chess club.

135/17/43 Nguyen Huu Canh, Ward 22, Binh Thanh

3512 7630

International Ladies of Vietnam

A women's group that meets Thursday mornings for coffee from 10am- noon at Sherwood Residences- 1st floor (127 Pasteur, D3) Cost for coffee and snacks is VND130,000. Membership is VND700,000 per year. Open to all ladies

Latin Street Dance

Geisha's was funky enough without the addition of this new meet-up for Latin fans yearning for something a little grittier than salsa.

Geisha Tea House, 85 Pasteur, DI

Overland Club

Overland Club is a 100 percent foreign-owned Japanese company that organizes cultural classes including pottery (from basic to intermediate level, as well as painting unglazed pottery) and cooking classes (Japanese and Vietnamese). The Overland Club also hosts various events. Past events include noodle making, soap carving, and kids' cooking.

36bis Huynh Khuong Ninh, DI

3820 9734

Saigon Swing Cats

Saigon Swing Cats organizes dance classes, workshops and events at various venues around HCMC including restaurants, lounges and dance studios. Dance styles include the Lindy, Shim Sham and Tranky Doo.

Petrohouse Tower- caffe molinari,

5 Le Duan, DI

Vietnam Cookery Centre

A complete cookery center offering hands-on classes. This culinary compound introduces visitors to Vietnamese cuisine.

263/8 Ung Van Khiem, Binh Thanh

3512 2764

sports

Green Bamboo Club

Pleasant tennis club with several courts just a short hop over the bridge from District 1 into Binh Thanh.

50/3 Xo Viet Nghe Tinh, Binh Thanh

3898 6504

Lan Anh International Tennis Court

Popular international sports club facility with advanced sporting equipment, courts, gym, and restaurant. This sports club also hosts tennis tournaments and other events.

291 Cach Mang Thang Tam, D10

3862 7144

Kimdo Recreation Centre

Situated in downtown Saigon, Kim Do Recreational Centre provides a wide variety of services: restaurant, karaoke, live music cafe, bar, dancing, massage,

steam bath and hairdressing.

129A Nguyen Hue, DI

3822 5914

swimming pools

Great World Pool

Popular public pool known for its high standard of cleanliness, this indoor pool is shallow at both ends and deep in the middle to ensure safety for non-swimmers.

600 Nguyen Pham Tuan, D6

3853 7867

Ky Dong Swimming Pool

Great D3 outdoor family pool, ideal for the kids.

40 Ky Dong, D3

2241 5322

Lam Son Swimming Club

Olympic-sized swimming pool with designated lanes (one exclusively for women) and a reputation for cleanliness.

242 Tran Binh Trong, D5

3835 8028

Lan Anh Swimming Club Pool

The popular Lan Anh club is a well-situated sports area with a clean, quiet pool and jacuzzi. A bar serves drinks and towels by the water. There are various areas with different depths from 1.4m to 2m, suitable for adults. Swimming lessons are available at the club.

291 Cach Mang Thang Tam, D3

3932 5508

Van Thanh Pool

A very casual swimming venue favored by younger people and recreational swimmers.

48/10 Dien Bien Phu, Binh Thanh

2219 5487

Yet Kieu Swimming Pool

A long-standing swimming club that's become the standard for competition, clean water, and inexpensive prices, Yet Kieu is a well-managed complex of pools for the family - and it also has its own gym.

1 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, DI

0839101542

classes

Cetana PSB Intellis International College

PSB College is the first and only Singapore licensed college in Vietnam. Located right in prestigious District 1, their city campus provides students easier accessibility in gaining knowledge and skills beyond the usual classroom study. PSB College offers a suite of internationally-recognized diploma programs from business, marketing, hospitality to finance.

144-146-148 Le Lai, DI

3926 2233

www.psbcollege.edu.vn

Saigon Cooking Class

Discover the mysteries of Vietnamese cuisine along with an English speaking Vietnamese chef. Classes can include a market tour to buy the day's ingredients followed by a hands-on cooking class, organized twice a day from Tuesday till Sunday (US\$39.50 to 45.50). Team building programs also available.

74 Hai Ba Trung, DI

3825 8485

VLS Vietnamese Language School

Imparting genuine fluency in Vietnamese since 1994, VLS is one of the city's best-organised and most professional training centers devoted to the Vietnamese language, with classes for all levels.

4th floor, CMARD2 Building, 45 Dinh Tien

Hoang, DI

3910 0168

Fashion

IMAGES BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY

Maiko-No-Kimono



May's fashion coverage is all about subtlety, strength and grace, whether in your fashion choices or actions. With this in mind, who better to seek inspiration from than the geisha, as Japanese influence has been a favorite at fashion weeks this spring. It is still said that geisha inhabit a separate reality called Karyukai - "the flower and willow world." This month, we explore bold prints, fabric layering, strong lines as well as delicate feminine fabrics for contrast.

Luckily for us, there was more than enough to choose from, even some new fashion finds like impressive accessories by Harmony Necklaces, a sculpted headpiece from the CalmRebel collection by up-and-comer Kan Kanemura and a beautiful new line of shoes by Fashion4Freedom which is also the focus of our column this month.

HAIR AND MAKEUP: KENNY LIEU

MODEL: THUY LINH/PL MODEL

STYLIST: JAMES ALLEN

ASSISTANT STYLIST: DANNY ST. LOUIS

LOCATION: M.O.F SAIGON PEARL

Dress | Vu by Truong Anh Vu
VND2,555,000

Bangle | Bonjour
VND460,000

"Tokyo 22" Necklace | Harmony Necklaces
VND2,100,000

Earring | D.U.Y Boutique
VND190,000

Top | Dieu Anh
VND799,000

Pants | Dieu Anh
VND939,000

Tie | ZEUS by Dieu Anh
VND399,000

Overcoat | Moonface by
Valentine Vu
VND3,486,000

Shoes | Saigon Socialite by
Fashion4Freedom
VND9,380,000

Earrings | D.U.Y Boutique
VND190,000





Coat | Moonface by
Valentine Vu
VND3,675,000

Necklace | The Line by
Truong Anh Vu
VND550,000

Earrings | Bonjour
VND250,000



Crop Top | **Bonjour**
VND550,000

Maxi Skirt | **Dieu Anh**
VND1,299,000


Coat | **Moonface** by
Valentine Vu
VND3,780,000

"Ulan Bator" Necklace |
Harmony Necklaces
VND6,000,000

Bangle | **Bonjour**
VND170,000

Headpiece | **CalmRebel** by
Kan Kanemura
by appointment

Shoes | **Saigon Socialite** by
Fashion4Freedom
VND9,380,000



Dress | LNNK
VND8,000,000

Earrings | The Line by
Truong Anh Vu
VND280,000

Bangles set | Bonjour
enquire in store

Bonjour | 446 Vo Van Tan, D3

CalmRebel by Kan Kanemura |
by appointment
nguyen.kan@gmail.com

Dieu Anh | Designer Forum
165-167 Le Thanh Ton, D1

D.U.Y Boutique
70 Le Thi Rieng, Ben Thanh, D1

LNNK | Vietnam Designer's
House
161A Hai Ba Trung, D3

Harmony Necklaces | Gaya
1 Nguyen Van Trang, D1

Concept Coiffure
48 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2

Moonface by Valentin Vu | by
appointment
vaunhhonguyen@gmail.com

Saigon Socialite by
Fashion4Freedom
[www.etsy.com/shop/
Fashion4Freedom](http://www.etsy.com/shop/Fashion4Freedom)

The Line/Vu by Truong Anh Vu
Crescent Mall, Ton Dat Tien, D7

Asian Attitude

May's essentials are big, bold, romantic and at times even a little bit furry. This issue's distinctly Asian feel runs through this collection and, with an interesting mix of materials and textures, is certain to lift your outfit out of the doldrums, turning a few heads in the process!



Necklace | **The Line** by **Truong Anh Vu**
VND550,000



Clutch | **Bonjour**
VND1 million



"Hong Kong 57" Necklace | **Harmony Necklaces**
VND4 million



"Shanghai 38" Necklace | **Harmony Necklaces**
VND2 million



"Hong Kong 48" Necklace | **Harmony Necklaces**
VND1,600,000



"Shanghai 33" Necklace | **Harmony Necklaces**
VND3,500,500



Fur necklace | **Bonjour**
VND220,000



Necklace | **D.U.Y Boutique**
VND450,000



Snake Pattern Bangle | **Bonjour**
VND170,000

Earrings | **D.U.Y Boutique**
VND190,000

WHERE TO BUY

Bonjour | 446 Vo Van Tan, D3

D.U.Y Boutique | 70 Le Thi Rieng, Ben Thanh, D1

Harmony Necklaces | Gaya | 1 Nguyen Van Trang, D1

Concept Coiffure | 48 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2

The Line by Truong Anh Vu | Crescent Mall, Ton Dat Tien, D7

Fair Footwear

We speak with Saigon Socialite founder LanVy Nguyen, who offers an insight into Vietnam's lost craft of imperial and pagoda wood art and the difficulties of producing an ethical, designer brand



IMAGE BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY

Living in Saigon since 2009, James Allen has become steadily obsessed with the Vietnamese fashion industry, eager to promote homegrown talent through his work as a stylist.

01 ITEM
OF THE MONTH



THERE IS AN endless array of homegrown fashion pieces in this city, from accessories to ready-to-wear to show stopping couture. But when it comes to people's feet? *Nada*. A quick look beyond the store facades and you'd be hard pressed to find yourself some fashion forward shoes designed and made here in Vietnam.

Enter the dragon. Or to be precise, a dragon carved into the platform of your Saigon Socialite wedges. They're showstoppers, made from lychee and jackfruit trees and responsibly-sourced leather. Saigon Socialite is, as they put it, "a hybrid social enterprise created to rectify an industry's transgression with unethical and irresponsible garment

production in Vietnam".

Why footwear?

Among our network of rural entrepreneurs exists a carpentry village whose craftsmen have spent generations producing imperial and pagoda wood art throughout palaces in Vietnam. By marrying the artistic skills of a seventh-generation carpentry village with a cobbler village and a lacquer artist co-op, we are producing high-fashion shoes that will more than triple the craftsmen's earnings.

What kind of support do you need for such a venture?

With respect to shoes, labor is not easily found. Sole masters are even rarer to find.

Schools do not offer technical teaching in shoe design and shoe designs require a strong technical understanding of fit, engineering (height to comfort), and material quality. Shoes are produced at large factories or at home workshops. Commitment for development [of shoe design and production] requires large amounts of funding.

It takes 18 days to produce a pair of your shoes; couldn't you cut costs by using a factory?

If one can find a factory willing to work with concepts or new designs, then maybe, but factories in Vietnam are either unwilling or unable to originate from conceptual drawings and often require a pre-made sample to copy. Despite this our 'walkable art' does not come from a factory because we are not merely a fashion house. It takes 18 days to produce one pair of dragons, yes, and in that time-frame, our shoes go through multiple artisans' hands in various areas of Hue. We hope to preserve the heritage of Vietnamese craft and elevate it to the level of quality that the luxury world can respect and desire.

In such a difficult business, how has Saigon Socialite set itself apart?

We are able to obtain high commitment, respect, and loyalty from our artisans because we pay them the same commitment. This is especially shown with our investment in our artisans' product development and our partner's investments for equipment needs. I don't know of any other design house that purposely invests as much of their resources into its suppliers.

When you compare how easy it is for a designer to make a dress versus shoes, it's no wonder there is a void in the market of Vietnamese shoe designers.

Visit www.fashion4freedom.com. A pair of carved wedges, pictured, costs around VND9,890,000 ■

>>The List Fashion



Atexpats is Ho Chi Minh City's first truly comprehensive insider's guide for foreign residents - website launching 2013

eyewear

Dilusso

Selling many famous eyewear brands under Italian manufacturers such as Dolce & Gabbana, RayBan, Versace and Bvlgari. Provides high-quality products at an affordable price.

29A Dong Khoi, DI
3824 6469
090 921 0192

Eyewear Hut

Eyewear Hut offers prescription glasses, contact lenses, ophthalmic lenses and other devices. They also stock popular brands such as Luxottica, DeRigo, Charmant, Marcolin, Dolce & Gabbana, D & G, Tom Ford, Salvatore Ferragamo and more. Also caters to kids.

135 Nguyen Hue, DI
3821 1695

Eyewear Plaza

The largest shopping center for eyewear in Ho Chi Minh City with more than 1,000 products including sunglasses and prescription glasses.

33 Nguyen Du, DI
3829 5051

Oakley

Decades of Oakley innovation have led to a full array of market-leading products including performance apparel and accessories, prescription eyewear, footwear, watches and electronics. The company continues to build on its heritage of authenticity by reinventing products from scratch to achieve superior quality and genuine innovation that delivers the unexpected.

28 Ton That Thiep, DI
3821 5712

Sunwear Boutique

With many locations around the city, this luxury eyewear store supplies many designer brands, including Burberry, Vogue, Blue Bay, and many others.

89-91 Nguyen Du, DI
3824 4397

ladieswear

Axara Paris - Saigon Center

Axara may have seduced the whole world, but its 2010 launch in Vietnam at the Vincom Centre is still making headway with modern young Vietnamese women entranced by its romantic, glamorous designs.

65 Le Loi, DI
3914 7655

Banana Shop

Banana Shop provides everything a girl needs to be noticed in Ho Chi Minh City. Whether it be undergarments, shoes, bags, or jewelry, Banana Shop delivers with unique products from Hong Kong and the United States.

128 Ly Tu Trong, DI
3829 0061

Bebe

The shop sells its brand of women's clothing and apparel, dresses, jumpsuits, shoes and bags.

1st floor, Saigon center, 65 Le Loi, DI
3914 4011

Cao Vinh Fashion

Specializes in formal Western-style shirts, Cao Vinh is distinctive if for

nothing else than its simple, intriguing website allowing customers to specify design elements.

69 Pasteur, DI
3824 5645
090 817 9129

Cashew

Fashion shop chain with 4 boutiques in HCMC. Specializes in women clothes and accessories. Designed by their own designers. Familiar brand in HCMC catwalk and Vietnam fashion industry.

38 Ly Tu Trong, DI
6683 9669

Diva Silk Boutique

Diva is all about silk, oriental glamour, luxury, and a feminine charm to match. The products in this little shop comprise both locally-woven first-grade silk garments and those imported from Thailand.

146 Dong Khoi, DI
3822 7153

Esprit

Hong Kong-based lifestyle apparel brand offering affordable casual streetwear from a two-story shop in the heart of downtown HCMC.

58 Dong Khoi, DI
3827 6085

Eva Gopa

Office fashion, street-style fashion, and evening dresses for women.

11E Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, DI
3910 3877

Fit

Caters to women in their 20s.

44 Luu Van Lang, DI

Gaya

A high-end shop that sells cocktail and party dresses by French-Cambodian designer Romyda Keth. Gaya has specializes in home interior products.

1 Nguyen Van Trang, DI
3925 1495

Kelly Bui

Launched in April 2010, the shop sells the most recent collections by the brand. The collections shown on the website are the same as those in-store.

BI-24, Vincom Center, 70-72 Le Thanh Ton, DI
3936 9386

Khai Silk

Khai Silk is a favorite among local celebrities for its high quality tailoring, fabrics and service.

81 Dong Khoi, DI
3822 2856

Kiwi Fashion

Kiwi offers contemporary designs at an affordable price. It was founded by former Vietnamese model Kim Hong Phung and houses the latest fashion trends exclusively designed by Josephine Geralda, one of the leading designers in London.

74C-74/1 Hai Ba Trung, DI
3824 8214
3822 1191

La Bella

A Vietnamese fashion shop that carries dresses, skirts, tops and a large selection of bags and purses.

58-87 Pasteur, DI
3823 0172
9am - 9pm

Lyn Around

This is the Saigon branch of the international high-class fashion label Lyn Around. It is famous for its girly girl and street style.

1st Floor, Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, DI
3821 6575

L'Usine

The central retail space offers famous fashion brands from around the world with full rotating stock.

First Floor, 151 Dong Khoi, DI
6674 3565

Maison de Bunga

Maison de Bunga is a specialty women's clothing store specializing in designers with floral motifs, hats, bags, and other accessories.

81 Pasteur, DI
3943 0990

Mango

Mango is a Spanish fashion design company with over 2,000 stores around the world. Ho Chi Minh City is home to several of its branches. Mango sells fashion clothing for women including dresses, skirts, tops and accessories.

Unit 2F-11, 2nd floor, Icon 68, 2 Hai Trieu, DI
6266 2111
1st Floor, 65 Le Loi, DI
3914 7464

Misa Collection

Well-known for tailoring bespoke ao dais.

67 Mac Thi Buoi, DI
3829 4007
098 330 0469

Ngan Private Collection

A collection of multi-brand fashion labels created by one of Vietnam's highly recognized fashion designers. Dedicated personal styling consultant available for those in need of their own stylist.

23 Ly Tu Trong, DI
6290 9391

Phuong My

A ready-to-wear fashion designer currently working from Ho Chi Minh City, producing feminine pieces using high quality fabric such as silk organza and lace using expert tailoring and construction which has earned her frequent coverage in the country's top fashion magazines.

81 Le Thanh Ton, DI
09 7271 7788

Shin

Vintage style ladies fashion, clothes and accessories by local designers.

122 Ly Tu Trong, DI
090 935 2369

Sifa Fashion

Known for selling office wear for women.

192 Ly Tu Trong, DI
3825 0618

Song - Valerie Gregori McKenzle

French bohemian chic designs that caters to sophisticated women.

75 Pasteur, DI
3824 6986

Sophilita

A simple Italian fashion brand with several branches in Vietnam, Sophilita mainly sells office, street, and casual,

womenswear.

15C Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, DI
6275 9019

Suite Blanco

Suite Blanco is a Spanish company specialized in the design, production, distribution and sale of all types of accessories and clothing for the modern woman and man looking for the latest trends at affordable prices. The chain now has 240 shops spread in 15 different countries including Vietnam.

Vincom Center A, 171 Dong Khoi, DI

Thuy Design House

A popular Vietnamese ready-to-wear designer creating seasonal collections using high quality materials with a minimalist design aesthetic. Thuy's friendly boutique carries a range of shapes and silhouettes that are often worn by the city's fashion conscious.

151/6 Dong Khoi, DI
www.facebook.com/thuydesignhouse

Umbrella

This fashion label caters to a higher end market with tailored bags to accessories.

35 Ly Tu Trong, DI
6276 2730
www.umbrella-fashion.com

Valenciani

Highly respected Vietnamese designer whose collections are featured in ELLE Vietnam and Vogue Vietnam.

1F/12 Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, DI
3821 2788
090 785 5788

menswear

Anna Vo Fashion Boutique

A popular designer currently in Saigon, Anna Vo produces seasonal collections inspired by her time in Europe and Vietnam as well as aiming to be both beautiful and functional. The boutique also carries pieces from her mother Thuy Nga's collections as well as high quality imported accessories. Each collection includes both menswear and womenswear.

23 Dong Khoi, DI
6675 4013

An Phuoc

An Phuoc Garment Manufacturing was established in 1992 with 50 workers and 40 sewing machines, specializing in manufacturing for exporting enterprises. Now it has transformed itself into a garment export company featuring handmade clothing and shoes.

182 Hai Ba Trung, DI

Bonjour

A fashion boutique at the Vo Van Tan/ Cao Thang T-intersection providing an exhaustive range of one-off fashion pieces and accessories with both a modern and vintage feel. Prices are affordable for both men and women and come in a range of sizes to suit most customers.

446 Vo Van Tan, D3

Maschio Shop

Colorful retro men's fashions, one of the quirkiest fine-quality local fashion stores in the central area.

168 Ly Tu Trong, DI
3829 2975

Mizada

Since its inception in 2004, Mizada has become one of the leading luxury fashion brands in Vietnam. Mizada caters to both women and women with products such as T-shirts, jeans, coats, scarves, and much more.

105 Le Thanh Ton, DI
6673 4199

San Sciario Manhattan

Fashionable, smart menswear from the Viet Tien Garment Company, specializing in garment manufacture and trade equipment since the mid 70's.

1st Floor Saigon Tax Trade Center, 135
Nguyen Hue, DI
3864 0800
090 316 6364

Santo Nero

Centrally-located purveyors of international Santo Nero brand "Italian gents wear".

23 Ly Tu Trong, DI

Veston Huy Hoang

Men's tailored fashions, specialising in suits. Expect to Pay: \$200 and upward for a suit, fabric included. Obviously, the better the quality of fabric, the higher the price. 70% of customers are foreigners.

65 Pasteur, DI
3822 4609
090 865 4988

shoes & accessories

Accessorize

Accessorize is devoted to bringing customers eclectic products with its own in-house design team. Accessorize is focused on sourcing globally in an effort to find well priced and good quality collections of fashion accessories following seasonal themes.

Vincom Center B, 70-72 Le Thanh Ton, DI

Adidas Performance Store

Sells running shoes and sportswear by the famous German brand.

2nd Floor Bitexco Tower, 135 Nguyen
Hue, DI
3821 2894
66 Le Loi, DI
3824 1455

Asian Fish

Serves made-to-order classic souvenirs, original ao dai designs, and is highly popular with Japanese customers. Also sells bags, sunglasses and clothing.

39/9 Mac Thi Buoi, DI
3822 1839

Avocado

Airy and spacious shop for handbags and accessories.

117 Nguyen Thai Hoc, DI
0123 999 9099

Bam Skate Shop - VVT

Bam Skate Shop stocks a wide range of international brands for those in search of skating equipment and apparel.

228 Vo Van Tan, D3
090 878 9820

Cara Diamond & Jewelry Vincom

One of the better-appointed jewelry counters at Vincom B, Cara sells boldly-designed pieces at reasonable rates.

Shop B28, First Floor, 72 Le Thanh Ton, DI

Charles & Keith

Singapore-based fashion retailer specialising in shoes, handbags and accessories at a mid range price point.

17-18 Nguyen Trai, DI

Compa Jewelry store

Compa Jewelry Store specializes in diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and emeralds from the finest quality of raw materials that meet international standards. Compa Jewelry is also

a manufacturer and importer of gemstones and fashion jewelry.

135 Nguyen Hue, DI
3915 2151

Doc Martens

Small central-city outlet of the popular international Doc Marten brand with an extensive stock of the latest styles.

39 Le Loi, DI
3821 4931

Hong Anh Collections - LTT

Using fabrics such as silk and taffeta, the brand caters to a younger crowd. Stocks clothing, handbags, jewelry and neckties.

75 Ly Tu Trong, DI
3824 3542

Ice Accessories

ICE and ICE Accessories are the newest brands from Duy Anh Trading Co., Ltd. under the creative direction of Adrian Anh Tuan. This high end fashion hub is now open at the Saigon Centre. Each ICE collection offers 100 types of fashionable designs and colors.

Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, DI
3521 0881

Ipa-Nima

With a focus on handbags and a design-first philosophy, Hong Kong expat Christina Yu's Ipa-Nima brand translates fashion trends into edgy accessories, steeped in soul.

77-79 Dong Khoi, DI
3515 3980

ITALY Shoes Shop

Modest Italian-style mens shoes at local prices in the central area.

186 Ly Tu Trong, DI
3827 9813

Kim Ngon Jewelry

A counter in Tax building that buys and sells jewelry made from gold and gemstones.

A37-A39 Counter, Saigon Tax Trade
Center, 135 Nguyen Hue, DI
3914 4874

Kimsong

An open storefront that sells gold and gold-related jewelry

50 Le Loi, DI
3823 4414
090 821 3245

Kita Diamonds

Quality diamonds specialist with a professional showroom.

82 Ngo Duc Ke, DI
3821 1510

Lam Boutique

The shop sells clothing for women only and most of the items on offer are European casual vintage style with a touch of street chic. The clothes are made by the shop and has become quite popular among Vietnamese celebrities.

1st Floor, 71 Mac Thi Buoi, DI
090 671 2309

Le Hang Crystal Jewellery

With almost 20 years of experience in the design field, Le Hang's experienced group of staff create jewelry from fragments of Swarovski crystals.

101 Le Thanh Ton, DI
3827 3596

Lua Exclusive Boutique

Prestige shop that sells exclusive Vietnamese silks.

83 Ly Tu Trong, DI
3822 5292

Nine West

Originating in the U.S. Nine West has a built a name for itself by quickly translating runway trends into styles attainable on the high street, and in the case of Vietnam, the malls of district one. Collections found in store now

include a wider range of accessories such as bags, belts and other lines of accessories.

Vincom Center B, 70-72 Le Thanh Ton, DI
Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, DI

Pandora

Pandora designs, manufactures and markets hand-finished and modern jewelry made from genuine materials such as sterling silver, pearls and gemstones at affordable prices.

6 Dong Khoi, DI
3822 3241

PNJ Nguyen Hue

PNJ was the first local jewelry company exporting products overseas. Since 1995, PNJ jewelry products have been introduced in Hong Kong Jewelry Fair, as well as exported to Denmark, Germany, US, Australia and is now entering the Dubai market.

Ground Floor, Saigon Tax Trade Center,
135 Nguyen Hue, DI
3914 4854

Puma

One of a network of Puma shops around town, this has a far more limited range than some of the other outlets, but scores on its convenient location.

1st Floor, Saigon Tax Trade Centre, 135
Nguyen Hue, DI
3821 7464

Saigon Jewelry Company Ltd

Formerly known as the Saigon Jewelry Holding Company, SJC specializes in manufacturing and trading gold and jewels. The brand is well-recognized throughout Vietnam as well as in the Asia-Pacific region.

1st Floor, Saigon Tax Trade Center, 135
Nguyen Hue, DI
3821 8844

Sapa Shop

Certainly one of the grooviest souvenir shops on Le Loi, much of the stock comprises ethnic handicrafts brought down direct from breathtaking Sapa.

76 Le Loi, DI

Shoes Hanoi

Cheap, centrally-located shoe store with babywear boutique at the doorway. Since 1929, they've been making and selling shoes for both men and women.

107 Le Thanh Ton, DI
3829 5753

Steve Madden

Considered the fashion footwear mogul of the 21st century, Madden has been responsible for the design and marketing of the company's trendsetting shoes for the past two decades. His collections are aimed at fashion forward men and women, and also include bags and other accessories.

Vincom Center B, 70-72 Le Thanh Ton, DI

Sophia Jewellery

Fine jewelry sold in an annex to the lobby of the Oscar Saigon Hotel.

68A Nguyen Hue, DI
3822 8513

Tran Quoc Lan

Custom-makes shoes and sells shoes of all kinds.

97 Le Thanh Ton, DI
3829 5453

Tuyet Lan

Tuyet Lan's tailor will help you design your own garment or choose from a colorful selection of exquisite hand-embroidered pieces.

91 Mac Thi Buoi, DI
3827 7038
090 392 6286

Viet Thanh

People still hunt Mekong crocodiles for their fine leather, and there's a

healthy home-grown crocodile leather industry with this venue being one of the more upper-class of these establishments. Sells wallets, belts, handbags, keychains, and other small leather goods.

137 Dong Khoi, DI
3824 2735

tailors

ANH SILK

A little fashion shop near the Sheraton hotel selling both men's and women's clothing and with a fast turnaround tailoring service for silk garments.

151 Dong Khoi, DI
2211 9116

Cao Minh

Founded by Mr. Ly Minh in 1948, who dedicated his entire life to custom-tailoring works. Cao Minh Garment Private Enterprise was the first in Vietnam to successfully export its suits to Japan.

77 Mac Thi Buoi, DI
3824 2547

Kim Dung Embroidery Tailor

Tailored outfits and specializing in Asian garments as well as Western suits and dresses for both domestic and foreign customers.

129 Le Thanh Ton, DI
3823 2077
012 7773 8146

Lam Tailor's

Considered the tailor of choice in the diplomatic community here, it had the honor to tailor a suit for President George W Bush when he was in Vietnam several years ago. They import their fabrics from England and Italy.

158C Dong Khoi, DI
3824 3830
Lan Vy

A small tailor shop near Ben Thanh market. Female tailor who specializes in shorts, skirts, business shirts and dresses.

217 Le Thanh Ton, DI
3822 5087

Minh Doan Tailors Shop

Specializes in suits for men and women.

120 Le Thanh Ton, DI
3823 1687

Phuong Anh

The shop stocks fine embroideries and brocade, with a 24 hour turnover tailoring service.

B4, 2nd Floor Tax Building,
135 Nguyen Hue, DI
38213115
090 380 9758

Tailors Nhut

Well-known tailor for men's business and event suits as well as ladies' business wear. Pre-tailored products are available in-store.

232 Le Thanh Ton, DI
3822 5338

Viet Tien Garment Company

The company was established in 1976, and has been successfully manufacturing garment, textiles and accessories for fashion industry.

178 Hai Ba Trung, DI
3829 4350

watches

D & D

Purveyors of fine watches on Saigon's central strip - one place to go to avoid questionable merchandise.

68 Nguyen Hue, DI
093 847 1846

Luu Hung Phat

There's no shortage of vendors of watches in this part of town, but not

many that can afford a plum spot on the central district's richest shopping strip.
56 Dong Khoi, DI
3824 4777
090 380 8909

Rhythm Showroom

An authorized importer and distributor of the Japanese Rhythm brand into Vietnam. Rhythm has 16 stores in HCMC; this Tax Building showroom is known as Shop Dang Nghi.
Ground Floor, Saigon Tax Trade Centre, 135 Nguyen Hue, DI
3821 3891

Swiss Watch

Straightforward, quality swiss watch products for the discerning Dong Khoi shopper.
41 Dong Khoi, DI
3827 6126
091 392 5212

Tan Tan Watch

Luxury watch retailers selling from a shop within the Kimdo Hotel foyer. Selling luxury branded watches such as Citizen, Movado, Enicar, Raymond Weil, Frederique Constant, Alfex, Mido, and Tissot - Swiss.
Kimdo Hotel, 133 Nguyen Hue, DI
3821 8297

Thanh Phat Watch

Thanh Phat Watch is a famous long-standing wholesaler and retailer with many watch stores throughout the city. They specialize in selling high-end watches from Switzerland and Japan, such as Rado, Longines, Montblanc, and many more.
Ground Floor Saigon Tax Trade Center, 135 Nguyen Hue, DI
3821 3231

Topten

Topten has been an exclusive distributor of the luxurious Swiss watch brand Tissot since 2006. This outlet is a luxury watch showroom in the foyer of the Sunwah building.
Ground Floor, Sunwah Tower, 115 Nguyen Hue, DI
3821 9279

clinics

American Chiropractic Clinic

American Chiropractic Clinic is a chiropractic, physiotherapy, and foot care clinic in the Heart of Saigon. We are staffed by American and French-trained Chiropractic Physicians and Vietnamese Physical Therapists.
8 Truong Dinh, D3
3930 6667

Australian Clinic & Pathology Diagnostics

The Australian Clinic, Pathology & Diagnostics (ACPD) is comprised of a medical outpatient clinic and associated pathology laboratory. The clinic hosts highly trained and experienced medical specialists.
273 - 275 Ly Thai To, D10
3834 9941

Center Medical International

Center Medical International is an outpatient clinic fully-equipped to provide international standard comprehensive and specialized medical services. All physicians are either French or Vietnamese.

1 Han Thuyen, DI
3827 2365

Columbia Asia Saigon Clinic

Beautiful international clinic a short distance from the cathedral, with exemplary standards of healthcare for walk-in patients.
8 Alexandre De Rhodes, DI
3823 8454

Diag Center International

Situated in Ho Chi Minh City, Diag

Center International is a diagnostic testing center, which consists of a team of thirty Vietnamese staff, and operates under French medical biologists and assisted by a group of Vietnamese medical technicians trained in France.
146 An Binh, D5
3838 1551

Hanh Phuc International Women & Children's Hospital

Hanh Phuc International Hospital aims to be the leading private healthcare provider for women and children in Vietnam. Designed and managed up to Singaporean standards, the 260-bed Hanh Phuc Hospital aims to provide a comprehensive range of quality healthcare services to women and children with a personalized touch and in a warm and friendly atmosphere.
2nd floor Saigon Trade Centre, 37 Ton Duc Thang, DI
3911 1860

Institute of Traditional Medicine

Established in 1975, the Institute of Traditional Medicine is a holistic research and teaching hospital. Patients are treated using traditional medicines, some of which are produced by the institute itself. Some doctors speak English and/or French, and acupuncture lessons are on offer.
273-275 Nguyen Van Troi, Phu Nhuan
3844 5954

Lotus Clinic

Lotus Clinic was established in 2007 as the first Japanese medical clinic in Ho Chi Minh City.
Lancaster Bldg , 22 Le Thanh Ton, DI
3827 0000

International SOS Medical Care

Located in the city center, the clinic is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year providing routine and emergency healthcare services as well as on-site laboratory and radiology services. Languages spoken include Japanese, Korean and French, among others.
167A Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D3
3829 8551

Perfect Skin lab

More than just a spa, this District 1 venue is a genuine skin lab that caters to each customer's unique characteristics and needs. The lab is the latest concept developed by Dermal Essentials, the elite distributor for Dermalogica, a skin care system researched and developed by The International Dermal Institute in Vietnam.
1st floor, unit 9-10 Saigon Center, 65 Le Loi, DI
3910 0372

Stamford Skin Center

The Stamford Skin Centre has grown to include qualified specialists who treat general diseases of the skin such as acne, eczema and other forms of dermatitis, rosacea, psoriasis, and skin cancers.
254 Dien Bien Phu, D3
3932 1090
090 845 3338

Uc Chau Cosmetic Surgery

This central clinic performs straightforward cosmetic treatments, including enhancing the nose bridge, breast enlargement, eyelid folds, and wrinkle removal.
25 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, DI
2212 3396
2212 3398

Victoria Health Care International Clinic

Victoria Healthcare offers the highest standard of healthcare, based on American and European practices, and offering compassionate and efficient service with the greatest respect for the patient.

79 Dien Bien Phu, DI

Vietnam Family Medical Practice

International clinic located in the Manor complex, within easy reach of high-rollers living around the Saigon Pearl area. The sister clinic is located beneath Diamond Plaza.
Ground Floor, 91 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh
3514 0758

dental

2000 Dental Clinic Trung Tam Implant

Established in 1999, 2000 Dental Clinic now has 65 dentists serving 3 locations offering the full range of dental care, including surgery, implants and extractions.
125 Le Thi Rieng, DI
3925 6501

Dang Luu Dental Centre

Dang Luu Dental Centre offers the full range of dental services, including implants, crown and bridges and teeth whitening. Orthodontic services are also provided. Some of the dentists have been foreign-trained.
34 Phan Dang Luu, Binh Thanh
3903 6636

Digital Dental Clinic

Digital Dental Care draws on well-known Korean consistency in service standards and precision equipment to offer a truly world-class service in the Phu My Hung area.
R4-35 Ton Dat Tien, D7
5412 2276

Elite Dental

With an atmosphere more reminiscent of a luxury hotel, this is one of the largest high-quality dental clinics in HCMC, established to answer expat demands for superb dental techniques and professional staff.
57A Tran Quoc Thao, D3
3933 3737

German International Dentistry

German International Dentistry offers excellent consultation services from experienced, international dentists so that you can make informed decisions about your dental care.
1489 Nguyen Van Linh, D7
3776 3777

Grand Dentistry

Grand Dentistry is an upscale dental office located in the ground floor of Sunwah tower on Nguyen Hue street. It is noted for being very tourist/expat friendly. This dentistry features English speaking staff and expatriate dentists.
Ground Floor Sun Wah Tower, 115 Nguyen Hue, DI
3821 9446

Minh Khai Dental Clinic

French/American/Swiss managed clinic with well-maintained international-standard equipment.
199 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, Nguyen Cu Trinh, DI
3925 3399

Saint Paul

Saint Paul has facilities all over Ho Chi Minh City, and with the slogan "slight, exact, and painless," the doctors at Saint Paul aim to please even the most fastidious patients.
50 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, DI
3835 6159

Smile Dental Center

Quality dental care with whitening, cleaning, and orthodontic services. Japanese equipment and techniques.
173 Ton Dat Tien, D7
5413 6635

Starlight Dental Clinic

Award-winning quality care and

personal service in clean premises, offering general dentistry, whitening and cosmetic surgery, implants, orthodontics, pediatric, and preventive dentistry.
2 Bis Cong Truong Quoc Te, D3
3822 6222

Westcoast International Dental Clinic

Large, international team of dentists and support staff from Canada, Australia, Japan, France, Italy, Thailand, and Vietnam. The clinic regularly hosts visiting dentists from many other countries.
27 Nguyen Trung Truc, DI
3825 7485

hairdressers

Art Hair

A small-time local Korean community hairdresser's with a highly-regarded service, presenting an ideal opportunity to be styled after the fashion of the most glamorous country in Asia.
R4-1 Hung Phuoc Villas, D7
5410 3154
090 663 2580

Hair Salon Nguyen The Hien

Nguyen The Hien is an upscale Vietnamese hair salon catering to both men and women. Named after its award-winning hairdresser and designer, the salon is decked out in stylish, modern décor.
102 Ham Nghi, DI
3821 2275

Hairlab

Hair salon without a hint of Asia, bright & clean with all the proper hair-tech on the first floor of the Saigon Center.
1st floor, unit 9-10, Saigon center, 65 Le Loi, DI
3910 4576
093 799 0880

His Salon - Gentleman's Barbershop

Popular men's salon with very good service and complimentary beer.
29 Le Thanh Ton, DI
3829 9455

Hung Pasteur

This salon offers a complete range of beauty treatments and services using quality imported products, drawing in a host of local celebrities and wannabes.
182 Pasteur, DI
3823 1118
090 391 9375

Just Men

A full-service salon for men. A spa and salon specializing in the unique styling and maintenance needs of men only. Masculine all-wood interior and dark brown Mercedes-style chairs. Specialising in hair, facial, massage, and relaxation for men.
40 Ton That Thiep, DI
3914 1407

Kim Hair Salon

An affordable hair salon in downtown Ho Chi Minh City. The range of services is focused on different hair treatments, but also includes manicures and pedicures.
2B Chu Manh Trinh, DI
3825 8643
090 823 9011

Masa hair

Beauty salon, make up, facial care and hair services – hair treatments and restoring damaged hair.
111 Ham Nghi, DI
3821 1282 / 093 777 5862

My Duyen

Cutting, perms, combs, hair washing, and dyeing - full services out of trendy Thai Van Lung.
20 Thai Van Lung, DI
091 927 7126

The Salon

Prominent ladies' salon & sanctuary - the sister venue to the well-known His Salon with its touts out on Ton That Thiep. Services include hairstyling, shampoo, hair removal, manicures, and pedicures.
Ladies' hair & bodycare sanctuary.
64 Ton That Thiep, D1
3914 3999

Vamp Hairline

Vamp Hair Line is a high-class Japanese hair salon offering quality hair care services.

9th Floor LANT Building,
56-58-60, Hai Ba Trung, D1
7303 3330
012 2768 8614

hospitals

Cao Thang Eye Hospital

The CT International Eye Hospital is one of the few dedicated, comprehensive eye institutes in the country. Internationally recognized staff diagnose and treat the entire spectrum of conditions of the eye, including complex problems such as diabetic retinopathy, retinal detachments, macular degeneration, glaucoma, and cataracts.

135B Tran Binh Trong, D5
090 588 6086

Cho Ray Hospital

Cho Ray Hospital is the largest healthcare service in Vietnam, providing full priority service for expatriates, with a staff including 696 doctors and 1350 nurses.

201B Nguyen Chi Thanh, D5
3855 4137

Columbia Asia International Hospital - Gia Dinh

Skilled and experienced doctors offer exceptional medical care at affordable prices with the latest in medical technology. Patients benefit from advanced medical diagnostics, treatment and personal care.

1 No Trang Long, Binh Thanh
3803 0677

DialAsia International Hospital

A specialist centre in kidney treatment for the expat community, DialAsia is a fairly well-reputed international hospital of nephrology & dialysis, offering medical consultancy in renal diseases, haemodialysis, and paraclinical examinations.

253 Dien Bien Phu, D3
3930 0828

FV Hospital

FV Hospital is a Vietnam's only internationally accredited healthcare facility. A wholly foreign-owned general hospital offering a wide range of medical and surgical services under one roof, equipped to care for patients from consultation and diagnosis through to the completion of treatment.

6 Nguyen Luong Bang, D7
5411 3334

Hoan My Hospital

Private hospital with a wide range of specialist areas, running for 15 years on Phan Xich Long.

Private owned hospital, has been run for 15 years
60-60A Phan Xich Long, Phu Nhuan
3990 2468
3995 9862

Saigon International Maternity Hospital J.S.C.

A private-owned hospital specialising in maternity, this was the first hospital to meet the Hotel-Hospital international standard in HCMC since the year 2000.

63 Bui Thi Xuan, D1
3925 3620

Traditional Medicine Hospital

This hospital is a major medical centre practising the essence of that millennia-old exploration into the rhythms of the human body and its connection to the natural world which firmly belongs to this region.

179 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D3
3932 6579

Tu Du Hospital

Tu Du is a large state hospital specializing in maternity, women, and children's diseases, family planning, and many other areas. Highly experienced doctors and staff provide affordable care.

284 Cong Quynh, D1
5404 2829

Vu Anh International Hospital - Obstetrics

Luxurious hospital facility offering modern care in a comfortable setting. The hotel also provides 12 VIP rooms for patients seeking 5 star medical services featuring garden access and designer furniture.

15-16 Phan Van Tri, Go Vap
3989 4989

nails

118 Nail & Beauty

118 Nail and Beauty is a salon and spa providing full services including oil, hot stone, foot and body massages, along with skin/nail care.

118 Pasteur, D1
3821 5313
090 372 8338

Kelly Pang

Nail salon established in 2004 as a small nail salon in Phu Nhuan, Kelly Pang has gradually become known as a training center and professional nail care facility throughout Vietnam.

214C Nguyen Trai, D1
6291 5477
012 2805 6789

OPI Nail Spa Nguyen Hue

Providing a full range of official products and services of the OPI brand.

103 Nguyen Hue, D1
2211 4956

pharmacies

Curewel International

Involved in marketing and distribution of pharmaceuticals, as well as personal healthcare products, throughout Southeast Asia, Sri Lanka, and Mauritius.

49/3 Bis, Tran Quang Khai, D1
38484493

Pharmacy Nguyen Hue

Small western medical pharmacy right in the central city CBD area, selling both domestic and imported medicines.

81 Nguyen Hue, D1
3829 3058

spas

An Nam Spa

Housed in a beautiful nine-story building with different areas for men and women, guests can enjoy a panoramic view of Saigon while calming their senses in a relaxing sanctuary.

26-28 Dong Du, D1
3825 1250

Avida Spa

High-tech luxury spa situated in central Ho Chi Minh City, Avida uses only high-quality beauty products imported from Germany and Italy.

106 Tran Hung Dao, Pham Ngu Lao, D1

3837 3977

Dep Mai Spa

Dep Mai Esthetic & Spa features Japanese estheticians providing excellent skin care advice and professional services.

15B/ 56 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3825 1962
090 811 8870

Dermal Essentials

Dermalogica, a Los Angeles-based company, is a revolutionary skin treatment system. Call Dermalogica's therapists for a complimentary Face Mapping consultation.

108 Pasteur, D1
3910 2038

Eden Spa

Extremely central, Eden is located in a quiet niche off Nguyen Hue in the commercial center. Owing to its expertise in skincare and first-class relaxing atmosphere, Eden has the gumption to claim a number-one spot in the discerning Japanese market.

19-25 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 3815
097 810 6868

Glow

A boutique day spa located in the heart of the city. In this relaxing, peaceful atmosphere, guests can enjoy a full range of massage/treatment options.

Kim Do Hotel, 129A Nguyen Hue, D1
3823 8368

Golden Lotus Foot Massage Club Sauna

Fully-featured massage establishment with pool, steam room, and hydraulic massage located in trendy Thai Van Lung. Various salt scrubs, and high-end beauty products imported direct from Korea are available.

15 Thai Van Lung, D1
3822 1515

Golden Lotus Traditional Foot Massage Club - Thi Sach

Modern technology and professional staff, Lotus' most popular package includes a 90-minute massage followed by ten minutes of 'Lotus tea time'.

20 Thi Sach, D1
3829 6400

HP Oxygen Spa

A safe haven from the dust and smoke of the city offering an array of body/skin treatment options, including advanced skin care, an eye lightening process, body massages, hair care, and foot care.

Ground Floor, Yoco Building,
41 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3822 1286
093 800 2322

Huong Sen Spa

Located in a charming old French villa, Huong Sen Spa is a natural green oasis with skin, face, and body treatment services.

21S Nguyen Van Troi, Ward 12, Phu Nhuan
3842 2218
090 395 1902

Jasmine Spa

Experienced staff utilize exotic skincare products to comfort guests in this cozy urban sanctuary, which has has a large, loyal following that swears by its friendly and professional service.

45 Ton That Thiep, D1
3827 2737

KL Spa

KL Spa is one of the city's more luxurious spa venues located in the Tan Hai Long hotel. It features four VIP rooms for deluxe service, with a high-end multimedia setup, private sauna room, and bathroom. Two quiet

massage rooms are also available and can serve up to 8 guests.

Level M, 14-16 Le Lai, D1
3827 2740 ext 2222

Korean Style Sauna

Sauna and massage that serves mostly Japanese and Korean men - some of the more discerning expat clients. For a delicate touch.

15 Thai Van Lung, D1
3822 1515

L'Apothiquaire - Saigon South

This Japanese/French style spa is an exclusive distributor of organic French skin care products, and other exclusive products from around the world.

1st floor, 103 Ton Dat Tien, Tan Phu, D7
5413 6638



La Cochinchine Spa

Located in the Rex Hotel, this luxury spa and fitness centre combined with a swimming pool and bar has a particular style that is a combination of Vietnamese, French, Cham, Hindu, and Asian cultures. Luxury spa and gym located at the Rex hotel.
6F, Rex Hotel, 141 Nguyen Hue, D1
3825 1812
info@lacochinchine.net
www.lacochinchine-hcm.net
12pm-10:30pm

La Maison de L'Apothiquaire

This unique spa is situated in an artfully-designed villa and offers guests many therapeutic body and skin treatments. The luxurious villa also provides a yoga studio, enclosed garden, and many exclusive skin care products.

64A Truong Dinh, D3
3932 5181
100 Mac Thi Bui, D1
3822 2158
1st floor, 103 Ton Dat Tien, Tan Phu, D7
5413 6638

MIMI Clinic & Spa

Prestige Spa for celebrities holding frequent beauty events - and therefore one of the best-known local brands in medical aesthetics for over 10 years in HCMC.

32 Dong Khoi, D1
090 387 6666

Miu Miu

Spa with an elegant and charming décor, offering facials, body massages, and manicures. Pervaded by exotic oils and aromas, the staff provide counsel on unique skin-care products from Thailand and around the world in English, Vietnamese, and Japanese.

4 Chu Manh Trinh, D1
6659 3609

Oasis Salon & Spa

The original Oasis spa & beauty salon, this venue offers a full range of services at competitive prices. Full hair care, facial, massage, nail spa, beauty care & waxing services.

1st & 2nd Floor, 45 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 6469
090 337 0507
1st & 2nd Floor, 92 Mac Thi Bui, D1
3821 6469
090 337 0507

Saigon Spa

Recommended inexpensive spa treatments with a full spa menu.
1st Floor, 47 Dong Khoi, D1
6650 4806

Sense Spa

Sense Spa is a massage, skin, and body care haven with a plethora of high-end imported creams, lotions, and serums.
54 Dong Du, D1
6299 0964

Thann

Thann provide a range of natural hair and skincare products formulated from botanicals derived by combining the art of natural therapy with modern dermatological science.
Level 2, Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, D1
098 362 4497

Thalgo La Beaute Marine

Thalgo is on the cutting edge of spa treatments, and is renowned for its products and skilled therapists.
40C Ly Tu Trong, D1
3824 4990
090 360 6366

The Body Shop

A global manufacturer and retailer of naturally-inspired, ethically-produced beauty and cosmetics products. The Body Shop offers many kinds of skincare products, makeup accessories, hair & body care products, perfume, and bath milk.
87 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3823 5318

The Prime – Spa For Men

American skin treatments for men from top brands such as Dermalogica and Lab Series. Equipped with imported machines from Europe. The spa has five therapy services, including basic skin care, professional skin care, intensive therapy, eye therapy, body therapy – and a Prime special service package.
192 Le Lai, D1
3925 5743

Tri Siam

Well-respected salon on the edge of town, offering manicures & styling.
76C Hai Ba Trung, D1
3823 2554

Xuan Spa

One of the most luxurious spas in Ho Chi Minh City, Xuan is located inside the five-star Park Hyatt hotel. Services include packages such as Urban Retreat Package, Apricot blossom – Mai, Bamboo, and more.
2 Lam Son Square, D1
3824 1234

YKC

One of the longest established spa in the city, YKC is popular for its professional service, and complete range of services from nails to massages.
209 Dien Bien Phu, D3
3829 2791

Yuan

Despite being labeled as a foot massage establishment, Yuan actually has a full range of services. Customers usually make appointments. Yuan is especially geared towards Japanese expats.
1588 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3825 0795

Yves Rocher Botanical Beauty Spa

A famous international botanical cosmetic brand with a full range of products, The Botanical Beauty Spa Center combines the expertise of its beauticians with the efficacy of Yves Rocher treatments.

16-18 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3824 8782

Zest Massage

Famous for its fish pedicures, Zest, located in the outer western region of District One, serves up some fairly dynamic Thai massage.
60 Bui Thi Xuan, D1
6291 6835

art & crafts

Art Arcade

Art Arcade displays a wide range of original Vietnamese artwork in a charming passageway off of Dong Khoi.
151 Dong Khoi, D1
3824 4076

Beeline

Small shop with cute stuffs. Special traditional hand-embroidered bags, shoes, clothes, and souvenirs.
60-62 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3822 2364
155 Dong Khoi, D1



Blue Dragon
Blue Dragon designs 'recycled' fashion and décor. Eco-friendly bags, jewelry, and home accessories made of feed-sacks, rubber, billboard and paper.
1B Bui Vien, D1
2210 2084
9am - 10pm

Cao Lien Huong

Artistic & traditional handicrafts on Saigon's heritage street.
49 Dong Khoi, D1
3521 0445
091 806 0608

CD Paragon Leather - Caodong Boutique 2

Attractive leather souvenirs & handicrafts
Ground Floor, Saigon Centre,
65 Le Loi, D1
3915 1778

Chon Nhan Production & Trading

Chon Nhan Production & Trading specializes in making high grade fine art, especially bamboo works, oil paintings, lacquering, and carved furniture. They have experience in interior design and handmade crafts.
70D Nguyen Hue, D1
3667 0341
090 383 8355

Du Du

One of Saigon's higher-class souvenir shops.
78 Dong Khoi, D1
38276128

Em Em

Bright, unusual souvenir shop with high-quality ethnic fashion accessories unavailable elsewhere. Special figurines and a tailoring service are also available.
38 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3829 4408

Em Oi

Funky souvenir shop with a twist,

selling original designer T-shirts, handmade jewelry, recycled bags, and hand-crafted leather products.
124d Le Loi, D1

Ethnic Folk Art Anh

Fine ethnic folk products, mostly hand-made embroidered cloths, accessories and statues carved from horns and bones.
Lot B1-C11-C12 2nd Floor, Saigon Tax Trade Center, 135 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 3716
090 360 7527

Fatima Shop

Fatima shop is manufacturer, wholesaler and retailer of customer handicrafts, lacquerware, embroidery goods, and silverware souvenirs.
3 Ton That Thiep, D1
3914 2403

Gia Gia

One of Vietnam's leading manufacturer and distributor of products made from precious stones. Range includes paintings, jewelry, precious stones used for medicinal purposes and fashion products.
135 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D1
3823 5384

Hai Yen

Sells fully-rigged model ships and boats, situated next to the Oscar Hotel. Fine model ships & boats
68 Nguyen Hue, D1
3822 0280

Huong Nga Fine Art

Huong Nga designs, manufactures and sells high quality arts and crafts products in Vietnam and around the world.
41 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3823 8356

Loang Xoang

Owned by a husband and wife glasswork artist team, they mainly sell their creations through their website, Facebook page, and at the monthly handicrafts fair.
232/8/6 Ba Hat, D10
090 855 6665



MEKONG QUILTS
The produce high quality, hand-crafted bed covers, baby quilts, accessories and giftware.
1/F, 35-37 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
2210 3110
517-Sky Garden 1, Nguyen Van Linh, D7
6271 7758
www.mekong-quilts.org
9am-7pm

MH Craft

The shop has a collection of fine handicrafts, artworks, furniture, and all kinds of knick-knacks made from Vietnamese traditional materials such as egg shells, buffalo horns, bamboo, white clay, lacquer, and more.
33 Ton That Thiep, D1
3915 2913
090 382 7471

Na Sa Shop

Selling fine wooden sculptures from a small store at the back of a tiny retail enclave, sales staff insist that the

particular wood chosen has natural medicinal properties.
35 Le Loi, D1
016 9778 8303

Ngan Quang Wooden Boats

Sells model-size wooden boats.
74/1 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3829 1814
091 822 9272

Nguyen Freres - Fine Furnishing

Spacious furniture establishment selling handmade goods of silk, mother-of-pearl, stone, brick, bronze, silver, indigo, wood, lacquer along with Buddha figurines, carved wooden screens, ceramic decorations, red lacquered boxes, water puppets, and lacquered statues.
2 Dong Khoi, D1
3823 9459
098 380 3070

Nhu Y Oriental Lacquerwares

Nhu y provides coasters, tissue boxes, wine bottle holders and boxes, cabinets, frames, plates, trays, vases, and many other items with unusual designs spattered with lacquer dots.
22 Ho Huan Nghiep, D1
3829 6138

Paper Paradise

Funky little retailer selling just about anything relating to paper and paper arts.
19 Do Quang Dau, D1
091 597 8896

Phuong Mai Gallery

Phuong Mai Art Gallery focuses on the contemporary art works of both up & coming and established artists from across Vietnam. The real deal in a district of mass-produced art retailers.
129B Le Thanh Ton, D1
3823 3181

Saigon Kitsch

Historic socialist pop-art culture is printed on t-shirts, coffee mugs, coasters and a raft of other goodies creating cool gifts for folks back home - or expats home in HCMC.
43 Ton That Thiep, D1
093 590 5675

Sapa Crafts & Fashion

Established in 1996, the shop sells clothes and bags reflecting the style of the picturesque village in the northern region of Vietnam after which it is named.
7 Ton That Thiep, D1
090 244 1256

SoCoLa Boutique

Unique souvenir items and crafts in an off-beat retail space. Highly unusual trinkets.
39/4 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3822 1839

books & magazines

Cua Hang Van Phong Pham

Large stationery shop with paints and supplies for artists, this is the place to come for art paper, easels, paints and brushes.
54 Le Loi, D1
3825 7986
091 917 0356

Fahasa - Le Loi

One of Vietnam's largest book chains with 56 stores around the country, Fahasa has a good range of English titles.
60-62 Le Loi, D1
3829 6386

Fahasa - Nguyen Hue

One of the largest book distributors in Vietnam with 35 years of operations,

Fahasa provides a wide range of books – including English titles – from local to translated editions, as well as CDs, videos, puzzles and stationery.

40 Nguyen Hue, DI
3822 5796

Nam Phong bookstore

A second-hand bookstore specializing in French literature, selling mainly novels and nonfiction titles with a selection of second-hand folio editions. The website is in French only, with a built-in searchable database of all titles available.

94 Ho Tung Mau, DI
3914 7859

Parker & Waterman

A specialist luxury pens counter in the foyer of the Bitexco Financial Tower, This Parker & Waterman outlet sells precision-crafted pens with gold & platinum finishes.

Ground Floor Bitexco Tower, 2 Hai Trieu, DI
6291 8739

Phuong Nam Book

With a system of over 30 bookstores in Ho Chi Minh City, PNB sells & publishes hundreds of foreign-language titles. The Saigon Center store also has a wide range of children's books.

Level 2, Saigon Center,
65 Le Loi, DI
3915 1475

electronics & camera

Bose Showroom

Something of a connoisseur's choice, a look through this showroom in the Tax Building will demonstrate some fairly impressive speaker and sound system equipment.

Ground Floor Saigon Tax Trade Center,
135 Nguyen Hue, DI
3821 5944 0903723933

Canon Vinh Hung

Canon Vinh Hung has over 15 years of experience providing the citizens of Saigon with quality Canon cameras and other products such as photocopyers, fax machines, and photo printers.

103 Tran Hung Dao, DI
3837 1066
090 370 0011

Lioa Electrics & Electronics

Hardware mart for power components, electrical appliances, and lighting systems. LIOA has more than 20 years of experience as the largest automatic stabilizer manufacturer in Vietnam.

138 Yersin, DI
6295 9077
012 3839 6768

Saigon Photo Center - Nam Ky Khoi Nghia

Saigon Photo Center has been providing an extensive range of photography services since 1991. They offer services such as photo printing, digital inkjets, equipment trading, camera sale, and equipment rental.

114 bis Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, DI
3825 8735
090 383 2224

Maydocsach eBook Readers

Vietnamese distributors of Kindle and Nook eBook readers, including e-ink screen and color LCD versions. Providing free Vietnamese language eBooks.

149/2 Le Thi Rieng, DI
6678 4542
093 822 2489

Son Ha

They sell products such as TVs, Karaoke and stage systems, soundproofing, MP3 players, refrigeration, and appliances.

41 Huynh Thuc Khang, DI
3923 1938
090 820 3262

home & furnishings

AA Deco Company

AA Interiors provides high-quality fabrication and fit-out services for hotels, residences, spas, and so on throughout the city. Also sells many well-known furniture brands.

219 Nguyen Van Thu, DI
3823 0940
3744 2728

AkzoNobel Decorative Center

Dulux Paints specialist with attractive central-city showroom/store.

91-93 Nguyen Hue, DI
3915 3491

Authentique

An interior decorating shop featuring Vietnamese traditional styles with a small showroom in the busiest area of the city,

71/1 Mac Thi Buoi, DI
3823 8811

Canada Home Deco Company

Established by an expat Canadian couple in 2003, Canada Home Deco specializes in distributing high-quality blankets, pillows, bedspreads, and cushions.

158 Hai Ba Trung, DI
3822 3430

Catherine Denoual

Supplies blankets, pillows, mattresses, tablecloths, cushions, and other luxury linens to reputable hotels, spas, resorts, and individual consumers.

15C Thi Sach, DI
3823 9394

JB Oriental Heritage

Unique Kashmiri products stocked in a plush retail space in the Saigon Center, JB Oriental Heritage sells fine imported Asian products, including carpets and exotic rugs, handicrafts, and objets d'art.

Unit 20, Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, DI
3821 2892
090 775 8926

Lam Bui Natural Home Goods

Founded in 2004 by a team of intrepid entrepreneurs, Lam Bui Natural Home Goods is a large, well-stocked home goods store with specialty old-style furnishings and decor items.

Unit 16-17, 2nd Floor, Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, DI
3914 3553

Mosaïque Decoration

Mosaïque Decoration takes all the unique beauty and craftsmanship of Vietnam and adapts it to contemporary home décor. Mosaïque offers unique lighting design, decorative embroidery, silk quilts, and other home accessories.

Ground Floor, Saigon Centre,
65 Le Loi, DI
3821 7233

Patina Home

A furniture and home-styling company specializing in antique reproduction collections, Patina Homes offers an exquisite range of handcrafted furniture, upholstery and home accessories.

SLOO8 Garden plaza, Ton Dat Tien, Tan Phong, D7
5412 4071

Premium Housewares

Providing high quality kitchenware and accessories, Premium Housewares presents its products in more than 70

countries worldwide.

77 Pasteur, DI
3824 7504

Red Door Décor

A well-known furniture store in Ho Chi Minh City offering products such as interior/exterior decorations, artwork, handicrafts, glass ceramics, garments, and textile materials.

31A Le Thanh Ton, DI
3825 8672

SB Furniture

SB Furniture is an award-winning furniture store with a reputation for excellent service and attention to detail. They specialize in products made with artificial wood, and cabinets for apartments and villas.

Unit 8-10, 1st Floor, Saigon Centre,
65, Le Loi, DI
0902157935

markets

An Dong Market

This boisterous wet market beneath the Caesar Hotel. Customers can find food carts, bulk raw ingredients, shoes, sandals, jeans, shirts, and many other goods.

36 An Duong Vuong, D5
3835 4773

Ba Chieu Market

An old market hosting nearly 800 independent businesses in central Binh Thanh district, famous throughout the city for its rich and diverse commodities. Fresh Food, groceries, crockery, household appliances, textiles, and apparel. Second hand clothing available at cheap rates.

40 Dien Hong, Binh Thanh
3841 2483

Ben Thanh Market

Saigon's most iconic tourist attraction, this Vietnamese souvenir bazaar is busy, hot, and full of most everything you'll need to pick up to prove you've been to Vietnam - you can also stock up on your entire quota of presents for family and friends here.

Quach Thi Trang Square, DI
3829 2096

Binh Tay (Cholon) Market

Binh Tay Market is the largest market in Saigon located in an elegant building of Chinese design in Cho Lon. The market caters mostly to wholesale trade, but also offers household items, makeup, and beauty products.

Le Tan Ke, Ward 2, D6
3857 1512

Tan Binh Market

Products here are targeted towards the locals, so don't expect to see luxurious or high-end products. The prices can't be beaten though. Bargain to your heart's content.

Le Minh Xuan, Ward 8, Tan Binh
3864 3711

Tan Dinh Market

Tan Dinh Market has been providing Saigon with a thriving market experience for decades. Customers can choose from food carts, clothing services, textiles, and fresh fruits and vegetables. Busy old-style market with impressive architecture, selling a great selection of fabrics and seafood.

48 Ma Lo, Tan Dinh, District 1
3820 1272

War Surplus Market (Dan Sinh Market)

Dan Sinh is known as the army surplus

market. Located just 5 minutes from the backpacker area and city center, it specializes in selling war surplus and military style clothing and items. It is also a good market for electronics and other types of imported industrial machinery.

104 Yersin, DI
3825 1130

supermarkets

Annam Gourmet

An upmarket deli-grocery chain offering gourmet groceries, cheese, organic products, gluten-free products, fruit and vegetables, gourmet deli, wine and other beverages. Features a deli café serving coffee, wine and foods. Regular shoppers can benefit from a loyalty card program.

16-18 Hai Ba Trung, DI
3822 9391

Sieu Thi Tax Supermarket

General supermarket in the centrally-located Tax Building.

1st Floor, Saigon Tax Trade Centre,
135 Nguyen Hue, DI
3821 3849

wine & liquor

Bacchus Corner

Bacchus imports from most of the world's wine regions and supplies wholesale and retail customers. It encourages wine tasting in its Pasteur store using the unique Enomatic system, and staff are skilled in advising on wine matches with food.

158D Pasteur, DI
3829 3306

Beer Plaza

Beer Plaza has an extensive range of international beers in stock. Connoisseurs will be pleased to find all of their favorite varieties of beer along with unique glassware.

94-96 Le Lai, DI
091 816 6809

Boutique Collar

All about wine, lots and lots of wine. Priding itself in being the sole distributors of premium wineries around the world.

11 Suong Nguyet Anh, DI

Liquor City

Purveyors of fine international wines & spirits.

95, Suong Nguyet Anh, DI
090 240 9024

Shop Thai Duong

Beer, wine, & spirits importers. Previously known as Tan Mai.

54 Ham Nghi, DI
3821 5398
098 888 9496

The Warehouse

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

178 Pasteur, DI
3824 6629
090 921 0014

Vinifera

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

15C7 Thi Sach, DI
3822 1141

Business & Tech

IMAGE BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY



An Affair from Down Under

Oi speaks to Australian Consul General John McAnulty on this year's 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Australia and Vietnam

TEXT BY HARRISON TRIPPLE IMAGE BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY

A NATIVE OF WAGGA-WAGGA, John McAnulty is in the midst of a three-year term as the Australian Consul General in Ho Chi Minh City and although he has only been posted in Vietnam for 18 months, he couldn't speak more highly of the developing nation's international progress and the respect it is commanding from its ASEAN neighbors. "I just see Vietnam progressing quite well, it's a very competitive nation within the ASEAN area and it's growing as a voice."

This year marks the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Australia and Hanoi. The festivities kicked off in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi in March with performances by *Bangarra*, an indigenous dance group from Australia.

Other events are mainly aimed at the youth of Vietnam and include Questacon, a scientific exhibition from the Museum in Canberra, which stopped in Ho Chi Minh City during the middle of April at the RMIT campus in District 7.

Along with organizing events to commemorate 40 years of collaboration between the two countries this year, the Australian Consulate office regularly handles a large range of requests and occurrences throughout the year from the expat community as well as some rowdy tourists. With about 22,000 expats living in Vietnam and around 300,000 Australian tourists flocking to the country every year, they deal with a large amount of misguided adventures that occasionally turn out fatal.

"We have people who come as tourists and they do get into very unfortunate accidents, it's a huge workload for us," says McAnulty before he unveiled a disturbing trend in

Aussie-tourist incidents. "A telling statistic is that now Vietnam [accounts for] the second highest number of deaths of Australian citizens overseas with about 60 per year." Thailand takes the dubious rank of number one.

Many of the incidents involving Australian tourists are alcohol and substance related while others range from passport replacements to motorbike accidents and the occasional natural passing.

"No matter who they are or what nationality, if they commit a crime in a country they are held accountable under the law of that country. We can offer assistance, but it has to be within the laws of that country," he states. "If people end up in court we visit them in court, but not to represent them. There are 30 Australians in prison in Vietnam, which is a very high number."

Many of the returning expats are veterans from the American War who are embedding themselves in the local communities to continue building the strong "person-to-person links" between both nations. Some of their contributions include creating jobs by opening restaurants, shops and even schools. Australian volunteers also immerse themselves in orphanages, while Aussie doctors and nurses dedicate a lot of their time to training programs in Vietnamese hospitals.

"There is one group which is now in the process of building its third kindergarten. Not only do they build the schools in the more remote areas of the province but they also maintain them and we're very proud of their efforts," says McAnulty.

The latest kindergarten the veterans are building is the Quang Thanh 2 Elementary School, in Chau Duc District of Ba Ria – Vung

Tau, the third in the same area.

Only One Direction

The strongest tie between the countries is in education where Australia is now the number one English-speaking destination for Vietnamese students. With 400 plus scholarships a year given to Vietnamese students and about 23,000 Vietnamese currently studying in Australia, he is positive that the future generations of Vietnam will continue their nation's development.

"Vietnamese students are now the fourth largest source of foreign students coming into Australia behind China, India and South Korea."

Australia also contributes to Vietnam's development with aid programs in the agricultural, technological and climate change fields, such as rice research projects at an Aussie funded facility and the construction of My Thuan Bridge, the largest ever foreign aid in the Mekong River Delta.

Pleased with the progress the Southeast Asian nation has made, McAnulty offers some insight into one area that Vietnam could improve.

"It's in many countries in the region and around the world, it's a part of their culture and how do you change someone's culture?" asks McAnulty about the topic of corruption. "It would be like telling a Canadian that they can't play ice hockey."

However, positive initiatives continue to grow between the two countries, with more and more Vietnamese migrating to Australia and vice-versa. Of the two countries' relationship, McAnulty concludes: "There is only one direction it can go in, it will get stronger and stronger." ■





Franchising in Vietnam

Buying the rights to a major brand's name comes with major paperwork and obstacles as our expert in the industry explains

TEXT BY SEAN T. NGO IMAGES BY MINH HOANG LY

THERE CAN BE little doubt that Vietnam is the type of market where the franchising business model is growing and thriving. With a large consumer base, rapidly rising incomes, a very educated, young and growing professional population, and an entrepreneurial economy that is focused on wealth creation, it's the perfect formula for success.

While franchising dates back to the mid 1800s and started in America, the influence and impact of franchising around the world

continues to be immense, contributing USD1.2 trillion to the global economy. In the US alone, franchising has created over 9 million jobs and contributed USD500 billion to the economy. Although not the same in sheer numbers, other developed and developing countries have seen similar growth in the franchising market, including Australia, the UK, China, South Korea and Japan.

It's easy to see when walking along the streets in Saigon that franchising has gained

momentum in recent years, especially with Domino's Pizza and Burger King sponsoring and adding their logos on the city's Tet decorations this year. And while KFC, Lotteria and Jollibee have entered the country more than a decade ago, newer players into the game like Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, Pizza Hut and Subway have ignited interest from abroad. And with Starbucks' recent opening of its first flagship store in HCMC recently, this will only drive competition faster into Vietnam.



Clockwise from opposite page: Starbucks, Burger King, Lotteria, NYDC, Popeye's, Domino's Pizza

Risky Business

Though the opportunities are numerous, there are also many risks that a franchisor (a person or company that grants a franchise) must navigate effectively if they are to compete and succeed here. It starts with picking the right business partner, managing the supply chain, deciphering the legal requirements, and the all-important and all too real issue of the rising cost of retail space. Finding the right partner in Vietnam is often a lengthy process and can take up to five years if the brand you're franchising has strict requirements. For example, Starbucks had eyed Vietnam for many years before its grand opening in February 2013.

As Matt Fujieki, Managing Partner of International Lifestyle JSC, Haagen-Dazs franchisee for Vietnam, says, "Like any global brand, the process of franchising may be lengthy and challenging, especially for a global brand's first entry into a developing country like Vietnam. For an international brand like Haagen-Dazs, they must carefully strategize the entrance, their local partner, and development goals amongst other important aspects. For the local franchisee, a clear understanding of the market must be present and a correct business

model must be put into an aligned game plan."

Demand But No Supply

Another key focus area is the ability of the new partners to manage the necessary supply chain. To keep costs down, ideally franchisees should locally source their raw materials, equipment, furniture, and other necessary products and services. However, the reality is that many local suppliers and service providers in Vietnam lack the quality and scale that are required by international brands, thereby forcing the franchisees to buy overseas, raising supply cost. It's a no-win situation that many franchisees face as local suppliers are unwilling to invest capital to meet international requirements if there is no guarantee of sale after they have made these investments. If you're selling a Big Mac and you decide to use a plain bun because suppliers can't produce the sesame seed bun, well, it's no longer a Big Mac.

"As Haagen-Dazs is a super-premium global brand, with some of the highest international standards, supply chain and particulars such as sourcing are always a challenge in a developing market like Vietnam," Fujieki confirms.

High real estate costs and location continue

to be issues as well. Rental costs are higher than the average for the region and many locations do not drive the needed traffic to these businesses, including prime real estate in high-profile retail establishments like Vincom or The Crescent Mall. Expectations for leasing prices by local landlords can also be a problem as they are often much higher than what is appropriate for the franchises that seek those locations. To make matters worse, local landlords have also been known to break leasing contracts.

For any internationally recognized brand, failure in any market not only hurts them in terms of time and money but it may take them 5 to 10 years before they are able to re-enter that same market. This will also bring up questions from future potential franchisees about its viability, especially if they are located nearby in Southeast Asia.

While franchising is sure to feed hungry appetites here, traversing these critical issues is a must for the parties involved.

Sean T. Ngo is the Managing Director of Vietnam Franchises. The company has helped international brands enter Southeast Asia including KFC, Delifrance and Carl's Jr. ■





Talking Heads

A slight misnomer, BarCampSaigon is not for those wanting to camp out in the woods and drink beer; it's actually an open discussion forum for the community

TEXT BY **MARIANNA DANIELS**

THE FIRST RULE of BarCamp is you *do* talk about BarCamp. Actually the more talking done, the better. This is the only rule you will see at one of Saigon's most unique conferences. Organizers refer to BarCampSaigon as an 'unconference' because you won't find some of the key elements of a normal conference here. There is no set agenda, schedule, or even speakers. All the content is generated by participants, and the entire event is free. Those who would like to present can sign up for a time slot when they register the morning of the event.

During the opening session participants vote on which topics they are most interested in attending. The most popular topics get larger rooms and more time to present, but anyone who would like to can present regardless of how many votes they receive. About 60 percent of the presentations are in Vietnamese and 40 in English, and presenters are encouraged to add subtitles to their submissions to make them accessible to everyone.

The 'camp' began in the technology community and most discussions are related to technology, media, or marketing. Some of the more popular sessions in Saigon events have been about mobile apps and iOS development, and past years have seen everything from neuroscience to more eccentric topics like "How to date a Cambodian girl" on the table.

"My friend asked me to come to BarCamp with her. I was afraid it would be boring with only presentations about technology, but it wasn't, there were a lot of different topics. I enjoyed it so much," says Chan Sun, who has been attending the unconference since 2010.

Since the participants determine the topics there are forums for everyone from the tech-savvy to the digitally deficient.

Finding the Pulse of a City

The BarCamp format has taken off in many developing countries, the largest event in the world, surprisingly, is BarCampYangon. The open presentation and voting format allows participants, and businesses that are interested in a specific country, to see what ideas are important in a particular city or region.

One of the main organizers Anh-Minh Do explains, "Every year we get at least 20 - 50 foreign participants who fly in from as far

away as Germany *just* for BarCamp because it is a great way to get a pulse on what is happening at the moment in any given tech and non-tech community."

The first one was held in 2008 with about 200 participants. Since then it has expanded rapidly. Last year they had over 800 participants, and organizers are expecting about 1,000 at this year's unconference. The event has also evolved dramatically with the growing numbers.

"We get immediate feedback on the event during the closing session. People love to complain at this session and it's great for us. That's why we've adapted so much every year," says Minh.

For the first time this year BarCamp will be held over two days. The first day will include preparation time for participants who would like to learn how to present. This extra training is to help improve the quality of the presentations as well as encourage more people to present. Other new features are iOS and Android apps developed specifically for this event, which will allow greater interaction with a larger crowd.

BarCamp relies on sponsorship for funding as there is no cost for participants. However, presenters are heavily discouraged from using the event to pitch products. Many of the sponsors are tech companies looking to recruit new talent. This year organizers are trying to increase networking and recruitment opportunities for participants and sponsors. Even if you are not looking for professional contacts, BarCamp actively encourages participation in discussions and interaction between attendees.

One of the greatest strengths of BarCampSaigon is the passion of both organizers and participants. Everyone who wants to present is given the opportunity. "Nobody has ever been refused to present because of attendance, because usually presenters are there because they really care about their topic. I've never seen an empty room, but we've had rooms with four people attending and people still presented," explains Minh.

"It's a great place to meet new friends who are funny and talented," says Chan Sun.

BarCampSaigon 2013 will be held on July 6 and 7 at RMIT. Registration begins in June. Visit www.barcampsaiгон.org. ■

Dear Hadrien,

I'm American. I've lived here for six years, and am thinking of buying some property in Vietnam. But I've been told that foreigners are not allowed to own land. I have some very good Vietnamese friends who I trust enough to put the property under their name, but since we're talking about a large sum of money, I feel I need some kind of legal protection. Is there some type of contract I could get drawn up to make sure that property will remain mine even if it's under someone else's name?



IMAGE BY NAM QUAN

A member of the Paris Bar, **Hadrien Wolff** has been practicing law in Vietnam for six years, currently as a partner of **Audier & Partners**. He specializes in banking and corporate law, regularly advising major foreign banks and assisting foreign investors in setting up joint venture companies with Vietnamese partners in sensitive sectors such as media, power and natural resources

ACCORDING TO THE Vietnamese land law, the land in Vietnam "belongs to the people and is managed by the State on behalf of the people". What you have been told is therefore not entirely correct – technically, no one can own land: foreigners or Vietnamese! However, although the State owns the land of the entire territory, it gives rights to use the land to individuals and entities under specific conditions, commonly called "land use rights," as evidenced by the issuance of a land use right certificate.

Land use rights can be so extended that the resulting legal framework may be qualified as quasi-ownership. On the other hand, Vietnamese law allows full ownership of real estate attached to the land under a distinct legal regime. So while it's true that foreign individuals cannot be granted land use rights, they are allowed to own real estate attached to the land under very strict conditions.

The practice that you are describing, which aims to circumvent the legal limitations regarding land use rights, has a foreigner engaging a nominee (in this case your friend) to hold the land use rights on your behalf. The land use right certificate would be issued under the name of the nominee with a private side contract between the two of you. The validity of this side contract under Vietnamese law is extremely doubtful to say the least... I am personally sure that any Vietnamese judge tasked with settling a dispute related to such a nominee contract would consider that contract invalid.

If your friend broke the side contract, you would not have any legal recourse to enforce your rights under that contract. Instead the rights of the nominee of the real estate property would be unconditionally recognized, since that person's name is recorded on the land use right certificate.

Consequently, even though you may trust your friend a great deal, I would be very wary of using such a nominee scheme, as it does not provide you with the minimum level of legal comfort that is required when investing substantial

amounts of money.

You might know of people who have successfully implemented nominee schemes throughout the years, as do I. But I'd caution you to view it as you would gambling: only invest what you are ready to lose!

If your ultimate purpose is to own an apartment you may consider an alternative legal option which is way more comfortable, namely the circular issued in 2009 allowing the following categories of foreign individuals to purchase and own one residential house in Vietnam:

- 1) Those who make direct investment in Vietnam or are managers of enterprises operating in Vietnam, whether domestic and foreign-invested enterprises.
- 2) Those who have made contributions to Vietnam as recognized by the Prime Minister or have been conferred orders or medals by the President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.
- 3) Those who are working in socio-economic domains and hold university or higher degrees, and specialists in fields which Vietnam has demand for.

- 4) Those who are married to a Vietnamese citizen.

To be entitled to own a residential house in Vietnam, the foreign individuals meeting the above criteria, must be legally residing in Vietnam for at least one year and must not be subject to diplomatic or consular privileges and immunities under Vietnamese laws.

Since you have been residing in Vietnam for more than one year (and assuming that your immigration has been continuously compliant with Vietnamese law), if you fall within one of the above listed categories, you have the right to purchase and own one residential house in Vietnam.

However, please note that Vietnamese law only allows foreigners to own a residential house for a maximum of 50 years from the date of issuance of the residential house ownership certificate. Foreign owners must transfer ownership of the property within 12 months after the end of the term of the certificate.

Happy house hunting!

If you have any legal questions you want answered, send them to legal@oivietnam.com.



Everything in a Click

Shopping no longer has to involve leaving the house



IMAGE BY NAM QUAN

Anh-Minh Do is the editor at TechInAsia.com for Vietnam focusing on technology startups, trends and companies. Minh also organizes events at Evecoo.vn



LAST MONTH, I covered a new trend that's happening in technology here and that is companies leveraging on the motorbike culture, and one of the sectors in that market is e-commerce. Now, in Vietnam, you can get just about everything online.

On Tiki.vn, Vinabook.com, and Bookbuy.vn, you can get a wide range of books even English ones. Gone are the days when you had to order on Amazon just to get the latest book sent all the way to Vietnam, not to mention dealing with huge international shipping costs. ForEva.vn and Noyyo.com are quickly becoming the main sites women are buying online for lingerie. And of course, if you've been watching Vietnamese television, you know that Lazada and Zalora are probably the two biggest e-commerce companies in Vietnam, offering everything from fashion to electronics and even furniture. And on VatGia.com, you can even buy an electric

golf cart. I've been ordering new mattresses, clothes, and books and payment is cash on delivery. Some sites even allow you to return the product if you're unsatisfied with it.

Basically, Vietnam is on the cusp of a super-aggressive e-commerce market where there is an overflow of players. At last count, there are over 35 different e-commerce sites online from general sites that sell everything to specific sites that sell only shoes. And I don't think this will resolve itself anytime soon; we probably won't see a dominant Amazon-like player in Vietnam until 2014 or later. The war rages on.

App of the Month

One of the coolest new iPhone apps (an Android version should come later this year) out of Vietnam recently is Fuzel. It's a photo collage-making program that

goes one step over Instagram by making it really easy to stitch photos together and share with your friends. The app is going global and has already been featured as Editor's Choice on the Apple Appstore. It has received over one million downloads already, with about 50 percent of users in the West. That's a big achievement for an app out of Vietnam.

The app's really slickly designed, something you don't normally see in Vietnam, and easy to use. So I highly recommend you give it a try to spice up your Facebook profile because Instagram is probably on the outs.

A Basement Studio has also released another app earlier this month called KeepShot that allows users to assemble albums together and then send them to your doorstep as a nicely printed out photobook. Unfortunately, this one only works in the States now. ■



Paul McLardie is a partner and a member of the investment committee at **Total Wealth Management** in Saigon. Previously he was Head of Wealth Management for a firm in Moscow and before that spent eight years at Barclays Bank UK within the Private Clients and Large Corporate sectors

Hi Paul,

Is it a good idea to convert money into dong or leave it as dollars or other currency? And since banks here only insure up to VND50 million is it risky to have a lot of money in the banks here? How can I best beat the Vietnamese inflation?

THIS IS SIMILAR to a question I got from a friend in my local pub this week, and there are a few variables to look into before being able to give true and proper advice. If anything like my friend, the main problem he saw was that over the last few years, he has seen his spending power decreasing. So what do you do? Keep your money here or move it somewhere else?

First things to look at are, the currency that you get paid in, the currency that your largest outgoings will be in (for example, your rent) here in Vietnam and if you need to pay money overseas to cover expenses from your home country while you are living and working here.

If you get paid in dong and your major outgoings are in dong, what's the point of changing money into US dollars or any other currency that you will not be able to use for everyday transactions. If you have to pay for your rent in US dollars as most landlords still want, just change the amount that you need, when you need it.

If you get paid in a foreign currency, paid directly into a bank by your employers, only take out in dong how much you need for the month, either a bit at a time or in one go, that's your choice. The only difference is, depending on your bank, the amount that you may be charged a foreign transaction and fees added for using either a cash machine or using the cashiers within the branch.

This may still leave you with a large proportion of your income sitting in an account, not really doing much for you that over a period of time, can add up to quite a bit of cash. So what do you do with it?

You are correct to say that the deposit

insurance offered through Vietnam can be seen as quite low comparative to the rest of the world, but please remember the majority of the deposits will be considerably lower than they will be in the rest of the world. This may not take away from your worry about keeping large volumes of money here. Short of doing the local thing of buying physical gold, which can be quite risky itself, you may want to look overseas to place some of your funds. This is not for everyone but it can work. Either back to your home country, or maybe even another financial jurisdiction that offers a higher level of protection and experience.

Moving money out of the country opens up the legalities of how much you can move, how to move it and the associated fees. The advice I gave my friend was to just use the banks to transfer money out of the country. Safety wise, using the swift network that the banks are linked to, they can find out exactly where your money is if it goes missing or is taking a while to get to its destination. Black market methods of bank transfers are illegal and they should not be used under any circumstances. It's not safe and you could lose everything just because you think you may save a few dollars on fees. Taking foreign currency in cash, out of the country, while legal up to a limit, is very risky because if asked by the customs officials, you will need to prove that the currency has been declared into the banking system. There is no point taking dong as it is a non-transferable currency (you can't use it abroad). Also, if you get stopped by customs officials and everything is completely legit, you may

still be asked to make a contribution to the coffee fund.

If you are transferring money over to a different country, bite the bullet and pay the fees. To lessen them, you may want to work out how much you want to transfer and how often. Also, if you are going cross currency, i.e. from dong to US dollars, you will need to use the exchange rate that the Vietnamese bank gives you. If you are from US dollars to AU dollars, you can choose to use the exchange rate that the Vietnamese bank gives you or the corresponding bank at the other side. Realistically, unless you are making multiple transactions or a large transaction, say over USD25,000 - USD30,000, there is no point attempting to speculate on the rate.

Back to the original problem of dealing with inflation. Short of asking your boss for an above inflation pay rise, what can you do? First of all, grin and bear it. It will be extremely dangerous for an individual without some knowledge to try to speculate on currency transactions, especially if you are attempting to gain an arbitrage advantage. For your savings, look long term, not short term. By long term, I mean a structured plan over a minimum period of five years taking into account your risk profile and also your plans during this period. Unfortunately, we live in an amazing and beautiful country that has an issue with inflation at the moment. All developing countries go through this; developed ones too. It will even itself out, but only if you look long term.

Have a finance question you want answered? Email us at finance@oivietnam.com. ■

>>The List Business



Atexpats is Ho Chi Minh City's first truly comprehensive insider's guide for foreign residents - website launching 2013

banks

Asia Commercial Bank

442 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D3
39290999

Bank of China

19th Floor, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 9949

Citibank

15/F Sun Wah Tower, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1
3824 2267
094 801 6318

Commonwealth Bank

65 Nguyen Du, D1
3824 1525
012 1861 8695

HSBC

Metropolitan Bldg, 235 Dong Khoi, D1
3724 7247

Mizuho Corporate Bank

18th Floor, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1
3827 8260

Standard Chartered Bank

Saigon Trade Center 1st Floor, 37 Ton Duc Thang, D1
3911 0000

Shinhan Vietnam

100 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D3
3829 1581

Vietcombank

2bis-4-6 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3824 4797
www.vietcombank.com.vn

consulates

Australian Consulate-General

47 Ly Tu Trong, D1
3521 8100
www.hcmc.vietnam.embassy.gov.au
Mon-Fri: 8.30am - 12pm; 1pm - 5pm

Belgium Consulate

105 Duong Van An, D2
6281 8001
9am - 11.30am on Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri

Cambodia Consulate

41 Phung Khac Khoan, D1
3829 2751
Mon-Fri: 7.30am - 11.30am; 2pm - 5pm

Consulate General of Canada

10th floor, The Metropolitan, 235 Dong Khoi, D1
3827 9899
Mon-Thu: 8.30am - 4.30pm

Chile Consulate

79/1/1 Phan Ke Binh, D1
3910 2903

China Consulate

39 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3829 5009
www.vn.china-embassy.org/eng/
Mon-Fri: 8.30am - 11am

China Consulate - Commercial Office

39 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3823 1142
ptmchn@hcm.vnn.vn
www.hochiminh.mofcom.gov.cn

Cuba Consulate

45 Phung Khac Khoan, D1
3829 7350
Mon-Fri: 8am - 11.30am; 1.30pm - 4.30pm

Denmark Consulate

115 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 9373
Mon-Thu: 8.30am - 4.30pm; Fri: 8.30am - 3pm

Finland Consulate

Room 501, 5/F Sailing Tower, 111A Pasteur, D1
3827 2029

France Consulate

27 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3520 6819
www.consulfrance-hcm.org

Germany Consulate

126 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D3
3829 2455
www.ho-chi-minh-stadt.diplo.de
Mon-Fri: 8am - 11.30am; 1.30pm - 4.30pm

Hungary Consulate

22 Phung Khac Khoan, D1
3829 0130

Iceland Consulate

80 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D1
Mon-Fri: 9am - 5pm

Consulate General of India

55 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D3
3823 7050
www.india-consulate.org.vn
Mon-Fri: 8.30am - 12.30pm, 1pm - 5pm

Indonesia Consulate

18 Phung Khac Khoan, D1
3825 1888
www.indonesianconsulategeneral.vn/en/
index.php
Mon-Fri: 8am - 12pm; 2pm - 5pm

Italy Consulate

81 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh
08 6258 6473
Mon-Fri: 8am - 12pm; 1pm - 4pm

Japanese Consulate

261 Dien Bien Phu, D3
08 3933 3520
8.30am - 11.30am; 1.15pm - 4.45pm

Kuwait Consulate

24 Phung Khac Khoan, D1
3827 0555
kuwaitconsulate@gmail.com
Mon-Fri: 9am - 4pm

Laos Consulate

93 Pasteur, D1
3829 7667
Mon-Fri: 8am - 11.30am; 1pm - 4.30pm

Malaysia Consulate

2 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
3829 9023
malhcmnh@kln.gov.my
Mon-Fri: 8am - 11.30am

Mexico Consulate

215 A-B Hoang Van Thu, Phu Nhuan
3844 5520
Mon-Fri: 8am - 3pm

Myanmar Consulate

50 Sam Son, Tan Binh
5449 2425
www.gmas.com.vn
Mon-Fri: 9am - 12pm; 2pm - 5pm; Sat: 9am - 12pm

New Zealand Consulate

235 Dong Khoi, D1
3822 6907
Mon - Fri: 8.30am - 11.30am; 1.00pm - 5.00pm
Nordcham
12A Floor, Bitexco Building, 19-25 Nguyen Hue, D1

3821 5423

www.nordcham.com

Norway Consulate

21-23 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3822 1696
norcons@hcm.fpt.vn
Mon - Fri: 08.30am - 11.30am; 1.30pm - 4.30pm

Panama Consulate

7A Le Thanh Ton, D1
3825 0334
consulgeneral@hcm.fpt.vn
Mon - Fri: 9am - 5pm

Russia Consulate

40 Ba Huyen Thanh Quan, D3
3930 3936
www.russianconsulates.com

Consulate-General of The Republic of Singapore

8th floor, Saigon Center, 65 Le Loi, D1
3822 5174
www.mfa.gov.sg
Mon - Fri: 8.30am - 12.30pm; 1.30pm - 5pm

Slovakia Consulate

64-68 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3829 8888
Thurs: 2pm - 5pm; Fri, Sat: 8.30am - 11.30pm

South Korea Consulate

107 Nguyen Du, D1
3822 5757
Mon-Fri: 9am - 12pm; 1.30pm - 5pm

Sweden Consulate

8A/11 Thai Van Lung, D1
3823 6800
Mon-Fri: 8am - 12pm; 1.30pm - 4.30pm

Switzerland Consulate

42 Giang Van Minh, D2
3744 6996

Thailand Consulate

77 Tran Quoc Thao, D3
7.30am - 11.30am; 1.30pm - 3pm

The Czech Republic Consulate

28 Mac Dinh Chi, D1
Mon-Fri: 8am - 5pm Sat: 8am - 11.30am

The UK Consulate

25 Le Duan, D1
3829 8433
Mon-Thurs: 8.30am-12.30pm; 1.30pm - 4.45pm; Fri: 8.30am - 1pm

U.S. Consulate General Ho Chi Minh City

34 Le Duan, D1
3520 4610
Mon-Fri: 8am - 12pm; 1pm - 5pm

Ukraine Consulate

22-24 Nguyen Van Thu, D1
09 0987 5678
Mon-Fri: 8am-11am; 1.30pm - 5pm

insurance

ACE Life Insurance

One of the world's largest multiline property and casualty insurers, insurance products include universal life insurance, term life, whole life, riders, and global personal accident.
21st Floor, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1
3827 8989

AIG Vietnam

AIG's presence in Vietnam dates back to the 1920s, although modern operations began back in 2005. They

offer a wide range of personal and commercial insurance products.

9th Floor, Saigon Center, 65 Le Loi, D1
3914 0067

BaoViet Insurance Corporation

BaoViet is now the leading financial insurance group in Vietnam with more than 145 branches across 63 provinces.
23-25 Thai Van Lung, D1
3822 0247

BHNT Great Eastern

Life assurance & financial plans for customers of various age groups. The company's focus is on promoting health and longevity - they have the perfect incentive to do so, really.
Level 8, 25 Bis Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
6288 6339

Blue Cross

Blue Cross Vietnam is a Medical Insurance Administrator specializing in Health and Travel insurance in Asia. Our competitive advantage is in our design and administration of modern travel and medical insurance plans; plans built for people living and working in Vietnam.
Level 8, River View Tower, 7A Thai Van Lung, D1
3821 9908

InterGlobal

Offers insurance programs offered by ACE, Liberty, Seven Corners and other global insurers. Free consultation and custom quotes for most lines of insurance including health, travel, home, auto, motorbike, property, liability, and personal accident.

2nd Floor, Bao Viet Building, 233 Dong Khoi, D1
09 3487 4271

jpruss@iglobalassist.com | www.iglobalassist.com

Liberty Mutual Insurance

Liberty Mutual is a 100% US-owned general insurer licensed to provide insurance services directly to Vietnamese individuals and state-owned enterprises as well as motor insurance.

15th Floor, Kumho Asiana Plaza, 39 Le Duan, D1
3812 5125

LIG Insurance

The company provides property and casualty insurance, along with customer relations management and automobile claims support services and long-term insurance to individuals and corporations.

Unit 809, 8th Floor, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 9968

McLarens Young International

McLarens Young International is a global claims service provider that helps our clients achieve timely and equitable claims resolution.

9th Floor, Yoco Building, 41 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3821 3316

Prudential Vietnam

Prudential Vietnam is one of the leading life insurers nationwide, also providing a variety of financial solutions, with over 200 customer service centers, branch offices and general agency and business partner offices.

Unit 25F, Saigon Trade Centre, 37 Ton Duc Thang, D1
3910 1660

information technology

Asia Pacific Solutions

A software development and IT support service company, services include developing all kinds of engineering systems and implementing software solutions.

Suite 1201, 12th Floor, 111A Pasteur, D1 3825 1041

NTT Communications Vietnam

NTT Com Vietnam delivers high-quality ICT services to customers in Vietnam, providing voice and data communication infrastructure, and supporting SME

11th Floor, Sailing Tower, 111A Pasteur, D1 3827 3646

Oracle Vietnam

Oracle offers an optimized and fully integrated stack of business hardware and software systems, lowering the cost and complexity of IT implementation and management.

Suite 25 & 26, Sunwah Tower, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1

Prism Smart IT

Prism is a foreign-owned Information and Communications Technology company that offers IT Managed Services and Total Business Solutions to companies throughout Vietnam.

4th Floor, Yoco Building, 41 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1

law firms

Apex Law

The Apex management system represents a creative edge in meeting the evolving legal landscape in this country.

Unit 4A2, 4F Nam Han Office Building, 65 Nguyen Du, D1 3822 2942 012 6479 9212

Baker & McKenzie

Baker & McKenzie is a law company with over 72 branches around the world, including offices in Australia, China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Canada, and the United States. Has a team of 4000 highly trained and insightful lawyers.

12th Floor, Saigon Tower, 29 Le Duan, D1

J&P Law Firm

J&P Law is a full-service law firm providing the highest quality legal services to both international and domestic clients, and its widely-recognized practice areas include Corporate, M&A and Finance.

Level 7 - Room 702, 81-85 Ham Nghi, D1 3910 0619

Logos Law Firm

Logos HCMC Office offers comprehensive legal services in a wide range of subject areas for foreign investors in Vietnam through highly qualified lawyers licensed in Korea, Vietnam, and the United States.

Unit 2002B, 72-74 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D3 3822 7161

Nishimura & Asahi

Nishimura & Asahi is one of Japan's premier full-service law firms, covering all aspects of domestic and international business and corporate activity.

Unit 704, 7th Floor, Sunwah Tower, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1 3821 4432

Phuoc & Partners Company

Phuoc & Partners is an independent law and consulting firm with integrated legal and tax practices. The firm enables clients to reduce their administrative

overhead and focus on core business activities.

Room 1602, Level 16, Centec Tower, 72-74 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, Ward 6, D3 3823 5895

PricewaterhouseCoopers

PwC boasts a thorough understanding of the transitional economy of Vietnam and a wide knowledge of policies and procedures covering investment, tax and accounting, and consulting throughout the country.

4th Floor Saigon Tower, 29 Le Duan, D1 3825 1947

marketing

Ambrij Vietnam

Specialist supplier in the concept, design, production and supply of corporate gifts and merchandise.

14-16-18 Chu Manh Trinh, D1

Bates 141 Vietnam

The Vietnamese brand of a global WWP social media marketing company. Bates 141 has bases in 11 countries across Asia and counts HSBC, Unilever, Avon, and more amongst its ranks of prestigious clients.

7th Floor, Vietnam Business Center, 57-59 Ho Tung Mau, D1

Edge Marketing

Particularly dynamic local marketing firm, committed to a "highly productive collision of creativity and technology". The firm's international staff bring local and foreign perspectives to each campaign.

1Bis Ngo Van Nam, D1 3911 1190

Ogilvy & Mather

An international advertising agency, O&M aims to be "the most local of the internationals and most international of the locals" in the advertising market.

12th Floor, 72-74 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, Ward 6, D3 3821 9529

Purple Asia

Purple Asia stands out as one of the most unique advertising design firms in the city, with a commitment to making brands perform better on the hard-to-crack local market.

Melody Tower, 422-424 Ung Van Kiem, Binh Thanh 3898 1005

Red

A branding consultancy and marketing agency team inspired to give your brand impact. Long established, red create and shape unique brand personalities to form emotional connections between people and brands. The team regularly share branding insights at red.tm/blog.

10 Phan Ngu, D1 3820 0169 info@red.tm | www.red.tm

Saatchi & Saatchi - The Lovemarks Company

This world-class international advertising firm has grown from strength to strength in Vietnam, picking up some major clients and showing exponential growth in the local market.

3 Phan Van Dat, D1 3824 1207

media

GroupM - MEC Media

The focus of GroupM is the intelligent application of physical and intellectual scale to benefit trading, innovation, and new communication services to bring competitive advantage to clients and companies.

Level 6, 111A Pasteur, D1 3821 2233

S3 Studios

The first international calibre, full-service production house and studio in Vietnam, S3 is designed to accommodate commercial photography, film & video productions and events.

1K Ngo Van So, D4 3941 1179

real estate agencies

Colliers International Vietnam

Globally, Colliers International is a leading commercial real estate services company offering comprehensive expertise to investors, owners and tenants around the world.

Bitexco Office Building, 7th Floor, 19-25 Nguyen Hue, D1 3823 3529

Cushman & Wakefield Vietnam

Their primary focus is on consultancy, brokerage, and investment across the retail, office, and hospitality sectors.

Level 2, Pathfinder Building, 52 Dong Du, D1 6291 4707

House Link

House Link offers a wide array of apartments and houses for lease all over Ho Chi Minh City.

23 Phung Khac Khoan, D1 3824 5271

Realty World

Focuses on real estate business, consulting, managing, and marketing. Currently they specialize in apartments, office buildings, and villas.

111 Nguyen Huu Canh, Ward 22, Binh Thanh 3899 4979

Savills

Savills PLC is a global real estate services provider listed on the London Stock Exchange.

Avalon building, 53 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1 3825 8598 090 396 8097

The Nest

The Nest is a customer-dedicated property company focusing on leasing luxurious properties in Saigon. French-Vietnamese managed with over four years of property experience.

369/6 Do Xuan Hop, Phuoc Long B, D9 090 319 8901

recruiters

Opus Recruitment

Opus group was originally a unit under KPMG Thailand that defected to run independently, focusing on quality executive searches.

2A Rolanno Offices, 128 Nguyen Phi Khanh, Tan Dinh, D1 3827 8209

Navigos Group & Vietnam Works

Navigos Group provides recruitment solutions in Vietnam. Services include VietnamWorks (which posts about 200 new jobs per day) and Navigos Search (the leading recruitment firm in Vietnam).

130 Suong Nguyet Anh, D1 3925 5000

Odgers Berndtson Vietnam

A global firm specializing in the recruitment of senior level executives, the firm employs experienced professionals from specific market areas to provide discreet access to

industry leaders.

Suite 1609, 1st Floor, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1 3827 8777

relocation

AGS Four Winds (Vietnam)

Global leader in international removals & relocations, with 128 offices in 78 countries, they can move you to/or from any location worldwide.

5th Floor, Lafayette De Saigon, 8A Phung Khac Khoan, D1 3521 0071

ags-vietnam@agsfourwinds.com | www.agsfourwinds.com

Allied Pickfords

One of the largest and most respected providers of moving services worldwide, AP assumes complete responsibility for all moving services through a single point of contact.

District 1 0122 5141 848

Asian Tigers

Pan-Asian moving firm with a perhaps unrivalled level of experience and expertise in packing, storing and moving a family's treasured belongings throughout this region and beyond.

9th Floor, Unit 9.3, 9 Doan Van Bo, Ward 13, D4 3826 7799

Crown Line

Crown Line is a well-known Japanese moving firm now operating out of Ho Chi Minh City.

60 Nguyen Van Thu, D1

JVK International Movers

Focused primarily on the international and local movement of household goods since 1979, JVK has established itself as a leader in this unique transportation field.

1st Floor, Saigon Port Building, 3 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4 3826 7655

Santa Fe Relocation Services

With over 150 offices around the globe, Santa Fe's core services are local and international moving, pet transportation, relocation services including home search, orientation, cultural training, immigration services and records management.

8th Floor, Thien Son Building, 5 Nguyen Gia Thieu, D3 3933 0065 info@santaferelo.com.vn

shipping

HL Shipping

A worldwide freight forwarder offering dedicated, integral services in the international trade market providing a reliable, customer-oriented, and cost-effective coverage of all shipping needs, including a comprehensive assessment of all costs and assurance of on-time delivery for each segment. Competent service in English direct from the MD Jeff Tran.

29 Huynh Van Banh, Ward 17, Phu Nhuan 3995 6117 23 Tran Nao, Binh An, D2 3744 2281

Sagawa Express Vietnam

A subsidiary of Sagawa Holdings Group, this firm specialises in providing solutions to general logistics issues in Vietnam, and it has a general logistics certificate unique in this country.

169 Dien Bien Phu, Ward 15, Binh Thanh 3840 9330 090 900 3649

The Outer Districts

IMAGE BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY



Much Ado About a Party

Without venturing to District 1 or braving the crowd at the markets, is it possible to organize a kid's birthday with all the knick-knacks within the perimeter of District 7?

TEXT BY **LYRA DACIO** IMAGES BY **QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY**

BEFORE YOU GET too excited about the nitty-gritty details of your kid's party, you have to clinch the deal first with the proper place. District 7 lacks choices when it comes to venues unless you have a villa for a home. For the majority of condo-living families in this area, party space is a major problem.

Kids Yard at Thien Son Plaza is one of the more well-known venues with its play gym, toys and other fun activities that will surely keep your kid and their friends busy. They also offer birthday packages complete with cake, decorations, and food (package price starts at VND800,000).

If your child is keen on Lego, **Lego Brain** at Grand View D is the place for them. Kids will have a field day with all the building they can do. The store doesn't have a fixed package; cost is VND100,000 per hour less 10 percent for 10 kids, 20 percent for 20 kids, and so on. And if you want exclusive use of the place, you'll have to pay extra. They allow food to be brought in too.

If you can bring your own entertainment, there are other places you can check out for a party in District 7. **Bizu Hotel** (15-17 Cao Trieu Phat) has a conference room complete with tables, chairs, sound system, and projector. **Maia Café** (R2-1 Hung Phuoc 2, Bui Bang Doan) and **Premium Gourmet** (R4-47 Bui Bang Doan, Hung Phuoc 4) have roomy floor areas for parties. For some, with the many fast food chains that have popped up in this area - like Dominos, Popeye's, and Texas Chicken - it may very well be more practical to just have the party there and order in food.

Food

No party is complete without the food of course, and if your venue of choice isn't a restaurant, you'll have to either cook all the food yourself (yeah right!) or hire a caterer. For Western cuisine **Scott and Binh's**, located in Bizu Hotel, does catering. Sometimes the best option is to call in some favors and friends, like foodie moms, **Mitch and Sheila** (sealtiel12@yahoo.com.ph). This duo can whip up mouthwatering Filipino and American dishes, and for chocolate lovers, they can set up a chocolate fondue that will

have your kids bouncing around all day.

Let's not forget the centerpiece of any kids' party - the cake. And not just any cake but *the* cake. **The Cake Factory** (orders@cakefactory.vn) exquisitely sculpts cakes and cupcakes that will surely please everyone.

Keepsakes

Keeping your little guests entertained can be stressful and tiresome so it's always a good idea to bring in reinforcements. The Magic Man, Balloon Man, Face Painter, and Clown may just do the trick. A treasure trove of suppliers can be found at **Theme Parties Oi** (www.themeparties-oi.com) or just contact Kim of **M&N Design** (kimnguyen1908@yahoo.com.vn) to hook you up with your choice of entertainment.

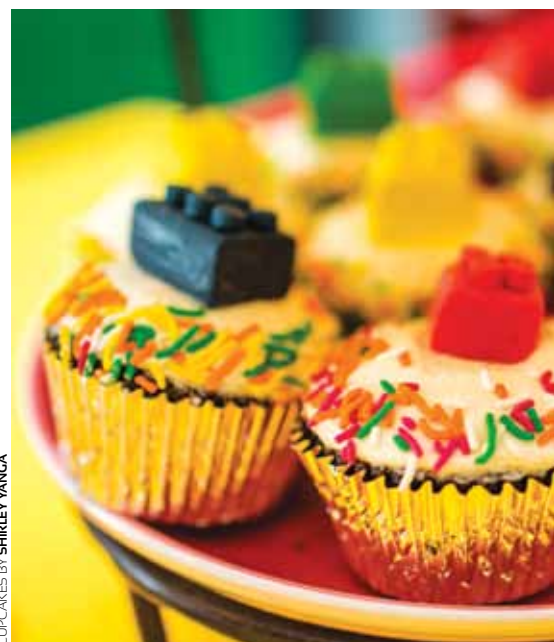
Another fun alternative for souvenirs (if you're too busy to assemble goodie bags), is District 7-based mobile photo booth, **Photo Oi** (www.photooi.com). They roll in the booth complete with backdrop, fun props, and lights - your very own photo studio. Kids can have fun dressing up and posing, and bring home memorabilia from the party. Photo Oi can also create invitation photomagnets to send out to your guests.

Heard of signature books? These are basically photo albums where guests can sign well-wishes to the celebrant. How to get one? Well, if you can't do the layout yourself, **Fujifilm** (87 Hoang Van Thai) can have the layout and printing professionally done for you (price starts at VND550,000 for a six by six booklet).

Décor

Hiring an event or set designer to dress up the party can be expensive so craft shops like **Friends** in Sky Garden 3 and **Kiets Stationary** (R2-36 My Phuc, Nam Quang 1) are great for doing it yourself. They sell balloons, decorations, and even party utensils. **K&B Mart** (S36-1 Hung Vuong 2 Block) is another good place where you can find popular character items from Disney and Pixar.

Party planning demands a lot of leg work and time. So spend your time wisely by keeping it in the neighborhood. It can be done! ■



CUPCAKES BY SHIRLEY YANCA



CAKE BY JELDA JAYNE MIRANDA





IMAGE BY NAM QUAN

Lauralynn Goetz, B.A., M.M.Ed. US, is a director of an early childhood education center in Vietnam

Babies Learn Best

Our columnist argues that learning a language doesn't require an age minimum

RECENTLY IN www.thanhniennews.com, an online local newspaper, I read an article about a new decree that will not allow Vietnamese children under five to attend international educational programs in the country. The decree's basic premise is: "Very early second-language acquisition would dilute the Vietnamese identity of children as well as their identification with Vietnamese culture and interfere with their ability to learn their mother tongue properly."

"If Vietnamese children study at international schools, they will very likely speak foreign languages instead of their mother tongue," Nguyen Thanh Huyen, deputy chief of the Education Ministry's International Cooperation Department, goes on to say.

My husband and I co-authored a white paper, now translated into 11 languages, which proves that the earlier children are involved in learning a second language, the more natural it is for them to understand and speak the language without diluting their mother tongue.

Internationally, there is a developing awareness of the importance of introducing foreign language instruction at the youngest age possible, and recent research indicates that a baby has the ability to learn any of the world languages. Linguist Patricia Kuhl ascertained this conclusion based upon brain measures in the form of electrophysiological scans (ERPs).

She documents the transformation that occurs between eight and ten months of age as infants learn to "take statistics" from

the language to which they're exposed, already beginning to determine which sounds are linguistically significant and which are not.

Adults are culture-bound listeners, but a six-to-eight month-old baby can

discrimination.

When exposed to a new language for the first time at nine months, infants will learn phonetically from a live, interacting human being, but not from a disembodied source, such as audio or television, even though the acoustic information remains the same in both situations.

International examples abound as English language learners in many countries begin their foreign language education as early as 15 months. In France, the Education Minister suggested in January 2011 to have children at age three begin English education in *maternelle*, or nursery school.

The most effective approach to facilitate English Language Learning (ELL) for very young children is the "Natural Approach." Its important underlying principle is an emphasis on language 'acquisition' as opposed to language 'processing'.

The child is encouraged to speak and think in the second or foreign language, and this takes precedence over analytical processing of formal language structure and syntax.

Meaning is considered the essence of language, and vocabulary, not grammar, the heart of language. Emphasizing the need to make children as comfortable as possible during the learning process, a wide range of activities including music, focused listening, movement (Total Physical Response – TPR), and story time

should be incorporated into the curriculum.

Have an education dilemma for our expert? Email us your question at education@oivietnam.com. ■



discriminate any sound in any language. In addition, new technology further verifies an already accepted premise that only human speech can trigger language



**Grab a copy of Oi
at these locations...**

Jaspas Restaurant

33 Dong Khoi, D1

Just Men Spa

40 Ton That Thiep, D1

La Brasserie de Saigon

38 Dong Du D1

La Villa

14 Ngo Quang Huy, D2

Long Monaco Restaurant

364 Cong Hoa, Tan Binh District

Lucca Coffee

88 Ho Tung Mau, D1

L'essential Restaurant

98 Ho Tung Mau, D1

L'usine

151 Dong Khoi, D1

McSorley's

D2 street, Binh Thanh District

Nathalie's

59 Hung Vuong, D7

Now Zone Coffee

R1-73 Bui Bang Doan
Hung Gia 3, D7

Pacharan

97 Hai Ba Trung, D1

Papaya Restaurant

68 Pham Viet Chanh
Binh Thanh District

Phatty's

46-48 Ton That Thiep, D1

Pizza Hut

364 Cong Hoa, Tan Binh District

Saigon Retro

113 Ho Tung Mau, D1

Sala Beer

28-29 Le Van Thiem
Tan Phong, D7

Sofitel Saigon Hotel

17 Le Duan, D1

Spice India Restaurant

56-1 Bui Bang Doan
Hung Vuong 3, D7

Stella

121D Bui Vien, D1

The Refinery

74 Hai Ba Trung, D1

The Tavern

R2-24 Hung Gia 3
Bui Bang Doan, D7

The Terrace Cafe

Saigon Centre
65 Le Loi, D1

Tokyo Deli

103 Ton Dat Tien
Tan Phong, Q7

Top Shop

2 Hai Trieu, D1

Vesper Bar

5B Ton Duc Thang, D1

Xu

71 Hai Ba Trung, D1

Zoom Cafe

169A De Tham, D1

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Moonlight Serenade

In Hoi An, when the full moon is out the city becomes spiritual



IMAGE BY NAM QUAN

A professional artist working in Vietnam, **Bridget March** has lectured at Leeds College of Art (UK) and practiced as a freelance product designer. She specializes in urban landscapes and aims to reveal the hidden treasures of city life and the richness of smaller town cultures through her illustrations. Bridget also holds drawing classes for beginners and improvers in Saigon. Find more of her work at BrushWithAsia.blogspot.com



IF YOU'RE LUCKY enough to be in Hoi An on the night of a full moon, you'll witness a delightful transformation taking place in the streets of the Old Town. A calm descends as the electric street lights are turned off and all the lanterns are lit. No traffic is allowed on the streets, not even bicycles. This is a night for promenading and connecting with Vietnam's rich cultural heritage.

The full moon is an auspicious night all over Vietnam. It is a night for people to remember their ancestors. Families and friends will gather around courtyard or pavement altars to drink tea and wait to see the moon's reflection in their cups. On these table altars are the yellow flowers purchased that morning at the market, incense sticks, maybe a little clay figure of the jade rabbit and a collection of offerings of fruit, tea and wine. Some may make offerings to Chang'e who, according to Chinese mythology, drank the elixir of immortality and floated up to

the moon. Some may honor the spirits that connect this world to the past and to the future, the spirits that run in the rivers and blow through the trees and that bind all humans to the natural and the supernatural.

Similar to the Lunar New Year (Tet) festival that takes place in January or February, the market women sell sunshine yellow chrysanthemums and marigolds especially for this occasion. Bunches of flowers are swept up into baskets and bicycle panniers; they are tucked under arms and squashed in with the groceries to be taken home for the evening's celebrations. They make tributes of yellow flowers that signify hope and family happiness, or perhaps, a wish for a new baby.

Another aspect of Vietnamese life is their love of playing games. Any time of day or night, groups of men gather around card games or chess boards but on full moon night you can see Chinese chess up close because games are staged outside some of the ancient

houses and temples. Dressed in traditional Vietnamese costume, men play the game by candle light and welcome onlookers. If you want to take part, they will even introduce you to the rudiments of the game.

Other full moon festivals in Vietnam are *Ram Thang Bay* during the seventh lunar month when families give thanks to parents and ancestors and make offerings to pardon lost or wandering souls. The famous Mid-Autumn Festival in the eighth lunar month, which is celebrated throughout East Asia, is a time for homecoming and harvest and is marked by the exchange of moon cakes. In ancient times, Confucian scholars used to make up poems for impromptu performances on the night of this festival each year. Now this tradition is remembered each month in Hoi An as poetry readings are staged around the town.

To find out about future full moon dates, visit www.hoi-an-tourism.com.

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REFINE *Asia*

Your Perfect Asia



>>The List District 2



Atexpats is Ho Chi Minh City's first truly comprehensive insider's guide for foreign residents - website launching 2013

food & drink

BAKERIES

Voelker

French bakery selling fresh breads, pastries and chocolate
39 Thao Dien, D2
6296 0066
voelker-vietnam.com

BARS

Mcsorley's

Recently opened Irish pub with a swimming pool and outdoor patio. Serves pub grub with events and theme nights happening regularly.
4 Thao Dien, D2
3519 4659
www.mcsorleys.vn
3pm - midnight weekdays,
10am - late weekends

Papagayo Saigon

A resort-style design and French Mediterranean food are the make-up of this newly opened hangout.
18 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2
6252 1333
papagayo.saigon@gmail.com
11am-3pm Tuesday - Sunday, 6pm-10pm

Buddha Bar

One of the long standing bars in the area, it has a pool table, darts, big screen tvs along with cheap beers and bar food.
7 Thao Dien, D2
3744 2080
5pm - 9pm, Monday - Sunday

restaurants

FRENCH

Gastrohome

New delicatessen shop offering western-fusion French food by French chef Stephane Courtin. Visit the shop or try their catering service.
100 Xuan Thuy, D2
6281 9830
7.30am - 9pm

La Villa ✓ Oi's Pick

This Colonial-style villa set in a quietly gentrified district 2 street is a cache of luxury with its beautiful poolside garden and cosy, scenic white-toned dining room area. Dine outside or in, on an off-the-cuff menu prepared by the French chef, based on the best market ingredients available on the day. Set amongst the flowers and with a ring of the lost charm of the Colonial era, this is an appealing and impressive venue for An Phu's high-profile community.
14 Ngo Quang Huy, D2
3898 2082
www.lavilla-restaurant.com.vn
Lunch (11.45 - 3pm), dinner (6.45 to late),
Closed Sundays
*Reviewed in Oi March 2013

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
Open for lunch and dinner from Tuesday to Sunday

ITALIAN

Pendolasco - Thao Dien

The original Pendolasco has been an institution in Saigon since the late 90's, and this newer venue picks up on the

success of the parent restaurant in the more gentrified An Phu area. Accordingly, the D2 Pendolasco is somewhat classier than its namesake in backpacker-laden D1. Expect excellent classic Italian cuisine - wood-fired pizza, spaghetti, and tiramisu - cooked with a focus on fresh flavours and featuring the finest imported ingredients from Italy.
36 Tong Huu Dinh, D2
62532888
www.pendolasco.vn
info@pendolasco.vn
11am - 10pm

Sarpino's Pizzeria

Sarpino's Pizzeria is a famous pizza brand from Canada with three branches around Ho Chi Minh City that specializes in pizza, pasta and rice.
43 Thao Dien, D2
3744 2132

JAPANESE

Tama River-Japanese Restaurant

Bottles of sake fill shelves along the wall behind the sushi bar, and unique Japanese paintings add a nice visual touch. Since opening four months ago, the restaurant has attracted a diverse clientele, from locals to expats.
14E1 Thao Dien, D2
3744 6782
10am - 2pm and 5 - 10pm

Chisana Hashi

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

THAI

Baan Thai

Baan Thai serves authentic Thai cuisine using a considerable variety of tastes and spices prepared by Thai chefs. Generally speaking, the cuisine leans more towards being authentic in taste than serving the more internationalised versions of Thai cuisine available elsewhere.
55 Thao Dien, D2
3744 5453
www.baanthai-anphu.com
11am - 11pm Sunday to Thursday. Open until midnight on Friday and Saturday

Jasmine Thai

A laid-back enclave of fine Thai dining in the high-class area of District 2, Jasmine Thai is a quiet, candle-lit affair awash in the ethereal tones of Thai traditional music. Thai is a cuisine that's difficult to get right even in Thailand, and in Ho Chi Minh City the quality and authenticity is known to vary - expect here variations on dishes you'll find throughout the Thai culinary tradition with features more common to those restaurants serving in Western nations.
85 Quoc Huong, D2
3519 0038

VIETNAMESE

Baniam Tree

A fine dining Vietnamese restaurant that serves authentic Vietnamese cuisine. Baniam Tree is part of the Khai Silk group so the design is extremely well thought out, gleaming wooden surfaces complementing the red signature walls. Offers a set lunch, set dinner and international breakfast
River Garden, 170 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
6683 5308
6.30am - 10.30pm

WESTERN/ 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
7.30am - 11pm

Mekong Merchant

Set in a colonial house within an open-air courtyard surrounding, this restaurant serves delicious pizza, sandwiches, smoothies with an extensive wine list.
23 Thao Dien, D2
3744 4713
8am - 10pm

Snap Cafe

By day, Snap Cafe is a community-centered, family-friendly cafe and restaurant. By night, guests can enjoy live music, sports on the big screen, quiz nights, pool, foosball, and more. Serves international cafe fare, great food, icy-cold draught beer and wine by the carafe. The space is a large open-plan room with an attached garden and play area for kids. Holds regular movie screenings.
32 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2
35194532
www.snap.com.vn
7.30am - 10.30pm

The Deck

Located on the banks of the Saigon River, this restaurant offers great international and Vietnamese fare.
38 Nguyen U Di, D2
3744 6632
www.thedecksaiagon.com
8.30am to late

Vino

They offer professional advice on selecting and tasting wines. The outdoor terrace area is the perfect spot to sample a new vintage and brunches on the weekends.
NO.1, Street 2nd, D2
6281 9059
www.vinovietnam.com

supermarkets

Annam Gourmet

An upscale deli and grocery chain offering gourmet groceries, cheese, organic products, gluten-free products, fruit and vegetables, gourmet deli, wine and other beverages. All locations, in District 1, 2 and 7, have a coffee lounge that serves breakfast, lunch, drinks and early dinner.
16-18 Hai Ba Trung, D1. 3822 9391
41A Thao Dien street. D2. 3744 2630
582-1 My Khanh 4, Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
5412 3263 / 5412 3264
www.annam-gourmet.com

An Phu Supermarket

Large supermarket stocking a wide range well-known international brands of dry goods along with fresh groceries, frozen meat and fish, fresh fruit and vegetables, cheese, wine, toiletries and more
43 Thao Dien, D2

Classic Fine Foods

Supplier of international brand foodstuff like Illy, Valrhona, Bonne Maman along with fresh vegetables, dairy, and meat.
No. 17, Street 12, D2
3740 7105

www.classicfinefoods.com

Metro

Wholesale suppliers of foodstuff, office supplies, furniture, clothes and more. Entry is reserved for business owners only but foreigners can obtain a one-day pass by showing their passports.
Residential An Phu, An Khanh Ward 2
3740 6677
6am - 9pm, Monday - Sunday

business

LAW FIRMS

Nguyen Giep Law Firm

14 Tran Nao, D2
3740 7812
www.hangluatnguyengiep.com
8am - 5pm

Dang Khuong

26 Street 44, D2
8224 09726

MARKETING & ADVERTISING

Industrial Design Asia

Offers design engineering and innovation consultancy for plastics, consumer products, electronics, metal parts. Dutch industrial designers with over 10 years of working experience in Asia. Contact them to get a free quotation.
VILLA B, 12A Street Number 12, D2
3740 6388

Thanh Tung

Prints digital, cuts decal, LED signs, Braille and stainless neon materials to ensure compliance with quality.
373 Luong Dinh Cua, D2
090 952 1411

REAL ESTATE AGENCIES

Namhouse

Provides rental properties for home and office use, focusing in the District 2 area.
48A Tran Ngoc Dien, D2
098 900 7700
www.namhouse.com.vn

Snap Café

Has an extensive list of property rentals in District 2.
32 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2
3519 4282
www.snap.com.vn
7.30am - 10.30pm

health & beauty

DENTISTS

European Dental Clinic

This is the dental clinic's second location in Ho Chi Minh City. Experienced practitioners, latest technology, most dentists from UK and France. Offering state of the art technology, competitive pricing, and supreme quality, this dentistry is truly dedicated to their patients.
17-17A Le Van Mien, D2
091 874 9204 or 090 955 1916
www.europeandentalclinic-asia.com

Saigon Smile

With a group of experienced doctors and professional staff trained to do teeth cleaning, dental work and other teeth enhancing procedures.
96 Tran Nao, D2
6674 4255
8am to 8pm

Nu Cuoi Hoan My (Perfect Smile)

14-16 Tran Nao, D2
3740 7470

hoanmysmile@gmail.com
8am to 8pm

Dental Truong Thanh

276 Tran Nao, D2
5402 3009
www.nhakhoatruongthanh.com
8am to 8pm

FITNESS

Ais Sports Complex

Open to the public, the center has a 25m swimming pool, basketball court and an astroturf play area. Inquire about special packages.

APSC Compound, 36 Thao Dien, D2
3744 2549
www.aissportscentre.com

Cyril And You

French physical instructor Cyril specializes in sports conditioning, resistance training and senior training along with designing a personal fitness program to fit your needs. Holds regular sessions at Boathouse.

Thao Dien, D2
094 777 1326
www.cyril-and-you.com

NTFQ2

Besides an excellent weights and cardio area, the facility runs group classes including power yoga, pilates, circuit training, martial arts and spinning. The centre also contains a spa and a restaurant serving up calorie-calibrated meals to help members stay in line with individual fitness programs.

34 Nguyen Dang Giai, D2
3744 6672
www.nutrifort.com

Thien Nga (Swan) Club

Fitness club that has training equipment and a 25sqm swimming pool

751 Xuan Thuy, D2
3899 0012

X-Rock Climbing

With two locations in the city, this wall in An Phu stands at 26 meters. The center offers nine levels from beginners to hardcore.

503A Nguyen Duy Trinh, D2
2210 9192
www.xrockclimbing.com

Yoga Club

Yogo fitness center for both men and women

18 Street Number 2, D2
3897 6786

HOSPITALS & CLINICS

Animal Rescue & Care

A.R.C. was founded in 2010 to directly address the plight of abused and abandoned animals in Ho Chi Minh City. Abandoned and wild cats and dogs can be adopted or fostered from their online database. ARC also organizes several animal welfare education and low-cost spaying campaigns. New volunteers are always welcomed there.

31-44 Thao Dien, D2
arcpets@gmail.com
www.arcpets.com

An Phu International Clinic

An international standard clinic with a full range of specialist and modern medical equipment with a dedicated team of professors, doctors, experienced nurses.

251A Luong Dinh Cua, D2
6660 6602
www.dakhoaanphu.com
info@dakhoaanphu.com
8am to 5pm

Family Medical Practice

With a nationwide operational advantage, they provide international standard medical services in a safe, professional and welcoming environment.

95 Thao Dien, D2
3744 2000
www.vietnammedicalpractice.com

hcmc@vietnammedicalpractice.com
8am-6pm Monday-Friday, 8am-2pm Saturday

SPAS

Cochincochine Luxury Spa & Fitness

La Cochincochine Luxury Spa & Fitness assists in improving the mental and physical state of a person using and will traditional Vietnamese, Indian, Chinese herbal remedies and techniques.

Rex Hotel, 141 Nguyen Hue, D1
3825 1812
www.lacochinchine-hcm.net

Saigon Dep

The clinic treats various skin diseases and offers skin care protection and prevention packages.

79 Xuan Thuy, D2
3899 0448
www.saigondep.net
sgd@saigondep.net

Thao Dien Village

Within this tourist complex is a luxury spa and wellness center.

189 - 197, 197/1 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
3744 2222

The Royal Spa And Salon

Services include acrylic nails, facials, hair salons and massages

14E14 Thao Dien, D2
3519 4873
9am - 9pm

shopping

HOME INTERIORS

Austin Home

Furniture shop that stocks art deco pieces, cushions, fabrics and wooden ornaments for the home

20 Thao Dien, D2
3519 0023
6am - 6.30pm

Clic Clac Sofa

Sells sofas that double up as beds in various sizes and wood

327F Luong Dinh Cua, D2
5402 7434
www.clicclacsofa.com

education

SCHOOLS

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.aisvietnam.com

British International School

Offers pre-school to secondary education under the English national curriculum.

225 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
3744 2335
www.bisvietnam.com

Horizon International Bilingual School

A bilingual school, HIBS opened in 2005 and applies 100 percent of the Vietnamese national curriculum, MOET, as well as providing students with an intensive English program along with teaching science and math in English.

6 - 6A - 8, 44 Street, D2
5402 24 82
hibsvietnam.com
info@hibsvietnam.com

L'atelier

A French language center offering

classes in all forms to children and adults. Classes include spelling and grammar tuition after school, monitoring for the French education program, preparing for official tests (DEFL, DAFL, TFL, IB), and Vietnamese lessons, including extra-curricular activities during the holidays.

33/19 Quoc Huong, D2
3744 6844
www.latelier-anphu.com

Saigon Sports Academy

A multi-sports training school that teaches chess, swimming, tennis, soccer, among others.

28 Tran Nao, D2
7303 1100

Smartkids

An international childcare centre provides kindergarten and pre-school education for children between 18 months and six years old. A fun and friendly environment, the school focuses on learning through play.

1172 Thao Dien Compound, D2
3744 6076
www.smarthidsinfo.com

travel

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Exotissimo

With 20 years of operations in the region, they offer unique travel experiences with destination-based offices in Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand, Japan and China.

41 Thao Dien, D2
3519 4111
www.exotissimo.com
yen@exotissimo.com
9am - 9pm

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Specializes in providing tickets for Eva Airlines, Qatar Airways, China Airlines, Cathay Pacific, American Airlines, Singapore Air, Malaysia Airlines, Korean Airlines, Qantas Airways, Lufthansa, United Airlines and many other international airlines.

6483 Xuan Thuy, D2
6674 9041

SERVICED APARTMENTS

Fidco River View Apartment

The Fidco River View Apartment is located in a safe and secure area in district 2, offering tenants luxurious amenities with a panoramic view of Saigon.

14 Thao Dien, D2

Riverside Apts

Overlooking the Saigon River, the compound offers short and long term leases.

53 Vo Truong Toan, D2
37 444 111
www.riverside-apartments.com

River Garden Apartment

River Garden is the first luxury river-view condominium development in HCMC. It is located within a 15-minute drive of downtown and provides its occupants with stunning views of the Saigon River in a resort type of environment.

170 Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien, D2

Somerset Vista Ho Chi Minh City

Enjoy all the space you need for a balanced and enriching lifestyle while staying at the new Somerset Vista Ho Chi Minh City. It has an extensive array of modern facilities and provides convenient access to a hypermarket, international schools, a medical clinic, retail outlets and offices.

628C Hanoi Highway, D2
6255 9900
www.somerset.com/vietnam

Villa Song Saigon

Colonial-style, boutique apartments characterised by solid hardwood flooring and an outdoor swimming pool enconced by verdant gardens.

197/2, Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien, D 2
37446090
0906099180
www.villasong.com



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>>The List District 7



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food & drink

BAKERIES

Savouré Bakery

Offering gourmet cakes and pastries with all the fine characteristics of the European gourmet tradition. Customers can choose from a wide array of baked goods including cakes, desserts, breads, cookies, wedding cakes, and moon cakes during the season.

Grand View, SD 4-1, Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
5412 2469
www.savourebakery.com

BARS

Peaches

A spacious, attractive restobar with comfortable, lounge-style seating and a bar area, this watering hole mixes three beers on tap and a large screen for live sports with a pan-Asian curry menu.

S57-1 Sky Garden 2, D7
5410 0999

The Tavern

The Tavern is a Western pub & restaurant where patrons can play darts & pool, watch football or enjoy reasonably priced food and drinks.

R2-24 Hung Gia 3, Bui Bang Doan, D7
5410 3900

CAFES

Baskin Robbins

With more than 7000 branches in more than 50 countries, Baskin Robbins is the largest ice-cream chain in the world with flavors such as Baseball Nut and Lunar Cheesecake.

105 Ton Dat Tien, D7
7308 3131
www.baskinrobbins.vn

Bud's

Bringing the taste of American ice cream to Vietnam, Bud's Ice Cream has nine stores in Ho Chi Minh City. Apart from a variety of delicious ice cream flavors, Bud's also offers a wide range of Western and Vietnamese food.

SD - 04 Panorama Residential Complex, D7
3932 2778
www.budsicecream.com.vn

Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf

The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf serves some of the best coffee and tea from around the world. It also has a full line of baked goods made from high quality ingredients, most of which are from their own proprietary recipes.

Ground Floor, Crescent Mall, Ton Dat Tien, D7
3824 4527
www.coffeebean.com.vn

FB Deli Coffee

FB Deli Coffee features a unique black and white design and signature coffee beans imported from Italy. Guests can also enjoy many varieties of homemade cakes, along with Tiramisu, muffins, and sandwiches. All cakes 50% off from 7 to 10pm.

SE-1 My Khanh 2 Apartments, D7
5411 9696
8am - 10pm

The Fountain Coffee Ice Cream

Known for its Swiss ice cream with all the fixings, Fountain Coffee also serves Western dishes in a spacious lounge area.

SB4-1 My Duc Residential Complex, Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
5412 3257

MOF Japanese Sweets & Coffee Crescent

Sourcing the majority of their dessert

ingredients from Hokkaido, Japan, MOF serves up premium desserts and a Japanese restaurant menu.

101 Ton Dat Tien, D7
www.mof.com.vn/en
10am - 9.45pm

NYDC

Established in 1995 in Singapore, NYDC, The New York Dessert Café, aims to bring a piece of New York to Southeast Asia with their popular mudpies and a whole range of Western comfort foods.

107 Ton Dat Tien, D7
5413 6523

S'cottage Restaurant - Café

Inspired by the mysterious wooden house in the Hansel and Gretel story, S'cottage serves up home-style meals in a spacious, fairy-tale inspired space.

SB-02 My Duc Residential Complex, Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
5411 1186

restaurants

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.

Reviewed in Oi April 2013
Block 07-08 CRI-07, 103 Ton Dat Tien, D7
5413 7932
Monday - Friday: 11am - 10.30pm
Weekends: 10am - 10.30pm

CHINESE

Huong Vien Hunanese Restaurant

Serving China's little-known spiciest cuisine, the dishes of China's reddest province and the preferred taste of Chairman Mao, Huong Vien is well-decorated although a bit on the pricey side, with dishes averaging VND180,000.

S59-S61, Sky Garden 2 Apartments, D7
5410 4368

Ming Dynasty

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

23 Nguyen Khac Vien, D7
5411 5555

INDIAN

Ashoka

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

S9-1 Block R13, Bui Bang Doan, D7
5410 1989

ITALIAN

Sarpino's

Sarpino's Pizzeria serves authentic Italian pizzas as well as other Italian dishes such as oven-baked pasta, baked rice, wraps and salad, all at reasonable prices.

351 12-1 Grandview, Nguyen Cao Nam, D7
5412 2480
www.sarpinos.vn
9am - 10.30pm

Salt & Pepper Italian Restaurant

Located in the modern confines of The

Crescent, this contemporary-styled Italian restaurant and pizzeria has an open kitchen and an outdoor terrace area. Serving up a range of pan-Italian cuisine, the menu includes a selection of salads, pastas, main courses, pizzas and desserts, all at affordable prices.

103 Ton Dat Tien, D7 | 5412 4848
www.saltpepper.com.vn

11am - 2pm, 6pm - 11pm

JAPANESE

Baby Spoon

Famous for its extensive omurice menu (fried rice wrapped inside an egg omelette), Baby Spoon offers contemporary Japanese-Western fusion cuisine. Baby Spoon omurice (green bell peppers, bacon, tomato sauce omurice) is the house specialty.

SB 2-1 Parkview, D7
3822 3356

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
5412 3940

THAI

Nathalie's Phu My Hung

Nathalie's Phu My Hung is situated in an ideal location on a central corner in the district 7 high-profile metropolitan area. Serving delicious Thai cuisine in charming and romantic surroundings, the restaurant has two floors with a unified, simple decor and warm colourful tones throughout.

S9 Hung Vuong 3 Apartments, D7
5410 0822
www.nathaliesrestaurant.com

Thai Express- Crescent Plaza

Thai Express's interpretation of Thai food exhibits the best of the cuisine but with the edges softened for a global palate unused to the extremes of Thai style cooking. Averaging from 40,000 VND to 200,000 VND per dish, its price can't be beat for the same quality and deliciousness.

105 Ton Dat Tien, D7
5415 5556
www.thaiaexpress.vn

VIETNAMESE

Co Ba Vung Tau

Co Ba Vung Tau is a chain of traditional Vietnamese restaurants serving up their famous banh khot amongst an extensive menu of affordable Vietnamese food.

R1-72 Hung Gia 1, Bui Bang Doan, D7
5410 2027

ASIAN

Cham Charm

Charm is more like a museum than a dining venue, filled with the artefacts and sculpture of the Champa people and with gorgeous artworks and colourful hangings on the walls. The upstairs area is a wide-open terrace with plenty of tables for a more relaxing atmosphere. The cuisine is pan-Asian.

2 Phan Van Chuong, D7

WESTERN/INTERNATIONAL

Boomerang Bistro Saigon

Located in The Crescent by the Crescent lake, the spacious Boomerang

Bistro Saigon serves Australian and other Western food in the most pedestrian friendly part of town.

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

Cham Charm

Famous for their extensive international nightly buffet featuring 8 types of oysters, American Angus beef and Australian filets, Cham Charm is devoted to Cham arts, culture and cuisine and is tastefully decorated with Cham artifacts and sculptural works.

02 Phan Van Chuong, Phu My Hung New Urban, D7
5410 9999

El Gaucho

El Gaucho Argentinian Steakhouse is an international chain of restaurants serving authentic Argentinian cuisine in a space reflecting modern yet rustic decor, giving it an inviting ambience and genuine atmosphere.

Unit CRI-12, The Crescent, D7
3825 1879
www.elgaucho.com.vn

Scott and Binh's Restaurant

A whole bunch of independent reviewers on tripadvisor can't be wrong - this unassuming little bistro is making big waves with visitors to the city and resident expats alike. Scott & Binh's offers comfort food for those craving a taste of the Western hemisphere, with the aim of giving guests a sense of having been invited into someone's home for dinner. With a menu replete with tasty sandwiches, burgers, pasta, and various other international dishes, this is an ideal guilty hideaway from Vietnamese cuisine for just one meal at least.

15-17 Cao Trieu Phat, D7
3920 8986
4pm - 11pm Tue-Fri; 11am - 3pm Sat; 4pm - 11pm Sun

supermarkets

Annam Gourmet

An upmarket deli-grocery chain offering gourmet groceries, cheese, organic products, gluten-free products, fruit and vegetables, gourmet deli, wine and other beverages. This location also features a coffee lounge.

SB2-1 My Khanh 4, Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
5412 3263/64

Citimart

Despite being smaller in floor size than some other supermarkets, Citimart, a large Vietnamese supermarket chain, carries a wide selection of imported goods.

SC-10 Green View, Nguyen Luong Bang, D7
5411 2238
B3-4, B3-5, B3-6 Ha Huy Tap, D7
3412 8008
S4-1 Hung Vuong 3, Nguyen Van Linh, D7
5410 1040

Lotte Mart

Lotte Mart is a South Korean supermarket chain with two branches in Ho Chi Minh City carrying a very wide range of products.

469 Nguyen Huu Tho, D7
3771 8989

Veggy's

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

554-I Sky Garden 2, Pham Van Nghi, D7
5410 2613

business

BANKS

ANZ Bank

47 Phu My Hung
5410 1666

www.anz.com/vietnam/vn

HUMAN RESOURCES

Xage Consultancy

A human resource management consulting firm that develops people and organizations specializing in talent development, organizational development and outplacement.

35A-I-2, 1st Floor, Grandview C, Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
5412 3402

MARKETING & ADVERTISING

Xone FM

The first independently run radio station in Vietnam, Xone FM provides the latest and hottest songs in both English and Vietnamese via 10 channels throughout the country.

100 Nguyen Luong Bang, D7
5413 5341

REAL ESTATE AGENCIES

Anh Nguyen Real Estate

Anh Nguyen specializes in rental and sales of residences in Phu My Hung.

168 Ha Huy Tap, D7
090 958 2489

Vietnam Housing

Vietnam Housing specializes in helping Vietnam's foreign community with their long- and short-term real estate rental and purchasing needs.

RI-49, Hung Gia 3, D7
5412 5979

health & beauty

DENTISTS

Naomi Dental Clinic

A full service dental clinic under the direction of Japanese dentist Dr. Nakashima Mikio.

R4-45 Hung Phuoc 4, D7
5410 3937

HOSPITALS

FV Hospital

French Hospital - Vietnam is a multi-specialty hospital equipped with modern equipment and providing a full range of medical services including medical and health advice, diagnosis and surgical treatment at a single point.

6 Nguyen Luong Bang, D7
5411 3333

SALON

Yuri

A full-range Korean beauty salon in the Lotte complex, with a chief focus on beautiful hair styling.

3rd floor, Lotte Mart, 469 Nguyen Huu Tho, D7
3775 2990; 093 481 8085

shopping

HOME & FURNISHINGS

Mekong Quilts

Mekong Quilts offers sustainable employment to women from poor rural regions of Vietnam and Cambodia who craft fashionable, quality silk quilts and home wares.

517 Sky Garden 1, Nguyen Van Linh, D7
6271 7758
www.mekong-quilts.org

LADIESWEAR

Aquamarine

Aquamarine and Xuan Thu are premium swimsuit brands for men, women and children.

3 Nguyen Luong Bang, D7

3842 7105

Vera

Vera is an international premium lingerie brand that is designed and made in Vietnam. The line offers cutting edge lingerie and is reasonably priced.

469 Nguyen Huu Tho, D7

3822 1152

www.vera.com.vn

education

SCHOOLS

Kindermusik

The center is a music, movement and English-language program for children from birth to 7 years. Each lesson promotes early literacy and English language acquisition, social skills and more. Kindermusik programs align with standards and/or requirements for the US, UK, UE, TESOL Pre-K and IB Primary years.

Ground Floor, Crescent Residence2, D7
www.kindermusik-vietnam.com
090 709 9480

Renaissance International School Saigon

Opened in 2008, The Renaissance International School Saigon offers programs from Early Years to secondary curriculum, founded on the International British System. The four buildings on the school's one-hectare site include a 350-seat auditorium, a computer resource centre, gymnasium and 25 m swimming pool.

74 Nguyen Thi Thap, D7

3773 3171

www.rissaiagon.edu.vn

RMIT International University Vietnam

RMIT International University Vietnam is the Asian hub of Melbourne-based University RMIT - Australia's biggest tertiary institution. The largest offshore campus in the world, RMIT Vietnam offers programs from business and management to design and micro engineering.

702 Nguyen Van Linh, D7

3776 1300

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

5413 0901

www.ssis.edu.vn

Vstar School

Vstar School provides education from Grades 1-12 in a spacious 30,000m2 environment including a sports field and swimming pool.

Him Lam Residential Complex, Nguyen Huu Tho, D7
3821 3821

VLS Vietnamese Language School

Imparting genuine fluency in Vietnamese since 1994, VLS is one of the city's best-organised and most professional training centers devoted to the Vietnamese language, with classes for all levels.

R4 - 28 Hung Phuoc 2, Le Van Thiem, D7
3602 6694

recreation

CINEMAS AND THEATRES

Lotte Cinema

Lotte Cinema (Nam Saigon) has 1,336 seats in 6 theaters, showing movies in English and Vietnamese.

3rd Floor, Lotte Mart, 469 Nguyen Huu Tho, D7
3775 2527

Megastar Cineplex

Showing movies in English and Vietnamese, and Megastar offers more cinema screens than anyone else in

Vietnam. Both the Crescent Mall and Parkson Paragon location s have 8 theaters.

5th Floor, Crescent Mall, IOI Ton Dat Tien, D7
5412 2222

5th Floor, Parkson Paragon, 3 Nguyen

Luong Bang, D7

5416 0088

SPORTS

The Crescent Wellness Club

Overlooking The Crescent complex's lagoon, this multi-purpose and organically designed fitness and wellness centre offers an array of modern facilities including a state-of-the-art gym, group fitness classes, yoga sessions, a squash court, swimming pool, steam bath and nutrition bar.

3rd Floor, Crescent Plaza,

105 Ton Dat Tien, D7

5412 1277

Saigon South Golf Club

The closest golf course to HCMC's downtown area, Saigon South is a 9-hole, par 3 golf course and driving range situated behind FV hospital. There are foreign trainers to help golfers with golf skills. Equipment hire is available.

Nguyen Van Linh, D7

5411 2001

travel

HOTELS

Bizu Boutique Hotel Phu My Hung

The hotel's 24 guestrooms are all designed with guests' comfort in mind, featuring wireless Internet access along with all the basic facilities. Other features at the hotel include a restaurant, billiards, karaoke, 24hr room service 24hr, an elevator, laundry service/dry cleaning and meeting facilities.

15-17 Cao Trieu Phat, D7

5411 1008

Bizu Premier Hotel Phu My Hung

Twenty-five rooms spread over 5 floors provide modern comforts such as satellite/cable TV, bathtub, balcony/terrace, bathrobes, air conditioning.

7-9 Cao Trieu Phat, D7

Black Sea Hotel

Black Sea Hotel is a conveniently located 2-star hotel close to Lotte Mart and FV Hospital.

11-A-15-17 Hung Phuoc 2, D7

5412 1234

www.blackseahotel.com.vn

Boutique Garden Hotel

Newly opened in 2012 and conveniently located close to Phu My Hung, FV Hospital and Tam Duc Hospital, guests can choose from 20 rooms.

R3-84 Hung Phuoc 3, D7

5410 5941

Golf Hotel Phu My Hung

Opened in 2008, the 2-star Golf hotel has 38 international standard rooms that feature a complimentary buffet breakfast, tea & coffee making facilities, ADSL Internet and Wifi access.

R4/17- 19 Phan Khien Ich, D7

5410 4999

Hotel de Paris Saigon

The Hotel De Paris offers 24 budget rooms equipped with cable / satellite channels, a TV and free Wi-Fi. The hotel staff are available 24/7 and can help with booking tours and tickets. A concierge, a business centre and a lift are also available at the hotel.

4 Street 12, D7

Ibis Hotel Saigon South

The 3-star Ibis Hotel Saigon South is located in front of Saigon Exhibition and Convention Centre and only 15 minutes from the city centre. It features 140 rooms with free Wifi internet access, a restaurant/bar and 3 meeting rooms. There is a free Ibis shuttle available to and from the hotel to major corporate offices and the city centre.

73 Hoang Van Thai, D7

5410 1111

www.ibis.com

Laguna Hotel

Designed for both business and leisure travel, Laguna Hotel has 23 rooms and features room service, car park, Wi-Fi in public areas, a restaurant and laundry service/dry cleaning.

R3-84.85 Hung Gia 4 Internal Road, D7
5410 2888

Lucky Star Hotel Phu My Hung

Renovated in 2012, the Lucky Star Hotel Phu My Hung's 15 guestrooms feature a variety of comforts such as bathtub, desk, complimentary wireless internet access and mini bar.

R3-36 Phan Khien Ich, D7

5410 3472

Milano Hotel

Milano Hotel offers 24 spacious and well-appointed rooms featuring large windows, a flat-screen cable TV and a mini-bar. Other services include laundry, ironing and currency exchange facilities.

R4-26 & 27 Hung Gia 4, Cao Trieu Phat , D7

5412 2225

One World Hotel

All 32 rooms at this 3-star hotel offers guests a refrigerator, air conditioning, television and desk. Also to be found at the hotel is a family room, elevator and room service.

16-18-20 Hung Gia 3, D7

5410 4455

Sabena Hotel

The Sabena Hotel sits in a quiet, tree-lined street just off the major Parkway Nguyen Van Linh. The Saigon Exhibition & Convention Center, RMIT International University and The Crescent Mall are only 1km away.

24 Noi Khu Hung Gia 4, D7

5416 1000

Sophia Hotel

Sophia Hotel features 12 guest rooms, each including air conditioning, mini bar, desk, shower and bathtub. The property also has a restaurant, concierge, safety deposit boxes, room service and Wi-Fi in public areas.

R3 60 Hung Phuoc 4, D7

5410 3689

Torino Hotel

Located on a peaceful and green neighborhood, this 10-room contemporary property is close to restaurants, cafés and shopping centers.

25 Road No. 2, D7

5410 5611

SERVICED APARTMENTS

The Crescent

The Crescent is located along the Crescent Lake in the heart of Phu My Hung New City Centre, offering an exclusive high-class lifestyle for locals and expats. This area consists of a variety of green parks, restaurants, luxury apartments, retail shops and entertainment venues.

101 Ton Dat Tien, D7

Garden Court

Completed in 2009, Garden Court is a luxury apartment building located close to schools, supermarkets and shopping centers and a golf course.

Garden Court, Ton Dat Tien, D7

Garden Plaza

Garden Plaza is a high class apartment building designed after modern Singapore buildings, comprising of four inter-connected 8-storey blocks.

Garden Plaza, Ton Dat Tien, D7

The Panorama

A complex consisting of six medium- and high-rises, from 6 to 24 storeys tall, The Panorama has 276 individual apartments and 51 stores.

The Panorama, Ton Dat Tien, D7

Sky Garden

Sky Garden is a huge complex of apartments including 42 buildings with more than 3,000 individual apartments set on 10.4 hectares.

Sky Garden, Nguyen Van Linh, D7

5410 1616

Faces & Places

Events around HCMC



Feet First

Sneaker Step, the Vietnamese version of Sneaker Con, is a celebration of street sneaker styles for "Freakers", those in love with urban footwear. Organized at Q4 as an event to buy, sell, trade or just drool over some of the most sought after footwear on the market, Sneaker Step is part convention, street style fashion show and hip hop concert.

IMAGES BY NAM CAO





Pillow Talk

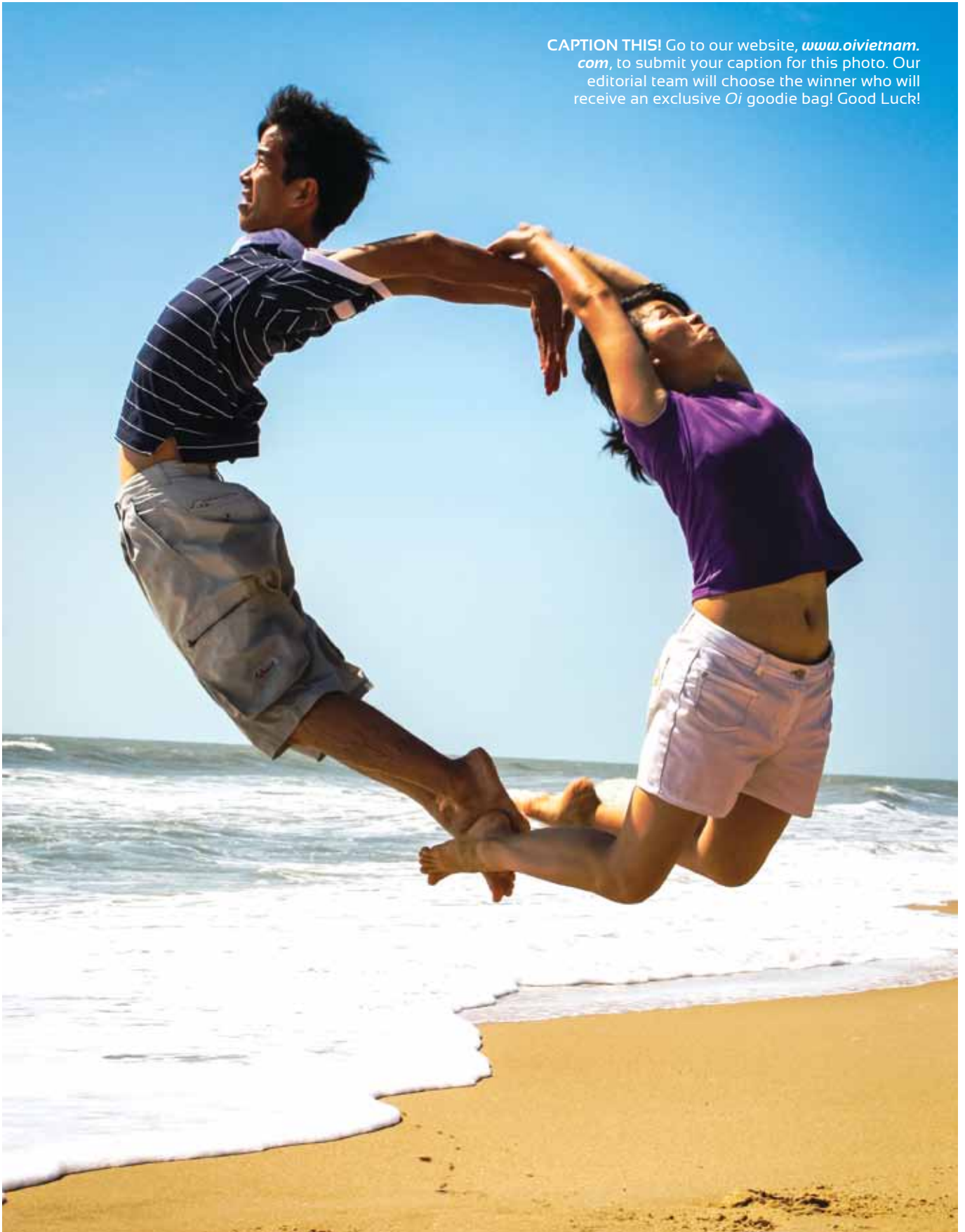
Tourists, locals and expats gathered at 23/9 Park to celebrate International Pillow Fight Day last month. Instead of putting the pillows to sleep, the cotton filled bags were used to knock friends and strangers around.

IMAGES BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY




Word Play

CAPTION THIS! Go to our website, www.oivietnam.com, to submit your caption for this photo. Our editorial team will choose the winner who will receive an exclusive *Oi* goodie bag! Good Luck!





You can 

Save Vietnam's endangered wildlife with WAR

-  Observe and feed rescued wildlife at Cu Chi Wildlife Rescue Station and other WAR rescue facilities.
-  Name a wildlife.
-  Support food for wildlife.
-  Volunteer.
-  Shop and save.

WAR
WILDLIFE AT RISK

Wildlife At Risk (WAR) is a non-profit organisation based in Ho Chi Minh City
Tel: +84 3899 7314 Fax: +84 3899 7316 Email: info@wildlifeatrisk.org
www.wildlifeatrisk.org



I wanted to be an engineer!

Don't let
traffic accidents
ruin our
children's future

 Bộ Giáo Dục & Đào Tạo  World Health Organization  AIP



CHILDREN ALSO NEED A HELMET.

We don't take ourselves too seriously...



SINGAPORE

SAIGON

SHANGHAI

TOKYO

...but we take what we do really seriously.

