



VIETNAM

NOVEMBER 2013

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REBEL WITH A CAUSE

Johnny Tri Nguyen
Talks MMA, Hollywood
and Being Shirtless

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GIVING THANKS

Time for Stuffed Turkey
and Pumpkin Pie

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Is Siargao Island
the Next Boracay?

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Just Desserts



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This Month's Cover

Image: Loc Nguyen
Model: **Vu Ngoc Phuong Trinh**
Stylist: **Fi Fi Hoang**
Venue: **Ciao Bella, DI**



*Special thanks to **Ciao Bella**,
Tony Fox, and **Chef John Tran** (pictured)
for creating the mouthwatering dessert
Pope's Pillow, featured on the cover.*

Ở VIỆT NAM

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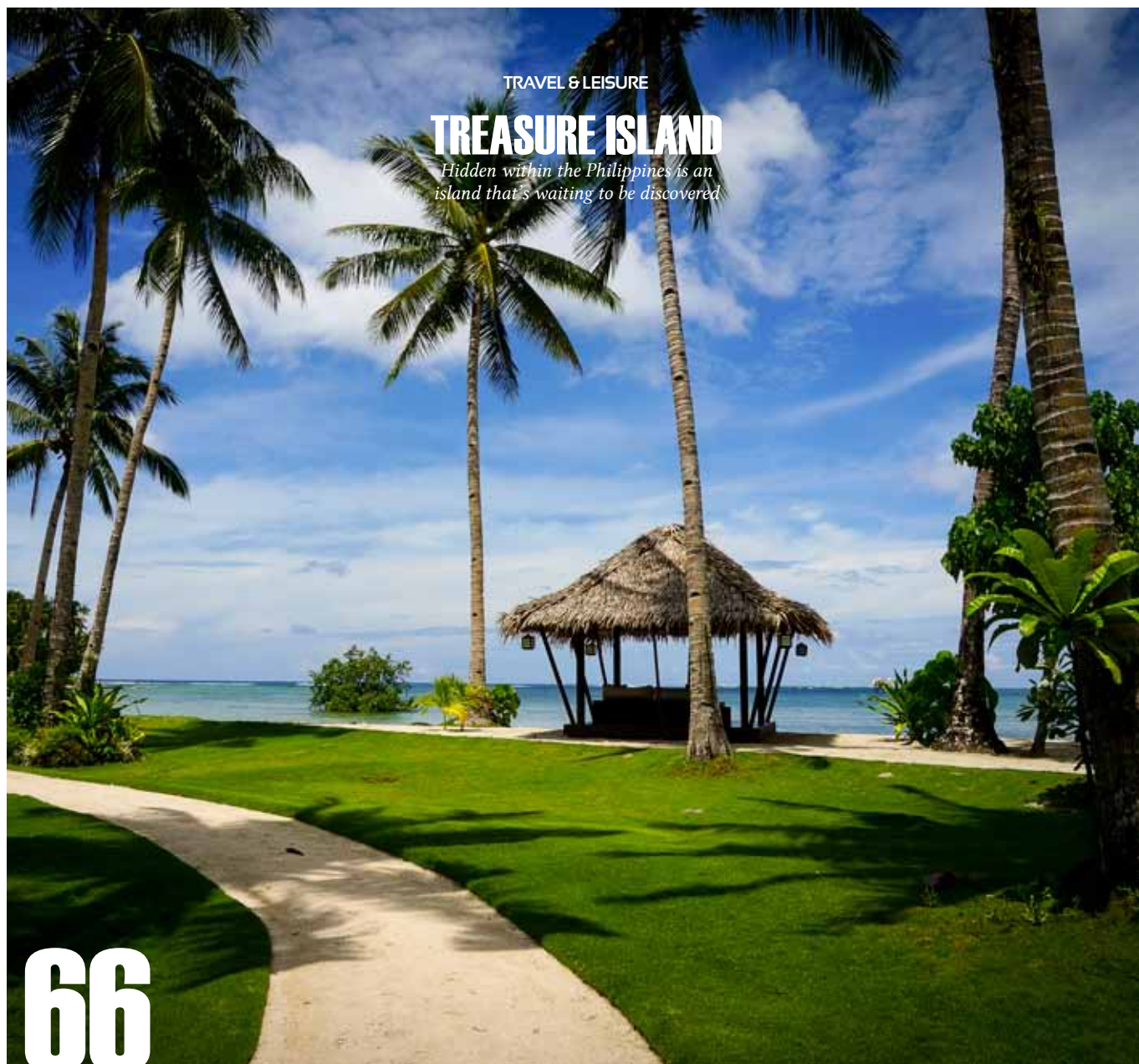
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Editor's Note

ISSUE NO. 9
NOVEMBER 2013

How Sweet It Is

I CAN'T BELIEVE we're almost at Thanksgiving. Soon, Christmas lights will be up and little kids will be paraded around dressed like baby Santas and then, before you know it, Abba's *Happy New Year* will be played on an endless loop. Where did the time go this year?

Whether you celebrate Turkey Day or not, the concept of stopping to consider what we have to be thankful for is universal. Here at *Oi*, we start every month with a clean slate, putting the entire magazine together from scratch. Our team pitches ideas, our readers write in with suggestions and we reach out to our wide network of writers from around the globe. I'm ecstatic to say that what comes together is just as exciting for me to read as I hope it is for you. Despite this being my tenth Thanksgiving here in Vietnam, through our talented writers and photographers, I still discover new reasons to love this country on a daily basis. For that, I am thankful.

I'm thankful as well for artists like Barbara Anchisi in this month's *Waterworld*. I love how she conveys peace and beauty in her pieces, especially considering her choice of themes are anything but. Her multimedia projects are so spectacularly different from reality that she inspires me to find beauty in the mundane.

I'm thankful for our travel writers spread far across the globe who bring the world to my feet. Stephanie Raley writes about the beautiful island of Sri Lanka in *Lanka Love*. I visited the country in 2009 after the civil war ended. At the time, there were still military checkpoints in Colombo, which was a bit disconcerting, but once we got out of the city the country was simply amazing.

I'm thankful for the resilient spirit of the Vietnamese people who always strive to make the best of every situation, along with the generosity of those who are able to help when you simply can't do it on your own. My first couple of years in Vietnam, I helped out with some translation work for an Aussie friend who founded a microfinancing charity in the Mekong region. Instead of loaning out cash, she would buy cows using donated funds and 'loan' them to families who needed this program the most. Once the cow had a calf, the calf would then be 'loaned' out to another farmer, continuing the cycle. From time to time, she would check to make sure the cows hadn't been sold off and that they were healthy. I remember one farmer who was so proud of how clean his cow was.

When we asked him his secret, he told us with a huge grin that he washed it with laundry detergent every day!

This month, we're featuring the Dairu Foundation, one of the many organizations here in Vietnam doing really great work, helping those who need that little bit extra to better their lives.

As each holiday season rolls around, one of the things I miss most is having family nearby. While the reality of our family dinners is probably more fiasco than fiesta, where everyone tries to talk over each other, voicing radically different opinions on just about everything, I genuinely miss those times now that it's not so easy to simply meet up for family dinners.

But something about a beautifully laid out table with turkey and all the trimmings seems to bring back all the great memories of family, with all its lovable quirks and maddening idiosyncrasies. Our roundup of Thanksgiving meals around town ensures you won't be without a taste of home come November 28.

And no great meal would be complete without a spectacular dessert. Boy, am I thankful for desserts! While I don't really have a huge sweet tooth, I enjoy the occasional indulgence. As a kid in Brooklyn, the sweetest sound in the world was the music played from the Mister Softee ice cream truck as it came up the block. Needless to say, the desserts featured in our cover series this month are slightly more sophisticated and worldly than those of my youth. From ingredients that normally aren't associated with dessert (think beans and seaweed, beetroot and water chestnuts) to the decadent and sinful, we've tried to include a little bit of something for everyone.

As always, I love hearing from you, our readers. Which of our featured desserts this month is your favorite? And which charities or personalities would you like to see featured in *Oi*? Email me with your thoughts at christine@oivietnam.com or leave comments on our website or our Facebook page.

No matter where you hail from, I hope this season finds you with much to be thankful for, living in this beautifully chaotic country we now call home. ■

CHRISTINE VAN

Managing Editor



HAVING MOVED FROM ITS OLD LOCATION AT BLANCHY'S TASH ON HAI BA TRUNG, **BLANCHY STREET** NOW HAS ITS OWN STAND ALONE LOCATION JUST UP THE ROAD IN SAIGON'S MOST FAMOUS FOODIE DESTINATION, THE REFINERY COURTYARD, OFFERING AUTHENTIC SUSHI AND CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE CUISINE WITH PASSION, FLAIR AND ATTENTION TO DETAIL.

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Datebook

Fill up your calendar with these exciting events

NOVEMBER 2

What: Zombie Walk

Where: Red Bar, 70 Ngo Duc Ke, D1; Starts at 6pm

About: Wake Up Saigon, the group that promotes play in public spaces, is hosting another zombie walk this year. The group will begin at Red Bar before heading out to terrorize the masses downtown, followed by a party at the final destination. There will be make-up artists on hand to assist, for a fee, those who need help. The event is free.

Contact: For more information, visit www.facebook.com/events/424965724280417/ or the Wake Up Saigon page www.facebook.com/WakeUpSaigon



NOVEMBER 9

What: Diwali Gala

Where: Sheraton Saigon Hotel, 88 Dong Khoi, D1

About: Diwali – The Festival of Lights – is an Indian festival celebrated to spread the spirit of kindness and share the joy. The event will feature Bollywood music, dance performances, Indian cuisine from the royal pavilions of northern and southern states and various other stalls featuring western and Asian cuisines.

Tickets for Diwali are available at InCham head office, Saigon Indian, Ashoka, Tandoor and Baba's Kitchen. Tickets cost VND600,000 and VND300,000 for InCham members and their children respectively, for non-members VND700,000 and VND350,000.

Contact: Call 3824 5671 or 3838 6661 for more info and tickets



NOVEMBER 9

What: Celebrating Talent

Where: VinGallery, 6 Le Van Mien, D2; 10am - 11am

About: This is a great opportunity to celebrate the artistic talent of the community and to raise money for charity at the same time. Students of VinSpace Art Studio will be displaying their work in an exhibition. All proceeds from the auction will go to charity.

Contact: Email info@vingallery.com or call 090 772 9846 for more info




NOVEMBER 9

What: Art Market

Where: VinGallery, 6 Le Van Mien, D2; 10am - 4pm

About: An opportunity to see great work and meet artists, and also to buy paintings, drawings and limited edition prints, photography, handmade jewelry, fashion, accessories and more. Kids will have a chance to enjoy interactive games, face painting, paper craft, drawing with still life and jewelry making.


Contact: Email info@vingallery.com or call 090 772 9846 for more info



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NOVEMBER 10

What: Traditional Handicraft Bazaar

Where: Renaissance Riverside Hotel, 8 – 15 Ton Duc Thang, D1

About: Artists from tribal groups of Black Lolo, Coined and Red Dao, Nung, White and Flower Mong presenting art and culture from Craftbelt – Cao Bang will be the highlights of this event. The men and women artisans who are behind the traditional handicraft products will be there to show the diverse steps of production: spinning, weaving, hand-embroidering and creating pattern with beeswax. Organized by DECEN, Mystère Boutique Saigon and HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, this event is an occasion for both Vietnamese and foreigners to experience an in-depth discovery of the northern ethnic minorities' culture and support a good cause.

Contact: Access www.decen.org or email lan.nguyen@helvetas.org or call 3858111 for further info



NOVEMBER 14-18

What: Helene Kling's Exhibition

Where: Exhibition House, 92 Le Thanh Ton, D1

About: French artist Helene Kling will showcase her new collection called "Rêve de Fer," literally translated as "Dreams of Iron" which embodies a tough beauty concept. The new collection uses recycled waste materials including corrugated iron and cardboard. It takes the concept of "Poubelle Plus Belle" ("Most beautiful rubbish" or "Best rubbish"). Imagery of women and the place of women in different societies is an emphasis of her latest collection.

Contact: Email hk.painter@gmail.com or call 090 395 5780 for more info

NOVEMBER 16, 17

What: Anusara Yoga and Yoga Therapeutics

Where: Yoga Meditation Centre, 335/31 Dien Bien Phu, D3; 8am - 5pm

About: Under the tutorage of Anusara yoga instructor Jonas Westring, these four workshops are designed to bring balance and bliss, as well as to gain a better understanding on the biomechanical functions of our bodies and how yoga can help with injuries and conditions. The workshops will include the following topics: The Gateway to Energy, System Balancing: Twists, Forward Bends & Yoga Breathing, Heart Opening: Sequential Backbends, and Therapeutic Touch: Hands-on Techniques. Early bird rate costs USD40 per workshop, USD75 for two, USD100 for three and USD120 for all four.

Contact: Email yogadaphne@gmail.com or call 0126 662 6467 to register



NOVEMBER 22, 24

What: Yoga Retreat

Where: Nutrifort Fitness, Diamond Island, Thu Thiem, D2

About: This yoga retreat features Elonne Stockton teaching traditional *Ashtanga asana* and *pranayama* (breathing techniques). *Ashtanga asana* (physical posture) is characterized by breath-synchronized movement or *vinyasa*, which de-stresses and detoxifies the body and brings body, mind and soul into alignment. *Pranayama* (breathing techniques) channels the mind through breath control. Apart from its therapeutic benefits, *pranayama* brings about clarity of mind and improved concentration and focus as a path to meditation. Stockton will teach how to practice "Yoga for Life," drawing from ancient yoga teachings to provide practical tools to help overcome daily stress and achieve healthy living.

Contact: Email tam.huynh@nutrifort.com or cat.walter@gmail.com or call 093 307 7991 for more info



NOVEMBER 22 - DECEMBER 1

What: Holland Village 2013

Where: 23/9 Park

About: The area surrounding Ben Thanh Market will transform into a quaint Dutch village with Dutch-style houses, a 3D photo zone and the delights of Dutch cuisine. Visitors will also have the chance to learn more about traditional and modern Dutch culture, technology and innovation within the theme of trade and sustainability, and can find out more about the opportunities the Dutch business community in Vietnam has to offer.

The Dutch Business Association Vietnam will offer networking events for entrepreneurs and professionals to enhance their connections throughout the business community in Vietnam and expand Dutch businesses' visibility in the Vietnamese market. Additionally, delegations from the Netherlands will be in attendance to attend business seminars on water management and horticulture.

Contact: Visit www.holland-village.org for more info

NOVEMBER 24

What: 17th Annual Terry Fox Run

Where: Crescent Area, Phu My Hung, D7

About: A non-competitive charity event held in commemoration of Canadian cancer activist Terry Fox to raise money for cancer research. Companies, schools, communities, families and individuals are invited to join on the 5km run, walk, wheel or ride. The Canadian Consulate General, Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Canadian International School and the HCMC Union of Friendship Organizations organize this year's event.

Contact: Email hcmc@canchamvietnam.org or call 3824 3754 for more info

NOVEMBER 30

What: Charity Bazaar

Where: The Deck, 30 Nguyen U Di, D2, 10am - 4pm

About: A biennial bazaar started in 2006, this one will feature over 45 vendors offering locally and regionally sourced and produced items, and stands from selected local retailers, too. All proceeds will benefit VinaCapital Foundation's Heart Beat Vietnam program, which funds crucial heart surgery for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Contact: Call 3744 6632 for more info

DECEMBER 5

What: UNICEF ZEROawards

Where: Intercontinental Asiana Saigon, corner of Le Duan and Hai Ba Trung, D1

About: This is a VIP black-tie fundraising event that brings together the most respected and influential individuals in Vietnam, catalyzing substantial, sustainable investments in Vietnamese children. UNICEF ZEROawards is an initiative of "Believe in ZERO," a global campaign launched in Vietnam, that aims to reduce the number of preventable child deaths to zero, the number of exploited or abused children to zero, the number of children deprived of clean water and denied access to school to zero.

Contact: Tickets for the event are available at www.unicef.org/vietnam/zeroawards or call Tam at 3821 9413



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Troi Oi

The country by numbers



13 Vietnamese were arrested in The Philippines after being found in the ocean with a haul of protected sea turtles. The fishermen were caught off the western Philippine island of Palawan, in waters near the East Sea where authorities say foreign poaching of endangered or protected species has become a major problem.

Sea turtles are protected under Philippine law and catching them is punishable by at least 12 years in jail. In recent years, the Philippine authorities have frequently caught foreigners, often Chinese, catching or buying sea turtles in the waters off Palawan.

In November last year, in the same area where the Vietnamese were caught, the Philippine navy recovered more than 100 sea turtles from poachers. The turtles were frozen and packed tightly in the cargo hold of the fishing vessel.

Turtles are used in traditional medicines and are served as a delicacy in many Asian countries.

4,174,000,000

packs of cigarettes were consumed in Vietnam in 2012, cited a report released by the Vietnam Tobacco Association. The shocking figure was released at a conference intended to implement a national program to combat smuggled and contraband cigarettes in Hanoi.

Vietnam's cigarette consumption has been on the rise since 2010. Cigarette consumption recorded in 2010 and 2011 was 3.986 billion packs and 4.131 billion packs respectively.

Smuggled cigarettes are another headache for authorities, the association added.

Last year some 900 million cigarette packs were illegally brought into Vietnam, accounting for 21.6 percent of the domestic cigarette consumption in 2012.



5,109 crimes have been committed so far this year, according to a report by the HCMC police department, an increase of 144 cases year on year. The police have infiltrated 687 criminal gangs and have arrested 1,629 criminals in total. The police say they are stepping up the fight against organized crime. All heads of local police precincts will face strict penalties if there are organized gangs operating in their districts.



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is the richest child in Vietnam following the wishes of his tycoon father, Huynh Uy Dung, who has passed on his

fortune (worth thousands of billions of dong) to his son. Huynh announced he is giving his entire business - including a Binh Duong-based resort, two industrial parks and three residential areas - to his son Huynh Hang Huu. The child has also officially become chairman of the board of directors of Dai Nam Joint Stock Co, which currently has more than 2,000 workers.

Explaining his decision, Dung said he has spent more than 50 years working hard and feels it is now the right time for him to take a break as he has finally found the meaning of life in his son.



1

Vietnam Airlines (VNA) plane wheel was discovered missing after the aircraft landed in Danang Airport last month. Le Truong Giang, the spokesman of the national flag carrier, said this was the first incident of its kind to happen and an investigation is underway.


The aircraft took off from Cat Bi Airport in the northern city of Hai Phong at 12:45pm and landed in Danang at 2:15pm on schedule. After all 41 passengers and crew had left the aircraft, airport technicians carried out a routine examination and found the aircraft's front shaft had been broken at one side, resulting in the loss.

Lai Xuan Thanh, head of the Civil Aviation Administration of Vietnam, said such an incident is classified as serious as it poses a threat to flight safety, and it was fortunate that it did not cause any serious damage. The agency has assigned staff to search for the lost wheel in both Cat Bi and Danang airports but they have failed to find it. If the wheel fell from the sky and caused any damage to anyone or any property, VNA must be responsible for paying compensation, he added.

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The Bulletin

Promotions and News in HCMC...



BABA'S KITCHEN IN D2

Baba's Kitchen has opened its second location in An Phu (49D Xa Lo Hanoi, D2) and is a truly fabulous Indian eatery that has the traditional taste of home with a warm and friendly ambiance.

Baba's Kitchen understand the need for authentic Indian fare and with many years of experience in catering and food service and a beloved first location on 164 Bui Vien, D1, the owners are skillful at making delicious and creative Indian food. The quality of food, the delightful atmosphere and the excellent service that Baba's Kitchen provides are renowned. The food you find at both locations is exactly like the food cooked in the homes of Northern and Southern India.

Using yogurts, authentic Indian spices, and other fresh ingredients allows the food to remain nourishing, light, and filling. With a wide selection of food there are choices for everyone.

Visit, www.babaskitchen.in for their full menu and delivery

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AIRLINE PROMOTION

To commemorate its 80th anniversary, **Air France Vietnam** (www.airfrance.com) has overhauled its ticketing office on Dong Khoi, and in conjunction with its re-opening, the airline is offering promotions until December 20.



For every flight ticket purchased, customers will receive a small gift such as a passport holder, luggage tag or air pillow. In addition, they will be invited to join the lucky draw running throughout the period, with prizes including: one business class round trip ticket from Ho Chi Minh City to Paris or Amsterdam (1st prize), one economy class round trip ticket from Ho Chi Minh City to Paris or Amsterdam (2nd prize), one Longchamp bag and two discount vouchers of VND5 million (3rd prize) and many other prizes.






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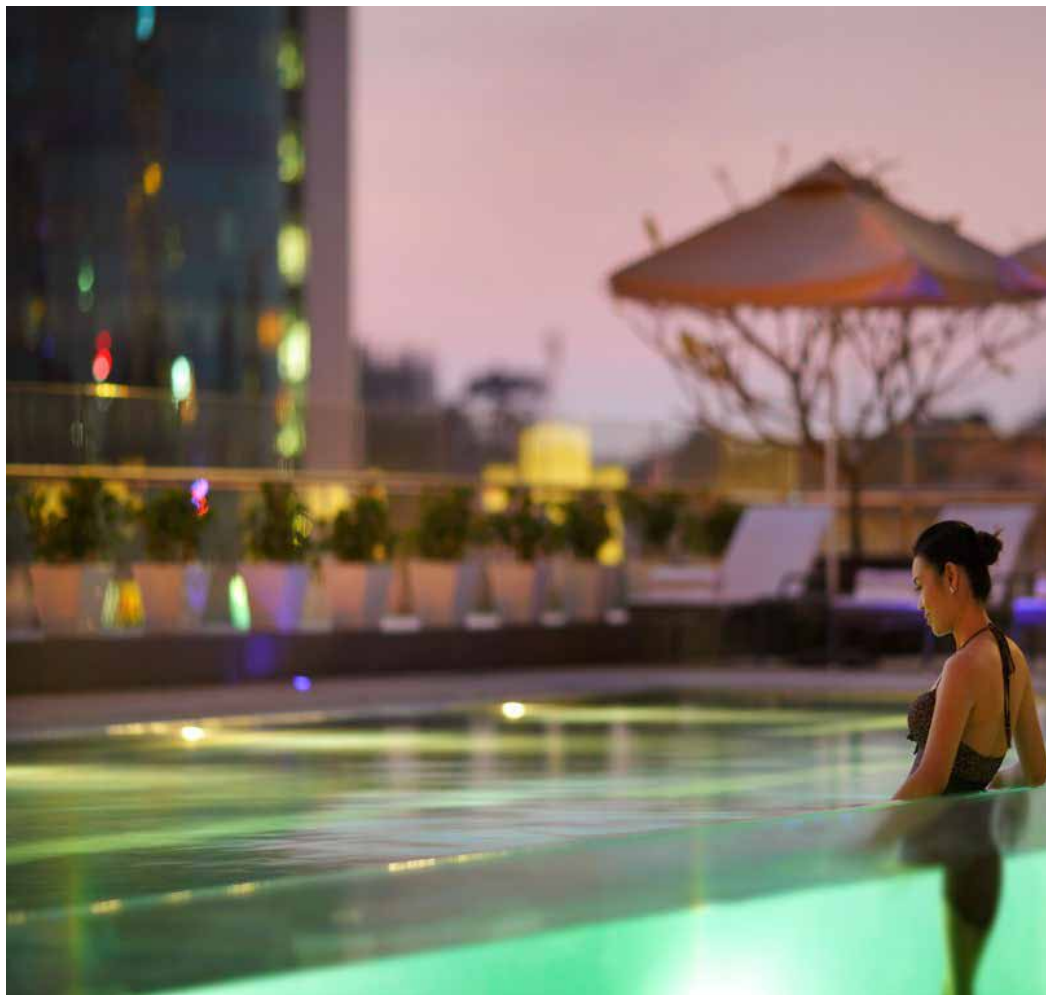
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For more information, email Lise.Nguyen-Owen@veryngon.com or Nguyen.Thi.Minh.Hieu@veryngon.com or veryngon@hotmail.com.





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A new place for food lovers, **Crawfish King** opens on 63 Truong Dinh, D1. It serves crawfish, lobster, mantis shrimp, American-style chicken wings, oysters, fruit beer, sea urchin and more.


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Dancenter Show 2013, Photo by Auf Photography

Scan for Class Schedule





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For those who want to stay fit, lean and fabulous, **Body By Jovie** offers a six-week “Finish the Year Strong” challenge at 20 percent off. The challenge, which includes complimentary nutritional guideline, fitness assessment and body measurements, will begin November 11 and will end December 20. The winner of this challenge will receive a one-month pass to the gym and a yoga pass worth VND3,125,000. Unlimited access to classes including Yoga, TRX Suspension, Outdoor Boot camp, and Zumba, and High Intensity Interval Training are offered to those who will attend a minimum of four days a week.

Located at Riverside Residence on Nguyen Luong Bang, D7, Body By Jovie is an urban boutique gym and yoga studio, catering to individuals demanding diversity, challenge and results. When signing up for this challenge, mention “**Oi Vietnam Magazine**” and receive a complimentary 2-day pass for a friend.

Email info@bodybyjovie.com or visit either Facebook: [bodybyjoviegym](https://www.facebook.com/bodybyjoviegym) or www.bodybyjovie.com for more info



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ROOM WITH A VIEW

Victoria Hotels & Resorts (www.victoriahotels.asia) opened a stunning, brand new 26-room property on Nui Sam Mountain (Chau Doc) in October. The resort focuses on health and wellness, taking advantage of its prime location, affording 180 degree views over the lush green fields below. While only 10 minutes from the town of Chau Doc, the Nui Sam Lodge is designed for those wanting to get away from it all.

The brand, under the Thien Minh Group, the largest integrated privately-owned travel and hospitality group in Vietnam, recently unveiled ambitious plans which include taking over operations of the Victoria Xienghong Palace in Luang Prabang, Laos, remodeled from the last residence of the Laos Royal Family, and operating luxury day and overnight cruises in the Mekong Delta. Scenic flights to Ha Long Bay are also in the works for summer 2014.

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Rebel with a Cause

Johnny Tri Nguyen talks MMA in Vietnam, his banned movie *Chinatown* and why he's always the bad guy

TEXT BY JAMES PHAM

HEARING JOHNNY TRI Nguyen talk about his grandfather, the "White Crane of Ca Mau," so named for his long sleeved shirts to hide metal arm and shin guards, it's hard to separate fact from fiction. The story sounds a lot like a Hong Kong movie script and involves a grudge fight on a sampan, Cambodian hitmen practicing black magic, a jerry-rigged flame thrower, and a debilitating "one finger to the eye" finishing move.

But that shouldn't come as much of a surprise, coming from a Hollywood stuntman turned Vietnamese movie actor/producer/director/writer. His body of work includes stunts done in TV shows and films such as *Mortal Kombat*, *Spider-Man* and *Jarhead*. He's starred in a number of Vietnamese films and foreign language films, and most notably had a part in the Hollywood action flick *Cradle 2 the Grave*, with a fight scene opposite Jet Li. Leaving Vietnam at the age of 9, Johnny and his family landed in Beaumont, Texas ("It was too cold for my mom") before settling in California. A devotee of martial arts, Johnny's first break came when a friend called about a TV series looking for martial artists. So began his career in the movie industry.

We're at Johnny's dojo, Lien Phong ("Connecting Winds", the style of martial arts originated by his grandfather), a peaceful shaded oasis in District 7 which contrasts with the raw, explosive action that takes place here. The rhythmic *thwap thwap* of two dozen jump ropes from the nearby training area provides the soundtrack for the interview. Clad in a tight fitting training shirt that shows off a body most 20-year-olds would envy, Johnny talks to *Oi* about his full circle journey in life and the movie business.

In your career, you've done it all - stuntman/actor/writer/producer. Which do you prefer?

JTN: As a stuntman, I loved doing things that were illegal to do outside of movies - shoot guns, fight, drive fast, jump from crazy places. You can make as much as the actors, except for the famous ones. But it was missing a creative element, so I took acting classes and got a few small roles, mostly where they needed an actor who could also do action.

Writing is something of a love/hate relationship with me. Sometimes when you create something good, it's really satisfying.

When you can't find a resolution for something, it's very frustrating. Producing is the same. Now that I've written quite a few scripts that are ready to be produced, I'd like to stick with acting and action directing. For one movie that's a lot of work already.

How come you always play the villain?

JTN: In Vietnam, the bad guy is always the white guy. But in the States, good guys are always the white guys. So whenever they wanted an Asian gangster, or a North Korean soldier, they called me. [laughs]

You were making a name for yourself in Hollywood. Why come back to Vietnam?

JTN: I came back in 2000 for the first time as a cameraman for an independent Vietnamese film and got the chance to travel in Vietnam. I loved the weather, the humidity, and the beautiful, cinematic scenery. Vietnam is full of life.

In 2004, I was hired to do a movie in Thailand, playing the lead villain in a Thai movie. It was really close to Vietnam and I always wanted to shoot a movie here. Back in 2000, there was no movie industry in Vietnam at all. But in 2005, it was kind of starting and I wanted to tell a Vietnamese story. So we wrote a script called *The Rebel* and got my brother to direct it. It was a big success, but not in terms of the box office. I think we made 20 prints for the whole country. But people who saw it, loved it. It made us proud of our work so I stayed and kept on working.

Your most recent movie, *Chinatown*, was famously banned here this summer after failing to pass the censorship board on multiple occasions. What happened?

JTN: As a filmmaker, you don't want anyone to touch your materials. I'm sure Leonardo da Vinci didn't want someone telling him to draw in the eyebrows on the Mona Lisa. With *Bui Doi Cho Lon* (*Chinatown*), we had a director's cut which we absolutely loved. So it was really a shock when we got the paperwork saying we had to change the movie. Even with the first notice, we knew it was going to be a movie that wasn't our vision. We made quite a few changes and shot more scenes. We had to somehow put police



IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN





in the movie. But it wasn't a police story! This was a gangster movie. But it wasn't enough.

What are you working on now?

JTN: We just finished shooting a comedy with myself and the number one comedic actor in Vietnam called *Teo Em*. I have a feeling it's going to be really funny, a road trip comedy that hasn't been done in Vietnam.

So, not another action movie?

JTN: We're not crazy enough to do another action movie after our last one was banned! You can't really ban a comedy. I hope! [laughs]

Okay. We have to talk about the body. Every other Google image of you is shirtless. What's your workout regimen like?

JTN: [laughs] It's quite normal! I just train with my fight team. I don't just stand there and point. That's the best way to know when they're tired, when to pick up the pace. It's an intense workout. I also do weights once or twice a week.

Do you diet?

JTN: No! I eat anything. I just had a big giant pizza yesterday. Your body is like gas tank. If

you drive a lot, put a lot in. If not, cut down. I don't want to walk around like a male model with a six pack all the time. Dieting is not fun. Life is about fun, it's about enjoying things.

Tell me about last weekend's MMA (mixed martial arts) competition, Meeting of the Warriors.

JTN: I was one of the organizers and fight team leader. I wanted to have a competition where our guys from the Lien Phong dojo could participate. I feel MMA is really watchable and enjoyable because of its diversity. Anyone with a martial arts background can join and it's unexpected, full of drama.

When we started Lien Phong last year, no one around town was really doing MMA. I wanted to get more people involved, more MMA gyms and clubs to grow the sport. So I partnered with Saigon Sports Club and we picked about 20 guys with the most experience to compete.

Some people say MMA is too violent. What do you say to that?

JTN: It can be, under certain rule systems. It can be borderline sport and combat when you allow anything. We don't want it to be that way. We kept the rule system to pro am/amateur level with safety in mind for

the competitors. MMA in the UFC [Ultimate Fighting Championship] is bloody mainly because of elbows, so we put Muay Thai elbow guards on. In 10 fights, there was no blood. I don't think Vietnam is quite ready for the full UFC experience, especially if it might lead to a negative response which wouldn't be good for the sport right now. It can still be exciting without the blood, though.

Were you too pretty for the UFC?

JTN: I retired from competing when I was 26, when the UFC just started getting popular. I was doing stuntwork and making good money. If there was no stuntwork, and the UFC had gotten popular earlier, who knows? But there are a lot of handsome UFC guys, come on!

What does Lien Phong mean to you?

JTN: I have a big apartment in the city, but I usually stay in a puny room here at the dojo. That's fine by me. There are about 10-12 people living here, most of them my fight team. All these guys want to train and get good. That was me when I was young. My body's not the same conditioning-wise but mentally I love the competition and that feeds my spirit. It's a happy place for me.

For more info on Lien Phong, visit www.lienphong.vn ■



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Waterworld

Artist Barbara Anchisi draws inspiration from her new life in Vietnam

TEXT BY **JAMES PHAM** PORTRAIT BY **QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY**
ILLUSTRATIONS BY **BARBARA ANCHISI**

ENSCONCED IN HER sunny third floor studio directly on the Saigon River, Italian artist Barbara Anchisi is perfectly happy watching the world float by. It's no surprise then that boats and barges inspired her latest collection, *Cargo*, a series of mixed media prints, photos and paint. "It's not just boats that carry something - what appeals to me are tiny boats tugging huge containers. They carry animals, flowers, children... the boat is the life. I wanted to use [this collection] to show that the whole city goes into the boats. It's amazing how much water links everything here. The water itself is so alive."

The journey that brought Barbara to Saigon a little more than one year ago with her husband and son ("I'm still putting bricks into

my new life," she says) has been inextricably linked to her love of art.

Born in Turin, Barbara attended high school in Florence and fell in love with both the city and her craft. "I knew I had to live there and painting was going to be my domain." Armed with a diploma in Fashion and Theater Design and a diploma in Painting Conservation, she started out restoring masterpieces under the supervision of prominent restorer Edo Masini, Head of the Restoration Department at the Fortezza da Basso.

For her, restoration is "a way to pay respect to an artist's work. What's fascinating is to try to get back to the spirit of the artist - what's underneath all the bad paint, bad

layers. Instead of getting new canvases, artists used to paint on top of previous paintings, according to the different styles of the period. We once removed a very gross Baroque painting and discovered an amazing landscape from the 15th century. Time alters colors, pigments, and varnish, but to be able to bring it back is incredible."

Her restoration work has taken her to many regions in Italy, the US, Austria, Pakistan and China. "I didn't know I would travel so much in my life. Perhaps archeology would've been better for me!" she says with a laugh.

But even during those years of meticulous restoration, Barbara's creative spirit shone through. "You have to be really respectful. You can't interpret [the painting]. Although sometimes we did add a little petal on a bouquet for fun," she confesses.

Another World With Children

Another influence on Barbara's art has been her work with children. In Shanghai, she volunteered as an art teacher because her children's school didn't have any art programs. Here in Saigon, she currently conducts art projects at the Pho Cap School for street children, some who have developmental problems including Asperger's Syndrome.

"What strikes me is the perfume of the streets. Even with the heat that we have, there are no bad smells... unless you're in a fish market! But otherwise, there are lots of good, positive smells coming from fruits and flowers. Well done HCMC!"

"I discovered that being around children takes you into another world. Their mind is so pure, their instinct still fresh, they're not afraid of color combinations. At the very small [Pho Cap] school, we did abstract art for the first month to free their minds. If you've never seen art or only very traditional art, it can be very limiting, just copying. I wanted them to use colors to represent themselves, not just through their true features. So for instance, I didn't let them use black for their hair. I wanted them to see things from a different perspective. You can ask them 'Why did you draw it that way?' and they'll tell you. They're opening your mind. They have a different point of view. I found it very inspiring for my own work. The funny thing is that in the studio, it's mainly you and the painting, but in the chaos of 20 children in the room, painting can be extremely exciting."

Back in her District 2 studio, anchored by a printing press brought over from her time in China, and littered with tempera paints, photographs, carving tools and rolls of Chinese paper, each work from Barbara's *Cargo* series starts off with creating prints of the barges made from plates carved out of plastic board using wood carving tools.

Experimentation and a keen sense of spatial relations are key, as a separate carving plate is required for each of four or five ink colors. The subject matter comes from a collection of photographs, from which Barbara creates stencils on a transparency placed directly on her computer screen. These images are later photocopied and meticulously hand painted, cut out and then reassembled onto the prints of the barges. The result is a stunning series of vibrant, exquisitely detailed multimedia prints which incorporate elements of Vietnamese life such as religion, community and the ubiquitous motorbike. "In China, there are lots of motorbikes and lots of cars. You're often stuck in traffic because of the car. Here cars are stuck because of motorbikes. Motorbikes are freedom," she says.

One of her works depicts a barge laden with religious icons. "Everything is alive here. You see Buddha there, the Virgin here. It's not just from the temple. I was struck by the mélange of religions in the Mekong Delta. There might be an image of the Virgin Mary but with incense in front of it. Religion is really part of the life here. The soul of the people is much stronger. It's so different from China [where Barbara lived prior to Vietnam],

where there's almost an absence of religion. There's nothing much left besides money."

Barbara also draws inspiration from the little things that are part of her new home. "What strikes me is the perfume of the streets. Even with the heat that we have, there are no bad smells... unless you're in a fish market! But otherwise, there are lots of good, positive smells coming from fruits and flowers. Well done HCMC!" she says with a flourish. "And the orchids - you see them everywhere. You see little jungles on tiny balconies. I also see butterflies in the fields when I walk my dog. They cluster together, fly in communities, like HCMC where the idea of life is community, one on top of each other, really living together. In my print, you can see one butterfly is trying, and one has escaped."

If you're looking to buy one of Barbara's originals, you may be too late. "I make work and then sell it and then it's over. I like the idea that my things are going to be around the world in someone's house. I haven't thought much about commercializing by making postcards and pillowcases. These are unique things - when they're gone, they're gone. In China and Vietnam, people always copy things, but my work won't be so easy to copy." ■



Fish a la Cart

Taking fish and chips to the streets

TEXT BY **NPD KHANH** IMAGES BY **LOC NGUYEN**



MEET **JJ's Fish and Chips** (38B Tran Hung Dao, D1), the self-proclaimed first-ever authentic fish and chips streetside food cart in HCMC. JJ is short for Jamie, the Englishman who missed his home country's national dish way too much to let a lack of business experience stop him from making it the star of his business, and Jackie, Jamie's Chinese-Vietnamese partner in life, business, and cooking.

"I had the idea nearly a year ago," explains Jamie. "A couple of months after my move from England to Vietnam, I went looking for fish and chips. I was missing it badly. I went into English restaurants and places where they serve fish and chips, but every time I was served french fries. French fries are okay

but when you really want chunky chips... The fish was quite nice, but we got french fries. So I thought, well, nobody's doing it here so maybe I should do it. I thought about opening up a street food place where I'd sell for maybe three or four hours a day. That's how the idea came alive."

Sounds simple? Bigger things have started out with ideas far simpler than that. Besides, its star entree is hardly the only thing that Jamie claims is unique about his stall. Open from 6pm every night on the corner of Tran Hung Dao and De Tham in the backpacker area, JJ's is a humble yellow-painted food stand with a couple of collapsible chairs and tables in front for a quickly removable dining area in case the



cops come by. According to the owners, the rough-and-tumble presentation is both a return to the classic form of the English dish and a conscious business decision. Back in England, fish and chips is a no-frills food usually served in mobile chip vans as takeaways or stand up dining.

"We played with ideas but we thought we should stick to how people like to eat it here. Here in Vietnam, people like to eat on the streets, like bowls of noodles and such. Locals, tourists and expats. If we had a fish and chip restaurant, the price would come up more than a hundred thousand dong for a portion and that's not a price most people would like. We wanted to introduce this as a kind of culture to the people here and we wanted as many people to be able to enjoy it, so we thought we shouldn't go with the restaurant option," says Jamie.

A Good Marriage

However, serving it on the street does not mean serving low quality, and Jamie and Jackie are adamant to prove that their food is not junk food made with questionable ingredients in unhygienic conditions. Their concept for JJ's Fish and Chips is to marry restaurant quality and taste with street food convenience and energy.

"The fish has to be fresh. The cooking has to be fresh. Everything must be kept clean and contained," says Jackie, who deals with much of the preparation and upkeep of the stall. He also hand selects the fish every day. Instead of the unavailable English cod, they use top grade sea bass.

"We don't want to be the kind of street food that people are wary of putting into their mouth"

"We don't do pre-cooks. We only start the cooking once an order is made. It takes more time and we've had customers complaining about the time. I told them that this was to ensure the food comes out fresh and hot. A couple of people have had problems but we don't want to be the kind of street food that

people are wary of putting into their mouth," adds Jackie.

While the decision in the business model and price has given JJ's significant popularity with customers very early on, it has also put them in a place with few operational choices, a fact that JJ's previous landlady used against them.

"During our hunt for a street-front place to rent and store the cart overnight, whenever we mentioned our food being a Western dish, they'd quote us outrageous prices," says Jamie. The problems did not stop even when we agreed on a price. "We started noticing missing oil, gas, even the cleaning gel. We started marking how much we actually used since we figured we couldn't be using that much. When we confronted her, she admitted it, but even when we tried communicating and being understanding, things just didn't improve. Because we didn't have much of a choice, she felt she could push us around. So we stopped. We said that's enough, we're not stupid, and moved."

It took a month and a half for JJ's to find its second home and things have been looking up. "It was difficult," says Jamie. "But we didn't let it bring us down, we didn't let it stop our passion for fish and chips." ■

Footloose

Find out how Linh Rateau's journey from France to Vietnam resulted in the creation of one of the city's most popular dance centers

TEXT BY **NPD KHANH** IMAGES BY **LOC NGUYEN**



LOOKING AT THE current Dancenter in District 2 - the villa, the spacious dance studios, the well-lit rooms and clean white walls, the star-studded list of instructors and the whopping 600 students on its roll call - it's hard to imagine that all this success started out with just a backpack and a few hundred dollars.

Meet Linh Rateau, the founder and central figure to this expat rags-to-riches tale. Twelve years ago she boarded a plane to Vietnam with nothing but a backpack, one address to rent a room, a few hundred dollars and the contact details of some of her dad's friends still living in Vietnam. She spoke fluent French, a little English and not a word of Vietnamese.

That was not her first time in Vietnam, however. Being a child of French and Vietnamese blood but never having been born or raised in Vietnam, Linh was understandably curious about her Vietnamese father's country and culture. In 1997 at 19 going on 20, leaving beautiful Paris for a vacation in dusty Saigon was a huge culture shock.

"Vietnam was not like in the pictures. There were poor people and homeless kids on the street. I was young then and hadn't seen a lot of the world," she says. "Despite the difficult condition of life, people have a good will to move forward. I could feel that. There was a positive energy to move forward. They have a lot of hope in the future. Paris is a beautiful city with lots of things to do but the energy feels down. People walk fast on the streets. Nobody looks at each other. It's very individualistic. Here you don't need to know anyone to strike up a conversation. This I like very much. The contact with each other. The will not to look at the past but to look to the future."

Once her three-month vacation ended, she had just one objective: to return to Vietnam.

Step by Step

Dancing is in Linh's blood. Her mother is a professional dancer and the owner of a dance school in suburban Paris. Linh herself started her dancing education at the age of three, but, despite that she wasn't exactly pirouetting all the way to success.

"Dancers are not considered seriously, in Vietnam most of all. The life of a dancer is short. You dance with your body. After a certain age your body no longer answers you as it did when you were 20. It's not like with actors, musicians or painters where your art matures as you age. Thirty-five years old is the limit. After that the body gets tired. The career of dancers is short. This is true everywhere."



When she returned to Vietnam, Linh started volunteering her time at the 15 May School, a government school for street children where she taught dance. Eventually those contacts led her to a job as a dance instructor for a Saigon-based French school. From there, requests for private dance lessons began pouring in, so in response Linh formed a small dance class inside the Labor Culture Palace. This was the predecessor to Dancenter.

In 2007, Dancenter was officially founded in an unairconditioned garage in Binh Thanh District. The charter members included Linh and four others - a dance instructor, two office assistants and the security guard - all of whom still work there today. The five shared a single computer and a broom closet sized office.

Linh and her team's hard work paid off. Now seven years after opening, the center is a resounding success. The initial team of five has long since grown past 20 and the first 100 students are now 600.

Classes here start from 8:45am to 10pm, ranging from 60 to 90 minutes each. The first half of the class is a music-pumping workout that aims to build the physicality required of dancers. The second half, by contrast, is where the instructor works with every student to develop his or her technique and understanding of a specific dance style.

The center boasts 10 dancing specialties ranging from timelessly classic ballet to young and trendy break dancing. In a country where any dance other than ballet is still seen as frivolous add-ons to other performances, and where dancers are still seen as stage props to singers and not artists in their own right, Dancenter brings much-needed attention to the unique artistry of each dance style and for this it has become far more than just a dance school.

For more info, visit dancentervn.com ■

“Dancers are not considered seriously, in Vietnam most of all. The life of a dancer is short. You dance with your body. After a certain age your body no longer answers you as it did when you were 20”



A Fixed Focus

People coming together to share information, experience, and knowledge in all aspects of photography



FOR CHIEN, THE Vice President of the Senior Photography Club, photography is a life-long pursuit. As a teenager he tried to pursue it as a career but harsh conditions during the American War and family obligations forced him to abandon it for a more financially stable job. Now in his golden years and retired, with resources and family support, he's able to reignite his first love.

The HCMC Senior Photography Club is a special chapter of the Ho Chi Minh Photography Association (HOPA, www.hopa.vn) with more than 30 senior and experienced photographers as permanent members. Founded by Trinh Dinh Thu in 1999 as a platform for retired professional photographers and aspiring ones to gather and share experiences, the club has grown strongly in terms of prestige and recognition thanks to the club's participation in major national and regional photography competitions.

Some of the members are renowned war photojournalists such as Trinh Dinh Thu,

Doan Cong Tinh, Vu Ba, and Trieu Hung, along with other members who have held high ranks in the government. Membership is granted to those who meet a few simple requirements. One should be 60 years of age or above, although the age limit has been lowered somewhat to allow for those serious about photography. Another condition is that all potential members should have some knowledge or experience on the topic. At the moment, the club comprises of only Vietnamese men but also welcomes female and expats as more perspectives about photography can then be shared.

With Age Comes Patience

I met Chien one morning at HOPA's office where the club was having its annual photo exhibition in conjunction with their Hanoi branch. Passing by each photo, he proudly and passionately explains the meaning and angle behind each shot. When asked if he saw any differences in

style and shooting techniques between the young and the old, he replies: "The differences surely exist, yet sometimes are not so obvious as the old folks with compounding life experiences bring calmer and more philosophical perspectives into their photos. And we are more patient too."

"Like a fisherman calmly and patiently waiting for his fish, senior photographers can spend days at a scene just to get a right shoot with the right light and structure. I am really amazed at the photos the club members produce, not only by the sheer beauty, but more so by the emotions which is clearly the heart and soul of all the photos," adds Chien.

The club holds its monthly meetings on the 19th where photos of the month are brought in for member critique. Chien says he's happy to mentor and pass down any knowledge he has to those who share his same passion. Email him at nguyenchien4546@yahoo.com. — Clara Phuoc Nguyen ■

THE MYTH:

Is it true that there are right and wrong ways to use your chopsticks at the dining table?

WHILE THIS IS true, some of the customs are no longer practiced in the city. The following is a list of things you should never do with chopsticks in the presence of Vietnamese people:

1) Never use them to drum on the table, never separate chopsticks with one hand. You should never do this because the locals believe that everything that is good comes in twos. If you separate the chopsticks, you'll disturb the "peace."

2) When setting down your chopsticks, never stick them into your food. If you stick them upright in the food, it will represent your tombstone because this is how food is offered to the dead. Death equals bad. If you must set them down, set them down on the table or sideways on your bowl.

3) If for some reason you can't use one of the chopsticks from your pair or it has dropped, don't get a single replacement chopstick; get

a fresh pair.

4) Never point chopsticks at someone, especially at your elders, or even worse speaking with a mouthful of rice. It is impolite.

5) Don't stick your finger out when using chopsticks.

6) Never attempt to pass food from chopstick to chopstick as this is how unburnt bones are moved to the urn at a cremation.

THE MYTH:

Why do some Vietnamese men grow long hairs out of moles and long pinky nails? Is it true it's a sign of luck and wealth?

MYTHS EXIST IN various cultures to define good versus evil, bad luck versus good luck, prosperity versus poverty. Asian cultures in particular focus on physical traits as an indicator of a person's future. For example, large earlobes tend to signify wealth, a wide nose signifies future prosperity. But perhaps the most curious of these facial *feng shui* trends is the hairy mole.

If you spot a Vietnamese man sporting a hairy mole, you'd better assume he's hitting the jackpot, scoring with the women, and living on top of the world. Why? Legend has

it that hairy moles are a sign of good luck. The longer the measly strands of hair are, the luckier you are. So, whatever you do, don't pluck them.

According to a lunar fortune calendar, hair indicates the mole is alive and, therefore, a "good" mole. So, until the luck of a hairy mole can be disproved, the myth will continue and Asian men around the world will continue to groom their most prized physical trait.

In the old dynastic days, long fingernails were a sign you were rich and didn't have to

do manual labor. No doubt there's some truth to this. Now they grow out the pinky nail as a sign of culture, breeding and wealth. A bit of browsing on the internet turns up photos of ornate fingernail protectors worn by ladies of the imperial court.

The Vietnamese also believe that if the little finger (including the nail) reaches past the last knuckle joint on the ring finger, you'll be rich and intelligent. Generally, though, you'll see men using it for general scratching and ear cleaning. - Christine Van



Just Desserts

As part of *Oi's* food coverage this month, we surveyed the city for the finest desserts, from strawberry and chili cake in District 2 to decadent morsels of luxury Japanese sweets in District 1 and shaved ice piled high with fresh fruit and coconut milk in District 5, we're proving that life in HCMC is undoubtedly sweet. Whether as an antidote to the sweltering heat or a quick pick-me-up any time of the day, these desserts will definitely leave you craving for more.

IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN



Decadent Dumplings

Japan's famous luxury sweet will satiate any sugar cravings

TEXT BY LOTTIE DELAMAIN

IN THE SPACE of two years, **Mochi Sweets** (77 Hai Ba Trung, D1) has not just arrived in Vietnam but is fast taking over the sweet snack scene with 14 stores already open and more on the way. Mochi is a type of traditional sweet Japanese cake made from *mochigome*, short-grain japonica glutinous rice. It is pounded into a paste, mixed with water and molded into a sticky, chewy dumpling. Traditionally they are filled with red beans and served as a treat on Japanese New Year. However, in their latest incarnation, they've been adapted and upgraded to cater to a more diverse audience. The red beans have been replaced with fruit sorbets and ice cream and are served all day long - as a mid-morning snack, a post lunch treat, or as popcorn replacements at the movies.

The chain boasts an impressive range of flavors, from blueberry and classic green tea, to the rare sakura (cherry blossom). The latest additions are orange mousse, durian, and coconut and all are presented ice cold on a paper napkin. For the novice mochi taster, it's an unusual texture - smooth, cold, chewy dough, surrounding a dollop of delicious ice cream. Undeniably sweet but strangely moreish, they are a pleasant surprise on the tongue. Beyond the more familiar flavors, the sakura was delicious - a delicate floral mouthful with hints of cinnamon. For the less adventurous, you can't go wrong with mango, and the blueberry is also popular (priced between VND24,000 - VND28,000 per piece).

They are gaining a cult following among locals who have been ordering them by the dozen. I have seen them turn up at everything from baby showers to birthdays in the office. Perfectly formed, suitably sweet and now available on almost every street corner, could the Mochi cake be the one to finally bring an end to the cupcake era? Perhaps.





The Couture Cake Maker

Delicious art that's edible from top to bottom

TEXT BY LOTTIE DELAMAIN

SHIRLEY STARTED BAKING as a small kid growing up in the Philippines. Her parents ran a Spanish restaurant and so for Shirley, food has always had a starring role in her life. After leaving school, she did a brief stint at a bank but soon realized she was in the wrong business. When she started bringing in the results of her weekend baking frenzies to the office it wasn't long before people were making orders for birthdays and other special occasions. Shortly after, coffee shops in the area were also placing requests and that was when she made the leap. Her dad was hugely supportive and helped her set up her first bakery, Pastry Passion, in Manila. And since then, it has been one sugar-coated adventure after another.

Shirley's sweet tooth then took her to New York where she trained with Cheryl Klienman and catered for well-connected New Yorkers, as well as the high-flying corporate world. Since having her first child however, she has slowed down the pace to focus on her passion, which is creating custom cakes, great towers of confection personalized and decorated in such detail they might be mistaken for art installations.

In her kitchen drawer, scalpels and sculpting tools sit alongside more familiar kit such as food coloring and sugar paste. The key to decorating a cake is, of course, the icing. Generally, Shirley works with two types of icing – fondant, which she makes from scratch from marshmallows – and gum paste, more elastic and stronger, and used for creating intricate detail such as hair or flowers.

Shirley likes everything on her cakes to be edible, so she starts with a Rice Krispie cake mix to make the body. Then she rolls out fondant and molds it around the figure. For the finishing touches she sculpts tiny eyes or flowers out of the gum paste before sticking them on with a sugar-syrup solution.

If you can't think of an occasion to order a spectacular cake, Shirley also makes some mean macaroons (the salted caramel flavor are absurdly good) and a big selection of cupcakes and other more traditional puddings.

Order online by emailing shirley.yanga@gmail.com, follow her on Instagram at [shirleyyangacakes](https://www.instagram.com/shirleyyangacakes) or on Facebook at [Shirley Yanga Cake Design](https://www.facebook.com/ShirleyYangaCakeDesign).





Crème de la Crème

Silky smooth manna

TEXT BY JAMES PHAM



ON THE LIST of the 49 most fattening foods as determined by a New Zealand university, cream sits at #11, not quite as fattening as corn chips and condensed milk, but more so than donuts and fried food.

While it may be high energy but essentially bereft of nutritional benefits, like almost everything that's bad for you, it is sinfully delicious in all its forms.

For those not counting calories, **Dine Viva** (195 Dien Bien Phu, D3), the newly opened French/Italian restaurant from chef and owner Vinh That Ton, unabashedly serves up two heavenly creamy desserts.

After heading up notable kitchens including Bobby Chinn (Hanoi), Shri and An Lam Saigon River, Dine Viva is Chef Vinh's first restaurant of his own. In spite of his cooking success, Vinh says he's actually an accidental chef. Born in Vietnam, Vinh left for Australia at the age of nine. After attending high school in California, he went back to Australia looking for work. "A friend gave me an ad in the paper to apply for a job. It turned out to be an ad for a cooking course but I thought I might as well try. Later on, when my father was working in a laundry store, he happened to wash a chef's uniform. He asked the chef if he needed any help." And so began an apprenticeship at one of Australia's top restaurants.

When Vinh first revisited Vietnam as an adult, he immediately knew that he wanted to come back regularly. Family connections made the country feel like home, including its comfort food. Vinh still remembers the flan that his grandmother and mother used to make. "When I first learned how to make it, it brought me straight back to when I was a kid. All Vietnamese kids have it."

Vinh's version of crème caramel, though, has improved on the original. "When I grew up, I tasted flan from the store, and it wasn't the same. It wasn't as good as I remembered. The Vietnamese way, you can only taste the egg custard and the flour. In ours, the caramel goes all the way through," he says of the much darker colored flan which is mixed with caramel before baking in a water bath as opposed to the Vietnamese version which is generally steamed.

The Dine Viva crème caramel is also served with fresh orange segments, candied orange rind and dried sweet potato slivers, all garnished with finely sliced mint. "A lot of Vietnamese restaurants serve it with coffee or crushed ice which overpowers the light smoothness of the crème caramel," he says. "The aroma of orange rind goes really well with the flan. It cuts through the richness."

While the basic ingredients which go into crème caramel are simple, Vinh says the secret is in "how you take care of it while you're cooking it. If you overcook it, it becomes hard. Undercooked? Then it's runny inside. The timing has to be almost perfect to get the consistency right."

Set in a villa owned by superstar singer Hong Nhung, Dine Viva is a full-service restaurant with a small but bold menu. The restaurant's most popular dessert so far has been the panna cotta (Italian for "cooked cream"), a simple creation made by simmering cream, milk and sugar with gelatin, and letting it cool until it sets as a wobbly, silky, sinfully soft pudding. Chef Vinh's version pairs it with a raspberry sauce, fresh raspberries from Dalat and a passion fruit gelatin. "It's easy to eat. The girls love it," says Vinh. "Some customers just come in for the panna cotta. The only thing is they're afraid it's too rich and creamy. It's a guilty pleasure," adds Vinh who is rail thin despite proclaiming that all he eats is cream, cheese, bread and chocolate, "basically anything fattening".

Vinh's baby daughter, Viva, seems to approve of the dessert served at her namesake eatery. "At eight months, she's already showing food appreciation. She loves cheesy things. When we first introduced her to Panna Cotta, she really went for it!"

Sweet Surprise

Unorthodox pairings to create uniquely divine cakes

TEXT BY JAMES PHAM

SOME MATCHES ARE made in heaven. Brad and Angelina. Pizza and beer. Gin and tonic.

But strawberries and chili? Chocolate and beetroot? More like pairs joined in culinary hell.

But David Campbell, owner of **Villa Royale Treasures** (8 Dang Huu Pho, D2), a brand new antiques store-cum-tearoom set on a quiet, leafy lane in An Phu, somehow makes it work.

While the tearoom serves up the requisite banana, carrot and chocolate cakes, David likes to experiment with unexpected flavor combinations. Trained as a cook turned restaurant owner in Queensland, David's passion is creating desserts. "They get the most amount of gratification from people. As well as the usual cakes, I like to throw into the mix something that's a little bit different."

Of his Strawberry, White Chocolate and Chili Tort, he admits that while it "sounds like it's going to be hot and spicy like a Mexican dish, the strawberries inside the sponge cake are macerated with sugar and chili from Sapa, which are hotter but smoother than regular chilies. I think chili brings out the flavors. Even Lindt has got chili in chocolate, so it's becoming mainstream. It's just a really nice combination, not hot as in burning but with a nice aftertaste of chili."

David's tort is three layers of sponge cake, each topped with a strawberry chili filling and iced with white chocolate buttercream, a decadent celebration of all that is good in this world.

David's tips for frosting the perfect cake? "Ice it roughly and then put it in the fridge, taking it out half an hour later after it sets. You'll have a better chance of getting it smooth. A sponge cake will tear and rip apart. But later on, come in with a hot knife and it smoothes around quite nicely." For the strawberry filling, "the trick is to have a lot of overripe strawberries and lots of sugar, hot, not to the point of toffee but sticky. Wait till it cools down to room temperature and then add the chili." Substitutions include using Dalat strawberries ("but you have to wait until they're almost overripe to have any flavor to them") or even cheating with strawberry jam ("as long as it's chunky").

Inside Villa Royale Treasures, style is as important as substance. Cakes are enjoyed around the dining room table, surrounded by possessions collected from every corner of the globe, from ornate Mongolian saddles to vintage suitcases from Melbourne to East Timorese wedding necklaces, each hand-picked by David on his travels as Global Director of Sales for the Raffles hotel group. "I know each of these pieces intimately because I've lived with them," he says.

That authenticity extends to his love for cooking. "My baking philosophy is: If I won't eat it myself, I won't cook it. I'm not a big one for pastries; they take too much time to make and are almost as good bought from a shop. But these kinds of cakes, you can really taste something about them that's homemade. You can taste how authentic they are."

Another surprising combination from David's kitchen is found in his Red Velvet Beetroot Mud Cake with Chocolate Ganache. "Beetroot is very accessible to the Vietnamese, but [in four years] I haven't seen it in anything here, especially not in desserts. There's a lot of beetroot in my mud cake, nearly 350g. You can taste it, but it's very subtle."

Indeed, the beetroot, which is baked like a potato before being pureed, lends substance and consistency to the cake, but the taste may not be readily identifiable to the unwitting. "The body of the flavor of the beetroot, along with chocolate, flour and eggs - it's got a real nice marriage of flavors. It's not something you'd eat every day but at least it's one of your food groups out of the way!" laughs David.

If only it were that gratifying to eat your vegetables.





The Other Che

The weird and wacky world of Vietnamese desserts

TEXT BY MICHAEL ARNOLD

COMING UP WITH a global definition for the whole spectrum of traditional Vietnamese desserts is certainly problematic. The collective term *che* (pronounced “jeah”) covers a broad range of what you might think of as sweet soups or porridges, served either warm or ice-cold. It’s the unexpected delicacy of the flavors that strikes most first-timers – beans and seaweed aren’t instinctive choices for internationally-popular desserts, but with a little Vietnamese culinary wizardry, the combinations work.

You could trek around Saigon for a week and still fail to sample every variety of *che* on sale at the many specialty stores in town. There are some more or less standard desserts, however, that you really wouldn’t want to miss out on while you’re here.

The eponymous dish at Che My (119 Nguyen Thai Hoc, D1) is probably what most people think of when they go out for *che*. Served like a sundae in a tall glass, this variety of the traditional *che ba mau* dessert is an icy blend of colored fruit jellies, thinly-sliced jackfruit, hunks of preserved coconut, green beans, white broad beans, and palmyra – all layered like a parfait in a cup with a mild pink syrup, sweet coconut milk, and shaved ice. The star ingredient is a cubed red jelly enveloping slivers of crunchy water chestnut. *Che my* is not quite a soup, nor is it a drink; it’s less sugary than your average bowl of

sweetened breakfast cereal, but beware – the initially addictive coconut cream will rapidly diminish in appeal past the second glass.

At the other end of the scale, *che bap* and *che khoai mon* are far simpler dishes. Small servings of warm gelatinous rice sweetened with coconut milk and blended with corn and taro respectively, these less exotic *che* are pleasantly filling and particularly welcomed on an empty stomach. This sweetened gruel has been an afternoon staple in the southern region for a very long time, often made with tapioca and sometimes sharpened up with a little grapefruit flower oil and roasted sesame.

Family Thais

One of the more dynamic aspects of having such a loosely-defined national culinary tradition is its ability to draw in other influences and turn out brand new forms. This has happened in the case of *che Thai*, now one of the most popular variations on the dessert and the result of an enthusiastic Vietnamese take on a relatively similar dish originating in Thailand called *tap tim krop*. **Che Thai Y Phuong** (380-384 Nguyen Tri Phuong, D10) was such a hit when it began rolling out classic iced *che* with durian several years ago – it was the first *che Thai* store in the city – that copycats now seem to have taken over the whole street.



Che Thai is essentially all about the durian, although those not overly fond of the fruit will be pleased to know that it doesn't entirely overpower the recipe, which is otherwise very similar to *che my* above except with more colorful chunks of jelly. The result is a rainbow of a dessert that any kindergarten-age kid would throw tantrums to be allowed to try.

A rather more austere dish at Che Thai Y Phuong is more of a mouthful to order – *che dau hu sau rieng sua tuoi* is a far milder variety of iced *che*, with fresh milk replacing the coconut cream. Served here in a beer mug, this ivory-colored dessert still has its hunk of durian, but the fruit is offset by a thick disk of soft, olive-green *khuc bach* (a very slightly sweetened gelatin-based substance not unlike tofu). This is an old matron of a dish in contrast with the vibrant, silky-stockinged *che Thai*, and it has an appeal that's very hard to place – fans will find a comforting graininess or mealiness in the drink that makes it seem healthier to consume than all the colored jellies otherwise on offer.

Fine China

Deep within one of Chinatown's most exotic suburban locations (set amongst the silk markets and behind the most ancient temple in Cholon) lies one of the oldest *che* venues in the city. Unchanged for a good 70 years and passed down through four generations of a

local Vietnamese Chinese family, **Nha Den** – a tiny blue shophouse squashed in between pajama shops off the Soai Kinh Lam intersection on Tran Hung Dao – serves a hybrid *che* channeling the influences of Cantonese cooking and Traditional Chinese Medicine. Open late from 4pm, the venue's signature dish is *sam bo luong*, a cocktail of herbs, beans, and grains best served freezing cold. Known outside of Vietnam as *qing bu liang*, the original dish was indeed a purely medicinal soup that was picked up for its cooling properties as a popular night snack in the sweltering Hong Kong summers, entering Southeast Asia from there. Nha Den's version is no less refreshing in its icy, sweet transparent syrup serviced with lychees and their juice; the soup itself looks like it's been scooped out of a fishbowl with its fans of white seaweed and bobbing chunks of lotus root and red dates.

A rather more challenging *che* is the *hot ga chung*, a thick gelatinous sweet paste served in a ceramic bowl engulfing a raw egg and a dash of coconut milk. You're supposed to stir it through as soon as it's served, but to do so is to commit yourself – the slightly salty gushing yolk gives the dish a hint of meatiness that makes for an awkward transition between sweet and omelette-y, whereas the paste on its own seems more familiar and is quite pleasant. It's no wonder this dish is often touted as a cure for constipation.



Magic Beans

Healthy and cheap, soy delights to please the palate

TEXT BY LOTTIE DELAMAIN

SOYBEANS HAVE LONG been touted as the latest super food, hailed for their ability to fight cancer, lower cholesterol and improve memory. And while they're easy to grow and cheap to buy, it's a wonder why we don't eat more of them. Phung wants to change all that. Having loved and longed-for all the delicious soy recipes she'd tried abroad, Phung, who owns **The Bean Store** (399 Vo Van Tan, D3), wanted to bring them back to her native Vietnam.

Although Vietnamese cuisine does incorporate soy into some of its puddings, to the uninitiated, the ladies selling it out of nondescript vats on the side of the road are an intimidating prospect. The Bean Store has created a more appealing option. At the west end of Vo Van Tan, wedged among rolls of shops on the busy street, the café is a hidden haven. Phung's design background and personality are evident in the cutesy contemporary layout - pared back pine furniture, Polaroid photo collages and a laid-back vibe.

As the first restaurant to specialize in soybeans, the menu champions all things soy - soybean pudding and bean curd are the most popular. Both are based on a soy milk jelly, made by mixing soy milk with a natural gelatin. The puddings are then mixed with various flavors (matcha, pandan leaf, chocolate or vanilla) and poured into molds and chilled to create a kaleidoscope of individual mini-desserts (VND35,000). The bean curd puddings use the same soy base, but are then paired with a host of different extras from lotus and longan (the Bean Curd Lolo Mix), pomelo, mango and watermelon (the Bean Curd LA Mix, VND49,000) to the more traditional hot ginger syrup.

Alongside the puddings, they serve every imaginable soy shake and smoothie as well as a selection of lesser-known Japanese savory snacks - more culinary relics from Phung's travels.

It hasn't been totally plain sailing for The Bean Store - compared to what you buy on the street, the prices are a bit more expensive, and culturally soy has a reputation for being unhealthy for men. However, 18 months in, it has overcome critics, spawned a host of copycats and there's even talk of a second store opening in the future. For those unfamiliar with soy, this is the perfect introduction. And if you're still not convinced, they do a great lunch deal too.



Wine & Dine

IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN





Giving Thanks

Before you grab that turkey leg, learn how the Pilgrims and the Native Americans celebrated the first Thanksgiving together

WELL AFTER AUTUMN settles in across the US, Americans of almost all stripes anticipate the Thanksgiving holiday with joy. Families and friends come together, food is prepared in gluttonous amounts, and football - the American version - is watched and played with extra oomph.

It holds a special place in American culture for its history and its role as herald of the holiday season. Thanksgiving is not a unique holiday, however. It's an incarnation of harvest festivals that are celebrated around the globe. What sets it apart from others, however, is the unique history associated with it. The story most children learn about is the familiar landing at Plymouth Rock by the Pilgrims in 1620 and how they befriended the native Americans and shared the first Thanksgiving in 1621, replete with all manner of foodstuffs indigenous to their new home, including the famous wild turkeys.

However, the true history behind this most beloved holiday diverges from the official story. According to Geoffrey Deetz, whose father, James Deetz, was a Harvard professor and the foremost expert on Thanksgiving, the holiday started out as more of a mercy mission.

The pilgrims were not prepared for the harsh winters of what is now New England. They nearly starved because they couldn't farm in their new environment, were terrible hunters, and the muskets they brought with them were all but useless. "Wild turkeys were very agile and they flew, it would have been impossible to hit them with a musket," Geoffrey explains.

The pilgrims had to scrape by on small game like squirrels and rabbits, or fish and eels, things simple enough for a child to catch by scooping them up or trapping them. Thanks to nearby tribes, like the Narragansett who brought them corn, grains, meats, and other food, they survived though that first winter.

But adjustment to new neighbors wasn't always so easy. The pilgrims rarely took baths or washed their clothes. Furthermore, the settlers kept their livestock alongside them in their homes for fear of losing them. The reeking odor that resulted was not only offensive to the natives, but it often drove the game out of the area, which forced the native people to have to move right along with it. Their religious fervor was also an impediment on occasion.

"Being puritans, the pilgrims often saw the

devil in things they found strange," Geoffrey says. "When their new neighbors brought them lobster, they shunned it for the red color, believing it was the work of Satan." Despite an amicable beginning, the relationship between the colonials and the natives gradually got worse over the next decade as the Europeans expanded farther and farther into native territories until fighting broke out. To this day the Native Americans view Thanksgiving with sadness, mourning the nation they lost.

The story of Thanksgiving lived on, albeit obscurely, through the ensuing centuries in written records. It wasn't until the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th that Thanksgiving evolved into what we know today. Turkey, stuffing, pumpkin pie, etc., became the 'traditional' feast. Then it was packaged, polished, and sold to the masses as a great American holiday. "Thanksgiving is a great holiday and well worth celebrating," exclaims Geoffrey. "We just need to remember that most American history was written by the wealthy, privileged European men, and this means we have to alter our perspective."

— Julian Ajello ■

THE
ULTIMATE
THANKSGIVING
FOOD GUIDE

Gobble Gobble

Thanksgiving is on the fourth Thursday of November and this year it falls on the 28th. Here is a list of places that have created special menus to help you celebrate it with friends and family

111 BLACK CAT

13 Pham Van Dat, D1

Black Cat is doing an all-you-can-eat family style dinner on November 28th and 29th. It will deviate from a normal buffet style arrangement where guests order what they want and how much they want from the menu and the kitchen will make it fresh for table. The family style is to provide fresher, hotter food with less waste. There will be a free flow of cranberry sangria, draft beer, and limeade. There will be special promotions on house California wines. This year, the Thanksgiving special will only be available dine-in only, no deliveries. Begins at 5pm until late. Prepaid reservations are recommended.

Cost: Adults - USD29, kids under 12 - USD12, kids under six - USD5, kids under two eat for free.

111 DINE VIVA

95 Dien Bien Phu, D3

Dine Viva is featuring a set menu for Thanksgiving with all your favorites, with a twist. Start off with a pumpkin and orange soup, followed by a starter of roasted beef tenderloin with braised mushroom and onion cream sauce. The main course is a ballotine of turkey roasted with potato and sage pudding, zucchini flower and cranberry sauce. Finish off the meal with a flourless chocolate and pumpkin jelly cake.

Cost: VND950,000 ++ per person including a complimentary cranberry cocktail per set menu. Call 8327 2018

111 ELBOW ROOM AND SKEWERS

52 Pasteur, D1 and 9 Thai Van Lung, D1 respectively

On November 28th and 29th starting from 6pm, an individual set menu will be available and includes clam chowder, garden salad, turkey with corn, mash potatoes, stuffing, gravy, bread, and cranberry sauce, along with a slice of pumpkin walnut pie to finish off the meal.

Cost: VND580,000 for the set or VND350,000 for an a la carte turkey plate, VND100,000 per slice of pumpkin pie, or VND100,000 per slice of key lime pie.

111 INTERCONTINENTAL ASIANA SAIGON

39 Le Duan, D1

Instead of slaving away in the kitchen, let their skillful culinary team lend you a hand in creating a wonderful Thanksgiving dinner for you and your family with their popular and mouthwatering "turkey take-away." Their 7 to 9kg delicious whole turkey comes with traditional cranberry and gravy sauces. You also have a choice of the following - stuffing: pork and cornbread, or apple and cranberry; side dishes: roasted potatoes (2kgs) or mashed potatoes (2kgs) together with two kinds of vegetable.

Cost: Priced at VND3,900,000++. Call 3520 9999 or email dine@icasianasaiagon.com. All orders must be placed at least two days in advance.

111 PARKVIEW, NEW WORLD SAIGON HOTEL

76 Le Lai, D1

Indulge in a selection of seasonal favorites for Thanksgiving Dinner such as roast turkey with homemade stuffing, cranberry sauce and gravy or honey-glazed ham with sage and mustard sauce. Complemented by their popular seafood buffet.

Cost: VND1,100,000++ per person including free flow of sparkling wine, house wine, draft beer and soft drinks. Or celebrate in the comfort of your own home by ordering their turkey, ham or imported roast beef rib-eye dinner. Priced from VND2,478,000 including one bottle of red or white wine. Call 3822 8888 or email saiagon@newworldhotels.com

111 RESTAURANT NINETEEN, CARAVELLE HOTEL

19-23 Lam Son Square, D1

Gourmet specialties and popular Thanksgiving treats, enhanced by a free flow of red, white and rose wines. The appetizer corner will have French cheeses, imported cold cuts, hand-rolled sushi and freshly baked bread and soft rolls, while a live seafood station will serve just-caught fish and shellfish fresh or cooked to your liking. A carving station offers unlimited helpings of stuffed US turkey together with sauces, and diners have their pick of a wide selection of international mains, roasted and barbecued meats, salads, soups, and desserts - including traditional pumpkin pie and the Caravelle's signature cream caramel.

Cost: VND1,013,000++ per person. Call 3823 4999

111 RIVERSIDE CAFE, RENAISSANCE RIVERSIDE HOTEL SAIGON

8-15 Ton Duc Thang, D1

Renaissance has a buffet dinner prepared with all the trimmings - Turkey with giblet gravy along with your all time Thanksgiving favorites: pineapple-glazed ham with maraschino cherries, glazed sweet potatoes with curried onions, oyster soup, mashed potato, pumpkin pie and many more.

Cost: VND990,000++ per person including house wine, beer, sodas and holiday cocktails; kids under six eat for free. Call 3822 0033 or visit www.renaissance-saigon.com

111 SQUARE ONE, PARK HYATT SAIGON

2 Lam Son Square, D1

Enjoy a feast for the eyes and palate with a truffle pea soup, followed by roast turkey, homemade stuffing, macaroni and cheese, cranberry sauce and more. Completing the meal is a pumpkin tart with maple ice cream and vanilla Chantilly cream. Available for lunch and dinner on Thanksgiving Day.

Cost: VND950,000++ per person. Call 3520 2359

111 VILLA ROYALE

8 Dang Huu Pho, D2

Villa Royale is offering holiday themed cupcakes in the spirit of Thanksgiving. An assortment of flavors will be available from November 26 until December 1st (unless otherwise sold out) including: Pumpkin spice with a maple syrup cream cheese frosting; apple cinnamon with a caramel cream cheese frosting; vanilla butter pecan with vanilla buttercream frosting and sprinkled with pecans; and classic carrot with a cream cheese frosting and topped with toasted coconut sprinkles.

Cost: VND60,000 per cupcake. Call 3744 4897 for advance purchase ■



OPA!

Take your taste buds on a Mediterranean fling

TEXT BY **MICHAEL ARNOLD**
IMAGES BY **NGOC TRAN**

WITH FOOD, IT'S always the familiar that wins over the exotic, and in the food industry, it's dependability that keeps a restaurateur in business. While trendy Thai Van Lung has transformed unrecognizably since Tristan Ngo founded his fancy Mediterranean eatery Skewers (9 Thai Van Lung, D1) here 13 years ago, the restaurant itself has remained pleasingly consistent. After all these years, the kitchen staff still haven't moved on (a record number of them have now married each other) and the menu has only expanded without dropping off any old favorites.

"Have a dish today, come back a month later and it's the same," says Tristan, who emphatically runs Skewers as a 'family thing.' "With a lot of us older restaurants, the staff have stayed with us right through. That's part of the secret of being able to stick around."

Don't be fooled by the classy décor – this is a venue to be concertedly comfortable in. You can wear a suit and tie if you want, but turn up in shorts and a polo shirt and you'll be seated, and no one will care. "It's not like a fine dining place, although it may feel like it," says Tristan. "We just make it so it's warm, it's comfortable. The kids are very welcome in our place too, because we aim at families."

Skewers' cuisine is as close to the genuine article as you can get. "I try to keep the traditions," Tristan explains. "French people come to the restaurant and call me the Greek guy. I don't believe in fusion cuisine. That's too confusing. Fusion is like you don't know what you want to do."

Tristan trained in Mediterranean-style cooking back in the States, and traveled in the region after graduation. "To me, Mediterranean is a simple food. It's all about freshness; it's not complicated, not like French or Italian or Spanish. Mediterranean food is essentially based on fresh products, and Vietnam has a lot of them. Fresh vegetables. We've got eggplant, cucumbers, and fresh tomatoes. There's plenty of seafood here. With those basic ingredients, you can start to put together the cuisine. We serve a lot of Greek food, but the menu is all over the Mediterranean, Lebanese, North Africa, the islands, you name it."

The Meal

We start our meal with a mixed dips platter (VND250,000), a generous heap of pita bread with a selection of pureed spreads. The hummus is very smooth and very good, but I find myself partial to the southern



“This is something I like to do. Just seeing people. Food, it’s all about bringing people together. You serve food how you want to be served yourself. That’s what it’s all about”



French-style tapenade with its salty, coarse-textured crushed capers and olives. The roasted eggplants in the *baba ghanoush* lend a pleasant smokiness to that particular dip. We’re also treated to the chef’s favorite goat cheese tart (VND150,000), a homemade recipe with a balsamic olive oil base. More or less a savory Hellenic cheesecake, the goat’s cheese is blended with feta and cream cheese to balance the flavors and add cohesion to each slice.

We take our mains from the grill – the tender meat cooked on the massive skewers that lend the restaurant its name (and on that note, don’t make the mistake of many first-timers: Skewers does not specialize in shish kebabs). I go for the saffron-marinated chicken skewers with *tzatziki* sauce (VND300,000), which is a massive helping equivalent to three chicken breasts. The meat is exceedingly consistent and pleasingly soft; the grassy tang of the saffron is apparent as each bite touches the palate, but does not persist long enough to overpower the natural flavor of the poultry. Use the *tzatziki* dip to vary the spiciness to your taste. Our second main, the grilled salmon fillet with nicoise salad, curry mayonnaise sauce and micro mix (VND380,000) is perfectly cooked – seared crunchy on the skin and full, unadulterated freshness within, warm and separating easily on the tongue. The beans and asparagus in the salad lend a firm quality to each mouthful, and this is an easy dish to finish despite the generosity of the serving.

Take Skewers meals with wine – the cuisine more or less demands it. “Wine goes with pretty much everything we have on the menu,” says Tristan. “We have a serious wine list here, because I like wine. Restaurant-wise, I’d say we’re in the top five in terms of range, and we’ve been officially recognized for it. I put a lot of consideration into what we included, and we’ve managed to participate in a lot wine events because of that.”

After so many years, Tristan’s still satisfied with the business. “I’m happy with it,” he assures us. “This is something I like to do. Just seeing people. Food, it’s all about bringing people together. You serve food how you want to be served yourself. That’s what it’s all about.” ■



One Bite at a Time

A taste of Spanish home cooking with a twist in Phu My Hung

TEXT BY ROBERT STOCKDILL IMAGES BY LOC NGUYEN

AS THE BLACKBOARD menu at **El Camino** (137 SB-02 Nguyen Duc Canh, D7) says, these are tapas “just like mama used to make.” Francis Aliu has been serving Barcelona-style tapas from his new restaurant in District 7 for just two months, yet he is already drawing a loyal local following - as well as attracting those prepared to make the journey from Districts 1 or 2 to satisfy their craving for Spanish food. Francis is Spanish and grew up on the culture of late night dining on small plates of nourishing, tasty food. His philosophy is simple: serving affordable, authentic Spanish food with the additional twist of a few dishes borrowed from other cuisines.

“I want to make tapas as accessible as they are in Spain, not high end or high priced,” he explains. “I can’t get the prices any lower because I use a lot of Spanish ingredients.” There are 26 tapas dishes on the main menu, none priced at more than VND55,000, along with two platter options at VND95,000.

El Camino is located on the fast-changing tree-lined boulevard of eateries and cafes in the heart of Phu My Hung. It’s a compact restaurant elegantly adorned with bright colored art and furnishings inside. But from our observation, most diners prefer to chill outside on large comfy sofas on the broad pavement, sipping cool, fruity Sangrias (available in white or red versions) and watching the eclectic mix of the local expat community amble by. This street feels a long way from Vietnam with its wide pavements, trees, al fresco eating and global brands mixing with local entrepreneurs. It’s a fitting environment for a tapas eatery.



Our Meal

Tapas without red wine or Sangria just aren't the real deal, so we eagerly ordered a bottle of Marques de Caceres Crianza Rioja 2009 (VND490,000), a smooth Spanish red we recalled fondly from Australian Spanish restaurants. And it was served non-chilled, just how we like it.

Francis is very proud of his *cannelloni* (*Canelones con béchamel* at VND49,000) - the only non-tapas dish we ordered (a mini hamburger, *Hamburguesas* mini at VND55,000, is another option).

"It's not really a tapas dish but I wanted to add it to the menu as my mother cooked it in Barcelona when I was a kid," he says.

The cannelloni was full of soft, warm meat and creamy béchamel sauce. If you close your eyes you can imagine yourself in the kitchen of a Spanish farmhouse on a cold winter's night, seated around a family table before a coal range. Yes, this is just how mama would have made it.

"It's not just the taste but the texture," Francis explained after our meal. "I remembered the taste and the feeling and

we tried seven or eight recipes. We just kept trying different ingredients until we got it right."

Chorizo Frito (VND55,000) was served in meaty chunks in a pool of olive oil. It tasted smoky and deliciously oily and moorish, soft on the tongue with a hint of tang in the aftertaste. The *Gambas al ajillo* (VND45,000) - prawns with garlic - were lightly cooked, tender, juicy, and deliciously garlicky, served with a sprinkling of herbs.

Croquetas (VND49,000) are potato croquettes made with Serrano ham, salmon and shrimp. The flavor was delicate, the balance of different meats complementing each other in the soft potato.

Francesco urged us to try his *Jamon Serrano* (VND55,000), which he is particularly proud to have sourced from Spain. "It's hard to find good Serrano ham for a good price, but my supplier is very good and the quality of the meat is very, very good." We were glad for the recommendation - it was wafer thin, soft and delicately flavored, slightly salty on the palate.

Manchego cheese is another of my favorite

tapas dishes. El Camino's *Queso Manchego* (VND49,000) is served thinly sliced with ciabatta bread drizzled with a mix of tomato, olive oil and salt.

The final dish in our banquet was *Patatas Bravas* (VND29,000) tossed in a garlic aioli by request. The menu has *patatas bravas* served hot with a tomato sauce or cold with garlic aioli, but the chef was happy to mix the offer to indulge our garlic craving, served with hot potatoes. The garlic was very strong - just like how the Europeans love it.

We were way too full after this European feast to indulge in desserts, but at the time of writing El Camino was augmenting its plate of fresh fruits with a traditional *Crema Catalina* and a selection of Bellany ice creams.

El Camino is exactly what it sets out to be: an authentic tapas experience with accessible pricing, a relaxed al fresco pavement dining area and cheerful, attentive staff. If you live in Phu My Hung and you're partial to Spanish food, it's an ideal spot to chill and graze. It's also well worth the journey if you live further afield. ■



Crustacean Cravings

Fresh delicious seafood without having to travel to the coast

TEXT BY **LOTTIE DELAMAIN** IMAGES BY **LOC NGUYEN**

BLUE CRAB (49 Quoc Huong, D2) is coming up to its two year anniversary and has had consistently good reviews since it first opened in January 2012. Its mission is high quality at low cost and it is an unwavering commitment to this philosophy that has earned it a loyal following.

Blue Crab is not your usual Thao Dien eatery. Located on Quoc Huong, at the distinctly more Vietnamese end of An Phu, it has a local homespun feel. Diners are there for the food, not for luxury furnishings. The menu, designed by owners Alex and Van, is also a homegrown mix of local Vietnamese dishes and European classics. Alex grew up in Paris and Los Angeles (US) before moving back to Vietnam, and his wife Van spent time in Canada before romance persuaded her to ditch everything and join Alex in Vietnam. Blue Crab is their first restaurant together, and is very much an expression of their personalities. Van heads up the kitchen (Van was a champion cookery competition winner as a kid) while Alex meets and greets out front, and it's a combo that seems to be working.

The surf and turf choices are endless – there's everything from lobster to langoustines, BBQ duck tongue and green

lipped mussels, to crab wontons and bacon-wrapped scallops. There's also a freestyle menu which Alex calls the "chicken McNugget philosophy" – you choose the fish and then pick any sauce you want (salt and pepper, garlic butter, or tamarind) and Van will whip up a feast just as you like it.

But the real show stopper, the chef's special, is the seafood *mariniere* (VND195,000). Based on the French classic *moules mariniere* (also available for VND175,000), but with the addition of fish, langoustines and giant prawns, it is a steaming bowl of garlicky Gallic goodness - as good as any you'd get in France. Served with chunks of warm French baguette to mop up the juices, this holy trinity of French food - garlic, shallots and white wine - is hard to beat.

For a more Vietnamese seafood feast, we also tried the *banh canh*, an udon soup with juicy pieces of crab meat, prawns and pork in an aromatic broth (VND70,000). And the seafood *mien* (noodle) with lobster, langoustines, crab and scallops was as delicious as it was indulgent – bok choy, bean sprouts and peanuts tangled up in a mound of stir-fried elastic strands of glass noodles and topped with mountains of fresh seafood (VND110,000).

For carnivores there are plenty of delicious grilled and BBQ meats, including goat breast which was excellent (VND45,000/100g) and for the more adventurous the local classic, duck tongue (VND50,000/100g). The crown, however, goes to the triple honey-dipped short ribs that were marinated, basted and glazed in honey making for a sticky, finger-licking mouthful (VND30,000/piece).

All the seafood is sourced from the same venues that supply the city's top hotels and restaurants, but served up at half the price. So how do they do it? "That's a closely-guarded secret," says Alex. He later reveals that they cut costs elsewhere. They moved out of their house down the road to live above the restaurant to ensure they could keep the prices down. To further demonstrate this, Thursdays they have oyster night where you can scoop up a dozen for VND120,000 - only VND10,000 a piece.

With so much on offer it is little wonder they are beginning to outgrow the premises and are looking to move to somewhere bigger next year. But for the time being, they will be where they always have been, serving up their take on French-Vietnamese seafood classics, at prices that could make a regular out of anyone. ■

Home is Where the Wine Is

How to start a basic wine collection



Michael Kloster grew up in the vineyard country west of Fresno, California. He has over 20 years of marketing, hospitality, and food and beverage experience. He is currently Senior Sales Executive for Magnum Wine Cellars. He can be contacted at michael@magnumwinecellars.com



AS WE EDGE towards the holidays, I've been pressed by more than a few private clients about what they should be stocking up on to imbibe during the festive season. This is an opportune time to stock up on a few party essentials, and wine is no exception. But the question I seem to be asking myself more and more these days is, "What about the rest of the year?" What should you keep around for a surprise celebration, a dismal day at the office, or something to wash down a delivery pizza?

In my home I always have on hand at least one of each: a dry rose, a dry white, a light, fruity red, and a sparkler. Changes in my personal taste, and the addition of a wife, have increased the selection a little. When you consider the suggested collection below, keep in mind your personal taste and situation, and then adjust accordingly.

Rosé

Rosé gets a bit of a bad rap: "Rosé is for women." "Rosé is for novice drinkers." Phooey. A nice, crisp rose is just what the doctor ordered on a hot summer's afternoon. And let's face it, where we live,

it's always summer. Rosé is also quite food friendly, especially with local style seafood. If you prefer wine on the sweeter side, there are plenty of sweeter and off-dry roses out there. Among them is the popular White Zinfandel from California, a sometimes sweet rosé version made from the Zinfandel grape. The rosé in my fridge is from Northern Italy, and just as good all by itself as it is paired with some yummy fresh spring rolls.

Dry White

The hip dry white wine right now is Sauvignon Blanc. Generally the citrusy-minerality and high acidity of a Sauvignon Blanc makes it a great choice for an aperitif or with simply prepared seafood (especially one with some fresh lime or other acidic accompaniment). I like a nice Sauvignon Blanc with fish and chips. An extra reason to keep a dry white wine on hand is that you need it for so many basic recipes (like pasta with clams, sautéed mushrooms, etc.). A richer white (like an oaked Chardonnay) can leave an unpleasant taste when it reduces in the pan.

Light, Fruity Red

The keys to which red wine you want to stock are personal preference and flexibility. For me, the key is to find something that can go nicely with roasted chicken, just as easily as a burger or a lamb chop (or the stereotypical delivery pizza). You have a few choices out there. Look for a fruity Pinot Noir, or even a reasonably priced Chianti. Chianti (made predominantly from the Sangiovese grape) is light and earthy enough sip with some chicken sautéed with mushrooms, yet perfectly acceptable to enjoy with a slab of red meat. These lighter reds are also nice with many types of local food, try one with some beef *la lot* if you don't believe me.

Sparkling

The sky's the limit here. The market is full of sparklers. Most notably Champagne. Please be sure to buy your Champagne from a reputable stockiest (a good idea with all wines as they are not often faked here, but easily spoiled). A modest non-vintage Champagne from a prominent house will set you back under USD100. But, if you're on more of a budget, there are plenty of options. In my fridge is a bottle of Prosecco from Italy. This particular one is dry, but they come in other, sweeter styles. Some are even pink, if you're feeling more festive. The Aussies like theirs red: sparkling Shiraz adds a bit of fun to almost any informal, or formal, gathering. Sparklers are also great with many types of food.

Bells and Whistles

In addition to the standard selections already outlined, you can outfit your personal cellar with other things that fit your taste. My wife likes off dry (read slightly sweet) Rieslings, so we always have one of these around. How about a port or a nice sherry? I am partial to Rioja (a Spanish wine made from mostly Tempranillo and Garancha) with a few slices of manchego cheese. But, no matter what bells and whistles you choose to add to your cellar, keeping a small supply of hard working wines on hand will round out almost any occasion. Cheers! ■



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>>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 cafes, 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.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

L'amour Bakery & Cafe

More than just another bakery, L'amour is the perfect place for those whom are looking for respite from busy HCMC. This patisserie offers a large selection of European cake and pastry, fresh juice and coffee. You will also find pastas, salads, and sandwiches, ideal for lunch time.

Open from 6am - 10:30pm
24 Hai Ba Trung D1

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
5am - 10pm

Savouré 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

bars

Allez Boo



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

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

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.bluegeckosaigon.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
dorutudose@gmail.com

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

Broma Saigon Bar



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

41 Nguyen Hue, D1
3823 6388
bromasaigonbar@gmail.com

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

Charm Bar

Unassuming expat bar in the central city

with table soccer and an upstairs floor for private functions. Opens late night.

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



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.

39 Le Duan, D1
9822 4206
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
ffn291182@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
Trung Quoc, D3
090 944 5544

Eon51

Eon51 includes a fine dining restaurant, a champagne lounge, a cigar bar and a heli pad cocktail bar. Spread on three levels, Eon51 is a destination for bespoke private and corporate events in Saigon.

Levels 51-52, Bitexco Financial Tower, 2 Hai Trieu, D1
6291 8751

www.eon51.com
7am - 2am

Game On

Opened in July, Game On is Saigon's newest and biggest sports bar that serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. The bar also has an extensive drink menu that includes coffees, juices, beers, wines, vodkas and more. Besides being a good place to watch games, Game On also boasts a function room for corporate meetings or private parties.

115 Ho Tung Mau, D1
6251 9898
gameonsaigon@gmail.com
8am till late

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

Go2

Go2 is a popular nightspot 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

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
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
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

Le 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

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

Miss Saigon

Recently opened, this quaint and cozy bar offers great service and delicious cocktails for those looking to quench their thirst after work. Beers start at VND30,000 and cocktails start at VND55,000 with happy hour from 6pm – 8pm where beers cost VND20,000. Open from 6pm to midnight.

8A/ICI Thai Van Lung, D1

MTV

A large Vietnamese cafe in D3 spread over two levels with space for quiet romantic chat or larger group meets. Serves a broad range of coffees and chilled drinks.

65 Vo Van Tan, D3
3930 2597
thuyhangmtv@yahoo.com
www.mtvcafe.com.vn
7am - 11pm

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

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

Purple Jade

Purple Jade is a stylish and chic venue with exceptional world class cocktails by the city's award-winning bartender along with snacks to melt away the bustle of the city.

First floor- InterContinental Asiana Saigon
Corner of Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan
3520 9099
www.intercontinental.com/saigon

RED Bar
RED offers one of the longest Happy Hours in Saigon, from 9am - 9pm, with live music available from Monday - Saturday. This multi-level bar has a non-smoking floor and a function room along with a top quality pool table and soft-tip dart machines. A menu of Eastern and Western dishes also includes wood-fire pizzas.
70-72 Ng Duc Ke, District 1
2229 7017

Ryan's Pub 'Banter Bar' @ Stella

Occupying the top floor of Stella, this new bar has an outdoor terrace along with a pool table and dart boards indoors. Happy hour drinks are also available.

First Floor, 119 - 121 Bui Vien, D1
090 000 0042
www.stellacaffe@yahoo.com

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 friendly bar service. Live sport on screen, including English Premier League.

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

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
www.stormp.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

Wine Embassy

For those looking to relax and enjoy a glass of wine after work, Wine Embassy is the perfect place with wine specialists and an interactive menu to help you pair your wine with crafted food.

13 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
3824 7827
www.wineembassy.com.vn
4pm till late

cafés

ABC Bakery & Cafe

ABC Bakery & Cafe has over 30 different kinds of baked goods such as baguettes, danishes, whole cakes, sliced cakes and even pizza. Together with its range of baked items, it is also has Western and Vietnamese coffee and juices.

223 - 225 Pham Ngu Lao, D1
www.abcbnc.com

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

Secreted 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

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

Angel-in-us Coffee

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

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

Blue Cafe

A sprawling, unique cafe in Go Vap, with indoor-outdoor seating and an attempt to recreate the appeal of rural Dalat. Enjoy the shade inside, or sit outside amidst the greenery and watch aircraft taking off from Ton Sat airport. Extensive menu and broad range of coffees and chilled drinks.

701-703 Phan Van Tri, Go Vap
3588 6824
www.mtvcafe.com.vn
7am - 11pm

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

Boulevard Cafe

This Parisian-style cafe has a fine, white tone and a warm ambiance that attempts a look of luxury with its plush sofas and chandeliers.

98 Phan Xich Long, Phu Nhuan

Bukafe - Cafe

This quaint cafe offers a Japanese style setting with chairs that have you seated on the ground. While offering elegant drinks and tasty simple dishes, make sure to catch the live bands. It won't set you back much either with inexpensive drinks.

43 Nguyen Huu Cau, D1
090 265 2635
bukafe.cafetruyen@gmail.com

Café Ban Sonate

Cafe 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
www.fresco.com.vn

Café Terrace

Cafe 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

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.

108 Ton Duc Thang, D1
3823 3279

Cake Durian Duiro

A chain of cafes selling durian inspired crepes and buns with prices under VND100,000.

Kiosk in Le Thi Rieng Park, 875 Cach Mang Thang 8, D10
093 333 9365
www.banhaurieng.com

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

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

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

Cooku's Nest

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

13 Tu Xuong, D3
2241 2043

Crêperie & Café

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

5 Han Thuyen, D1

DeJa Vu Cafe

It is easy to mistake this cafe for someone's home as the tranquil atmosphere will have you tension free in no time. The peaceful setting is ideal for dates or low-key social events. Make

sure to catch the live bands that frequent the cafe.

314/2 Dien Bien Phu, D10
6276 6966
info@dejavu.vn

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

Fe Cafe

Fe Cafe brings you all kinds of scrumptious coffee, along with Vietnamese food and dessert. It offers breakfast, lunch, dinner and offers delivery as well. The interior is a mix of alternative and fancy, with wooden furniture, soft backrest pillows and decorative paintings.

26 Ly Tu Trong, D1
090 878 3788
www.facebook.com/fecafe.vn
7.30am - 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
www.geishacafe.com



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 Jean's

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
www.gloriajeanscoffees.com/vn

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

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

Imagine Coffee shop

One of the walls of this rustic cafe is literally covered with books. An easy place to get lost for an evening with prices below VND100,000.

58 Ho Bieu Chanh, Phu Nhuan
090 956 0105
www.facebook.com/ImagineCafeShop
09 0956 0105
nguyenmai.huan@gmail.com
8am - 10pm

Kebab Cafe

The healthiest kebab! Featuring an excellent homemade white sauce, fresh veggies and chicken or pork marinated without oil. The French owner also serves savory and sweet crepes and a home-made puree.

538/2/8 Doan Van Bo, D4
01648 805 915
contact@kebab-cafe.com
www.kebab-cafe.com
10am - 10pm

Kem My

This quiet ice cream shop is the perfect place for families and couples to indulge their sweet tooth. It offers a fresh release from the heat of Ho Chi Minh City.

11 Duong 41, D4
093730 3030
www.kemmy.vn
3.30pm - 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
heserakesera.com

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

L'amour

A stylish bakery and cafe new to Hai Ba Trung, in the city centre, L'amour specialises in cakes and desserts and serves Illy Coffee. Eat in or take away.

24 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3520 8180
www.lamoubakery.com

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, DI
38212718

LightBox Cafe

This stunningly designed cafe also doubles as an event and photography studio, so make sure you dress to impress at this location because you never know who might snap your picture. They also serve vegetarian cuisine with prices ranging between VND300,000 - VND500,000

179 Hoa Lan, Phu Nhuan
3517 6668
www.lightbox.vn

L'Usine

L'Usine is a retail, café and gallery space occupying two locations in the center of DI. 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, DI
70B Le Loi, DI
www.lusinespace.tumblr.com
9am – 9pm

Le Tokyo Baum

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

46 Nguyen Van Trang, DI
3926 0388

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, DI
3827 7099
www.maycoffee.com

Minhu Coffee

This specialty cafe offers a wood furniture interior setting, which resembles the cabins you would expect to see in the western North American frontier. Live bands are a regular feature at the cozy cafe and prices are inexpensive.

149/35 Le Thi Rieng, DI
3601 9319

MTV Cafe

Providing a relaxing atmosphere after a hard day's work with some of the top hits out today, MTV cafe is the perfect place to unwind with that special someone or just a cup of coffee.

65 Vo Van Tan, D3
3930 2597
mtvcafe.com.vn

MZ Coffee

A cafe in a colonial villa that was built in the early 20th century. It boasts a broad selection of coffee, from fine Vietnamese condensed milk coffee to Italian Lavazza espresso, cappuccinos and lattes as well as wines and beers.

56-56 A Bui Thi Xuan, DI
39255258
www.m-zing.com

NYDC

A fun, dynamic and cosmopolitan place for food, desserts, beverages and not forgetting the company of good friends. Prices range between VND100,000 - VND300,000.

Diamond Plaza, 34 Le Duan, DI

3822 9992
www.nydc.com.vn

Onset Cafe

This lounge cafe features live bands and is a good setting for work events or business meetings. With bold interior furniture it is a popular respite for Ho Chi Minh residents.

319 Ly Thuong Kiet, DI1
6670 7092
onsetcoffee@yahoo.com.vn

Paris Deli

A French style cafe 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, DI
3821 6127

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

Phuong Cac Cafe

With indoor and outdoor lounge areas this cafe is a relaxing respite from the grind of Ho Chi Minh City. With live bands and drinks under VND100,000 it makes for the perfect getaway.

Bis 213 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D3
3932 7484

Phúc Minh Coffee

Phuc Minh coffee is an airy, clean environment providing a varied menu and delicious coffee. The staff is attentive and quick with a friendly approach. Prices start around VN 25,000 for this simple cafe.

51 Hung Phuoc 4, D7
www.quancafe.vn/phucminh.1

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, DI

Regina Coffee

A popular hangout for hip, young Vietnamese around Nguyen Du, serving western coffee in a vintage, artsy environment.

84 Nguyen Du, DI

Retrobite Diner Cafe

Inspired by the concept of 1960s Americana, bi-level Retrobite Diner Cafe features an interior that includes booths, retro egg chairs, jukebox and classic radio players. The menu is mostly American food with sandwiches, hamburgers, pastas, steaks, milkshakes, waffles and more.

6 Cong Truong Quoc Te, D3
3521 0673
retrobite.vn@gmail.com
7:30am - 11pm

Soho Coffee

Two level local cafe chain serving light meals, coffee and local chilled drinks.

185 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, DI
3839 5038
7am - 11pm

Starbucks Coffee

Has 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, DI

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, DI
3836 9220
www.stellacaffe.com

The Blue Cafe

A spacious cafe divided into two different areas with a lush, outdoor garden seating lounge and an air conditioned in-door lounge. The Blue Cafe has live music with drinks under VND100,000.

701-703 Phan Van Tri, Go Vap
3588 6824

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, DI
Ground Floor, Crescent Mall
Ton Dat Tien, D7
157-159 Nguyen Thai Hoc, DI
39 Le Duan, DI
12-14 Thai Van Lung, DI
94 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D3
235 Nguyen Van Cu, DI
235 Dong Khoi, DI
1-5 Le Duan, DI
60-62 Cach Mang Thang 8, D3
1-3 Phan Chu Trinh, DI

The Library

The Library provides a welcoming atmosphere for those in search of tranquility, comfort and great drinks in the heart of Saigon

Ground floor – InterContinental Asiana Saigon
Corner of Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan
3520 9099
www.intercontinental.com/saigon

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, DI
3822 0377

Tram Coffee

A unique romantic cafe 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 cafe 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

The Myth Cafe

Escape the daily grind of Ho Chi Minh City with a trip into the mystical setting of Myth Cafe. With live bands and prices under VND100,000 it's no wonder The Myth cafe is one of the best around.

176 Dien Bien Phu, D3
3820 9735
thuyhangmtv@yahoo.com

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, DI

The Serenata Cafe

The Serenata Cafe is a peaceful, relaxing oasis in a French Colonial house. This cafe embraces nature with plants, fishponds, and small fountains, and offers music in the evenings.

6D Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3
3930 7436

Windows

A highly fashionable cafe 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, DI
38238408

Zoom Cafe

This distinctive Vespa-themed Café has been a popular fixture in DI 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, DI
3920 3897

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, DI
3827 2566

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 thee totally private rooms.

New World Hotel
76 Le Lai, DI
3822 8888
www.saigon.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.

20 Le Anh Xuan, DI
3822 2673

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, DI
3822 0033

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, DI
3827 2828
www.libaisaigon.com

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, DI
3925 7777

Ocean Palace

A place for those who love Chinese food. The large dining room on the ground floor can accommodate up to 280 diners. Up on the first floor are six private rooms and a big ballroom that can host 350 guests.
2 Le Duan Street, DI
3911 8822

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 Chinatown. 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, DI
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, DI
3925 1111
www.dimsunhouse.vn

Yu Chu

Yu chu is renowned for the quality and presentation of its authentic Cantonese and Peking cuisines along with its elegant décor. Watching the chefs prepare signature dishes such as hand-pulled noodle, dim sum and Peking duck right in the kitchen is a prominent dining feature here.

First floor, InterContinental Asiana Saigon
Corner of Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan
3520 9099
www.intercontinental.com/saigon

french

Alibi Restaurant and Bar

Centrally located a stone's-throw from the Opera House in downtown DI, this is a warm, appealing lounge environment with modest prices.
5 Nguyen Sieu, DI
3825 6257

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

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

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, DI
3926 0699

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, DI
3822 5216
www.cordonblue.vn

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 Parisian brasserie service experience.
38 Dong Du, DI
0862913657
contact@labrasseriendesaigon.com
www.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, DI



La Creperie

La Creperie is the first authentic Brittany French restaurant that serves savory galettes, sweet crepes with tasty seafood and the best apple cider in Saigon.
17/7 Le Thanh Ton, DI
3824 7070
infosgn@lacreperie.com.cn
Mon-Sun 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, DI
2229 8882
www.lacuisine.com.vn
La Doree
La Doree provides its patrons with over 50 varieties of cakes, as well as a rich

Baba's Kitchen

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

Open 11am to 11pm
North & South Indian food
Halal & vegetarian dishes
Of course we can cater!
order online at vietnammm.com & eat.vn
"Baba brings India to Vietnam"

Wok n'roll

American Chinese Food

Full Menu

www.woknroll.vn

We wok hard for you!

SUPER FAST DELIVERY!
0122-690-8881

Scan for the full menu

Address: Hung Vuong 1 E006, Phu My Hung, District 7

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 specialty: 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

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

L'essentiel

A recent arrival to the growing ranks of authentic French dining experiences in HCMC, L'essentiel offers a quiet intimate dining experience downstairs with space for private functions and alfresco dining on an upper floor. The menu changes weekly, the food is fresh and the wine list carefully collated.
98 Ho Tung Mau, D1
0948 415 646

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
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 under the eye of iron chef Vietnam winner David Thai.
40 Thai Van Lung, D1
www.lebouchondesaigon.com

Le Jardin

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

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

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. Their vindaloo is a must try.
164 Bui Vien, D1
3838 6661
www.babaskitchen.in
11am - 11pm

Bombay Indian Restaurant

Located in D1 near the Ben Thanh Market area, serving Indian & Halal cuisine. The ambiance is relaxed thanks to Bombay's easy-going, family kitchen vibe.
57-59 Ham Nghi, D1
9am - 10.30pm

Ganesh

Ganesh serves authentic northern Indian tandooris & rotis along with the hottest curries, dandas, and vada from the southern region.
1584 Le Thanh Ton, D1
8223 0173
www.ganeshindianrestaurant.com

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

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

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

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

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



Ciao Bella

Hearty home-style Italian food served with flair and excellent service. An extensive menu is complemented with daily specials. Arriving guests are greeted with a free glass of Prosecco. Diners sit in a cozy setting upstairs or on the ground floor for people watching. Big groups should book in advance.
11 Dong Du, D1
3822 3329
tonyfox56@hotmail.com
www.saigonrestaurantgroup.com/ciao



Da Vinci's

Da Vinci's is an Italian-American style pizzeria delivery offering pizzas, lasagna, spaghetti, calzones, salads and desserts. Their full menu is online at www.davincisvietnam.com. Free delivery to Districts 1, 3, 4, 5, 7 and Phu My Hung.
Open 11am - 10pm.
Call 083 943 4982 or
SMS your order to 093 328 4624

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

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

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.
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.saigon.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
www.pizza4ps.com

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.

Japanese



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, spaghetti, pizzas, steak and special Japanese sweet desserts.

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

Aka Taiyo

Aka Taiyo 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
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

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

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.

47 Phan Chu Trinh, D1

Blanchy Street 🍷 Oi's Pick

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
www.blanchystreet.com

* Reviewed by Oi in April 2013

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

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

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
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

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

Kuru Kuru Shushi

A Japanese restaurant that features a rotating conveyor belt for the buffet, offering 50 different selections. It also offers an a la carte menu.

129 Nguyen Du, D1
www.kurukuru.com.vn
11am - 2pm and 5pm - 10:30pm

Kokekokko Pandora

Kokekokko is a combination of modern style fast food with the essence of ancient Japanese cuisine. The restaurant space is designed with high quality materials and features youthful and modern dynamic subtleties. With prices under VND100,00 Kokekokko is a must see.

4th Floor Pandora, 1/1 Truong Chinh, Tan Phu
3849 6840
www.kokekokko.com.vn

La Fenetre Soleil

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

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

Robata Dining An

The restaurant has a downstairs bar and a second floor with private rooms that have sunken tables, sliding fusuma doors and tabletop barbecues. Popular with the Japanese expats, the menu serves up healthy appetizers, rolls, sashimi

and An specialty dishes like deep fried chicken with garlic salt sauce An style (VND100,000).

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

Sakura Vietnamese-Japanese Restaurant

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

99 Suong Nguyen Anh, D1
6291 1036
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

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

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
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, DI
3823 3232
vickis.com.vn
10.30am - 3pm; 5pm - 10pm

Wainosuke

Wainosuke is a Japanese and Italian style restaurant. It serves food such as pastas, salads and steaks to name a few and wine from traditional Japanese to premium Italian wine.

37 Ho Tung Mau, DI
3821 4016
www.wainosuke-vn.asia

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, DI
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, DI
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, DI
3825 7974
www.daejanggum.vn

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
www.mihanquocvn.com
8am - 11pm

Mr. BBQ – Korean Chicken & Hot

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
7am - 10pm

steakhouses



Au Lac do Brazil

Serving Saigon for more than 10 years, Au Lac do Brazil is the very first authentic Brazilian Churrascaria in Vietnam, bringing a new dining concept - an "All you can eat" Brazilian style BBQ where meat is brought to your table on skewers by a passador and served to your heart's content. They have an extensive selection of fine wines as well.

HO CHI MINH CITY
Au Lac do Brazil I
238 Pasteur, D3
(08) 3820 7157
HA NOI
Au Lac do Brazil II
6A Cao Ba Quat, Ba Dinh
(04) 3845 5224
For Banquet & Catering
Call or email
pr@aulacdobrazil.com
090 947 8698

www.aulacdobrazil.com
www.facebook.com/aulacdobrazil

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.norfolkhotel.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
www.steak.vn
11am - late

El Gaucho

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 🍲 Oi's Pick

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.

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

Corlander

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.

16 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
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.thaieexpress.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

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

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

Banh Xeo An La Ghien

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

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.

6276 2609
www.bunsaiigon.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

Cuc Gach Quan

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

Grillbar - Eatery & Cafe

A new trendy kitchen and cozy restaurant with the concept of taking traditional Vietnamese charcoal grilled street food and serving it in a New York style cafe.

122 Le Thanh Ton, DI
38227 901
www.grillbar.com.vn



Quan Bui - Authentic Vietnamese Cuisine

An exciting Vietnamese culinary experience awaits you in the heart of the old French quarter in downtown Saigon. Reasonably priced, you will see the open kitchen as you come in (chefs working hard to thrill your palate with the herbs, spices and sauces from around the country - definitely no MSG here). The ambiance is sophisticated and comfortable with traditional crockery serving as decoration.

17A Ngo Van Nam, DI
3828 1515
www.quanbui.vn

Highway 4

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

101 Vo Van Tan, D3
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
www.hoatuc.com

Hoang Yen

A venue for those who are looking for high-quality Vietnamese cuisine. Try some of the country's delicacies in a modern yet inviting atmosphere. The eatery's various clay pots are flavorful; some feature mam, a delicious fermented fish paste. While the restaurant's cuisine is light and healthy overall, those with a penchant for green veggies should definitely order one of Hoang Yen's assortment of edible 'flowers' – especially the sautéed hoa thien ly. It is recommended to order a few dishes and share them all.

7-9 Ngo Duc Ke, DI
148 Hai Ba Trung, DI
Parkson Hung Vuong, Third Floor, Hung Vuong Plaza, An Duong Vuong, D5
CRI- 12, 103 Ton Dat Tien, D7
www.hoangyencuisine.com

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

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

Nam Phat Restaurant

A Vietnamese restaurant that specializes in hosting social events such as weddings and business conferences. Traditional Vietnamese cuisine is the specialty with prices ranging from VND100,000 - VND300,000. The setting is of an elegant banquet hall.

21 Nguyen Trung Ngan, DI
3910 6488
nhahangnamphat@gmail.com

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

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

Mitau

Mitau creates a gathering place for those who love Hue cuisine. The interior includes memorabilia, statues, bric and brac and golf trophies.

52 Hai Ba Trung, DI
3823 0767
www.mitauhue.com

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
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 Chanh, 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

Quan Bui Authentic Vietnamese Cuisine

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

17a Ngo Van Nam, DI
3829 1515
(deliveries: 3602 2241 or 091 400 8835)

Quan An Ngon

Quan An Ngon appeals easily to tourists and local people alike in its unique concept: presenting the diversity of Vietnamese cuisine from different regions in a village market style. The restaurant is set in a large new building, which from its external yellow appearance is reminiscent of an old European villa; but inside its space is designed as an ancient Hue ruong house.

138 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, DI
3827 9666
www.quanngon138.com
7am - 10pm

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

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

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.com.vn

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 Nguyen Anh, D1
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, D1
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, D1
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.
187 Hai Ba Trung, D3
3829 7242
www.tibrestaurant.com.vn

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, D1
3821 2538

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, D1
3829 1623
www.vietnamhousesaigon.com

(other) asian

Crawfish King

Crawfish King serves special menus with crawfish, lobster, mantis shrimp, American-style chicken wings, oysters, fruit beer, sea urchin and more. Offers free delivery for customers in D1 and D3.
63 Truong Dinh, D1
6272 7888
www.facebook.com/crawfishking63
7am - 12am

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, D1
3823 8371
www.lioncityrestaurant.com

Long Monaco 🍷 Oi'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 1
364 Cong Hoa, Tan Binh
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, D1
3926 0036
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

Bahdja

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

Ben Style 🍷 Oi's Pick

Every sandwich comes wrapped with a label that displays its calories, protein, fat and carbohydrates content. A 544-calorie Cheesy tofu meatballs sandwich costs VND80,000 while a 281-calorie Chicken salad sets you back VND50,000. The chicken jumbo sandwich comes with a massive 638 calories, 59 grams of protein and 62 grams of carbohydrates, but only 16 grams of fat. Ben also offers meal plans for those who want to get fit and bulk up.
302 Co Bac, D1
090 691 2730

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

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

Burger Oi!
 Burger Oi offers fast delivery at affordable prices. Try their burgers, filet of fish, BBQ pulled pork, fresh cut curly fries and desserts. See their full menu online at www.burgeroi.com
 Call 083 826 5426 or
 SMS your order to 093 836 3030

The Elbow Room

The Elbow Room on Pasteur is an American-style bistro with a long bar, exposed brickwork, white walls, and whirling 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

Jaspas Wine & Grill 🍷 Oi's Pick

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
alfrescosgroup.com

MEXICAN RESTAURANT

Khoi Thom
 Khoi Thom - "fragrant smoke" in English - is a unique venue, set in a bright, colourful al fresco decor inspired by renowned architect Ricardo Legoretta. A long way from Mexico, Chef Alejandro Torres's menu blends "Cocina Potosina" and timeless Mexican classics.
29 Ngo Thai Nhim, D3
www.khoithom.com

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

Market 39

Market 39 showcases seven interactive live show kitchens, featuring a la carte all-day dining and an extensive buffet selection served daily during breakfast, lunch and dinner.
Ground floor, InterContinental Asiana Saigon
Corner of Hai Ba Trung & Le Duau
3520 9099
www.intercontinental.com/saigon

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


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.saiгон.newworldhotels.com


Pasha

 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
www.pasha.com.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

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



White Forest

Set in a modern décor, the restaurant serves authentic Italian and French cuisine accompanied by a good selection of European wines and cocktails. Happy Hour cocktails from 2pm – 7:30pm where it's buy one get one free. Order take-away online at vietnammm.com, foodpanda.vn, and eatvn
14 Bis Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D1
0122 428 5237
www.whiteforest.com.vn

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

Zest Bistro & Cafe

A casual restaurant featuring an American, French and fusion menu. Located across from the waterfront, just minutes away from the Bach Dang pier,

Zest offers diners one of the nicest views in the city.
5 Ton Duc Thang, D1
3911 5599

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

>>The List District 2

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

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

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

CAFES

Agnes Cafe - Dalat Coffee & Flower Shop

At Agnes Cafe they offer fresh coffee, smoothies and juices along with a delicious breakfast and lunch menu. This quaint and cozy cafe is a perfect place to meet up with friends or just relax to get away from the bustling traffic outside. They offer free delivery.
11A-B Thao Dien, D2
agnescafe@agnescoffee.vn
6281 9772
facebook.com/pages/Agnes-Cafe

Shalom Coffee

Shalom Coffee is available for all your coffee and chocolate needs, warm snacks, cold refreshments, breakfasts and lunches.
53 Vo Truong Toan, D2
37444111
www.coffeeshalom.com
6:30am - 7pm

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

La Villa

 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
***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

ITALIAN

Pendolasco – Thao Dien

 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

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

Chisana Hashi


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

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

Jasmine Thai

 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

Banlian Tree

A fine dining Vietnamese restaurant. Offers a set lunch, set dinner and international breakfast
River Garden, 170 Nguyen Van Huong, D2

Frangipani Hoa Su

Frangipani Hoa Su offers authentic Vietnamese cuisine with a variety of

dishes from different parts of Vietnam ranging from pho, bun bo Hue to mi quang. It serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. It also has an open space and a VIP air-conditioned room together which can hold a maximum capacity of 500 people, making it an ideal venue for different types of events and functions.
26 Le Van Mien, D2
frangipani.restobar@gmail.com

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

Blue Crab

Blue Crab offers delicious seafood - prawns, scallops and lobster, crab, oysters, scallops and many more for rock-bottom prices. All of the seafood is sourced from the same supplier as a number of high-end hotels and restaurants in the city, ensuring the food is fresh and high quality. For meat-lovers there's also a wide range of dishes that include pork ribs and chicken wings. They offer weekly specials as well.
49 Quoc Huong, D2
3744 2008
www.bluecrabsaigon.com

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

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

The Deck

 Located on the banks of the Saigon River, this restaurant offers great international and Vietnamese fare.
38 Nguyen U Di, D2
www.thedecksaigon.com

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
www.vinovietnam.com

>>The List District 7

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

Ruby Soho

A popular district 7 spot with excellent and cheap range of cocktails, good food and great music! Listen to the likes of Jimi Hendrix, The Ramones or Beck while downing an ice cold one.

S52-1 Sky Garden 2, D7

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

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
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
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
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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INDIAN

Ashoka

Ashoka is a small chain of slightly more upscale Indian restaurants serving both Northern and Southern Indian cuisine including curries, naan and tandoor.

S9-1 Block R13, Bui Bang Doan, D7
5410 1989

Spice India

Spice India offers a wide range of dishes that cater to any palette. Enjoy your curry with a side of Bollywood.

S6-1 Bui Bang Doan, Hung Vuong 3, D7
093 841 6551
www.namaste-india.com.vn

ITALIAN

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

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
www.sarpinos.vn

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

JAPANESE

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

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

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

Cham 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

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 ambiance and genuine atmosphere.

Unit CRI-12, The Crescent, D7
3825 1879
www.elgaucho.com.vn

Scott & Binh's Restaurant

This unassuming little bistro is making big waves with visitors to the city and resident expats alike. 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

supermarkets

100%

100% Alimentation.Generale.De.Qualite is the latest high-end grocery store to grace the streets of An phu. With a rustic charm 100% provides customers with 100% safe, natural and local products all sourced and manufactured in Vietnam. The shop only offers products that reach international food safety requirements

and runs food events at the store. All products are available to order online at www.100percent.vn.com.

26b Thao dien, D2

Annam Gourmet

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

41A Thao Dien street. D2. 3744 2630
SB2-1 My Khanh 4, Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
16-18 Hai Ba Trung, D1

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
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

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.

S54-1 Sky Garden 2, Pham Van Nghi, D7

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, D1

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, D1

Boutique Cellar

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, D1

Shop Thai Duong

Beer, wine, & spirits importers. Previously known as Tan Mai.

54 Ham Nghi, D1

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, D1

Vinifera

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

15C7 Thi Sach, D1

Travel & Leisure

IMAGE BY JASPER RIBBERS





Treasure Island

A hidden gem on the border of the Pacific

TEXT AND IMAGES BY JASPER RIBBERS

AS A FULL TIME traveler and travel blogger, I'm often asked for nuggets of travel wisdom. Everyone wants to know what pristine destinations exist that haven't yet been flooded by the masses, where one can still enjoy a peaceful visit without the intrusion of camera wielding tourists and hawkers selling souvenirs. The first place that always comes to mind is a medium sized island in The Philippines called Siargao Island.

Siargao Island rests in the province of Surigao del Norte, Mindanao and it's relatively unknown amongst tourists except for one group - surfers. These thrill-seekers have known about the island and its good breaks for quite awhile and have managed to keep it a guarded secret.

A few surf competitions are held here every year. A walkway has been constructed in the sea leading to a three-level viewing deck at the end, providing a perfect vantage

point to watch surfers - both locals and travelers - riding the waves, the most famous of which is known as 'Cloud 9'. Countless other good surfing spots can be found around the island such as Guyam Island, Jacking Horse, and Tuesday Island. The locals are experts in picking the best spots depending on the weather conditions.

Located just off Daku Island, the surf breaks here were the biggest I had ever encountered. Every time a wave approached my back stiffened with fear at the mere sight of the massive water wall. Unfortunately, I lacked the requisite confidence and determination needed to catch a wave. Fred, my close friend and surfing mentor, dominantly rode wave after wave in the violent waters. Sensing my frustration, he pulled me aside to give me a stern talk. "Jasper, buddy, you have to just go for it! Don't think about the size of the wave or

your fear. Just watch it come in, grab your board, and throw yourself forward. The worst that can happen is you catch an awesome wave!"

It was the motivation I needed to recalibrate my mental state. My veins coursed with adrenaline as I watched the next wave appear. Once again, my arms and legs were paralyzed with anxiety. But strangely enough, despite my heart wrenching fear, I started peddling as fast as I could. It was as if my body had gone on autopilot while my mind merely watched in awe. Suddenly, the wave launched me high up into the air. I mustered all my remaining strength to focus on one simple action: standing up. As I pressed the soles of my feet to the top of the board and finally stood tall, my body was flooded with excitement. What lasted for just a few seconds felt like an eternity. When I finally relented and let myself fall into the warm tropical water, I felt like I had won an epic battle.

Surfing is by no means the only activity that Siargao has to offer. Diving in Siargao is a recent development, and new dive sites are being discovered on a regular basis. This offers divers a unique opportunity to explore uncharted terrain. There are currently 15 designated sites, offering a range of diving opportunities for both beginners as well as experts.

The most famous dive site is the Blue Cathedral, an underwater rock formation. Its top consists of a 20-meter-wide hole at a



depth of 20 meters. A gentle slope leads down into two caverns, the North and East Caverns, each with their own connection to the surface. The cavern has the feeling and look of an actual cathedral because the sunlight enters from different spots: the top as well as the North and East caverns.

Pop Star

Almost all of the resorts are near the picturesque town of General Luna. I love spending time in this village because the locals are especially friendly and welcoming. I'll often grab a quick meal and a beer at one of the many amazing food stalls along the central boulevard. Most serve only grilled meats and fish. My favorite one is Lalay's Barbeque. The grilled chicken at Lalay's is to die for. The seasoning is simple yet tasty, and the meat is always tender. The cook at Lalay will also happily prepare any fish that you buy from the nearby market for a fee.

At night, some of the food places transform into makeshift karaoke bars. Here is a piece of very valuable advice: there is no better way to make local friends than by singing famous pop songs with them. The first time I stumbled across one of these music hot spots, I stepped inside merely to watch the others sing. I found a table in the corner and sat down. I tried to enjoy my beer without drawing any attention, but I soon had a gang of folks trying to push me on stage. After much cajoling by the locals, I gave into the pressure and elected to sing *American Pie*. Although my performance was far from stellar, the locals cheered with great enthusiasm. Men were giving me high-fives and women were winking at me from afar. For a brief moment, I contemplated abandoning my life of travel and pursuing a career as a pop star. It seemed totally doable. But, this dream was quickly dashed when my friend's equally bad attempt was met by similar applause.



Caving In

It takes about three hours by boat to arrive at the nature reserve site of the Sohoton Caves. As I entered the confinement of the lagoon through an opening under a rock mountain that is passable only during low tide, I found myself in an enchanted world with calm clear waters, beautiful caves, lush greenery, and the soothing voice of the sea.

When I first entered the caves, their beauty overwhelmed me. The walls were smooth and slightly moist, and the water was luminous and transparent. One of the caves features a cliff jump as an exit. The slippery rocks with sharp edges make the climb a tricky one, but I was determined nonetheless. As I carefully made my ascent, guided by my tour guide's torch, I realized that going back down without getting

scratched would be almost impossible. This left me with only one option when I reached the exit and that was to jump. Encouraged by the cheering of my fellow tour companions, I stretched my arms forward, closed my eyes, and lunged into the water. What an incredible rush!

The combination of the friendly locals, the natural beauty, the relaxing vibe, and the wide range of available activities make Siargao Island one of my favorite places on this planet. I wouldn't be surprised if this island becomes the next Boracay (one of the most heavily visited places by tourists in The Philippines) in the next five to 10 years. Until then, I will return again and again.

Bio: Jasper has been traveling the world since 2010, read more of his adventures at www.thetravelingdutchman.com ■

Lanka Love

Exploring the towns and beaches of the exotic island nation of Sri Lanka

TEXT BY STEPHANIE RALEY



THE TEARDROP-SHAPED island of Sri Lanka has a long, colorful history that is often overlooked in favor of its more popular neighbor, India. Think of Sri Lanka as 'India light,' the beauty and culture of India without the dire poverty, noise and uncleanness. While the country is typically seen as a beach destination, it boasts a dizzying array of colonial architecture that tells the story of its rich integrated past. Since the 16th century, this small island has been occupied by the Dutch, Portuguese and British, and in cities like Galle these different influences are like patches on a quilt, woven together to tell a single story.

Welcome to Galle, a seaside town that offers a lot more than just a beach; it's an intoxicating juxtaposition of East and West. Apart from the capital Colombo, Galle is the second busiest city in Sri Lanka. My first impressions of the city were that it was dirty, chaotic and cultureless. However, a closer look later revealed I was wrong. This place was a great surprise on my journey; this unblemished coast southeast of suburban Mount Lavinia was picturesque. The boom of cheap hotel buildings, tourist lodgings, even the gaudy luxury complexes I'd been told to expect were all there, but were offset by mile upon mile of unspoiled sugar-white beaches fringed with cinderblock houses, their walls sprouting wiry growths of bougainvillea. The white stupas that marked the coast road at regular intervals resembled blanched onions.

Stalls line the streets selling freshly caught fish, women in saris glide amongst the crowds ushering scores of school children dressed in crisp white uniforms and ankle socks.

Locals would cry out, "Oh, Miss beautiful!" as I walked along the busy road. The children are just as confident, eagerly stopping me to ask my name, country and age with big grins across their faces.

Galle is a place that's deliciously exotic and typically Sri Lankan. In the green fields of the city, local boys gather to play cricket next to the beach with the sound of waves crashing against the rocks as background music. The city feels more European than South Asian, mainly because its center - a jumble of quaint gem shops, cafes and guesthouses - sits within the weather-beaten walls of a Portuguese-built fort.

The Portuguese, Dutch and British influence is seen around every corner thanks to the narrow streets, quaint windowsills and imposing Dutch churches. This is a city that's absolutely charming, and I dare you not to fall in love with it. The imposing Galle Fort, built first in 1588 by the Portuguese, then extensively fortified by the Dutch, watches over this unique city. It is a UNESCO World Heritage site and, to this day, it is still the largest remaining fortress in Asia. Brisk onshore winds cut the heat and make wandering and exploring the narrow lanes of the 90-acre walled city a pleasure. Officers prowl the fort night and day, not to guard the fort but to deter local teenage couples from kissing in one of the many secret spaces.

Good Vibrations

But if you prefer to spend your days lazing on the beach and your nights relaxing at a beach bar, the small town of Hikkaduwa (roughly 17km northwest of Galle) is the perfect destination for that. Once famed as a hippy hangout, this coastal town is no longer off-the-beaten-track and now draws in families as well as crowds of backpackers and surfers looking to enjoy its laid-back vibe and golden swoop of beach.

Hikkaduwa is located on the Galle Road, the very busy thoroughfare connecting the cities of Colombo and Galle. While the dense traffic on Galle Road calls for tourists to be cautious when traveling in and around Hikkaduwa, it also makes it relatively easy to get to and from the town. Regular buses travel between Hikkaduwa and Colombo, Galle and Ambalangoda. Trains, which according to Lonely Planet tend to be crowded and slow, connect Hikkaduwa with towns up and down the coast, as well as Colombo, Galle, Matara and Kandy. Taxis - generally minibuses for up to eight people - are readily available, especially in front of larger hotels.

Hikkaduwa was the first place I visited in Sri Lanka and it will always hold a special place in my heart. The beach here is one of the most beautiful tropical beaches I have ever seen in my life; it's like a postcard. The sunrise at Hikkaduwa was enough a reason to pull me out of bed at 4:30am. It's easy to

argue that the sun rising from the end of the endless sea is the same everywhere, but the one I witnessed here was inexplicably different. There were also a few early risers strolling barefoot on the beach, waves washing water and sand against their feet.

It might sound incredible, but a giant turtle, about four feet wide, came out onto the beach. A local pointed out that it weighs over 100kgs and is over 200-years-old. Uncomfortable with the attention and shutters, the tortoise soon went underwater.

After a rising sun and a sinking tortoise, the third attraction of the morning was snorkeling. Just below 100 meters of the ocean I saw giant colonies of corals, with patches of royal blue and bright green shimmering with sunlight on their surface. The 90-minute snorkeling session was as fatiguing to the body as it was pleasing to the mind.

Surf-wise, Hikkaduwa ranges from absolute beginner on the open sands, to fairly advanced on the reef break. The waves in November and early December are virtually empty and steadily grow in size from January onwards until the end of the season in April. What's more, the turtles arrive in December and the sight of an alien head popping out of the water from time to time is thrilling.

The streets next to the beach are lined with stalls and stalls of street food. Don't be surprised if your Bombay mix is served in a paper packet made from someone's homework - so charming and so Sri Lankan. The traffic is chaotic and cows nonchalantly cross the road causing a cacophony of beeps from impatient drivers.

The highlight of my trips to Hikkaduwa was the beautiful sunsets. I spent many evenings relaxing at one of the beach bars with a beer watching the surfers catch the waves as the sun set over the ocean. Fishermen would bring their boats in and leave beautiful silhouettes against the setting sun. The images of modern day surfers intertwined with traditional fishermen represented exactly what Sri Lanka is known for - wonderful cultural diversity. Welcome to Sri Lanka.

With additional reporting by Christine Van ■



Themed Vacations

Giving your holiday a purpose



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

IT USED TO be that everyone would dream of that once-in-a-lifetime vacation - a European cruise, a Hawaiian holiday, a week in Paris. But now that flights have gotten cheaper and people are traveling more, those bucket list holidays are prone to losing a bit of their magical luster. Luxury properties with similar amenities start merging together in a hazy combination of glitzy lobbies, ornate dinners and marble bathrooms.

Enter the themed vacation - a holiday built around a hobby, destination or event, the perennial classic being the beach vacation. And while I've been guilty of spending an entire week at an all-inclusive beach resort with nothing but a limitless supply of piña colodas and an armload of trashy paperbacks against a backdrop of crystal clear Caribbean waters, I can't really say those types of holidays have been particularly memorable.

Last week, I made a holiday centered around one of my great passions - tennis. I spent the entire week at the Thailand Open tennis tournament which was the anchor for my working vacation, but made sure to hit some great shopping venues (Bangkok's Platinum Mall is still my favorite place for quirky, inexpensive clothes), awesome Thai food (I'm still partial to street food and keep wondering why Vietnam hasn't adopted the universally loved grilled meat skewers with sticky rice combo) and a couple of movies in Bangkok's plush theaters. After all, man does not live on tennis alone.

The travel industry has really adopted the themed vacation. While *Star Trek*- and *The Sound of Music*-inspired itineraries are still popular, updates for the 2000s have included Downton Abbey holidays, complete with visits to Highclere Castle, home of the Crawleys, and the village in Oxfordshire used in the making of the TV series.

Themed cruises are also popular, both for on- and off-shore activities, like hitting golf courses at every port to hobnobbing with your favorite celebrities. A themed cruise earlier this year that sounded fun was the *Top Chef* Cruise - five days with your favorite judges and contestants, amidst quick-fire challenges, cooking demonstrations and private classes.

You'd be surprised how niche these themed cruises can be. Take Royal

Caribbean's Barbie Premium Experience, complete with pink room décor, a "Tiara and Teacups" party and a Mermaid Dance class for girls age 4 to 11. Or the Fred. Olsen Espionage cruise, hosted by a Cold War specialist. Or if 80s boy bands are more your thing, there's always the annual "New Kids on the Block Cruise," which apparently sold out in about an hour this year. (Not to worry, there's always 2014 where organizers promise: "TWO FULL days trapped at sea with NKOTB on the ship - DAY & NIGHT THEMED DECK PARTIES. MORE FACE TIME.")

Feet Firmly on the Ground

For landlubbers in Asia, a themed vacation could be anything from elephants in Thailand (visiting elephant camps from Chiang Mai in the north down to Koh Chang in the south) to Vietnamese food (organizing street food tours or cooking classes in each region).

A few years ago, I took a photography-centered vacation to Africa. It was the perfect combination of glamping, animals and photography workshops - three of my favorite activities. And I walked away from the two month trip with a new skill as a bonus.

Because themed holidays are on the rise, you can always find travel specialists who will help plan your perfect holiday. These

agents can be really useful, not only to custom-assemble elements of your trip, but can sometimes even use inside contacts to secure once-in-a-lifetime opportunities like visiting sites which are normally off-limits (think Nefertari's Tomb for the budding Egyptologist). Table tennis fans might like to play for an hour against a Chinese Olympic champion and traveling socialites can rub elbows with the glitterati at an Indian prince's birthday bash - all truly unforgettable experiences.

For me, though, part of the joy of travel is in the planning which I can get pretty obsessive over. Themed vacations usually require more research than the average holiday, as they tend to have a lot of moving parts as well as off-the-beaten-path requirements. For an upcoming trip to Tokyo (not my first time), I decided on the theme of Old and New. It's made planning all the more fun, as I'm looking into cycling to Tsukuda-Jima, an old fishermen's island, and perhaps staying in a *ryokan* (a traditional Japanese inn) as well as checking out the crazy kids of Harajuku and the geeks of Akihabara. And there may or may not be a robot restaurant involved.

For your next holiday, why not choose a theme and plan around it? It may just be one of the most memorable vacations you've ever had! ■



Big Sky Vietnam

She walks around all day with
her head in the clouds



A professional artist and author of *A Week in Hoi An*, **Bridget March** specializes in urban landscapes and aims to reveal the hidden treasures of city life and small town cultures through her illustrations. Bridget holds drawing classes for beginners and improves in Saigon. For more of Bridget's work including her new book, see BrushWithAsia.blogspot.com



ILLUSTRATION BY BRIDGET MARCH

WALKING ALONG THE thronging streets of Saigon we are always assaulted by the myriad of sights, sounds and smells of street life. The social gatherings spilling out of cafes, wonderstruck tourists grouped to check maps or take photos, food vendors, shoppers, office workers, traffic police, shoe repairers and lottery ticket touts.

As you walk you must watch every step on the uneven pavements as you mingle with the ebb and flow of the city's young population. As you cross a junction, the continuous soap opera of chaotic traffic with its near misses and daring maneuvers, the cries of street sellers, the backing track of construction trucks and the traffic noise all keep you on high alert and fully grounded. Your eyes are always drawn down. If we dare to look upwards it is to find a street sign, an address above the door, to wonder at the mass of black cables draped in swags from post to post down every street or occasionally to admire the architecture or the huge rainforest trees that line the avenues.

But walk towards the river and emerging from the maze of high rise and crowded streets the vista begins to open and the enormity of Vietnam's amazing skies is revealed. Take some time to stand on one of the bridges over the rivers that meander through Saigon and if you are elevated high enough you can see the skies extending into the blue of 50 miles or more.

As an artist, I am captivated by skies. I love to stand and watch the ever-changing vista above me. One of my favorite vantage points is Thu Thiem Bridge. From there, on sunny days, it is blue as far as you can see. Everywhere twinkles in the sunlight and the river sparkles with diamond lights. The wide blue sky is dotted with puffy white clouds. People bring their kites to fly above the open flat acres of the Thu Thiem peninsula. As I watch them from the bridge my spirits soar just like the kites. Even on stormy days I love to watch the rain clouds moving across the cityscape. You can see them coming for miles and miles always preceded by that powerful

rush of warm wind that heralds heavy rain. Moody, malevolent and magical.

From my top floor studio I can see every aspect of the daily displays from delicately misted yellow sunrise through mornings of sunshine and showers to the end of the day when strident flares of sunset gather then shrink back behind purple and orange clouds, their last glow soon snuffed out like a candle's flame as it vanishes beyond my horizon.

When teaching watercolor painting, the very first lesson is about skies because this is where a landscape painting usually begins. I show students how to create clouds using yellows, browns, violets and red and by pulling paint off the paper with tissue, sponges and dry brushes. Suddenly they can see an exciting sky appear on their paper, which gives their landscapes drama and movement. But, the most lasting change that results is that they begin to pay attention to, and even start to watch, what is happening in the big, beautiful Vietnam skies they may previously have never noticed. ■

airlines

Air China

7th Floor, Sun Wah Tower, 115 Nguyen Hue, DI
3823 3888
www.airchina.com

Air France

130 Dong Khoi, DI
3829 0981
mail.hcm@airfrance.fr
www.airfrance.com.vn

Asiana Airlines

39 Le Duan, DI
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 - Phuoc 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#rnt@cathaypacific.com
www.cathaypacific.com

China Southern

21-23 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, DI
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, DI
3822 4488
www.evaair.com

JAL Japan Airlines

4F Hotel Nikko Saigon, 235 Nguyen Van Cu, Nguyen Cu Trinh, DI
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, DI
3824 2878
www.rorean-air.vn

Lufthansa

14th Floor, Bitexco Building, 19-25 Nguyen Hue, DI
3829 8529
lufthansa.vn@dlh.de
www.lufthansa.com

Malaysia Airlines

37 Ton Duc Thang, DI
3829 2529
www.malaysiaairlines.com

Qantas Airways

186 - 188 Le Thanh Ton, DI
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, DI
3823 1588
www.singaporeair.com

Thai

29 Le Duan Blvd, DI
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, DI
3823 4755
www.united.com

Vietnam Airlines

16F Sunwah Tower, 115 Nguyen Hue, DI
3832 0320
www.vietnamairlines.com.vn

Vietjet

CT Plaza Building 8th Floor, 60 Trung 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, DI
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, DI
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, DI
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, DI
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 DI sights. Hidden away in a quiet back alley right in the central area.
36 Bis/2 Le Loi, DI
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, DI
38224495

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, DI
5411 1008

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, DI
38236167

Bong Sen Hotel

★★★
Located in the heart of DI, The Bong Sen Hotel offers luxurious accommodation for guests who wish to relax or get a little work done.
117-123 Dong Khoi, DI
38291516
www.bongsenhotel.com

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, DI
5410 5941

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, DI
38296296

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, DI
www.ibis.com

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, DI
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, DI
38299201
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, DI
38225914
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, DI
38239269
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, D 1
38293415
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, D 1
38224866
www.novotel.com

Oscar Saigon Hotel

★★★★
 French colonial hotel in District 1 offering stunning panoramic views and 4 star amenities.
68A Nguyen Hue, D 1
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, D 1
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
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
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
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
www.equatorial.com/hcm

InterContinental Asiana Saigon

★★★★★  **Oi's Pick**
 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, D 1
3520 9999
saigon@ihg.com
www.intercontinental.com/saigon

Lotte Legend Hotel Saigon

★★★★★
 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.
Oi 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

★★★★★  **Oi's Pick**
 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
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

★★★★★  **Oi's Pick**
 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

Softel Saigon Plaza Hotel

★★★★★
 The Softel 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@Softel.com
www.softel.com/gb/hotel-2077-softel-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
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

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

BLUE MOON HOTEL & SPA

★★★★★
 Located in the heart of breathtaking Dalat, the Blue Moon Resort & Spa is designed to complement the natural beauty of the "City of Eternal Spring." Built opposite the popular and tranquil Xuan Huong Lake, Blue Moon is centrally located and convenient to Dalat's eating, shopping and entertainment spots. Much more than just a comfortable night's sleep, Blue Moon Resort & Spa invites you to experience true hospitality.
4 Phan Boi Chau, Dalat 67, Vietnam
www.blumoonhotel.com.vn/blumoon2

DALAT GREEN CITY HOTEL

Budget hotel in the center of Dalat. Five minutes from most major attractions in Dalat. Quiet. Newly refurbished. Beautiful mountain and city views from the rooftop. Features free WIFI, TV, snack bar in all rooms. Coffee shop downstairs. Airport pickup by private car. Motorbike rental. Tour information. Laundry. Computers in lobby for public use.
172 Phan Dinh Phung, Dalat
(063) 3827 999
www.dalatgreencityhotel.com

DALAT TRAIN VILLA & CAFE

Located near the Dalat Train Station, the Dalat Train Villa is for short or long staying guests. The villa is a restored 2-story French colonial-era villa. Next to the villa is a French train car, which has been renovated into a bar/cafe/restaurant. Romantic venue. From the lake, take first left after Dalat Train Station.
1 Quang Trung St, Ward 9, Villa #3
(063) 381 6365 or 090 334 2442
www.dalattrainvilla.com

Softel Dalat Palace

★★★★★
 Hotel Softel 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 Softel 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

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

Life Resort Danang

Sitting on the Bac My An beachfront only 3km 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

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

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

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.

1a 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

The Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi

***** **👉 Oi'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

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

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

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

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.

130 Minh Mang, Truong An, Hue
05 4388 5461

NHA TRANG

Evason Ana Mandara

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

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

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

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

Windflower Beach Boutique Hotel

Located in the resort capital of Vietnam – Mui Ne Bay, Windflower Beach Boutique Hotel offers an intimate setting for guests to enjoy a getaway on the beach to its fullest. The hotel is home to 24 cozy deluxe rooms with services and sophistication that are expected from a beach boutique hotel.

76 Huynh Thuc Khang, Mui Ne (Vietnamese) (06) 2374 3969 / (English) 090 291 3969
www.windflowermuine.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

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

QUY NHON

Life Wellness Resort Quy Nhon

A hide-away style spa and beach destination set in 13.5 hectares of private mountainous land and beach. The tranquillity, 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

VUNG TAU

The Grand-Ho Tram Strip

The Grand - Ho Tram Strip is Vietnam's first largest integrated resort and ultimately will include an 1,100-room five-star hotel, a world-class casino, restaurants, high-tech meeting space, an exclusive VIP area, as well as a variety of beach-front recreation activities. The first 541-room tower of this development opened in July 2013 with its casino including 90 live tables and 614 electronic game positions. The second 559-room tower is on track to open in 2015.

Phuoc Thuan Commune, Xuyen Moc District
Tel: (64) 3788 888
www.thegrandhotramstrip.com

serviced apartments

Avila Serviced Apartment

These serviced apartments combine

an excellent location with luxurious amenities.

20-20bis Thi Sach, D 1
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 1

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 1
38221111

Diamond Island Luxury Residences

Diamond Island Luxury Residences offers 68 fully-furnished apartments, ranging from two- to four-bedroom units with private balconies providing panoramic views of the stunning surroundings. Each apartment comes with a fully-equipped kitchen, en-suite bathrooms, separate work and living areas. Each lavish space features plush interiors, modern amenities, elegant furnishings and carefully chosen trimmings and fixtures, creating a luxurious harmony of comfort and tranquility that will have you relaxed and recharged, and functioning at peak performance.

No 01 – Street No.104-BTT, Quarter 3, Binh Trung Tay Ward, D2
096 829 3388 / 3742 5678
www.the-ascott.com

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

Glenwood Serviced Apartment

A very modern property, located in the heart of the expatriate's residential area, steps away from Int'l schools and supermarket.

248A Nguyen Van Huong, D2
0944 168 568

Hung Vuong Plaza Apartment

Huong 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

InterContinental Asiana Saigon Residences

InterContinental Asiana Saigon Residences offer discerning residents

the finest and most contemporary residential space in Ho Chi Minh City with a premier location in the heart of the major business and cultural area in District 1. It's a 31-floor tower with 260 rooms; the Residences offers superb panoramic views of downtown area and is part of the Kumho Asiana Plaza - the city's finest integrated complex featuring commercial, hotel, residential and a diverse choice of dining and dining outlets. Residents will experience an exclusive work-live-play lifestyle concept as well as enjoy the exceptional services of a prestigious international luxury brand. They will also benefit from the preferred amenities at the InterContinental Asiana Saigon next door.

Corner of Le Van Huu & Nguyen Du
3520 8888

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 1
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 1
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 1
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 1
38226111

Riverside Apts

Overlooking the Saigon River, the compound offers short and long term leases.

53 Vo Truong Toan, D2
www.riverside-apartments.com

River Garden Apartment

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

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

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

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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

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

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

Villa Song Saigon

Colonial-style, boutique apartments characterised by solid hardwood flooring and an outdoor swimming pool ensconced by verdant gardens.

197/2, Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien, D2
0906099180
www.villasong.com

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



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41 Thao Dien, D2

3519 4111

www.exotissimo.com

anphu@exotissimo.com

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

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

Buffalo Tours

A premium travel agency that helps travelers customize their itinerary and destination packages. From corporate to small tour packages available.

81 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3827 9170
www.buffalotours.com.vn

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

Ha Nguyen

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.

64B3 Xuan Thuy, D2
6674 9041

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 Buoi, D1
3939 0135
090 803 9699

Inside Asia Travel

Inside Asia Travel is a boutique luxury travel provider of tailor made travel arrangements for English speaking expats and travelers through Southeast Asia. Guests enjoy highly personalized, bespoke travel arrangements suited to individual tastes and budget.

www.insideasiatravel.com
team@insideasiatravel.com
3844 1005 (Ext: 221)

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

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

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

cinemas & theatres

The Ballet and Symphony Orchestra

Ho Chi Minh City's local classical music venue with regular programs & performances.

212 Nguyen Trai, D1

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

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

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

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

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

social clubs & classes

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, D1
090 927 3997

DanCenter

A professionally run dance studio with an international teaching team offering over 70 classes per week and workshops for kids and adults of all ages and abilities. Kids can start from age 4 with Dance Intro. Regular classes offered for kids and teens in Sing & Dance, Jazz, Ballet, Tap, Hip Hop, Break & Acro Dance. Adults of any age, size and ability are also welcomed. Come and try Ballet, Jazz, Hip Hop, Tap, Contemporary, Belly and many more.

53 Nguyen Dang Giai, D2
3519 4490 / 3519 4340
www.dancentervn.com

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, D1
5404 3618

Hash House Harriers

Combining beer and running, this long-established club goes to various out of the city running areas to burn some calories. Departs from the Caravelle Hotel every Sunday at 2pm.

www.saigonh3.com

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, D1

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, D1
3820 9734

Saigon Cooking Class

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, D1
3825 8485

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, D1

Vietnam Cookery Centre 🍴 Oi's Pick

A complete cookery center offering hands-on classes. This culinary compound introduces visitors to Vietnamese cuisine.

26 Ly Tu Trong, 4th floor, Ste 45, D1
3827 0349
3823 8085

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, D1
3910 0168

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

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, D1
0839101542

Living

IMAGE BY LOC NGUYEN





Baby School of Rock

A German-invented method of teaching preschoolers social skills and languages through music

TEXT BY **MICHAEL ARNOLD** IMAGES BY **LOC NGUYEN**

I HAVE TO admit, when I first heard about the Kindermusik center over at the Crescent, I presumed it was all about musicianship for kids. What I imagined was something more Suzuki-style, a group of three-year-olds with miniature violins, or a cacophony of pre-tweens going wild on their glockenspiels.

Lauralynn Goetz's classes, however, aren't really about musicality. They're very musical for sure, but there's something going on here that's beyond the music. The children who attend these short, concentrated lessons are each exposed to a series of songs, games, and social cues that are designed to capture their attention just long enough to instill basic educational concepts. The theory goes that this will help them to establish versatile

behavioral platforms that should serve them well when the time comes to go to school.

"I think there's a strong need among children here for the whole scope of Kindermusik," says Lauralynn. "It isn't only music; it encompasses all the aspects of the child's development. Every domain of the brain: cognitive, language, movement, emotional, social – they're all addressed. Especially social skills. So many of the preschools and international schools here require those fundamentals in order for children to benefit from what they have to offer."

Parents sometimes take a while to understand what's happening. "One of the criticisms we had from a parent was, 'Well,

this is very structured,' says Tom, Lauralynn's husband and partner in the business. "Yes it is! It's not a playgroup. But it's fun. The child doesn't know it's structured. But the parent's assessment was correct. It's very definitive, but it works. It flows through transitions."

At just 45 minutes per session, this is not a daycare center, neither is it a place to drop off your toddler while you hit the gym. Parents are more or less required to attend with their children in the early stages, and it's as much instructional for them as it is for their kids. Each family is given access to digital take-home materials online, designed to support the character-building sessions in class. It's not all about polite behavior either – one of the routines in each lesson involves dimming



version of the course *ABC Music and Me* in schools – and suffering multiple set-up and funding disappointments along the way – the meticulously-designed Kindermusik studio now provides the ideal space for instruction. As the business has grown, it's kept up with developments in the international program – and this includes a deliberate focus on the system's ability to support language acquisition, something the couple hopes will encourage more enrollments from local families. Most of the school's students are currently expat kids, but they're not all Westerners – while all instruction is in English, cushioned in the international language of music.

"Kindermusik instructors have really started to notice the effect the program has on kids learning English," explains Lauralynn, whose whitepaper *Music and Movement and... Foreign Language Acquisition* deals exclusively with this subject. "Language acquisition starts with the phonemes, the smallest particle of speech. Little sound bites. They're very easy for children to learn. They're not going to be bilingual in a New York minute with this program, but the foundation will make them better English speakers later on."

"The youngest children can learn to speak any language in the world," adds Tom. "From zero to six months, babies are looking at your eyes, but at around six months to a year, they're focused on your mouth. They need to know how that mouth works. They want to be able to communicate."

The studio is now branded with the ABC English & Me logo – which, according to Lauralynn's paper, "naturally evolved from Kindermusik educators' vast teaching experience in non-English speaking countries around the world. Very young children are not only learning musical skills – listening, coordination, rhythm, following a steady beat, singing – but are also acquiring a variety of language skills in English: following instructions, understanding vocabulary, speaking interactively, singing, and repeating nursery rhymes and poems."

In this case, theory does translate into practice. Parents from non-English speaking households do regularly express their surprise at how much of the language their kids are picking up. You can see it happening before your eyes in the class area – those children who've settled into the pace and variety of the lessons follow Lauralynn eagerly as she leaps about with different props and instruments, mimicking her deliberately-overemphasized instructions.

Although she regularly interjects snippets of theory into the lessons for the benefit of the parents, their expectations seem to be far more straightforward. As mother Phan Thi Thanh Xuan, who has been attending Kindermusik through four units now with her two-year-old daughter Nguyen Lan Chi, puts it: "Kindermusik is an important first step in her education and real life, especially for working and living abroad. It's fun. She can exercise with her mother, teacher, and friends. My daughter has a new knowledge of the outside world through these lessons."

For more info, visit www.kindermusik-vietnam.com ■

the lights and having parents lovingly support their child, engaging total relaxation techniques that don't come naturally to children. Reinforced at home, these exercises have profound balancing effects on erratic preschooler behavior.

"Daycare is just that, they're care centers," says Lauralynn. "There's no one there to teach them how to take turns, attentive listening, and so on. It takes a long time, and of course they're not going to do it right away. You expect that. But as they're seen to do it, they're being applauded for it, so there's not only emotional development there, but social development too."

"I see it especially in our *Sing & Play* class [for children aged between one and two]," she continues. "For the first year of their life, everything's theirs. It's very, very difficult for them to start to share. Then I see in *Wiggle & Grow* [two to three years] that they take their time; they have that patience to wait their turn."

"You can see in the expressions on their faces when you congratulate them for having that self-control. They're so pleased with themselves," says Tom. "That's when they start to think, 'Hey, I have control over this situation, I can do this.' By setting the parameters, you're making those kids stronger. You're not confining them. They certainly learn to think outside the box. As long as it's a safe environment, you have to

let them explore so that they know what the limits are."

Read My Lips

The Kindermusik system itself is a German invention based on the work of several early 20th century specialists in education who began to understand how young children in their formative years learn through play. Growing from early music and movement courses – and closely connected with Eurhythmics and the Montessori Method – Kindermusik came to fruition in South Carolina in the US, from where the master curriculum is now licensed worldwide. The studio at the Crescent is now the sole franchise holder authorized to run the program in the city, fulfilling the dream that Lauralynn and Tom have been building here since they first arrived in 2005 as somewhat jaded expats of more than two decades in Hong Kong.

"We got off the plane, and everybody was so young," says Tom. "The Hong Kong expats, the long-term residents, they're very old. But here, everyone was so young. Babies. So we thought to ourselves, 'This is Kindermusik heaven.' So every holiday, every schoolteacher's holiday, Tet, Chinese New Year, summer holiday, we would be coming here at least four times a year." The couple now reside here permanently.

After years of teaching the shorter

Rainbow Bright

For kids to think creatively, parents must help change the education system here



Lauralynn Goetz, B.A., M.M.Ed. US, is the director of an early childhood education center in Vietnam



I would like to draw attention to an excerpt in a recent article in *Vietnam News* that caught my eye: “Prime Minister Dung calls for highly creative, brighter teachers. Vietnam should renew its attitude towards education and education management so it could train teachers with intellectual skills and creativity... with an open education, which has good teaching and learning methods, alongside the growth of a learning society, to ensure the necessary conditions for a better education system.”

This statement reflects a real need in the Vietnamese educational system. The PM said this was necessary to develop the nation so that the best people could actively contribute to the country's development. Unfortunately, my experience inside one of the teachers colleges here indicates that the teachers are often unwilling to take on the challenge. The current education system does not encourage teachers to be open to creative teaching methods.

The function of education is implied in its Latin root ‘educare,’ meaning “to draw forth; to lead out.” Educare means that the first task of teaching is to call forth

children's potential, to lead them out into creativity through providing information.

Doug Goodkin, author of *The ABC's of Education*, says, “Get rid of those desks in rows, make space for circles and bring in round tables that invite group work and discussion.” This thought was in the back of my mind as I taught a class of 4 to 5-year-olds. Using the theme of a rainbow, the children were given the colors of the spectrum cut into separate crescents. While listening to the lyrics, “*Colors of the rainbow, red, orange, yellow, green and blue,*” they placed the corresponding colors into a rainbow (half-circle) shape.

Then after, and still listening to the same music, the children were asked to make their own patterns using the crescent shaped colors. Most of the children, with a little prompting, began to make serpentine lines and one child created a smiley face. However, one child could not use the colored pieces to make anything other than the original rainbow. She kept looking over at the others but was unable to think ‘outside the box’ of the original shape.

‘Thinking outside (or beyond) the box,’ sometimes referred to as lateral thinking,

means solving problems through an indirect and creative approach, using reasoning that is not immediately obvious and involving ideas that may not be obtainable by using only traditional step-by-step logic. The child who was unable to create an original pattern was the only one in the class attending a government school, where the encouragement to improvise doesn't exist.

What can parents do to support the Prime Minister's call? By getting involved with the school's administrators and educators – and that's the challenge. My experience has shown that parents in Vietnam are all too willing to send their children to government or private schools, pay all the required fees or even extra-curricular teaching fees, but rarely get involved.

The parents are the first and most important teachers in a child's life. Until parents realize that they are the only valid source of feedback to the educational community, the system will not change. Most parents here are products of learning ‘by rote’ and they themselves find it challenging to think outside the box. ■

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US Bound

Advice to help your child pick the right university after graduation



Katie Rigney-Zimmermann B.S., M.B.A., M. Sec. Ed, is director of Admissions and Marketing at Saigon South International School in Phu My Hung.



THERE ARE OVER 4,000 universities and colleges in the US, so how does a high school senior pick the right one? At times it can be a daunting and overwhelming decision, and keep in mind that not every college or even the best college is the 'right' one for your child.

While one of the best ways to get a feel for a university is by going there and taking a personal tour, unfortunately for many students here in Vietnam that might not be a practical, or financially viable, option. So here are a few tips that can help narrow down the list.

Family Talk

It is important for you and your child to be on the same page when it comes to college choices, especially when it comes to costs and location. These discussions need to be the start of the college search so that some parameters are set. Families need to be realistic about a student's abilities, interests, available choices, and affordability.

If you have family members, friends or teachers who have studied overseas, ask them about where they went, and what they thought of their experience. Personal recommendations are a good insight into particular universities.

Know Thyself

Your child should think about the things they consider most important for a school to have, and locations where they can see themselves living happily for the next four years. It's often a good idea to make a list of deal-breakers. For example, if your child enjoys group discussions they might do better in a smaller school with smaller classes. Alternatively, if they are self motivated, larger lecture halls might be better suited. Also, for those who like outdoors sports, campuses in big cities can be crossed off the list.

Take Advantage of College Fairs

College fairs give students the opportunity

to speak in person to representatives from different universities. At the fairs your child can look at course guides, ask questions about programs and get a general feel for a variety of schools. Though be aware that university brochures are marketing tools and will, of course, highlight their strengths, so take advantage of the chance to ask representatives about any weaknesses.

Representatives should be able to discuss work placement opportunities, internships and alumni associations. Find out how much the school will help with job placements prior to graduation.

There are a number of fairs held at hotels in HCMC throughout the year and are usually advertised in local newspapers. Prepare some questions ahead of time, and have somewhere to record each school's answers. This helps avoid becoming overwhelmed.

Research, Research, and Research

The internet can be a great tool for researching schools. There are many university directories available online which can give statistical information about different schools. College websites also have a great deal of information listed. Most universities today have Facebook accounts where prospective students can ask questions.

Go ahead and take a look at rankings but use them as a guideline. Few schools do everything well so it's best to research which schools are ranked in the subject area your child is interested in. There are some good resources here in Vietnam which can help guide families and students towards the right choice. The US Department of State sponsors the Education USA center which provides students with unbiased, comprehensive and current information about educational opportunities at universities and colleges in the US. Their services are free of charge. There are a few other educational centers in Vietnam that will help with the process for a fee.

Matching the right university to the student is what's paramount, not the other way around, and this will lead to a good education. ■



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www.unicef.org/vietnam/zeroawards

Black Tie

>>The List Education

education

SCHOOLS [CHILDREN]

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Saigon South Campus 1 (Primary & Secondary)

#2, 1E Street, Khu Dan Cu Trung Son, Binh Hung, Binh Chanh
5431 1833 / 34/35/36
abcinternschools@vnn.vn
www.theabcis.com

Australian International School (AIS)

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

Xi Campus (Kindergarten)
190 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
Thao Dien Campus (Kindergarten & Primary School)
APSC Compound
36 Thao Dien, D2
Thu Thiem Campus (Kindergarten, Primary, Middle & Senior School)
East-West Highway, D2
3742 4040
www.aivietnam.com



British International School (BIS)



Inspected and approved by the British Government, BIS provides a British style curriculum for an international student body and is staffed by British qualified and trained teachers. Fully accredited by the Council of International Schools and a member of FOBISSEA, BIS is the largest international school in Vietnam.

An Phu Primary Campus
225 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
3744 4551

An Phu Secondary Campus
246 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
3744 2335

Tu Xuong Primary Campus
43-45 Tu Xuong Street, D3
3932 0210
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
hibsvietnam.com

Kids Club Saigon

Early childhood centers in Phu My

Hung offering creative play-based programs for children ages 2 to 5. Known for unique facilities, experienced staff, high-quality learning resources, and small class sizes

79/7 Pham Thai Buong, D7
27/3 Ha Huy Tap, D7
5412 5944
www.kidclubsaigon.com

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

L'atelier

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

Montessori International School of Vietnam

The school seeks to enable all its pupils to achieve their fullest potential by providing them with a nurturing and stimulating environment, and by being sensitive and responsive to their individual needs. Their curriculum is designed based on Montessori methodology and practice, and is enhanced with a variety of programs.

42/1 Ngo Quang Huy, D2
3744 2639
www.montessori.edu.vn

Noah's Club

Providing high quality care & education for kids aged 1-6 in District 2. Various creative & fun programs, beautiful outdoor space with a warm family feeling and more.

No3, Duong so 4, Nguyen U Di, D2
3744 4709
noahandmum@yahoo.com.vn

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
www.rissaigon.edu.vn

Saigon South International School

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

78 Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
5413 0901
www.ssis.edu.vn



Saigon Star International School

Saigon Star is a student focused international primary school offering high quality first class provision. Specializing in the British National Curriculum, all of the class teachers hold international teaching qualification. In the early years program, a Montessori specialist works closely with the main class teachers to ensure a high rate of progress. The school also provides specialists for children requiring extra support with ESL.

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

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

SCHOOLS [ADULT]

Cotana PSB Intellis International College

PSB College offers a suite of internationally-recognized diploma programs from business, marketing, hospitality to finance.

144-146-148 Le Lai, D1
www.psbcollege.edu.vn

RMIT International University Vietnam

RMIT Vietnam offers programs from business and management to design and micro engineering.

702 Nguyen Van Linh, D7

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



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facebook.com/oivietnam2013



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www

www.oivietnam.com

ladieswear

Anupa Eco Boutique

The boutique has been converted into an eco-boutique which houses the complete Anupa leather collections and semi precious jewelry as well as up-and-coming eco designers both locally and internationally such as ready to wear mens linen shirts, ladies cotton dresses, chicken leg watch straps, bamboo glasses and scarves with pendants.

9 Dong Du, DI
www.anupa.net / facebook: anupaluxury

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 Josphine 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 adias.

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 Grogori McKenzie

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 🍷 O's Pick

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 Sclero 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

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, D1
3822 4609
090 865 4988

gyms

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

Amaryska Kamionko

Private fitness trainer, assisting in full body workouts, toning & strength training for females. Sessions often at clients' homes or at their designated gyms.

0902271830
personalfitnessathome.blogspot.com

Body By Jovie

Body By Jovie is a boutique personal training center and yoga studio, catering to individuals demanding diversity, challenge and results. It specializes in one on one session and also offer a full range of classes such as yoga, TRX suspension class, belly dancing, Zumba and outdoor boot camp.

Riverside Residence, Nguyen Luong Bang, D7
5417 1946
info@bodybyjovie.com
7am - 9pm (Weekdays) and
7:30am - 7pm (Saturdays)

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

Christina Eberlin Yoga Teacher

Christina graduated from Virajati 300hr yoga teacher training in Thailand. She is offering private yoga classes and group classes. For more information you can reach her at

Christinaeberlin@gmail.com

or 093 849 2461

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. Thao Dien, D2; 094 777 1326

www.cyril-and-you.com

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

Nicky's Zumba® Fitness Studio

They offer Zumba® Fitness, Yoga, Cross Fit, Pilates Personal Fitness, Nutrition

Advice and Hip hop kids, Aerobic kids, ZumbaAtomic®.

Available at: Panorama-Fitness (206 Tran Van Tra, D7), Fit & Fun Club (Sky Garden 2, D7), Cyril&you (49a Xa Lo Ha Noi, D2), and Sommerset (8 Nguyen Binh Khiem, D1).
093 406 0735 or 6680 7226
zumba.nutrition@gmail.com
www.zumba-saigon.com

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

Spa InterContinental & Healthclub

Guests will have access to a 20-meter outdoor lap pool complete with a sundeck, a 160-square meter spacious fitness centre with the latest generation cardio and resistance equipment, plus a personal program of fitness classes.

3rd Floor, InterContinental Asiana Saigon
Corner of Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan, D1
3520 9999
spa@icasianasaigon.com
8am - 9:30pm

Thien Nga (Swan) Club

Fitness club that has training equipment and a 25sqm swimming pool

751 Xuan Thuy, D2
3899 0012

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

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
www.xrockclimbing.com

Yoga Club

Yogo fitness center for both men and women

18 Street Number 2, D2
3897 6786

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

Animal Rescue & Care

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.

31-44 Thao Dien, D2
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

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

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, D1
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, D1
3823 8454

David Shepherd Chiropractic Clinic

DSCC provides Chiropractic care for patients using state of the art physiotherapy equipment imported from USA. DSCC is managed and operated by American doctors who use modern and advanced technologies techniques to ensure safe, gentle, and effective treatment.

41 Noi Khu, Hung Gia 3, D7
5410 6242
www.saigonchiropractic.com

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

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

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, D1
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, D1
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, D1
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, D1
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, D1

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, D1
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

European Dental Clinic

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

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, D1
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, D1
3925 3399

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

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

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, D1
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, D1
3825 7485

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

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



Classic Nails

Located near Ben Thanh Market, Classic Nails is a professional salon with staff who are trained and experienced in designing complicated pattern. The salon only uses materials from reputable companies and always update with the latest colors. They also have sofas with a massage function and adjustable posture for the customer's comfortable and relaxation.

4 Phan Boi Chau, D1
3825 7047
9am - 8pm

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

spas



Indochine Spa

Nestled in the heart of Saigon, Indochine spa will bring you back to an ancient time with peaceful melodies and aromatic scents. With our skillful therapists, Natural products with French formulation and high class cleanliness environment, Indochine spa provides your senses with natural energy. Indulge yourself for a unique and amazing experience.
69 Thu Khoa Huan st., D. 1, HCM
3827 7188
indochinespa@gmail.com
www.indochine-spa.com.vn
Open: 10:00-22:00

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

Dermal Essentials

Dermologica, a Los Angeles-based company, is a revolutionary skin treatment system. Call Dermologica'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



Flamingo Spa

Flamingo Spa is an authentic Thai spa where all ingredients used are imported from Thailand. Guests arrive in a clean and friendly atmosphere for an optimal relaxing experience. Men, women and couples are welcome, and they offer a wide range of massages along with a sauna, jacuzzi facilities & VIP rooms.
13B Le Thanh Ton, D1
3822 1074
091 243 9601
FlamingoSpa.vn@gmail.com

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

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.

215 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

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 Buoi, 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



Moc Huong Spa

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

9C Ton Duc Thang, D1
3911 7118



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 Buoi, 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

Spa InterContinental

Spa InterContinental is a contemporary spa that has two double and five single treatment rooms, each with a private bathroom, a foot reflexology area, and luxurious changing and shower rooms. Combining the fresh, local traditional herbs and plants, an ambient lighting, soft scents and soothing sounds with the best of international brands, Spa InterContinental offers guests the professional spa expertise and a truly sensory experience. Guests will experience a quintessentially way of relaxing in which beauty treatments feature world renowned products.

3rd Floor, InterContinental Asiana Saigon
Corner Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan, D1
3520 9999
spa@icasianasaigon.com
8am – 9:30pm

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

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.

158B Le Thanh Ton, D1
3825 0795

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

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

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, D1
3823 0940

AkzoNobel Decorative Center

Dulux Paints specialist with attractive central-city showroom/store.

91-93 Nguyen Hue, D1
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, D1
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, D1
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, D1
3823 9394

Gomo

Typical of the large furniture warehouses in North America and Europe, Gomo sells contemporary items for your home and office.

7/30B, Road 13, Binh Hoa
Thuan An Town, Binh Duong
(0650) 376 5115
www.gomo.com.vn

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, D1
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, D1
3821 7233

Premium Housewares

Providing high quality kitchenware and accessories, Premium Housewares presents its products in more than 70 countries worldwide.

77 Pasteur, D1
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, D1
3825 8672

Business & Tech

IMAGE BY NGUYEN ANH DUC



Fit to a T

We speak to Benjamin Grepinet, the brains behind the locally-based Ginkgo T-shirt brand about copycats, fair trade and his new concept store

INTERVIEW BY **CHRISTINE VAN**

Why did you pick T-shirts as a business to go into?

BG: Seven years ago while I was traveling in Vietnam, I was looking for nice graphic T-shirts with Asian-themed designs, but all I could find were low quality T-shirts with awful graphics. That's why I decided to start a business of T-shirts one year later. So maybe I would say that it's the T-shirts business that picked me.

Explain your company's name.

BG: When I was searching for a name and logo, I wanted a name that sounds different, that is exotic and makes you think about Asia with a logo that is easy to recognize with simple forms. The overall logo should also make you think about nature, a thing that I respect and love.

At the time, I was in my home in the countryside of France. I was walking in the village and met a neighbor planting trees. I was quite interested in one tree in particular

so I asked her, 'What is this tree that you are planting?' And she answered, 'It's a ginkgo biloba.' I immediately understood that I just found my name because the sound of it was really different and unique. Also the ginkgo tree has a powerful meaning, it's the first tree that grew after the Hiroshima bomb in Japan, so it's a symbol of life and strength, exactly what a company needs.

Who are your designers? Are they expats or locals?

BG: In the very beginning, I was doing everything myself. But now, we've developed quite a talented team. They are expats, and, surely, Vietnamese. I love the way our Vietnamese designers express their culture on the T-shirts, and I also love the view of our expat designers on Vietnam and life in Asia.

Do you worry about copycats? I've seen your same designs selling for USD2 in The

Pham. Have you taken any legal action against that?

BG: Copycats are a big concern for any serious company in Vietnam. We took some serious legal actions in the past, but only for serious cases like people copying our designs to start their brand, or copying our name, logo... For other cases, we prefer to spend our energy and time for creativity, create more styles and things that are hard or too expensive to copy.

Can you give me an example?

BG: For example, some labels are printed in high density - it's a technique that requires five to ten layers of ink and takes excellent skill and time to do it the right way, and it's expensive. On a USD2, even a USD5 or USD10, it will be too costly to do.

Moreover, we work on every detail of our products so that the customer can recognize that it's a high quality product. We make sure



IMAGES PROVIDED BY NGUYEN ANH DUC

that any print, embroidery, tag, zipper, fabric, even the thread for sewing is perfect.

How much do you estimate you lose in terms of sales because of these copied T-shirts?

BG: We cannot count how much exactly the loss is, but it influences our sales somehow.

Locally-based T-shirt company Papaya sells similar designs as yours (with the electric wires, graphic novel images, etc) and they opened a year after you. Thoughts?

BG: Same same but different. You know this famous phrase? When we created our company six years ago, and even after one year, we were the only one in Saigon with this concept. Today there are a few other companies that do the same thing. Clients now have more choices, and I prefer to let them have their own thoughts on them.

From our side, I still have to say that we are different. Different in our strategy, different in our designs and graphic style, different in our image. Really different in many ways.

Are your designs trademarked? Can you explain the process?

BG: Yes they are. We trademark all of our designs under the trademark legal representative office of the Vietnamese government.

It's quite simple, we send our designs to the representative office in Hanoi, we pay the amount for the copyright process, and we receive an official document that proves our designs are copyrighted. It takes one year though to be really protected and to be able to start any legal action. I think it's really good that nowadays Vietnamese people are required to respect these obligations. It will force them to be more creative.

How often do you come out with new designs?

BG: We have new stuff almost monthly. We are not a fashion company, so the collections don't go by season. But we catch the trend on the colors, the cutting style of the fashion world, and have a collection of designs that go with them.

We are a team of creative people, so the designs may go out right when we have an idea. Like now I'm talking to you, and if this special flower in front of us gave me an emotion and an idea for a T-shirt, tomorrow I can call you and say: 'Thanks Christine, Ginkgo just got a new design collection of Vietnamese flowers.'

You recently opened up the Ginkgo Concept Store. How is this shop different from the T-shirt one?

BG: Ginkgo T-shirt store sells only Ginkgo

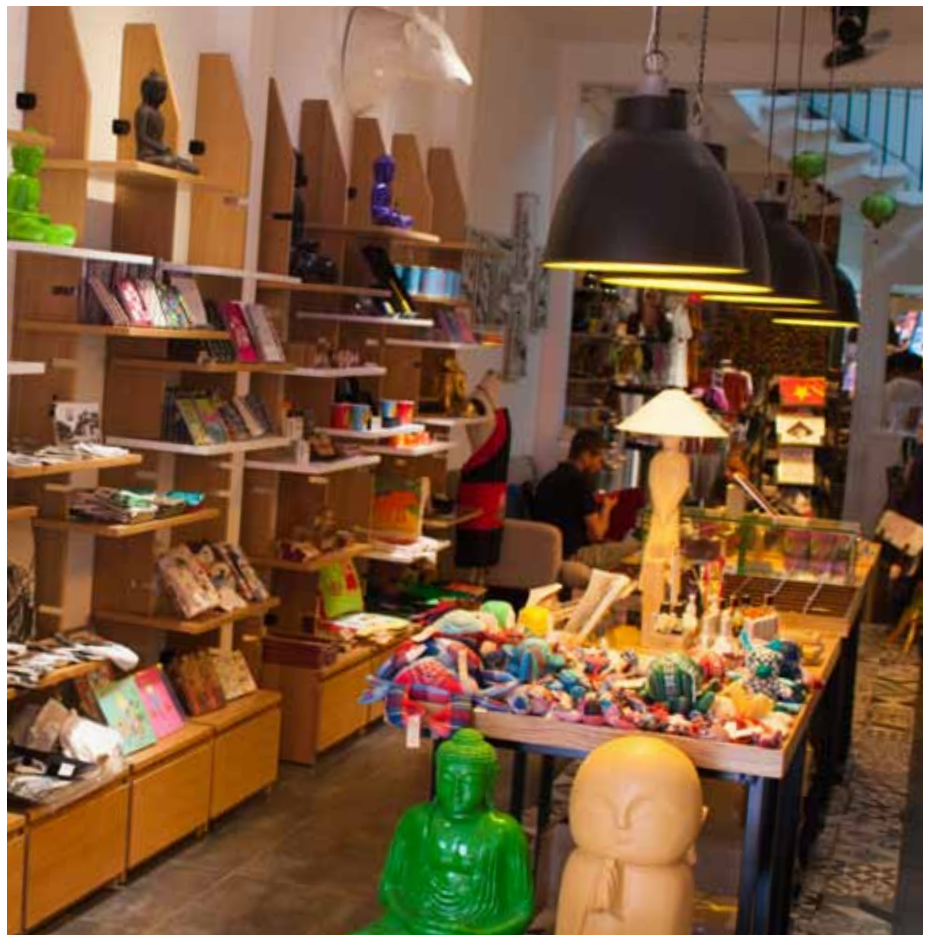
products. In the Ginkgo Concept Store you will find other brands and designers from all over Vietnam. It was created in order to propose to our customers a shopping space where they can find high quality and creative products only made in Vietnam.

Your ethos is organic and sustainable products with fair trade in mind. How do you maintain this in Vietnam? Where do you source your materials and products? Is everything made in Vietnam?

BG: One of our main objectives with the company is to create as many jobs as possible and bring a cool and safe working environment as well as a fair salary to all of our employees. And with everyone, we try to share frankly our ideas for the same objective: to develop together with Ginkgo.

Ginkgo's products are made in Vietnam, in our factory in Saigon. You are welcome to visit us anytime. Most of our materials are produced in Vietnam by the local factories that have been our providers since the first day. We're trying to use local materials as much as possible. But when it's not available in Vietnam, we need to import, like organic cotton. Organic cotton is one of our proudest products. It has been quite difficult to import and we are the first local T-shirt company to offer a great collection with this fabric.

For more info, visit www.ginkgo-vietnam.com. ■





A Foundation for Hope

Breaking the cycle of poverty through small loans

TEXT BY **HARRISON TRIPPLE AND MICHAEL ARNOLD**

IMAGES PROVIDED BY **DARIU FOUNDATION**

CHARITY WORK IS not without its critics. The old proverb about teaching a man to fish puts its downside quite plainly – there's only so much you can do for someone in need before you're at risk of creating a dependency that could do more harm than good.

That's the concern, in some respects, that has given rise to microfinancing. While the idea of a charity that lends rather than gives seems a little counter-intuitive at first, the hope is that in giving people the opportunity to take themselves out of poverty, one engenders a sense of self-respect and dignity that does more to bring about real change than the traditional give-and-then-disappear model delivers. A man who learns to fish may not go hungry again, but a man who gets the chance to start his own fishing business can feed a whole town.

The model is working in Vietnam. Recognized as one of the top microfinance institutions in Vietnam consecutively since 2007, the Dariu Foundation works both with the Vietnamese government and in partnership with other aid organizations to help alleviate the symptoms of poverty – mainly operating in the poorest districts of Tieng Giang, Vinh Long, and Dong Nai provinces.

"We work with Save the Children and Handicap International, but most of our cooperation is with the Union of Friendship Organizations working around the Mekong," says the Director of the Dariu Foundation, Hanh Nguyen. Although microfinancing projects in the poorest communities are its top priority, Dariu also runs mobile schools, offers scholarships for kindergartens, builds kindergartens, and provides residents with

financial education.

Success Stories

The foundation was established in 2002 by Tomas Trüb of the Swiss media company Ringier AG, who fell in love with the country during his frequent visits. Tomas has since invested a large amount of his personal fortune and recruited many other donors to help create better living conditions and opportunities for underprivileged Vietnamese families.

Since then, the foundation has seen many success stories. "If they asked someone to lend them money, people would shoo them away because they wouldn't believe that they could spend it wisely and repay the loan," says Hanh. "One of the poorest residents, Mrs. Ngoc of Vinh Long province, joined our program in 2008 with a loan of one pig. She

had no land, nothing. By 2010, after three years in our program, she was earning more than USD10,000 per year."

The microfinancing program has led to other more diversified projects, including the mobile schools. These provide children without access to computers or the internet at home with basic skills they'll need later on in life to pass high school and university exams. The courses teach the children how to use Windows and Microsoft Office, and run for three months.

Providing children with these skills heads off compounding issues that may occur in the future. "One of the problems is with the culture," says Hanh when asked why many families in the Mekong Delta and the Dong Nai highlands are lagging behind in education compared to their provincial counterparts. "They think they can make an income easily so they don't need to go to high school or university."

Duong Tran Le Truong, a bright 15-year-old boy from Go Cong Dong, currently takes courses at the mobile school in his community. The school has motivated him to work in the IT field. "I'm happy because I can learn and improve my skills for a better future," he says. "I'd love it if some more programs like this could come to my community."

The Dariu Foundation and the mobile schools they run have become well-respected in the areas in which they are provided. With the excellent reception and success of the program, Dariu is currently working on expanding the school's model to other countries such as Myanmar and Kenya.

Education for the Poor

The scholarships provided by Dariu are a little different from what most people imagine by the term. In the most hard-hit impoverished areas, barriers to schooling are far more fundamental than the lack of a seat at school. Scholarships mainly go to poor families who have children of around kindergarten age, and are in the form of school supplies such as uniforms, notebooks, pencils, and bikes for students living a long distance from their closest school. This year, the foundation is looking to provide around 2,000 scholarships, 1,000 of those in the form of imported bicycles from the US.

Because of the Vietnamese administration's need for more than 3,000 additional kindergarten classrooms in the Mekong Delta, the Dariu Foundation has also made a large investment in building classrooms in the area. Both the government and Dariu share the costs of building the preschools 50-50, with the former assuming all responsibilities after construction is completed.

"The government provides teachers' salaries, furniture, toys, and all the necessities. We just help to build the schools," Hanh explains.

Of course, without donations and the support of international organizations, Dariu wouldn't be able to run the projects that they do. With an official staff of 70 employees, they are always appreciative of the enthusiasm of newcomers wishing to join their cause. For those HCMC-based earners who prefer to invest in charitable work rather than the alternative, it's worth taking a look at the Dariu Foundation website at www.dariu.org to learn how to get involved. ■

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My wife and I are both French citizens and we would like to adopt a Vietnamese baby, however, as my name is not Brad Pitt and as I am unfortunately not married to Angelina Jolie, I expect that the process for us may be quite complicated. Could you please give us some information about the conditions that we must fulfill and the steps that we should take in order to adopt a child here?



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

IN VIETNAM, MATTERS relating to adoption are governed by the Vietnamese Law on Adoption of 2010 and the implementing Decree No. 19/2011/ND-CP (Decree 19). Additionally, Vietnam has been a member of the Hague Adoption Convention since 2010, and has signed bilateral adoption agreements with various countries.

For a non-Vietnamese citizen who wants to adopt a child in Vietnam, the most relevant principles, rights and obligations, conditions and procedures can be found in the Law on Adoption. Article 4 of this law contains an important restriction: "Adoption by a person living abroad is only allowed when no domestic substitute family can be found." The law also provides for a priority list, whereby foreigners permanently residing abroad are ranked fifth place, after family members of the adopted child, Vietnamese citizens permanently residing in the country, foreigners permanently residing in Vietnam, and Vietnamese citizens settling abroad.

In practice, every year a few thousand so-called "intercountry adoptions" from Vietnam take place, where the Vietnamese government actively encourages the adoption of disadvantaged children, such as abandoned and disabled children or children with serious illnesses like HIV/AIDS or heart disease.

According to the Law on Adoption, one single foreigner or two foreigners (husband and wife) can adopt a Vietnamese child under 16-years-old if either meets one of the following criteria:

- 1) You are the stepfather or stepmother of the child.
- 2) You are the natural aunt or uncle of the child.
- 3) You have previously adopted a sibling of the child.
- 4) The child is disabled or infected with HIV/AIDS or another dangerous disease.
- 5) You are currently working or studying in Vietnam for at least one year.

On top of that you must have full civil

capacity to act. You must at least be 20 years older than the child. You must be able to provide the health, financial and accommodation conditions to assure good care, nurture and education of the child. You must have good ethical qualities. And, finally, you must meet all conditions required by the law of the country of your permanent residence concerning intercountry adoption.

Those who are not allowed to adopt children in Vietnam include ones whose parental rights over a minor child have been restricted and persons who have a criminal record relating to serious offences.

If you meet all of these conditions, then it is time for the paperwork! Both the Law on Adoption and Decree 19 contain detailed provisions on the required documents that should be submitted to the Vietnamese Department of Adoption under the Ministry of Justice, which is the authority in charge of processing your adoption dossier. In practice, the whole process can take several months.

The Hague Adoption Convention of 1993

intends, among other things, to ensure that intercountry adoptions take place in the best interests of the child, and with respect to the fundamental rights of the child and to promote cooperation between the member countries. Even though Vietnam ratified this Convention in 2011, intercountry adoption from Vietnam has recently been subject to scandals involving alleged falsification of adoption papers and human trafficking. As a result, the US has put a ban on all adoptions from Vietnam, which is still in force today.

To answer your question: Is the process of adopting a baby from Vietnam complicated? Depending on your situation, the answer would probably be 'yes'. Is it impossible? Well, as long as you are not Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie, or a citizen of a country suspending intercountry adoptions from Vietnam then no, it is not!

If you have any legal questions you want answered, send them to legal@oivietnam.com. ■



I have USD5,000 in a bank but it's just sitting there and not earning interest. What's the best way for me to invest it? Ideally I would like to double that in six months. Any advice or options?



Afonso Vieira is an investment manager and financial planner. He is licensed by the Financial Planning Association of Singapore.



SO YOU WANT to double your money in six months. Great! That means 100 percent return in half-year, which compounded annually is 400 percent return per year. I only know of one place where you can get that type of returns: a casino. But innately we know that investing is not about gambling. True, there are clear parallels between the two. Both call for you to calculate the odds on a given 'bet,' but it is foolish to regard them as one and the same activity.

Generally speaking, investment professionals believe there are four types of participant attitudes in the financial markets: savers, investors, speculators, and gamblers.

Savers are afraid of the market, usually because they don't understand why markets go up and down. They park their money in low risk vehicles to protect it against inflation, usually in bank accounts and tangible real estate assets. In some emerging markets like Vietnam, collectibles like jewelry, and gold/ silver are also used.

Investors understand that markets can go down for short periods of time but that over the long run markets will grow and generate higher returns than bank deposits. Investors assume the risk of being "underwater" during the investment period, and are comfortable with it. They have a long-term horizon (several years) while investing and feel comfortable to buy "more of the same" even during economic contraction periods.

Speculators are consciously very aggressive investors and buy/sell in less than six months. Many even buy/sell on the same day, hour or minute. Some use borrowed money to leverage their positions in the market and try to outsmart them with the help of statistical techniques and other trading methods. Usually they end up making a lot of money or losing almost all. Speculators are aware of the high risk they incur and feel comfortable with it.

Gamblers are born-losers that participate in the market for the thrill of a big win, and usually end up losing all

their money.

To summarize: now you are a saver (your money is "just sitting there") and are considering becoming a gambler. Let's look at both options. If you gamble in a casino you are playing a negative-sum game. This is because the system is designed so that the house pays out less than what it takes in. On the other hand, stock investing is a positive-sum "game." Since the Industrial Revolution began in Western Europe in the late 18th century, most of the world's economies have witnessed an unprecedented increase in output. We are all richer today than we were 50 or 100 years ago. Over time, economies expand and companies increase their value. The aggregate gains made by shareholders must of necessity match the business gains of companies. So when you invest in the stock market you are actually investing in the economy.

My suggestion: become an investor, and understand that returns are obtained with discipline, patience, and over the long-run.

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 Building, 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

concierge

Giup.me (help.me)

A local concierge service fluent in English, Vietnamese and Mandarin to assist in all your personal needs from finding an apartment, domestic help and schools, to setting up a local company, renewing visas, car services and arranging medical/legal services. They charge a flat rate VND175,000 per hour.
7300 4487 (7300 GIUP)
service@giup.me
www.giup.me

consulates

Australian Consulate-General
 47 Ly Tu Trong, D1
3521 8100
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, 11A 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
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

IGlobal Assist

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.
09 3487 4271
jpruss@iglobalassist.com
www.iglobalassist.com

IF Consulting

IF Consulting has for 20 years provided advice to individuals and businesses in assessing health/accident risk and finding the best suitable solution. The company is independent and Vietnam-based.
IBC Building, 3rd Floor, 1A Me Linh Square, D1
3827 7362
hcmc@insuranceinvietnam.com
www.insuranceinvietnam.com

Liberty Mutual Insurance

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

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

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

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.

34th Floor, Bitexco Financial Tower, 2 Hai Trieu, D1

JP 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

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, D3

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, D3. 3821 9529

Purple Asia 🍷 Oi's Pick

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 Khiem, Binh Thanh 3898 1005

Red 🍷 Oi's Pick

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

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, 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

Logical Moves

They offer your belongings the best protection available with the latest technology, experienced staff and equipment. With door to door services, Logical Moves is all about quality service, best prices and well-arranged time. They have moved offices and household goods for many well-known international companies in Vietnam.

3941 5322 www.logicalmoves.net

Santa Fe Relocation Service

Door to door relocation service which promises to take the stress out of moving personal possessions from one city - or country - to another. Also offers pet relocations, records management, home search and immigration help.

www.santaferelo.com 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

Logitem Viet Nam

Warehousing, shipping and transportation, 100% Japanese owned.

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

Faces & Places



Book Launch

The debut of the first edition of Saigon Artbook drew in a large crowd of art lovers who were excited to meet the three artists featured in the book. In turn, the artists themselves became celebrities for a night by signing autographs for fans.

IMAGES BY ADAM YOUNG



Clothes & Art

"Silk of Light," currently on display at Phuong My clothing shop, is a body of work inspired by light as both a physical and metaphorical medium. Bao Chau carefully studies the process of light as it covers, disperses and adjusts to the surface of different materials.

IMAGES BY ADAM YOUNG



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190 Nguyen Van Huong Street
Thao Dien Ward | District 2 | HCMC | Vietnam
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Thao Dien Campus

(Kindergarten & Primary School)
APSC Compound | 36 Thao Dien Road
District 2 | HCMC | Vietnam
t: +84 8 3744 6960 | f: +84 8 3744 6961

Thu Thiem Campus

(Kindergarten, Primary, Middle & Senior School)
264 Mai Chi Tho (East-West Highway)
An Phu Ward | District 2 | HCMC | Vietnam
t: +84 8 3742 4040 | f: +84 8 3740 7361

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 youtube.com/aisvietnam



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