



**Ởi**

VIETNAM

NOVEMBER 2014

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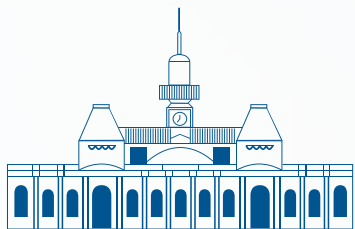
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**THE CHAM  
LEGACY**





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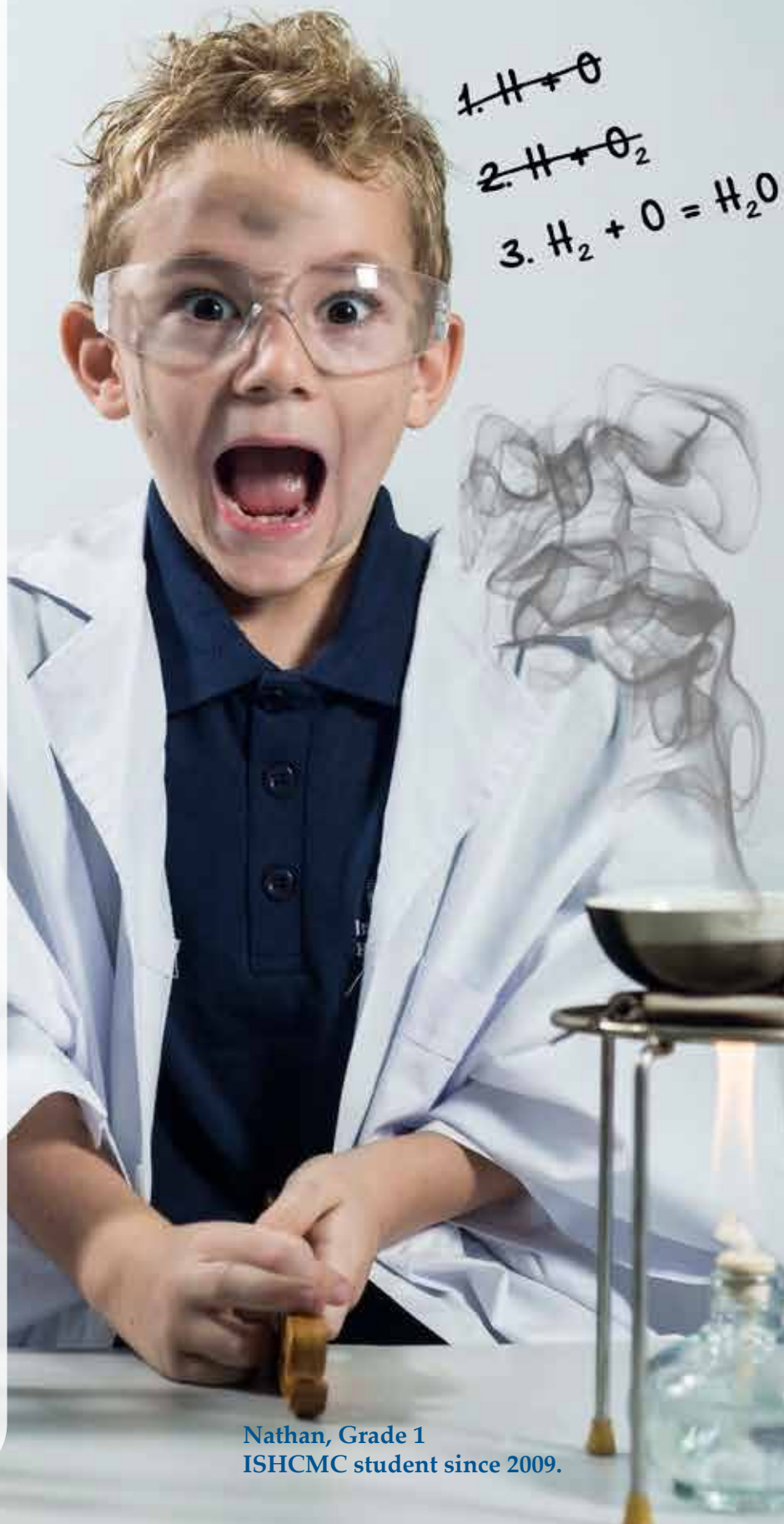
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## This Month's Cover

Image: **Inra Jaya**

This month's mesmerizing cover photo was taken by Cham photographer Inra Jaya of Thach Anh Nguyet, a teenage Cham girl living in Bau Truc Village in Ninh Phuoc, Ninh Thuan Province, not far from Phan Rang.

"I just happened to see her, I had a piece of red cloth with me and I asked her to wear it so I can take some photos of her. No one knows exactly why she has blue eyes," says Inra.

The original Champa settlers in Vietnam have origins in Borneo and because intermarriage with non-Cham is rare, the Cham have mostly retained their distinctive physical features which include darker, almost brownish-reddish skin and thick black hair. Blue eyes, however, are very uncommon.

## ƠI VIỆT NAM

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IMAGE BY NEIL FEATHERSTONE

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IMAGE BY JAMES PHAM

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# Datebook

What's on this month...

## NOVEMBER 8 & 9

**What:** Traditional Handicraft Bazaar

**Where:** Renaissance Riverside Hotel (8 – 15 Ton Duc Thang, D1); Free; 5pm – 9pm on the 8th, 9am – 4pm on the 9th

**About:** Ethnic minority groups including Lo Lo, Dao Tien, Dao Do, Nung, Mong Trang and Mong Hoa will present their handicrafts and traditional artwork for sale. The bazaar aims to raise funds for building a communal house for Mong Hoa ethnic women in Quang Lam Commune of Bao Lam District in Cao Bang Province to be used for earning their living from making brocade products.

The fair is organized by Cao Bang Community Development Centre (DECEN), a non-profit in Cao Bang, to help improve lives of ethnic minorities through better access to water and a platform to sell their products, which is funded by HELVETAS Swiss Inter-cooperation Vietnam and implemented by Cao Bang Community Development Center.

**Contact:** Call 3822 0033 for more info



## NOVEMBER 9

**What:** Saigon Hash House Harriers Annual Red Dress Run

**Where:** Caravelle Hotel (19 Cong Truong Lam Son, D1); 2pm; VND220,000 for expats, VND150,000 for Vietnamese

**About:** Saigon Hash House Harriers will be holding its annual red dress run. Everyone attending is required to wear a red dress to participate in the run or walk. Proceeds will go to the charity Operation Smile.

**Contact:** Visit [www.saigonhash.com](http://www.saigonhash.com) for more info

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## NOVEMBER 11

### What: The Grey Zone Screening

**Where:** The Observatory (corner of Le Lai & Ton That Tung, D1); 7:30pm; Free

**About:** The film, by A.Demenet, V. Doubrere and JY. Ricc, aims to show the human reality of informal sector workers behind the GDP growth figures and the expected uniform development process. By following five individuals in the country's economic capital, Ho Chi Minh City, the film's ambition is to tell a different story and to show an often-ignored reality.

**Contact:** Visit [www.theobservatory-hcmc.com](http://www.theobservatory-hcmc.com) for more details



## NOVEMBER 12

### What: Loud Minority Presents Wild Beasts

**Where:** Cargo Bar (7 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4); VND350,000 or VND250,000 for students

**About:** UK indie royalty Wild Beasts will make their Vietnam debut with support from Saigon's own Space Panther. Since signing to legendary UK indie label Domino (Arctic Monkeys, Franz Ferdinand) in 2008, Wild Beasts have worked their way into the hearts and minds of an ever-expanding fan base with their heavenly falsetto songs and beguiling melodies.

**Contact:** Visit [www.ticketbox.vn/event/wild-beasts-12199](http://www.ticketbox.vn/event/wild-beasts-12199) for more details

## NOVEMBER 12 & 15

### What: Saigon International Guitar Festival 2014

**Where:** HCMC Conservatory of Music (112 Nguyen Du, D1); VND200,000 for one show, VND500,000 for all three

**About:** This first annual classical guitar festival in HCMC will showcase performances from some of the greatest guitarists from Vietnam, the US, Italy, Malaysia, Iceland, and the Philippines. There will also be master classes, workshops and lecture recitals along with concerts by talented young and emerging guitarists. There will be two shows on November 12 and one show on November 15.

**Contact:** Visit [www.ticketbox.vn/event/guitar-festival-12197](http://www.ticketbox.vn/event/guitar-festival-12197) for more details

## NOVEMBER 14

### What: Pulse | Heart Beat Meets Usual Suspects with Till Hennig

**Where:** The Cube Bar (31b Ly Tu Trong D1); VND50,000; 9pm till late

**About:** Augsburg based DJ Till Hennig can be characterized by deep progressive sounds, playful melodies and synth-driven deep/techno tracks that fit perfectly in the world of underground techno. He's no stranger to the Bavarian scene and some of the best-known clubs like Harry Klein in Munich or the Schwarzes Schaf in Augsburg.

**Contact:** Visit [www.heartbeatsaigon.com](http://www.heartbeatsaigon.com) for more info



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## NOVEMBER 14

### What: Flamenco Workshop

**Where:** DanCenter (53 Nguyen Dang Giai, Thao Dien, D2); 6:30pm – 8:30pm;  
Early bird fee VND250,000 or VND350,000 at the door

**About:** Try this introduction to flamenco dance course and learn the basics on creating flamenco movement including upper body and posture, arms and *floreo* (finger/wrist movement), hips and introduction to basic flamenco footwork.  
Register before November 14.

**Contact:** Visit [www.dancentervn.com](http://www.dancentervn.com) for more info



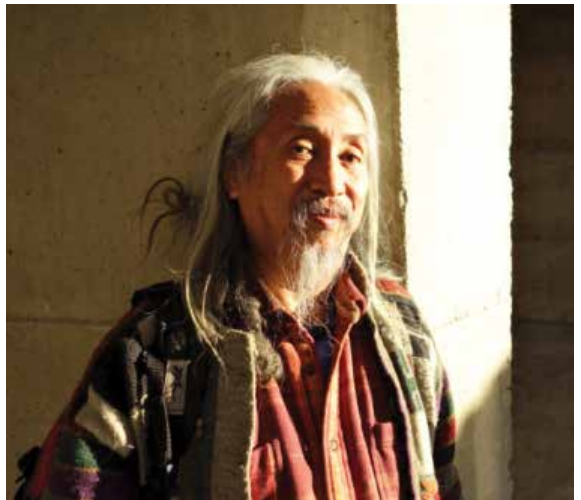
## NOVEMBER 14, 15 & 16

### What: The Lexie Mega Furniture Sale

**Where:** To be determined, 9am – 5pm

**About:** The pop-up shop is holding their annual furniture and accessories sale in Thao Dien, D2. Full of high quality export pieces at local prices, all the furniture is manufactured in Vietnam but normally sold only in the US and Europe. The sale will include pieces from Julian Chichester, Restoration Hardware, Crate and Barrel, Henry Forwood Designs, John Reeves, SQUARE ROOTS designs, Pottery Barn and more. There will also be antiques found in Saigon for sale.

**Contact:** Email Lexie at [lexiestoddart@hotmail.com](mailto:lexiestoddart@hotmail.com) for location



## NOVEMBER 15

**What:** Screening of *Why is Yellow the Middle of the Rainbow?* by Kidlat Tahimik, and *Far from Vietnam* by Chris Marker; 3pm and 7pm, respectively

**Where:** Salon Van hoa Ca phe The Bay (1st Floor, Trung Nguyen Coffee, 19B Pham Ngoc Thach, D1)

**About:** The event will showcase two films by cinema greats of the Third Cinema Movement - a movement that began in Latin America in the 1960s/70s denouncing neocolonialism, the capitalist system and the Hollywood model of producing cinema for mere entertainment. Both Tahimik and Marker are considered pioneers of essay filmmaking - a film genre that takes the style of the documentary with oral commentary and composed with the signature style of the auteur. It often blends fiction and experimental narratives. Kidlat will be attending the screening and giving lectures on his work the following week.

**Contact:** Visit [www.san-art.org](http://www.san-art.org) for more info



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## NOVEMBER 15

**What:** Tom Trago

**Where:** The Observatory (corner of Le Lai & Ton That Tung, D1); VND100,000

**About:** The Dutchman is an internationally renowned DJ, producer, performer and label owner with three critically acclaimed albums to his name. By the time local label Rush Hour snapped up his debut single, Live With The BBQ, in 2006, he'd already developed a trademark style that blended the best of three decades of dance music – disco, boogie, synth funk, Detroit techno and more – with insatiable house rhythms and an intrinsic grasp of what makes dance floors tick.

**Contact:** Visit [www.theobservatory-hcmc.com](http://www.theobservatory-hcmc.com) for more details

## NOVEMBER 16

**What:** Flamenco Workshop for Baby & Mom

**Where:** DanCenter (53 Nguyen Dang Giai, Thao Dien, D2); 2:30pm – 4pm

**About:** The Me and Mum Flamenco workshop has been specifically designed for young kids (7- 12 years old). The class focuses on coordination and musicality, with an emphasis on body conditioning. Moms will also dance in the class and help the process of learning together with their kids. Register before November 14.

**Contact:** Visit [www.dancentervn.com](http://www.dancentervn.com) for more info



## NOVEMBER 20

**What:** Canvas and Wine – Abstract Picasso

**Where:** VinSpace Garage (95 Pasteur, D1); 6:30pm – 9pm

**About:** A painting class for students of any level that combines wine with art. Instructor Bui Xuan Phai graduated from Ecole des Beaux Arts d' Indochine in Hanoi and is considered one of Vietnam's most significant and popular artist of urban space.

**Contact:** Visit [www.vin-space.com](http://www.vin-space.com) for more info

## NOVEMBER 21

**What:** Borrowed Identity

**Where:** The Observatory (corner of Le Lai & Ton That Tung, D1); VND100,000

**About:** Borrowed Identity is a 23-year-old DJ and producer born and based in south Germany. With roots in Romania, Borrowed Identity's name says a lot about his life. His musical upbringing was a mélange of ethnic music from friends, weird stuff from local libraries and whatever else he could find in record stores and on the internet, making anything from classical to ambient, house to techno, experimental to electro, and hip-hop to pop music.

**Contact:** Visit [www.theobservatory-hcmc.com](http://www.theobservatory-hcmc.com) for more details

## NOVEMBER 21

**What:** Dutch Open

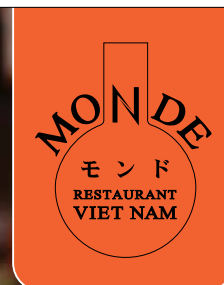
**Where:** Song Be Golf Course (77 Binh Duong, Binh Duong)

**About:** Dutch Business Association Vietnam (DBAV) invites golf enthusiasts to sign up for its annual Dutch Open. This year's Dutch Open aims to help Vietnamese kids in need by contributing all proceeds of the event to Live and Give and Mai Nha Children Foundation. Registration begins at 10:30am followed by complimentary coffee and a BBQ lunch. In the evening, all participants are invited to join in the international buffet dinner with a prize ceremony, auctions and networking. The gunshot starts at noon. There will also be a clinic available where participants can start learning about golfing or look to improve their current skills. Sponsorship opportunities are available.

**Contact:** Visit [www.dbav.org.vn](http://www.dbav.org.vn) for more info



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## NOVEMBER 21

**What:** Lecture and Q&A with Kidlat Tahimik

**Where:** Hoa Sen University (Marie Curie Room (6F) 8 Nguyen Van Trang, D1); 6:30pm

**About:** Kidlat is a prominent name in the Filipino film industry and is associated with the Third Cinema Movement. He will speak about his films – his motivations, choice of style, his influences and method of practice. His anti-colonial gaze, evident in his commentary and choice of subject, embraces a love of his culture and the importance of the locals who he believes must not be goaded into the global race for 'uniformity' of value. Translation will be provided.

**Contact:** Visit [www.san-art.org](http://www.san-art.org) for more info

## NOVEMBER 22

**What:** Charity Gala of the CMI and the Heart Institute

**Where:** Park Hyatt Saigon; 6:30pm; VND2.9 million

**About:** Founded by Professor Alain Carpentier, the Heart Institute was the first hospital in Vietnam to specialize in heart surgery. To help children who cannot pay the surgery fees, he created CMI (International Medical Center), which is an outpatient clinic that donates its benefice to operate on underprivileged children. This annual gala hopes to raise funds to save more children.

The evening will consist of a welcome Champagne drink, a four-course French dinner, a live auction and performances. Dress theme is Monte Carlo.

**Contact:** Visit [www.cmi-vietnam.com](http://www.cmi-vietnam.com) for more info

## NOVEMBER 22

**What:** Small Things – Christmas Music & Art Exhibition

**Where:** VinGallery (6 Le Van Mien, Thao Dien, D2); Concert starts at 6pm

**About:** The show features a contemporary mix of art dedicated to their small dimensions. Small work can take many forms, sometimes as a natural part of an artist's practice, sometimes the key to generating ideas. The opening of the art exhibition will be complimented by a musical collaboration with the Christina Noble children's choir and the Saint Music Academy as well as a performance by Hong Anh's students. The event is a run up to Christmas.

**Contact:** Visit [www.vingallery.com](http://www.vingallery.com) for more info

## NOVEMBER 21

**What:** Saigon Charity Bazaar

**Where:** The Deck (38 Nguyen U Di, Thao Dien, D2); 10am – 4pm

**About:** A biannual charity bazaar, benefitting the VinaCapital Foundation program Heart Beat Vietnam, which funds crucial heart surgeries for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. What started in 2006 on the shoulders of two Dutch ladies and 10 vendors, has become a community event in the years since, with crafters and charities such as Vietnam Quilts, Mekong Creations, Grace Cookies, and Operation Smile among the 50 vendors who will be present.

**Contact:** Email [domlampel@hotmail.com](mailto:domlampel@hotmail.com) for more info


## NOVEMBER 22

**What:** Charity Bazaar

**Where:** SSIS (78 Nguyen Duc Canh, D7); 9am – 2pm; VND50,000, kids under three are free

**About:** Organized by the Saigon South International School PTA, the bazaar will have activities for kids, over 50 vendors selling jewelry, toys, food, homeware and more along with prizes. All proceeds will go to charity.

**Contact:** Visit [www.ssis.edu.vn](http://www.ssis.edu.vn) for more info




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### NOVEMBER 22

**What:** Prisma Night Run

**Where:** Truong Van Bang, D2; VND550,000

**About:** Vietnam's first ever 5km night time fun run where participants are integral to the show, featuring immersive blasts of light and sound that transport runners into an electric wonderland and a concert (US rapper Lil Jon will be headlining) afterwards at the finish line. Participants of all levels can join.

**Contact:** Visit [www.prismarun.com](http://www.prismarun.com) for more details

### NOVEMBER 22

**What:** Based on Kyoto

**Where:** The Observatory (corner of Le Lai & Ton That Tung, D1); VND100,000

**About:** Based on Kyoto (BOK) is a Japanese dance music unit consisting of DAICHI, a DJ and producer, and MARRON, a guitarist for DUBDUB ON-SENG, Dubmarronics and Datenryu. BOK was formed in 2006 to search and create a groove that incorporates a very unique Japanese dynamic with a variety of other musical genres such as house, electro, ambient, dub, soul, jazz and rock. They've so far released four 12 inches and LPs.

**Contact:** Visit [www.theobservatory-hcmc.com](http://www.theobservatory-hcmc.com) for more details



### TILL NOVEMBER 22

**What:** 78 rhythms

**Where:** Galerie Quynh (65 De Tham, D1); 10am – 6pm, Tuesday to Saturday

**About:** A solo exhibition by Hanoi-based artist Nguyen Huy An. Known for his quiet performances of transforming the most mundane and familiar of materials into simple and poetic artworks, An is among the most innovative artists of his generation. While focusing on new and recent work, the artist's first exhibition at the gallery will also include his acclaimed work *The Roads* (2007), presented in Ho Chi Minh City for the first time.

**Contact:** Visit [www.galeriequynh.com](http://www.galeriequynh.com) for more info



### NOVEMBER 24 - 26

**What:** Romeo, You Idiot

**Where:** International School Ho Chi Minh (28 Vo Truong Toan, D2); 7pm – 9pm; VND50,000

**About:** Secondary School students attending International School Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC) are set to host the premiere of their upcoming drama performance, *Romeo, You Idiot*. A Tim Kochenderfer adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* is set in Verona where Romeo meets Juliet and, faced with obstacles designed to quell their love, they scheme to be together forever. However, they hadn't anticipated vampires and cacti to be such an issue. Filled with humorous popular cultural references, fans of *The Godfather* will appreciate the mafia allusions. The performance is directed by drama teachers, Amy Penn and Glen Fleury, and co-directed by student Jee Ye Hong with a further 13 student cast members and 53 students working backstage.

**Contact:** For further details, call 3898 9100



## NOVEMBER 26

### What: Saigon International Music Week

**Where:** Cargo Bar (7 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4); Shows start at 7:30pm, Prices vary depending on the show

**About:** Saigon-based promoters Loud Minority & Saigon Sound System are teaming up to launch the event, which will kick-off on November 26 with UK indie rockers, The Vaccines. Following The Vaccines' opening show will be a Vietnamese showcase with Black Infinity and White Noiz, as well as shows from The Lemonheads (US) and Jagwar Ma (AUS). Shows confirmed at time of print are: The Vaccines (November 26), Black Infinity/White Noiz (November 29), The Lemonheads (December 2) and Jagwar Ma (December 4)

**Contact:** Visit Facebook: "Saigon International Music Week" for more details



## NOVEMBER 29

### What: 21st International Charity Bazaar

**Where:** White Palace Convention Center (194 Hoang Van Thu, Phu Nhuan); 9:30am – 2pm; VND100,000 for adults, free for children under 10 accompanied by an adult

**About:** Organized by the Consular Club, the bazaar continues the tradition of selling goods and foods from all over the world for a worthy cause. Proceeds from the event support scholarships, medical care, improved rainwater purification, flood relief and more. Visitors can also purchase tickets for the popular Grand Raffle; past prizes have included airline tickets, resort stays, spa packages, etc. Santa Claus will be there to have his photo taken with children, bringing the festive atmosphere of Christmas to the event. All Consular Club members volunteer their time to work towards improving the quality of life of the disadvantaged in Vietnam.

**Contact:** Visit [www.consularclub.com](http://www.consularclub.com) for more info

## DECEMBER 3

### What: Jingle Bells, Jingle Bells!

**Where:** AIS (Thao Dien Campus, Lotus Road, An Phu Superior Compound, 36 Thao Dien, D2); 5pm – 7pm; Free entry

**About:** The Australian International School invites you to a traditional Christmas celebration with mince pies, mulled wine, Christmas carols and a chance to meet Santa and see the Christmas lights being switched on. Better still, as guests bask in the flavors and sounds of Christmas, they will be helping some of the poor and disadvantaged children in rural parts of Vietnam to have access to the basics such as food, water, transportation, schooling and health care.

**Contact:** Visit [www.aisvietnam.com/jinglebells](http://www.aisvietnam.com/jinglebells) for more info

## NOVEMBER 28 - 30

### What: Three-Day Charity Cycle Adventure

**Where:** Hue, Danang and Hoi An

**About:** Organized by the Saigon Children's Charity, the event is to raise money to build and equip kindergarten classrooms, support 30 young people through their full four-year university degree, and send 500 children to school for a whole year.

**Contact:** Email team leader Tom Duncan at [duncantomd@hotmail.com](mailto:duncantomd@hotmail.com)



## NOVEMBER 29

### What: Little Flowers

**Where:** Sofitel Saigon Plaza

**About:** A solo exhibition of mixed media paintings on do paper by Hanoi-based artist Nguyen The Hung. In Little Flowers, there is a greater focus on life on earth, on humanity and its potential, rather than a spiritual approach. Backgrounds are decorated with what the artist refers to as "little flowers, and flying spots of colors" that are like "seeds falling to the ground, awaiting or seeking wet soil to germinate in." In an orderly chaos, these seeds fall endlessly from the sky, suggesting a hopeful regeneration of the cycles of life.

**Contact:** Visit [www.cthomasgallery.com](http://www.cthomasgallery.com) for more details


## JANUARY 9 - 11

### What: Standpoint Theories - Vietnam Edition

**Where:** Cargo Bar (7 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4)


**About:** A collaborative project focused on building a graphic novel of six Vietnamese legendary myths (Au Co, Son Tinh, Ong Dong, Chu Dong Tu, Princess Lieu Hanh and Ba Chua Xu) by using the means of dance, Vietnamese text, live visual art, 3D mapping and live electronic music fused with traditional Vietnamese music.

**Contact:** Visit [gemdartiste32.wix.com/standpointtheoriesvn](http://gemdartiste32.wix.com/standpointtheoriesvn) for more info




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# The Bulletin

Promotions and news in HCMC and beyond...



## RB&K NEW COLLECTION

RB&K ([www.rbkandco.com](http://www.rbkandco.com)) debuts its new Fall/Winter Collection 2014-15 « Link ». The new collection emphasizes the elegance of a feminine and independent woman, using strong colors like yellow and blue. Creativity is the strength of these simple and unique designs. The clothes act as a physical bridge, a link, mixing cultures together, and embracing the similarities of all countries.

## STELLA ARTOIS DEBUTS IN VIETNAM

Last month Stella Artois held its official launch party at 2 Lam Son Bar. Stella Artois' brewery is located in Leuven, Belgium dating back to 1366, where the name of the brewery was Den Horen, meaning "the horn" in Flemish. It was master brewer Sebastian Artois who gave his name to the brewery in 1717, but "Stella" (Latin for "star") – was a title given to a seasonal Christmas pilsner-style beer which was first introduced in 1926. Stella Artois was so well received that it became available year round. Honoring the long tradition and heritage, the horn emblem is still part of the Stella Artois logo today.



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## RENAISSANCE RIVERSIDE SAIGON PROMOTIONS

### Sky BBQ Poolside

Chill by the pool with friends and family while enjoying savory barbecued food smoldering on the grill for VND888,000++ per person, every Thursday and Friday until December 30.

### Turkey on the Run @ Riverside Café

Let our master chefs take the hard work out of your festive dinner with a turkey on the run dinner (VND2,250,000 net per set) with a choice of three condiments, two sauces, and one bottle of house wine. Offer valid until December 21, 24 hours prior order is required.

### Cocktail Culture @ Atrium Lounge

Head mixologist, Mr. Phu, creates concoctions for your quenching pleasure. Trio Cocktails (set of three glasses per person, VND300,000++ per person). Every day until December 30.

Visit [www.renaissance-saigon.com](http://www.renaissance-saigon.com) for more info

## NEW COBALT ROOFTOP BAR

To celebrate the Pullman Saigon Centre's one year anniversary, the hotel has launched its newest addition, the Cobalt Rooftop Bar (148 Tran Hung Dao, D1). Located on the 31st floor this is the highest rooftop bar in Ho Chi Minh City. The furniture features pieces designed by John Reeves who takes recycled motorcycle parts and turns them in to cast iron talking points. The bar and outside deck can accommodate up to 100 guests. Access is via the Cobalt Restaurant on the 30th floor with LED lights paving the way. A series of high and low areas on the deck give guests an opportunity to take in what Ho Chi Minh City has to offer whilst listening to the sounds of Cobalt's resident DJ on Friday and Saturday nights.

## CREPITEE OPENS

Crepitee ([crepatee.com](http://crepatee.com)) is a new café and French bistro on 65 Xo Viet Nghe Tinh, Binh Thanh offering homemade affordable Gallic food by owner and chef Christophe. Dishes include stewed beef in red wine sauce with potatoes (VND85,000), Quercy French style salad (VND65,000), La Normandy crepe (VND80,000) among others.

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## CORPORATE LEASE ON DIAMOND ISLAND

The Ascott has opened its fifth property in Ho Chi Minh City. The new Diamond Island Luxury Residences is located in District 2, which is earmarked to become Vietnam's new commercial and financial centre. Surrounded by water, Diamond Island provides a uniquely tranquil environment that is strategically located only ten minutes from the city center and adjacent to Thu Thiem. Facilities include a marina, yacht, tennis courts, golf putting green, gymnasium, salt-water swimming pools, water taxi, bicycles together with a 1.7-hectare garden and 2-kilometre promenade for leisure purposes. To celebrate the opening of Diamond Island Luxury Residences, Ascott is offering special introductory monthly rates from USD1,700 for One-bedroom Premier Apartment. For more info, visit [www.the-ascott.com](http://www.the-ascott.com), or call 0968 293 388.

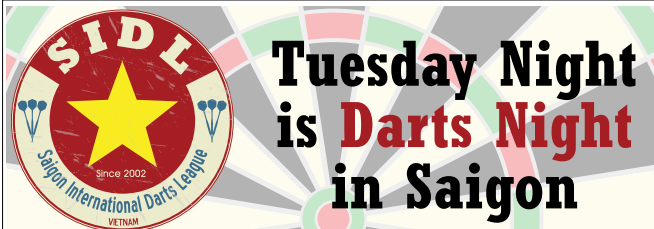


## CORNER BOUTIQUE OPENS

Located on the first floor, the recently opened Corner Boutique (23 Ly Tu Trong, D1; Facebook: "Corner Boutique Saigon") sells high-quality hand stitched clothes, accessories, homeware and gifts for men, women and children.

## ROMEO & JULIET OPENS

The culinary foundation of Saigon's newest Italian restaurant – R&J (Times Square Building, 22 – 36 Nguyen Hue and 57 – 69F Dong Khoi, D1) – was laid in Italy, not surprisingly – in Chef de Cuisine Fabrizio Valdetara's grandmother's kitchen where he first hand-rolled pasta. His skills were honed during his time working in the kitchens of Italian Michelin-starred restaurants. Both his *nonna's* influence and his extensive experience are evident on the menu in such regional Italian specialties as *tagliata di manzo*, a Tuscan meal of beef with arugula, tomatoes, and an aged balsamic reduction. The décor is inspired by the meticulous tile work of grand Venetian palazzos; several of R&J's walls are decorated with vibrant, floor-to-ceiling floral mosaic art. Adjacent to the 74-seat restaurant is a 48-seat lounge.



## Tuesday Night is Darts Night in Saigon



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### RED Bar

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### Spotted Cow

111, Bui Vien, d1

### Voodoo Bar

92, Ho Tung Mau, d1

### Buddha Bar

7, Thao Dien Street  
Anh Phu d2

### Ice Blue

54 Dong Khoi, d1

### Phatty's Bar

40, Ten That Thiep d1

### Stella Bar

119, Bui Vien, d1

### Harry Casual

số 2 Đường Hùng Gia III,  
Phường Tân Phong, d7

### Baan Thai

55/57 Thao Dien Street,  
Anh Phu d2

### Saigon Retro Bar

113 Ho Tung Mau, d1

### Chilli Bar

104, Ho Tung Mau, d1

### Tavern

r2-24 Hung Gia 3, Bui Bang Doan St,  
Phu My Hung

### Game On Bar

115 Ho Tung Mau, d1

### Vinyl Bar

74 Pasteur

### Gartenstadt

34 Dong Khoi, d1

### M52

52 Ten Tap Thiep d1

### Tequila

106 Pasteur, Ben Nghe Ward,  
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## THE BLUFFS HO TRAM STRIP GRAND OPENING

With golfing icon Greg Norman on hand to cut the ribbon on The Bluffs Ho Tram Strip ([www.thegrandhotramstrip.com](http://www.thegrandhotramstrip.com)), a course he has called one of the two most beautiful that he has ever been involved in, Harbinger Capital Principal and Ho Tram Strip investor Philip Falcone further took the opportunity to announce that the Ho Tram Project Company would be developing both condominiums and villas which would be available to both international and domestic investors.

Open for preview play since early in 2014, the course has already been nominated for three Asia Pacific Golf Awards, including Best New Golf Course in Asia Pacific, Best Golf Course in Vietnam and Best Golf Course Superintendent (Ali Macfadyen).

Norman was joined by former US Open champion Michael Campbell and two-time European Tour winner Robert Rock. Campbell and Rock took the opportunity to play the course with two of Vietnam's finest female golfers – LPGA Tour pro Tang Thi Nhung and US collegiate golfing star and Ba Ria Vung Tau native Ngo Bao Nghi – in a charity exhibition match.

According to Stephen Shoemaker, the Chairman and CEO of Asian Coast Development Limited, "the new development announcement will see The Bluffs' scenic dune formations adorned with luxury villas, while the adjacent The Grand Ho Tram Strip will have several vacation condominiums available for investment. All will be available to both international and domestic investors, with detailed plans to be announced in the near future."



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## DENTAL PROMOTION

Dr. Hung & Associates Dental Center ([www.drhung01.com](http://www.drhung01.com)) has extended its Women's Day promotion until November 15 where ladies can receive a 15 percent discount on veneers. Located on 224A Cong Quynh, D1, the center uses the latest equipment for services like teeth whitening, implants, pedodontics and more.

## SPA PROMOTION

In November only, Villa Aesthetica will be holding a bring-a-friend-at-half-price promotion on spa treatments only, offered to all *Oi* readers. Along with traditional and Thai massages, the facility is the only venue in Vietnam with a dedicated Turkish *hammam* – check our review on page 84 for more details. Take along someone who deserves to be pampered and mention “*Oi*” to receive the discount.

## INTERCONTINENTAL TURKEY TAKEAWAY

As Thanksgiving is fast approaching, the InterContinental Asiana Saigon's culinary team has created a turkey takeaway Thanksgiving dinner. The six to seven kg delicious turkey is priced at VND3,250,000 ++ per whole turkey together with two kinds of roasted vegetables, traditional cranberry and gravy sauce. Customers can choose their favorite stuffing (pork and cornbread or minced turkey with apple and cranberry) and side dishes (two kg of roasted potatoes or two kg of mashed potatoes). Orders must be placed two days in advance at 3520 9099 or email [dine@icasianasasaigon.com](mailto:dine@icasianasasaigon.com).



## SEAPLANES OPEN ROUTE BETWEEN HANOI AND HALONG BAY

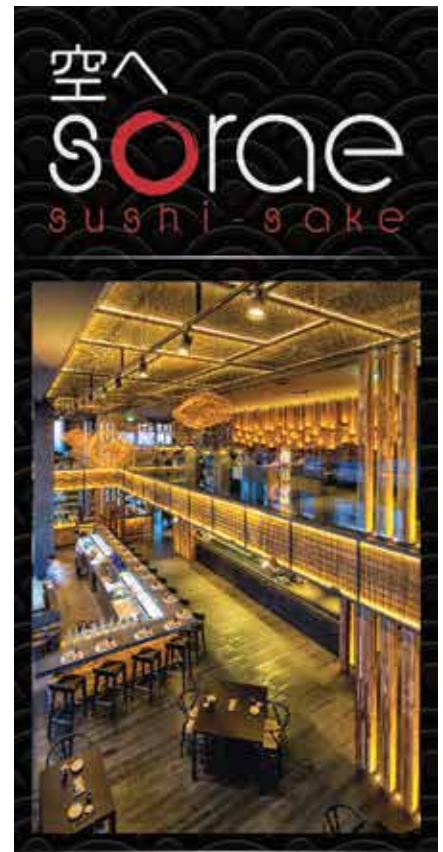
Vietnam's first seaplane service launched, cutting the travel time from Hanoi to Halong Bay to 30 minutes. To inaugurate the new, long-sought alternative to the four-hour, overland haul, Hai Au Aviation has launched a joint promotion with Emeraude Classic Cruises ([www.emeraude-cruises.com](http://www.emeraude-cruises.com)) through December 31. The planes lift off at 10 am from the tarmac at Hanoi's Noi Bai airport and touch down on water at Tuan Chau Marina. From the marina, passengers then ferry to the Emeraude for a noon departure onto Halong Bay.

Hai Au's maiden flight took place on September 9. The airline flies Cessna Caravan C208 EX, manufactured in Wichita, Kansas in the US. The 42-foot long aircraft seats 12 and cruises at 260 km/h under the command of two pilots.



## THE LONG BAR OPENS

A 48-meter bar that vaults the distance between Dong Khoi and Nguyen Hue has opened. The Long @Times Square (Times Square Building, 22 – 36 Nguyen Hue and 57 – 69F Dong Khoi, D1) anchors the ground floor of The Reverie Saigon – set to debut at the end of the year. The bar's lithe, marble-topped counter leaps between the streets in six individual segments, including connecting columns, a setting that's not quite indoors, not quite outdoors. Ten bartenders patrol its length, catering to patrons at 80 bar-front stools and two dozen more at the high cocktail tables beyond. The bar's menu volleys a plethora of Vietnamese and Italian favorites and drink specials.



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# Our Lives as... ball boys

Two teenagers open up about scoring  
their dream jobs, rich customers and Rafael Nadal

INTERVIEWED BY **DOAN HONG HAI, NGUYEN HAI YEN,  
TINA NGO AND PETER DEL MORAL** IMAGE BY **NGOC TRAN**

**Hoang:** I'm 17 years old and I've been working here for four years.

**Duy:** I'm also 17. I've been a ball boy for seven months.

**H:** Our job is pretty simple, we pick up tennis balls for customers who come to play tennis.

**D:** Well, sometimes we do other things like pick up trash and wash the courts, but that's not our main job.

**H:** It's really easy, we walk around the court and use this trash scoop to pick up the balls and put them in that box. [Points to a large cardboard box that used to contain bottled water.] If people need balls, we throw them some. Our boss usually brings out the water and talks about paying for the court. On a normal day, I work about six hours until around 11pm, seven days a week. In the mornings I go to school and come to the courts after that.

**D:** You don't go to school! Don't listen to him. [Laughs] Kids from poor families like us, they don't go to school. I stopped going to school my first year of high school.

**H:** Well anyway, tennis is my favorite subject. [Laughs] We play tennis together when people aren't here, just for fun. We get paid VND1.5 million per month so we buy our own food from local restaurants. The rest of my money I spend on going out.

**D:** Me, after work, I go home and sleep. Right now, I live with my mother and father in Hanoi, but our home village in Thai Nguyen is about 80km north of here.

**H:** I don't go back to my village Phu Tho too often. It's a four-hour drive from here, so I stay with family in Hanoi. They're just happy that I've been able to get a job and make a living at the tennis courts.

**D:** I normally work eight hours a day and

the rest of the time I play. There aren't a lot of customers early in the day because it's too hot, so I come here and play, sleep, watch TV, or eat. There's nothing else to do. Then from 2pm to 10pm the courts are always busy and we have to work the entire time. Our customers are pretty wealthy. It costs them VND60,000 for one hour per person to play, and then they have to pay for water and for us ball boys. So for everything, it's going to come to about VND100,000 per person. Our customers all drive nice cars and motorbikes, though, so it's not like it's expensive for them. Most of the customers are older men and they come at the same time every week. Sometimes I see foreigners here, like that Indian guy. He's supposed to be the president of some big company. I've never seen a woman play here, though.

**H:** I like working with my friends here. I don't need or want to do anything else. I don't care about going to university. I don't want to do another job. I like tennis and picking up balls. That's what I am going to do for the rest of my life... although it would be nice to live as a professional tennis player. The player I like most is Nadal, but I know I'll never be that good. I just play for fun.

**D:** This job is good for me right now. I don't have any dreams to do anything else. Why would I? Besides, I like the work just fine. We don't need any equipment, we'll never be replaced by some expensive machine, and our customers don't yell at us for not doing our job. I'm happy with how things are now. Well, I guess it would be nice to get paid more. [Laughs] ■

*Additional editing by Gerard Sasges.  
Excerpted from **It's a Living: Work and Life in Vietnam Today**, available on Amazon and iTunes. Or look for the Vietnamese version, **Việt Nam ngày nay: Chuyện mưu sinh** in local bookstores.*









# Full Metal Jackets

Costume designer turns play into work

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

IN THE COSPLAY community, Han Phi Tuyet (also known as “The Armor Man”) is the go-to designer for bespoke one-of-a-kind anime or sci-fi inspired costumes. At just 24, Tuyet has created sets and props for movies, celebrities and online gaming companies. In Vietnam, he is one of only two artists who specialize in historical costumes.

“I started hanging around the IDECAF Nu Cuoi puppetry company when I was 12, mostly as a hobby and for fun,” shares Tuyet. “I used to run straight from school to the theater, eager to jump in and help out. Once I finished high school, I became a full-time staff member. I didn’t have the money or the time for college, and I already knew what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.”

It was during those years at the theater that Tuyet fostered his passion and skill for costume design. He was responsible for designing the puppets and their movements. From there he graduated to making weapons

and armor for Vietnamese opera shows.

“When I started out, I claimed I could make full, functional sets of wearable armor and costumes. Nobody believed me. Some even called me a liar,” he says. “At that time, nobody had the know-how and there were few suitable crafting materials. We used to make boxy suits out of hard plastic or foam. Of course, those are hardly wearable let alone durable enough for filming or realistic enough to viewers. Once I made the first set and showed them the proof, though, then they started believing.”

In early 2013, Tuyet left IDECAF to open his own business, T’Shop (62D An Dương Vương, D8), when he was commissioned by a Hanoi-based PR company to fabricate a pair of Victoria Secret-inspired wings. The piece comprised of thousands of white feathers hand-glued onto a lightweight metal frame, and cost VND9 million. Vietnamese lingerie supermodel Ngoc Trinh wore it to a gaming

event. The project helped launched his solo career. Since then, his works have appeared in marketing campaigns, game conventions, cosplay contests and historical television dramas.

Tuyet’s work is difficult to describe in steps. A costume usually begins with drawing a design and then giving it realistic, wearable elements. “I deal with a lot of fantasy designs in my work. Game companies will come in with an armored suit that, you know, you will have to weld it shut around a model in real life, and then maybe saw it open when the job is done. It’s up to me to make their ideas work.”

Each piece is labor intensive, and sometimes dangerous, taking a minimum of two to three weeks to finish. “We use whole barrels of glue each day. We can’t do it outside since the neighbors can’t stand the fumes or the stink. We do use protective equipment but when you are working 12 hours a day in a tiny room filled with gas from chemical paints and glue, there’s only so much a mask and gloves can do,” says Tuyet.

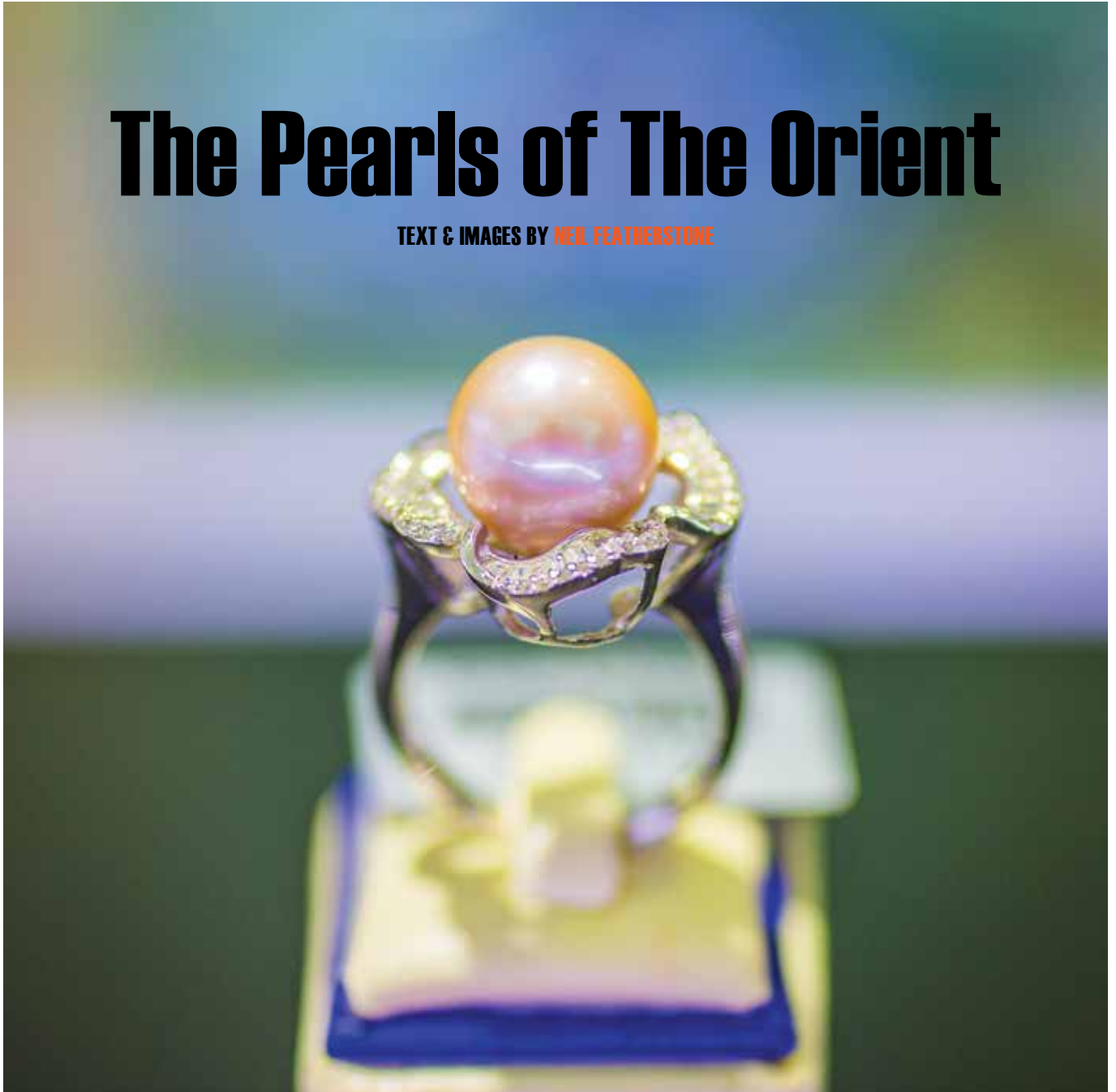
Tuyet charges roughly VND4 million for a costume and averages two to three commissions a month. “The demand is great and if you are good you won’t be starving for a gig, but this is not something for people who are lazy. This is what I do. I’ve known this since I was a kid. I probably will pay for this when I’m older, inhaling all the fumes. But, you know, the feeling of completing a suit of armor and then putting it on and seeing yourself in the skin of some larger than life fantasy character? Priceless.” ■





# The Pearls of The Orient

TEXT & IMAGES BY NEIL FEATHERSTONE



THE MORNING DAWNED sunny and hot for what had been billed as a mysterious journey to a “secret island” somewhere off Phu Quoc, to plumb the depths of the famed pearl farming industry.

As I waited to be collected for the journey I didn’t quite know what to expect when a mini bus pulled up carrying my host for the day and a dozen local girls in *ao dais*. As luck would have it the girls worked for the company, Ngoc Hien Pearl ([www.ngochienpearl.com](http://www.ngochienpearl.com)), at various sales outlets on Phu Quoc and were joining us for a day of staff training.

The adventure entailed a trek of 30 kilometers to the small beachside village of Ganh Dau, our jumping off point to the pearl culturing pontoon. Ganh Dau is a small, poor fishing village far from the tourist trail, whose residents enjoy million dollar views

of a spectacular sweep of ocean. The village is supposedly slated for resumption so that a resort can be built in its place.

Thirty minutes by boat and we arrived at the pearl culturing pontoon, built on stilts a few hundred meters off a picture perfect beach on the “secret island” of Hon Gioi. Around 40 people work on the pontoon and half a dozen live there, with the remainder commuting by boat to nearby villages on the main island each day, a more scenic commute I could not imagine.

Work on the pontoon is hot and cramped. The culturing process requires great concentration and precision, the workers, resembling surgeons, wield their instruments as they make tiny incisions in the oyster’s tissue in order to implant the small white sphere around which the pearl will hopefully develop. Once impregnated, the shells are

closed and packed in layers into nets, called pallets, and are taken a short distance out to sea where they are suspended from buoys to begin the growing process.

Depending on the size of the pearl that is required, the shells remain in suspended animation for between 18 months to six years. Understandably a close eye is kept out for poachers and pallets are periodically retrieved to the pontoon to check on development and to cull any dead oysters. Around 25 percent will not survive.

For lunch we sat on the deck and enjoyed a Vietnamese feast that had been prepared on board, complete with ice cold beer, as we talked and laughed and looked at the beautiful stretch of ocean that was laid out before us on one side and the spectacular stretch of beach on Hon Gioi on the other. ■











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# The Roach Hunter

The unusual job of catching cockroaches to sell as fish bait

TEXT BY **NPD KHANH** IMAGE BY **LE DANG TRINH**

"I DON'T TALK about my job in polite company. Most people gag or stare at me in disbelief when I do," says Nguyen Thi Kim Anh, on her unusual job. As bizarre as it sounds, Kim Anh has been catching and selling cockroaches for the past 15 years, and although she's not the only one in Saigon doing it, at 50, she's the oldest.

Every night, Kim Anh collects the roaches in the thousands, keeping them alive in sealed cans before selling them as fish bait. A batch of 1,000 can fetch from VND90,000 to VND110,000 and in a month, with weather permitting, she can earn twice as much as an office worker.

"It sounds unthinkable but for the last 15 years, everything in my life has revolved around the roaches, both good and bad. They gave me the means to send my kids to school and fix my house. But they also make people stare at me in disgust. And of course, there's always the risk of contracting nasty diseases from them," she says.

Every night Kim Anh's scavenges the sewers, gutters and wet markets in District 11, using durian skin, a cloth soaked in sugarcane juice and a fishing pole as tools to lure the bugs. At sewer openings, she sticks her pole in, waits a couple of minutes and then pulls out a swarm of them. Each sewer nets Kim Anh roughly a hundred roaches. On a good night, she only needs about 20 to 30 of these dips to meet her quota. "It took me awhile to cook up the perfect bait for roaches. Before that, I tried honey, which is too expensive, and melted sugar, which is too sticky and difficult to remove roaches from."

In the beginning, when she was new to

her hunting areas, residents would call the police on her. "A woman skulking around in the dark, in the dirtiest places of the streets and markets every night. I probably look like a thief, or a robber of some kind," says Kim Anh. After a while though, people started to get used to her and most tend to stay out of her way.

At the end of her workday, around 5am, she lays durian skins in strategic areas around the wet markets. The smell, while disgusting to many, attracts the crawlers without fail. Each trap will add an additional hundred or so to Kim Anh's total. "I used to throw up because of the smell. Imagine working with these creepy-crawlies, holding them with your hands, keeping them in your house, in the thousands, sleeping close to them, maybe in the same room while you wait for customers to come with orders."

Few people outside the fishing community know that cockroaches are effective fish bait. For example, the shark catfish (a species native to the Mekong River that can grow up to a meter in length and can be sold at premium prices at restaurants all over the city) prefer roaches to other kinds of bait. During peak fishing season, demand usually exceeds what she can supply on her own so she enlists help from her children and husband to meet the increased orders.


"For years my neighbors have had to put up with me and the stink. I really should thank them every day. Regardless of what people think, this is an honest job that does a lot of good for the city. It provides the fishing industry with a ready supply of cheap bait and exterminates roaches at the same time." ■









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# Reopen for Business

Moving a company from Malaysia to Vietnam and how to replicate it



A member of the Paris Bar, **Hadrien Wolff** has been practicing law in Vietnam for more than seven years, currently as a partner of Audier & Partners based at its HCMC office. Having gained extensive legal experience in the Netherlands and Cambodia, **Marijn Sprokhereef** is an associate at the Hanoi office of the same firm. **Audier & Partners** is an international law firm with presence in Vietnam, Myanmar and Mongolia, providing advice to foreign investors on a broad range of legal issues.

**Dear Hadrien and Marijn,**

**I'm an American who's been living in Malaysia for 15 years now and I currently run a company where we design furniture and lighting. We also produce small consumer items which we sell online and ship from Malaysia to the US. My partner and I are considering a move to Vietnam to set up a similar company. Can you provide us with some advice on how to begin?**

WHAT A PLEASURE to read about your plans of moving to Vietnam. From our own experience we can assure you that it is a wonderful country with many interesting business opportunities. Since you already seem to have some plans in mind, let's get you started right away.

First things first, in Vietnam foreign investors can do business in all sectors that are not prohibited by law. In addition, there are so-called "conditional sectors," such as television and radio broadcasting, telecommunications and transportation. These sectors are open to foreign investment, but stringent conditions may apply, making investment procedures more complicated. Rest assured, however, as your business plans do not fall within one of those categories.

According to the Law on Investment, foreign investors may directly invest in Vietnam through a wholly (100 percent) foreign-owned enterprise or through a joint venture with a Vietnamese partner. To implement your plans, you can start a business together with a local partner who speaks the language, who knows the market and who has experience doing business in Vietnam, but this is not a requirement.

The next thing to consider is the type of company that you would like to establish. Under the Vietnamese Law on Enterprises, there are a number of options available to you, the most popular of which are the limited liability company and the shareholding company. In theory, the private enterprise is another option, but

the risk of establishing such a company is that the owner shall be personally and fully liable for the company's liabilities. The option of opening a branch is limited to certain service sectors only, and hence this option is not available to you.

Once you have decided on the structure of your new company, it is time to obtain the approval of the Vietnamese authorities. Under the Law on Investment, first-time investors need to have a so-called "investment project," which is basically the business plan that you will need to submit to the Department of Planning and Investment of the city, province or industrial zone where you want to invest.

For your business plans, Vietnamese law does not prescribe a minimum amount of capital that you will need to contribute. In practice, however, the authorities will require you to commit a certain amount of capital in order to show your serious intentions. You will also need to provide the exact location of your future investment, which you can prove by submitting a copy of the lease contract, or a letter of intent that you have signed with your future landlord.

As the owner of your new company, you will not be required to apply for a work permit. Instead, you and your partner can both apply for a visa with a duration of up to three years. As from January 1, 2015, the maximum duration will be extended to five years.

If everything goes well, at the end of the line you will be granted an "investment certificate," approving your investment

project and the incorporation of your company at the same time. Once you have duly submitted all documents, it should take around 15 days to receive your investment certificate. Unfortunately, in practice the procedure often takes considerably more time and it is not uncommon that you will be asked to submit additional documents about your plans.

Even though we have only discussed the most important procedures, we hope you understand that establishing a company and implementing an investment project in Vietnam is not overly complicated. Having said that, obtaining practical advice beforehand, as you are already doing now, and carefully preparing your application file can save you a lot of time and frustration. In this regard, please keep in mind that all documents need to be prepared and translated in Vietnamese and that official foreign documents may need to be legalized in your home country on top of that.

Furthermore, it is advisable to request the help of a professional to draft important documents, such as the charter of your future company, a joint venture contract and the lease agreement for your premises. We wish you and your partner a great new adventure in Vietnam!

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

# Grab it and Rock on

What's new in digital transportation, education and gaming



Anh Minh-Do is the editor at [TechInAsia.com](http://TechInAsia.com) for Vietnam, focusing on technology startups, trends and companies. Minh is on the board of [Starhub.vn](http://Starhub.vn) - a database and forum for startups dedicated to the growth of Vietnam's business industry.

## Grab/Motorbike/Taxi

On just about every Ho Chi Minh City street corner there are idle *xe oms* waiting for a fare. Hoping to capitalize on this unused resource is GrabTaxi. The company has started to connect and incorporate *xe oms* into its taxi app. It's a beta project currently only available in Vietnam. I recently tested out the service using the GrabTaxi app but only saw one motorbike driver nearby, as opposed to the 36 taxis in the area. Obviously, GrabTaxi is still trying to source and convince *xe oms* to join the new venture. GrabTaxi usually gives out smartphones to its taxi drivers, so it'll likely be offering the same with the motorbike drivers as an added benefit to join the network.

## Rockit Online

Rockit Online just secured USD500,000 from three investors in Silicon Valley: Learn Capital, John Katzman and Formation 8. The company is an online education website that focuses on teaching Vietnamese children math, science, English and test preparation (IELTS, TOEFL, TOEIC) through live interaction with teachers. The key to its success is to connect middle and high school students with teachers (currently employs 50) in virtual classroom sizes of five or less.

Rockit Online's founders are made locals and Americans, possibly giving them a slight edge on the Vietnamese-only competition already out there. No doubt the Valley investment also lends new perspectives to the team. According to an official statement, Rockit plans to expand throughout Southeast Asia in the near future, which is good news for Learn Capital because it has allotted USD100 million to future investments in education startups across the world and is keen to focus more on Southeast Asia.

In Vietnam, there are only a few online startups that focus on education and that includes DeltaViet, Udemy and Topica (which hosts over 1,000 teachers

on its online certification programs). Alongside these are Zuni, LeeRit, HocMoi and GiapSchool, also trying to break into a potentially profitable market. Statistics show Vietnamese parents spend a significant amount of their income on children's education and the Vietnamese education system is struggling to serve a workforce that cannot keep up with the economy. Therefore, these startups address an urgent systemic issue for Vietnam's potential continued growth.

## OnClan

Appota has unveiled a social mobile gaming app called onClan. Do Tuan Anh, founder and CEO of Appota, says the product is a social mobile gaming platform aimed at gamers who want to interact through their favorite mobile games.

The mobile app, available on Android and iOS, is an evolution of the social gaming platforms that already exist. Game Center from Apple solely exists on the iOS platform and only logs scores, leader boards, and challenges limited to just friends. Google's Play Games system also offers similar limited services. On the other hand, onClan provides the front end interface for gamers to chat with each other, post tutorials, share achievements and recommend new games. It's like Facebook for gamers.

Appota goes direct to the users and solves problems they believe are specific to gamers. One example of onClan's gamer-specific functionality is the availability of creating multiple anonymous accounts. The app allows users to create many names under one account so gamers can play in different games with various aliases. According to Do, this is a feature gamers really want and he believes onClan's methodology will create higher engagement beyond that currently possible. This is in a market worth USD12.3 billion with over 1.2 billion gamers worldwide. By the end of 2015, Appota hopes to have 30 million worldwide users. ■





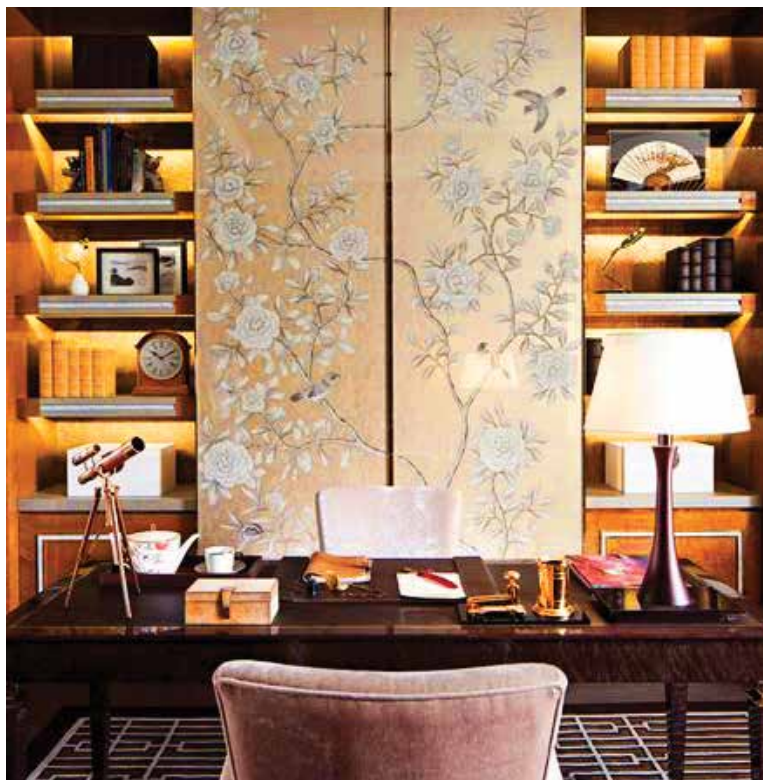


IMAGE BY STEVE LEUNG



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

# Light Reading

Creative lighting solutions can transform your home in many ways

HERE'S A LITTLE secret about light: it's one of the most difficult elements to get right without any training. Color, pattern, line and texture — all of these are elements that you can, at the very least, observe and experiment with in your space. Light is a little different because it's highly technical, closely related to function and dependent on quickly developing technologies - not to mention its impact on the health of your eyes. Despite the high stakes, there's a lot that you can gain from understanding the basics of light as an element of interior design.

## The Basics: Big Three

Ambient light is the general illumination of a space, indirect and soft. Sunlight, overhead lighting and wall lighting are all primary forms of ambient light, but it also includes light reflecting off surfaces, such as a mirror or the metallic finished panel in the Steve Leung office shown above. Accent lighting is where we add drama and emphasis, highlighting an architectural or other design feature: in this case, the beautifully styled built-in bookshelves. Task lighting is what it sounds like — a desk lamp to adequately illuminate what you're writing, pendants over a kitchen island to ensure you can see what you're cutting, bedside lamps for late-night reading.

A great lighting plan layers all three of these lighting types for both visual effect and function. You don't necessarily want to have the same lighting scheme for an intimate dinner party and the cleanup that happens afterwards; in fact, you may not even want the same lighting for an intimate dinner party and a casual family meal.

In addition to layering these major categories of lighting, a beautiful space will also mix locations and angles. Light coming from a single direction, especially when that angle is overhead, produces harsh and unflattering shadows. Have you ever cringed at your own reflection under the harsh lights of a public restroom? Vain creatures that we are, most of us will feel better in a space where we (and our guests) look better. A living space feels more inviting when light is soft and indirect, cast from lower angles.

## Times They Are A-Changin'

A greater global focus on sustainability means that lighting technology is constantly developing. Unfortunately this also produces some complications for the consumer. For decades, incandescent light was the standard for residential design. It produces beautiful, soft light with a warm tone and reasonably good color rendering. The downside? These bulbs are

so inefficient that governments around the world have halted production unless major advances are made in their efficiency.

To put things very simply, your options are these: Halogen lamps produce beautiful light, warm and good at rendering the differences between colors. Unfortunately, they aren't much more efficient than incandescent. Compact fluorescent lamps, or CFLs, are cheap and quite efficient, but the light they produce isn't as nice and they don't render red and orange color tones as well as other sources. LEDs, or light-emitting diodes, are a third option. Although they're extremely energy efficient and built to last (8-10 times the life of a CFL), the technology is relatively new, still developing and expensive.

In addition to the basic types, you'll need to know a few numbers. When purchasing LEDs or CFLs, you'll have the option of choosing the color temperature of your lamps. A range of 2700-3000 is usually specified for residential applications and this produces a warm yellow-white light similar in color to incandescent or halogen. Do be sure to use a consistent color temperature within a single space, as a mixture of yellow and white bulbs is distracting to the eyes. The second number is the Color Rendering Index (CRI), which is measured on a scale up to 100 and reflects the ability of a light source to show the differences among colors. It isn't a perfect scale, but the higher the better for your purchasing power—try to buy lamps with no less than a rating of 80 CRI.

The best option is always to get a professional involved at the beginning of any project, but you can also make improvements to your space as it is. Start by evaluating the different functions and activities that take place in each room of your house. Is the existing lighting adequately serving the task at hand and does it create the right mood? Portable lighting, such as table and floor lamps, can be a quick addition and a spotlight on a piece of art is also easy to do. Adding dimmers, where possible, is an inexpensive change that gives a lot more flexibility. ■

# THE CHAM LEGACY





*An inside look at the Cham, a culture dating back thousands of years. Little is known of the Cham, but their land was one of the more exotic places visited by Marco Polo on his legendary journeys in the late 13th century. Champa no longer exists by that name, but it can still be seen along the central coast of Vietnam, and experienced along with its people at festivals held every year. A few temples, sensuous art and sculptures of Cham gods survive as testimony to this highly developed civilization.*







# THE CHAMPIONS OF CHAMPA

*One family's mission to preserve the Cham culture*

TEXT BY JAMES PHAM / IMAGES BY NEIL FEATHERSTONE

**F**or most Saigonese, the word “Cham” evokes at best an image of the My Son temple complex outside of Hoi An, an iconic symbol of what most people envision as a once noble but extinct classical civilization. Established in the second century AD, the Champa civilization reached its zenith in the ninth century, controlling parts of Central Vietnam down to the Mekong Delta and extending west into present-day Cambodia and Laos.

“My Son tells so many stories — the Champa civilization; the rise and fall of Vietnam, so to speak; the story of French colonialism with French scholars undertaking archaeology there; sections of it were destroyed by the [American] war,” says William Noseworthy of the Department of History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. “In fact, every single place in

Vietnam where I have done research, I saw all these different layers of history and the more I got involved, the more I noticed that one of those layers was Champa civilization and Champa culture.”

Driven south by the Vietnamese kings and east by the Angkorian kings in the 12th to 15th centuries, what’s left of the Champa civilization in Vietnam is now concentrated in Binh Thuan and Ninh Thuan provinces (near Phan Rang) and along the Cambodian border in Tay Ninh and Chau Doc provinces in the form of the roughly 167,000 Cham people, classified as one of Vietnam’s 54 ethnic minorities.

As with many ethnic groups the world over, the Cham are facing what is possibly their biggest threat to date. “I cannot stress enough that there are many pressures of all kinds that are exerted on the Cham communities in Cambodia and Vietnam: history of oppression, minority status, poverty, unequal representation in administration and education gaps... not to mention pressures of globalization and a rapidly changing environment,” concludes William.

However, one family is doing their share to not only preserve but to restore the glory of the Cham.

## THE POET

“The most in-depth and ethnographic reports that exist on the traditional Cham Muslims come from the documents of French colonial officials and scholars,” asserts cultural anthropologist Raymond Scupin. Unfortunately, “these colonial scholars often made judgements of Cham society based on the Western-centred, ethnocentric standards of French society





were taught how to prepare their minds to deal with the challenges of life. Now that children go to public school, many have forgotten the old ways.”

The Chamic language has its own written system, and while there are transcribed as well as Romanized versions, the original is derived from the Indian Brahmi script family, retaining many swirls and flourishes from older forms. While the Vietnamese government arranges four sessions of Cham language studies a week for elementary school children, Inrasara is worried that isn’t enough. “Language is living. Spoken language can be lost very quickly. When I go back to my village, I hear half Vietnamese already. I’m afraid that the younger generation will not treasure this part of our culture.... I know that once the doors have been opened, they cannot be closed, but while we have to accept the new, we can’t lose ourselves in the process.”

**“THE CHAM WERE A  
POWERFUL, EARLY  
PROGRESSIVE  
CIVILIZATION.”**

*Many friends have chastised me for wasting time on Cham poetry / How many can read it? Who will remember it? / But I want to squander my entire life serving it / Even if there is only half a dozen people / Even if there is only one / Even if there is no one.” — Inrasara in “Allegory of the Land”*

### THE WEAVER

A 10-year-old girl waits until her mother steps out to surreptitiously take her place at the loom. She fingers the corals that hang as weights off the loom, the ones that go *clack clack clack* when her mother’s experienced hands pass the shuttle back and forth. “I didn’t know what I was doing,” remembers Inrahani, master weaver and Inrasara’s wife. “I remember making a mess of things and my mom hitting me with the shuttle,” she laughs.

Early Chinese sources suggest that the Cham wove both cotton and silk cloth incorporating multiple colors and patterns. Cham weavers “knew how to mix gold thread into the weft and weave, wrong or right side out, a different pattern on each side” and they “embroidered complicated motifs made more dazzlingly luxurious with gold, silver, pearls, and gemstones”.

Cham weaving is quite literally the thread that binds everyday life. “Red with silver or gold patterns for men. Dark green and other dark colors for women. The colors and patterns are used to show hierarchy. It’s worn by our priests who talk to God. It’s worn by our mothers and fathers when they pass on. So how can it die?” says Inrahani of the importance of this ancient art.

and civilization. Cham culture and society was often depicted by these scholars as inferior and uncivilized as compared with the West,” he writes in *Historical, Ethnographic, and Contemporary Analyses of Cham Muslims in Kampuchea and Vietnam*.

During that time, noted French scholar Paul Mus allegedly said Cham literature could be summed up in just 20 pages. In response, Cham poet Inrasara put together a 1,200 page defense entitled “*Cham Literature – Concepts*,” the product of 20 years of research, for which he won the Indochina History and Culture Center Award from the Sorbonne University in France in 1995.

Born in Ninh Thuan, Inrasara has devoted his life to writing and researching Cham poems and folk tales. He has dozens of books and dictionaries to his name, including *Tagalau*, an annual magazine curated with Cham compositions, collections and research, all with a view of introducing Cham culture and literature to the world. While he also writes on broad world issues, his poetry often reverts back to everyday Cham life and the beauty of the landscape and the people.

*I am a child of the wind blowing across the fields of the narrow Central Region / A child of the fiery sun through all four seasons blazing over dry white sands / A child of the roaring stormy seas / And of the pale sleepless eyes of*

*the tower of Champa. — Inrasara in “A Child of the Earth”*

“The Cham were a powerful, early progressive civilization,” says Inrasara. “When that went away, its heritage passed to the Cham people. We’re different from other minorities because we live in the lowlands, side by side with Kinh [ethnic Vietnamese]. A weaker people would’ve been assimilated,” he says with pride. Long a seafaring people, even their colloquialisms reveal a unique mindset. Where Vietnamese Kinh say “*Troi dat oi!*” (a common exclamation, literally “Heaven and earth!”), the Cham say “*Troi bien oi!*” (“Heaven and sea!”).

Speaking of the inevitable changes that have come from intermarriage with ethnic Vietnamese and Cham people moving away in search of better work and education, Inrasara notes: “The Cham have long lived peaceful, stable, agricultural lives. After [the open door policies of] 1996, all that got destroyed. People brought back to the villages so many foreign things. Yes there was some good, but the evils were not insignificant.... What’s been lost the most is related to our culture and language. In the past, we used our own books to teach our children and grandchildren. Girls were taught how to treat their husbands and children, how to look after the home. Boys



As an adult, Inrahani (Hani) became a teacher and later a school principal working under the Department of Education, but she could never quite let go of her passion for weaving. Moving to Saigon in 1990, Hani sold woven handicrafts as souvenirs. “I came with nothing but my two bare hands,” she recalls of those days when she needed to buy supplies on credit. In the years since, she’s established herself as the face of Cham weaving in Vietnam, set to receive an award later this month for being the country’s largest Cham textile producer.

In establishing her base in My Phuoc in Ninh Thuan Province, Hani has also helped to revive the craft in her village. “It was almost lost, maybe only 10 percent left,” she says. “When I was a girl, almost every family did weaving, even in the evenings. But then many people left the villages. You could work at a factory or be a seller or do manual labor like picking coffee or cashews and make more money. It was only the older or weaker ones who stayed behind to take care of the homes and children. The looms were being discarded for firewood. But I knew that if we called them back, they would come. If they could earn even VND 3 million at home instead of VND 4 million away, people would come back.”

In the last two decades, Hani has made it her mission to create a sustainable weaving business. Her Saigon home is piled high with elephant backpacks and turtle-shaped phone holders — souvenirs ready for export. “You have to use one thing to feed the other,” she says of the modifications she’s had to make, like making the textiles more colorful than the traditional Cham fabrics. She also helped devise mechanical looms to meet the demand. “If we wove everything by hand, we couldn’t make enough. Also, each handmade

weaving is like handwriting — each one is different. But if you’re mass producing, they have to be the same.” Hani has also partnered with Ethnotek, a Saigon-based company which uses locally produced textiles made under fair trade practices in their line of chic travel gear. “A lot of people talked, but my American friend [Ethnotek owner Jake Orak] was the only one who did something about it. They pay us 50 percent upfront which allows us to buy the materials. They are genuinely interested in helping the community.”

With her success Hani hopes to reinvest in the Cham villages. She wants to build a preschool and a library where people can read Cham writings. She wants to build traditional-style Cham houses for visitors to see what Cham family life is like. She wants to restore all 30 Cham weaving motifs, often taken from everyday life, like flowers, a dog’s paw print or rain drops. “We still have the [Cham] towers which are historical artifacts. I also want to make sure our culture survives — our food, our arts, our way of life.”

### THE CULTURAL AMBASSADOR

Moving to Saigon when he was in third grade, Inrajaka, Inrasara and Hani’s eldest of three sons, found it hard to forget his Cham roots. “No matter where I went or who I met, something always pulled me back. Every time I went back and put on Cham clothing, it just felt like me — the moonlit nights, the wide open sky, the smells, the people.” At the age of 30, Jaka decided to move back to Ninh Thuan, recently building his own traditional thatch-roofed home with walls coated with mud and straw, to the surprise of many. “I felt the best way to help preserve the culture had to be to live here and survive here,” he says.

Jaka laments the wave of people who

have left to move to the cities, often returning with a totally different mindset. “They bring back social ills — materialism, fighting, gangs, thievery. For most young people, when they feel like they have the strength to fly, they fly away. I wanted to try and do the opposite: fly back and add my voice to the mix, to make a change to the bad things that have come here.”

More worrying to Jaka, though, is the potential loss of culture. “There are families who feel that teaching the Cham language to their children is not important, that it’s better for business if they learn English or Japanese. The Cham have a saying that ‘those with knowledge sit in the best places and eat first; those without can sit right next to you and you wouldn’t even notice them.’ We used to value knowledge, literature and music above material possessions but now it’s cars and big houses and money,” he says wistfully.

Jaka hopes that his presence back in the village can make a difference. “Sometimes it’s as simple as reminding the children to speak Cham to each other and save Vietnamese for school or writing Internet posts and short plays to show how beautiful the Cham language is,” he says.

In addition to organizing cultural tours to help others understand more about the Cham people and lifestyle, Jaka has also traveled internationally to participate in conferences on minority issues.

“I’ve found beauty in Western culture,” he says of his world travels. “We should enrich each other. But while we have to learn about other cultures, we need to maintain our own. It’s a serious issue because each minority is a different color in the spectrum. If they’re preserved, it makes the world a more colorful place.”



# SEAFARER KINGDOM

*Cham-inspired travel combining culture and comfort*

TEXT & IMAGES BY JAMES PHAM

**K**nown as intrepid seafarers, the Champa Kingdom developed international trade routes that allowed them to accumulate wealth and political power as well as forge ties with other regional kingdoms and with South Asia and China. Together with the Khmer and Dai Viet kingdoms, a maritime route starting from Thang Long, near the Red River in Vietnam's north, spread further northwards up to China, southwards through the Malacca Straits and the South Asian islands and westwards to India and then on to the Persian Gulf, Red Sea and

Mediterranean.

For this reason, port-cities were crucial for the economy including the port of Great Champa (Hoi An), Vijaya (Qui Nhon), Kauthara (Nha Trang), Panduranga (Phan Rang) and Malithit (Phan Thiet). For history buffs looking to combine Champa culture with creature comforts, Vietnam's scenic coastline offers up both in stunning fashion.

## HOI AN, TRA KIEU AND MY SON

The center of the Champa Kingdom from the 2nd to 13th centuries CE, the Thu Bon River Basin (Quang Nam Province) included three

main centers: Hoi An with its river-mouth port as the economic center; Tra Kieu, 20km to the southwest was its political hub and center of royal power; and My Son, the royal religious center, a further 30km inland.

Rediscovered in 1885, the 2km diameter semi-circular valley of My Son contained 72 religious monuments of brick and stone, most dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva. The oldest remains date back to the 7th century, although other evidence suggests that construction on the site began up to 300 years earlier. Monuments continued to be erected until the 13th century, providing a historical record illustrating up to six styles of ancient Champa art, with the golden age considered to be somewhere around the 10th century. While the Cham monuments themselves are quite uniform, featuring red bricks that were hand-rubbed resulting in very thin joints, the decorations remain magnificent.

Listed as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage in 1999, a site visit should begin with the two world-class exhibition halls at its entrance, with excellent, user-friendly exhibits providing background information on the sanctuary's history as well as the evolution of Champa art, including examples of hair styles, *sampots* and sarongs and dances and musical instruments. A sleekly lit board shows the terrain of the site chosen for the sacred Hon Den (Mahapavata) mountain to the south and the sacred Thu Bon (Ganga) River to the north, and the dense group of

## JOURNEY TO DISCOVERY

The tagline for the brand new **Alma Courtyard Hoi An** is "Discover Yourself." More than just a marketing slogan, the spirit of discovery touches every aspect of this stunning property, boutique sister to 5-star Fusion Maia Da Nang and À La Carte Da Nang Beach.

The 145 rooms surround the swoon-worthy courtyard comprised of a picturesque pebble pool and two beautiful swimming pools, one with a soothing water feature. The second jewel of the resort is Alma Courtyard's massive spa complex, Vietnam's largest, with 40 treatment rooms and 90 therapists able to accommodate 70 guests at a time. After a refreshing morning swim and a healthy breakfast, guests can go on one of three spa journeys (cleverly tied into Vietnamese folktales) which includes a steam or sauna, a 50-minute massage, tai chi or still relaxation in the studio and meditation or a relaxing hot soak in the cavernous Silent Sanctuary. Best of all, this 90-minute spa journey is included in the room rate for each day of stay. A la carte treatments are also available.

For those wanting to indulge the spirit as well as the soul, there is the Blue Bottle Bar Cafe. The eclectic menu reflects the theme: vintage blue apothecary bottles serving up magical concoctions flavored with local ingredients like the Jasmine Bud (VND120,000), sake infused with lychee and lotus flower buds served with lychee juice. Next door, the four show kitchens in the Four Plates restaurant serve up innovative Vietnamese, Japanese, Italian and grilled dishes like edamame salsa with olives, lemon and parsley (VND60,000) and prawn salad with roasted pumpkin and goat's cheese (VND160,000). The beautifully laid-out breakfast buffet (also included) features gorgeous fresh juices, freshly made yogurt (perfect with the to-die-for homemade compote of passion fruit, dragonfruit, pineapple and watermelon), irresistibly cute Hoi An mini banh mi sandwiches and a full hot breakfast station to fuel you up for a day of exploring Hoi An's Old Quarter, or simply lounging by the pool.

Just a short bicycle ride away from the Old Town of Hoi An, or a 10-minute taxi ride to Cua Dai Beach, Alma Courtyard is truly a sanctuary of discovery.

**Doubles start at USD101++, valid from Dec 20, 2014 to March 31, 2015 including breakfast, daily 90-minute spa journey and use of bicycles. For more, visit [www.almacourtyardhoian.com](http://www.almacourtyardhoian.com) or phone (+84) 510 3666 888.**



temples in which each building is given a letter/number designation.

While touring the site, look for the two main representations of Shiva found either in human kingly form or as the ubiquitous linga (a phallic symbol) mounted inside a square yoni, its female counterpart. Another theme to notice is the zoomorphological deities in the carvings, including the comically menacing lion-faced *makara* guardians and the elephant-headed Ganeshas combining the strength of an elephant and the intelligence of man. There is also a small cultural building which hosts a 20-minute dance and music show (included in the ticket price) at 10:30am. Cham musicians play drums and flutes and the show concludes with a Vegas-style sequined adaptation of the graceful, supernatural apsara dancers immortalized in stone.

The relatively small size of the complex makes for an easy half-day trip just an hour's drive from Hoi An. All the temple groupings are connected by scenic, fairly level brick paths that wind their way through beautiful, thick forests.

Hoi An Travel offers both half- and full-day private tours to the My Son Sanctuary including guide and driver. My guide for the day has been traveling to the site for more than 20 years and it was fascinating to hear how the area has developed before and after its becoming a World Heritage Site. Most groups will head directly to the B, C, D grouping which is the most impressive,

but having my own guide meant we were able to stay well and clear away from the larger tour groups and for the most part, had the sites to ourselves. On the way back, we also made an unscheduled stop at the Museum of Sa Huynh – Champa Culture, a curiously large building with 2,000+ year old artifacts from the Sa Huynh culture, one that pre-dates even the Champa Kingdom and which occupied some of the same territory. It's not yet on the tourist trail, evidenced by the sleeping guard we had to awaken to unlock the door. The tour also includes lunch at the Tra Que village just outside of Hoi An, with its colorful organic farms contributing to a delicious meal of regional specialties including *tom huu*, bite-sized packets of river shrimp and pork bundled in fresh microgreens bursting with flavor. Tours start at VND925,000 per person for groups of three to four and includes air-conditioned transport, English-speaking guide, entrance fees and lunch. For more, visit [www.hoiantravel.com](http://www.hoiantravel.com).

### DA NANG MUSEUM OF CHAM SCULPTURE

Housing approximately 400 works, the Da Nang Museum of Cham Sculpture is home to the finest collection of Cham sculpture anywhere in the world. Conveniently situated right on the city-side of Dragon Bridge over the Han River, the museum reportedly started off as an abandoned sculpture garden of sorts. It's said that a French resident in Quang Nam deposited Cham sculptures he acquired from his

travels here and local residents added to it, ostensibly due to some kind of superstition against having Cham artifacts on their property. This impromptu sculpture garden then formed the core of the first museum's collection, established in 1919 by Henri Parmentier. The building itself is quite beautiful with original floor tiles in place. Look for some of the subtle architectural elements, like the stylized lotus-like mouldings that are drawn from Cham art.

The museum is divided into a series of rooms named after the area where the works were found: My Son, Tra Kieu, Dong Duong, etc. Additionally, decorative design, the shape of hair curls, costumes, etc. help classify the various styles. The museum received a 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> extension, much of it currently empty, but museum officials assured me they have much more in storage that will be rolled out in the next year as part of the celebrations around the museum's 100th anniversary (commemorating the year that an agreement was signed to establish the museum, instead of when it was actually opened). There are also plans to address some unfortunate water damage and on-going construction in some of the galleries.

Nevertheless, each room is very well documented with additional placards to explain key pieces. Careful observers will find it fascinating to see the influences visible in the sculptures, for example the horse-riding polo players (Quang Tri gallery), a Cham interpretation of a sport popular in



## OASIS OF PEACE

Ideally situated with Cua Dai Beach on one side and the De Vong River on the other, **Hoi An Beach Resort** is truly the best of both worlds. The resort's 121 rooms are spread out in clusters of low-lying buildings, designed to resemble a Vietnamese riverside village amidst immaculately landscaped gardens. Life as it plays out on the river is nature's very own television. From your river view balcony, watch ducks and small rowboats go silently by, fishermen casting their circular nets as they have done for centuries. Or go out on one of the resort's kayaks (with or without a guide) and explore the peaceful river yourself, with a fishing rod as company. In the evenings, colorful floating lanterns are released on the river, recreating the magic of Old Hoi An.

Hoi An Beach Resort is all about comfortable elegance. Rooms are generously sized with garden, river or sea views. Wake up to local specialties like banh nam, steamed rice flour rolls stuffed with shrimp, and international favorites at the included breakfast buffet, taken on the Cua Dai Restaurant's waterfront balcony. Or indulge yourself with a traditional Vietnamese or Balinese massage, one of the many treatments on offer at the Waterlily Spa, the perfect complement to a day spent lazing around the resort's two pools, one a drool-worthy infinity pool with sweeping views of the De Vong River.

For the active traveler, the resort organizes complimentary tai chi sessions on its own private beach. A games room, mini-library and fitness center ensure there'll always be something to do. Or take one of the resort's many complimentary shuttle buses on the short 4km trip to Hoi An Ancient Town for some shopping and sightseeing or to see the Old Quarter lit up by colorful lanterns. A host of day trips can also be organized, including a visit to the spectacular Cham towers of My Son.

Available now to the end of the year, the **Discovery Package** features two nights in a Garden View Deluxe room including buffet breakfast, a candlelit set dinner for two, one-way transfer to/from Da Nang International Airport, a 30-minute Oriental Foot Massage for two, a half-day private tour to My Son including lunch, and much more for just VND3.6m++ per person. Spa lovers may opt for the **Vietnamese Therapy Experience**: two nights in a Garden View Deluxe room including buffet breakfast, welcome fruit basket and 60-minute Vietnamese Traditional Massage for two at the Waterlily Spa for just VND2.42m++ per person. For more, visit [www.hoianbeachresort.com.vn](http://www.hoianbeachresort.com.vn) or phone (+84) 510 392 7011.







## MAX RELAX

**Fusion Maia Da Nang**, routinely rated Da Nang's top resort, is all about creating the ideal environment in which to relax. Each of its one to three bedroom villas comes with a completely private garden courtyard and swimming pool. Unlike the towering neighboring behemoths, Fusion Maia Da Nang revels in understated elegance with no villa taller than the tree line, giving each space a luxuriously secluded feel. At Asia's first all spa inclusive resort, guests are guaranteed at least two treatments per day at no extra cost and can book more, space pending. Choose from full body treatments like the Fusion signature massage infusing Eastern healing and holistic aromatherapy to essential care treatments to rejuvenating facials, scrubs and polishes. No alarm clocks need be set with the resort's anytime, anywhere gourmet breakfast which can be taken in either of the resort's two dining venues, in the Tonic lounge bar while surfing the internet on provided iPads, in your room or even in the Fusion Café in Hoi An, where an included shuttle operates four times a day. Complimentary bicycles make it easy for guests to explore the World Heritage-listed town.

The Maia experience focuses on wellness, and a daily program encourages balanced, natural living, with included yoga and tai chi classes throughout the day either on the beachfront deck or in the yoga studio. Classes follow daily themes like Eating Well (nutrition) and Open Your Mind (intellect), ensuring guests will see plenty of variety throughout the week. Additional off-site options (minimal charge) include tai chi on Marble Mountain, cycling in a coconut grove and a visit to a local Buddhist orphanage. In addition to the spa treatments, guests can while away the day on the beach, around the stunning infinity pool, by a second waterfall pool in the lush gardens of Maia Spa, or spend quiet moments in the cozy library.

While healthy meals like the Spa Fusion all-day breakfast with Asian infused egg white omelet and a fresh greens shooter are available along with juicing or raw food items, hedonists will definitely not go hungry with options like warm beef and fresh mustard sprout pizzas or Asian lasagna of pork belly layered between crisp wonton sheets.

Whatever you want out of your stay – improved wellness, limitless pampering, a luxe beach getaway – Fusion Maia Da Nang invites you to try it all.

**Doubles start at USD270++, valid until December 20, 2014 and include any time or place gourmet breakfast, two guaranteed daily spa treatments, scheduled shuttle bus to explore Hoi An and more. For more, visit [www.fusionmaidanang.com](http://www.fusionmaidanang.com) or phone (+84) 511 3967 999.**





**“WE VALUE KINGS  
THAT WERE NOT  
POWERFUL AND  
RICH BUT POWERFUL  
AND USEFUL, THE  
ONES THAT HELPED  
THE PEOPLE.”**

India at the time or the seated bodhisattva, a wonderfully detailed deity found at Dong Duong, the largest known Buddhist monastery in Champa. The My Son gallery with its life-sized guardians and the Tra Kieu gallery with its massive pedestal featuring a cistern, lingam and bas relief friezes as well as a gorgeously intact apsara dancer forever captured in graceful mid-dance are soaring highlights of all the collections.

The museum is open daily from 7am to 5:30pm. Admission is VND40,000. Budget an hour to 1.5 hours for a leisurely visit.

Guided tours for groups of five or more are available in English and Vietnamese from 8am - 10am and 2pm - 4:30pm. It's worthwhile to collect other visitors to make your own group of five.

#### **KATE FESTIVAL, PHAN RANG**

The largest of all Cham festivals is Kate (pronounced “kah-tay”), held yearly in October just outside of Phan Rang (the dates are based on a lunar calendar, so change every year). While it's often mis-called the Cham New Year, it's primarily religious in significance, a time of year to return to the Cham towers to pay homage to the deified Champa kings of old. “We value kings that were not powerful and rich but powerful and useful, the ones that helped the people,” says Cham writer, Inrajaka.

The first day of the ceremony includes an opening dance and musical performance in the blazing midday sun at the local soccer stadium in Huu Duc, just outside of Phan Rang. Thousands turn out for the procession that includes priests, drummers and villagers. At the stadium, crowds pack the bleachers and the perimeter of the field as young girls in colorful dress perform a fan dance that lasts just under an hour, marking the opening of Kate. As Kate is a time when many return to their hometowns, it takes on a festive quality as families and friends get together for much drinking and storytelling. This year, a soccer game featuring local clubs and more dancing and music followed the official ceremony.

On the second day, the crowds make their way, laden down with offerings, to the well-preserved temple of Po Klaung Garai, three brick towers set on a hillside. Legend has it that this king won a battle against invading Khmer forces by suggesting a tower-building contest instead of fighting, with the temple bearing his name evidence of his peaceful victory. By 7:30am, dancers and musicians open the ceremony. If you want a good vantage point, you'll have to arrive early as the tiny performance area fills up quickly. The priests then perform a ritual of bathing of the statue of the king and changing its raiment. Very few can enter the small space, with most families staking out a patch of ground on the surrounding hillside to lay out offerings of food which are later eaten on site or brought to a second nearby tower, Po Rome, or even down to the beach to share with family and friends.

While the Cham people are extremely hospitable, few outsiders attend Kate other than photographers and invited friends. Westerners are few and far between, although the ones that do attend are warmly welcomed. Even Vietnamese in nearby Phan Rang don't usually go. If you do attend, wear plenty of sunscreen and bring a hat as there is not much shade where the events are held. For the full cultural experience, contact Inrajaka at [inrajaka@gmail.com](mailto:inrajaka@gmail.com) or visit his Vietnamese-language site at [www.jakatours.com](http://www.jakatours.com).



## **RESTFUL LUXURY IN PHAN THIET**

One of the most scenic Cham sites in all of Vietnam is the Poshanu Towers, built in the late 8th to early 9th century, what many consider to be the peak in Cham art and sculpture. Set on a hillside overlooking Phan Thiet and its stunning coastline, the three towers reflect Hindu influences, with the main tower dedicated to Shiva, one of the three main Hindu gods. Look inside for a lovely altar featuring a Linga-Yoni representing life.

Pair a sunset visit to these carefully maintained towers with a stay at the elegantly comfortable **Victoria Phan Thiet Beach Resort & Spa**. Each thatched roof bungalow boasts a large bathroom, open-air shower and a spacious private terrace, all set amidst expansive, lush tropical gardens, making the resort the perfect base from which to explore Phan Thiet's famed sand dunes, quaint fishing village and endless scenic beaches and then come home to restful luxury. Guests can choose from spacious garden view, beach front or pool villas featuring beach-friendly terra cotta floors and the colonial-chic décor for which Victoria properties are known as well as enjoy the resort's many first-class amenities which include two swimming pools (one a gorgeous infinity pool with panoramic sea views), complimentary wifi, bicycles and kayaks, free sunscreen at the pool, volleyball, a fitness centre and more.

Families will especially appreciate the generously sized Family Bungalows or can splurge on the Family Pool Villa featuring an incredible array of amenities: two master bedrooms, two children's bedrooms, a guest room and its own private swimming pool. A fully staffed Kids Club (open 9am to 10pm), kids' lunch and dinner menu, pony rides and available babysitting services ensure parents will be able to spend some alone time as well.

The resort's Spa Village (open daily from 9am to 9pm) is ready to further pamper you with a large selection of massages, beauty care, manicures and pedicures. Guests can also make use of the saunas and the outdoor Jacuzzi, cooled by ocean breezes with the sand and waves just steps away.

Whether your idea of the perfect beach getaway is doing nothing or doing everything, **Victoria Phan Thiet Beach Resort & Spa** is sure to delight.

For more, visit [www.victoriahotels.asia](http://www.victoriahotels.asia) or phone (+84) 62 381 3000.



# NARRATIVE DANCE

*An inside look at a Cham New Year celebration*

TEXT BY HO HUU LUC / TRANSLATION BY NPD KHANH / IMAGES BY INRA JAYA



When people speak about Cham, the first thing that comes to mind is the Kate festival. One among Vietnam's five most important cultural events, it's celebrated by the nearly 200,000 Cham ethnic minority people in Vietnam and countless tourists and photographers drawn in by its vibrant beauty. But the Cham also hold many other festivals and rites which, while smaller and lesser-known than the Kate festival, are of no less importance. These are the formal ceremonials steeped in Cham culture and history that few outsiders have had the privilege to witness.

Cham society is a matriarchal one, where the mother figure and the force of natural procreation lay the foundations for Cham culture and religion. Opposing symbols such as yin and yang or male and female can be found in all aspects of Cham life, from their clothing and architecture to normal everyday objects, even in their poetry and cultural rituals. These symbols are unique to the Cham, one among the last representatives of their indigenous heritage.

The Cham worship Po Inu Nagar (The Sky Mother), the original matriarch who gave birth to their people. The annual Kate festival is in her honor. During Kate, Cham women dress in beautiful, elaborate costumes to join the procession in Po Inu Nagar's name as a way to celebrate and commemorate the many merits Po Inu Nagar granted the Cham.

**"TO THIS DAY, CHAM PARENTS STILL TEACH THEIR CHILDREN HOW TO READ ONG-KA-ING'S DANCES AND COMPREHEND THE GREAT LABORS OF THEIR ANCESTORS."**

Aside from Kate, the Cham also hold Rija Nugar (Cham New Year). The Cham calendar begins in around April of the lunar calendar. During this time, the Cham hold the Rija Nugar to commemorate past ancestral heroes with great deeds. Rija Nugar has a second meaning, that being to wash away all unclean things from their *palei* (village) and prepare oneself for a good future.

During the Rija Nugar celebrations, the Cham hold a specific ceremony where Ong-



Ka-Ing, the Cham shaman, plays the central figure, performing ritualistic dances for the community. During the ceremony, Ong-Ka-Ing is dressed in *aw lah*, a garment made from sewing six pieces of cloth together, two forming the back, two forming the front, and the last two forming the sleeves and shoulders. This unique sewing technique was developed in a time when looms could not be used on any piece of cloth exceeding one meter in length. The *aw lah* is short, only coming down to the buttocks, and it has two slits on the side of about 20 centimeters in length. The front of the *aw lah* has a slit, buttons and two pockets while a stand-up collar hugs the neck of the wearer. *Aw lah* is usually in color blocks of white, red, blue, and yellow, with no patterns. Ong-Ka-Ing wears a turban with red tassels like those worn by Brahman and Muslim priests.

Once the music starts, Ong-Ka-Ing starts his performance in honor of various Po Cham. The dance movements hold specific messages only known to the Cham. To this day, Cham parents still teach their children how to read Ong-Ka-Ing's dances and comprehend the great labors of their ancestors.

### THERE ARE FOUR MAIN DANCE STORIES PERFORMED IN RIJA NUGAR:

#### 1) *Praise of Po Riyak: Wah ge dance with*

#### *fan and scarf*

Po Riyak was born in Bicom village (now Binh Thuan province). As Po Riyak grew up, he traveled to Malaysia to further his studies, hoping to come back and help his homeland once he was finished. When he was away, he heard word of an invasion and attempted to return. During the sea journey back, a storm sunk the entire boat and everyone on board perished. In memory of Po Riyak, the villagers of a nearby coastal town built a temple in his name, honoring him as the deity of the waves symbolizing the Cham people's patriotic love.

#### 2) *Praise of Po Tang Ahok: Kacek dance with a sugarcane to symbolize Po Tang Ahok's paddle*

Po Tang Ahok was a great general of the ancient Champa fleet. His entire life was spent on the sea and in battle to keep his homeland free of invaders. His life was often spent in loneliness with only the sea and his paddle as companions. Stories tell that at times, even his trusty paddle broke under his will.

#### 3) *Praise of Po Nai: Tha Gai dance*

Nai Tanya was a princess of Panduranga. When she was young, Nai Tanya traveled extensively to learn about the heart of her people. As a result, she was given the name Nai Rah Nugar. As she slowly became

an adult, Nai Tanya fell in love with Kei Kamao, a handsome and talented Roglai man. However, since their families were of two different social classes and prestige, the relationship was broken off and Nai Tanya went into seclusion in the mountains. The dance is performed to the sound of a Khan Nhjram instrument, and with a plate of fruit and cakes as an offering to Po Nai.

#### 4) *Praise of Po Hanim Par: Hanim Par and Jawa Kapo dance*

Po Hanim was a talented army general. Through many battles, he kept his homeland free of war and strife. He was famous for his weapon, a rattan switch. Part of the dance involves walking through fire to show Po Hanim's will to surpass all obstacles and claim victory.

Ong-Ka-Ing's dances during the Rija Nugar are accompanied by three main Cham musical instruments – the *ginang* drum, *baranang* drum and *saranai* clarinet – as well as other gongs and bells.

Like Tet to the Vietnamese, Rija Nugar marks the end and the beginning, and a badly performed Rija Nugar may mean misfortune and disaster for the coming year for an entire village. Few outsiders are allowed the privilege of entrance into a Rija Nugar and as a result, even fewer know of its cultural and historical significance.





# HOUSING HISTORY

*How the Cham museum in Danang was founded*

TEXT BY PASCAL BOURDEAUX

**T**he Da Nang Museum of Cham Sculpture houses the largest collection of Cham artifacts in the world. The museum was established at the end of the 19th century by the Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient (EFEO), displaying around 300 sandstone and terracotta sculptures gathered from mostly Central Vietnam. The building itself was designed by two French architects, Delaval and Auclair, imitating designs and features specific to Champa towers and temples.

EFEO's mission was to preserve the historic monuments of French Indochina, and the only way to do this was to create museums. This task was therefore written from the start into the school's program. From the school's earliest years of activity, the establishment of the archeological inventory of Indochina and the systematic clearing of large groups of monuments such as My Son and Dong Duong in Champa provided a steady supply of pieces to the collections. Objects brought to light when the monuments were cleaned up and restored – mostly statues and inscriptions – had to find a home if they could not be protected on-site. The first half of the 19th century saw eight

museums founded and managed by EFEO, all of which are still functioning today, including the Da Nang Museum of Cham Sculpture, formerly the Musée Henri Parmentier.

The first collection was accumulated between 1885 and 1892 by Charles Lemire, a French resident of Quang Nam. The second collection of statues was added by Camille Paris, a former post office official who became a colonist and then a corresponding member of the school. The two collections were displayed at Le Jardin de Tourane on a small hill by the Han River. They were then augmented by contributions from Fathers Cadière and Durand, and from Prosper Odend'hal. From 1900, further material came from the surveying and excavations conducted by the school's archeological department, directed by Henri Parmentier. However, the pieces were showing signs of damage and deterioration caused by visitors touching them – and negotiations to obtain a building from the government to protect the artifacts proved fruitless.

Finally, the school used its own funds to finance the construction of a building, designed by Parmentier, that was worthy of the collections it was to house. Although

construction was finished in 1916, its inauguration did not take place until the end of the First World War. The objects, which were kept in EFEO's museum in Saigon until after the war, were then transferred there. Parmentier drew up the first catalogue, which was published in the *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* (BEFEO) in 1919.

Dr. Albert Sallet, who was an amateur collector and a corresponding member of the EFEO, was a generous donor to the collections, and was in charge of their conservation between 1926 and 1931. The museum also profited from expeditions made by Jean-Yves Claeys, an architect and the new Head of the EFEO Archeological Service, to Thap Mam in 1934 and to Tra Kieu in 1937. Because of Claeys, the objects were classified more rigorously by site (and therefore by period).

In 1936 Emperor Bao Dai inaugurated the greatly enlarged building and named it Musée Henri Parmentier. Today it has been enriched by new additions and is now known as the Da Nang Museum of Cham Sculpture. A catalogue was published in 1997 in collaboration with the EFEO. The Cham sculpture exhibition (*Trésor du Vietnam, l'Art du Champa*) held in Paris at the Musée Guimet in 2005, brought together statues from the Guimet and Da Nang museums. The latter were recently renovated: a studio to restore statues was created in 2001 with the help of the EFEO and the personnel of the National Museum of Phnom Penh. Many pedestals and sculptures collected there were restored. From 2005, other artifacts came from Dong Duong and My Son sites to be repaired. At the same time, the western wing of the museum was extended. All this work was shown during a special exhibition at the museum. Then from 2006 to 2009, a new restoration campaign aimed to set up new spaces dedicated to the sculptures of the My Son and Dong Duong sites.

In a few months, Da Nang will celebrate the museum's centennial anniversary.

To learn more about the history of the museum, read *A Century in Asia, The History of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient 1898-2006*, published by EFEO.

# MBENG KATE

## *A disappearing tradition*

TEXT BY WILLIAM B. NOSEWORTHY / IMAGE BY INRA JAYA

**H**eld in September/October, the *Mbeng Kate* (the seventh month of the lunar calendar), or more commonly, but perhaps inaccurately, known as the Kate Festival, is one of the most important events on the Cham calendar. While *Mbeng Kate* is often billed as a festival for tourist purposes, its religious roots lie deep in the history of the classical Champa civilization, or perhaps even before that.

The ceremony is comprised of two parts, each lasting two days: *Mbeng Muk Kei* and *Kate*. *Mbeng Muk Kei*, or 'ancestor spirit worship' in the Cham language, is likely derived from the Austronesian Southeast Asian culture, and has elements similar to Thai, Khmer and Vietnamese traditions of ancestor worship. By contrast, *Kate*, probably derived from *Kartika*, a Sanskrit name for the eighth month in the Hindu saka solar calendar, is most likely a Southeast Asian localization of Indic-Hindu culture.

Although *Kate* is taken to be a "Cham ceremony" today, representatives from

the Roglai peoples are considered crucial to *Kate* ceremonies as they are charged with the maintenance of *aw po*: sacred clothing that is used to dress the images of local Champa deities worshipped during *Kate*. The process of exchange whereby the Roglai bring ritualistic clothing and present it to *Ahier* Brahmanist-influenced priests of the Cham people closely parallels another ceremony common throughout Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka: *Kathina*. *Kathina* is a Theravada Buddhist festival that occurs at the end of the rainy season, and the gift of clothing to Buddhist monks from lay people is supposed to have its origins in Gautama Buddha's own gift of robes to the monks as a symbol of generosity. Given the uncanny similarities between the two rituals, it is possible that the Buddha's gift to the monastics had pre-Buddhist precedents. Deeper knowledge of *Kate* therefore is likely to reveal a better understanding of some of the most important religious ceremonies throughout the world.

The first day of *Kate* takes place in small towns and villages that have ancestral Indic deities tied to them. The smaller ceremonies rely strongly upon the roles of the Cham *Ahier* priests, who are responsible for opening the doors to local temples, and the *Ong Kadhar*, who are charged with playing the *kanyi* and chanting *damnu* hymns to recount the histories of the gods and goddesses and invite them to be present and bless the Cham and Roglai peoples, as well as any visitors who may be invited to attend. During these ceremonies, visitors may take special note of *Muk Pajao* shamaness-like figures who invite ancestral spirits to take possession of their bodies and bless the living, as well as musical

performances featuring drums and double-reed clarinet-like instruments.

On the second day, *Kate di bimong/kalan*, communities of Cham and Roglai ancestry are obligated to visit their clan's tower, regardless of their religion. Today the most active towers are Po Rome (Hau Sanh in Vietnamese), Po Dam (Tuy Tinh), Po Sah Inu (Phan Ri) and Po Klaong Garai (Phan Rang) in Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan provinces. However, cultural historians believe that at one time all Champa towers were used for this purpose. Nevertheless, the ceremonies demonstrate that these are not just 'vestiges' as they are so often described, but, rather, they are active religious sites. For this reason, it is clear that *Kate di bimong* is not just a 'Hindu Ahier-Cham' holiday, as it is so often portrayed.

The third day of *Kate* is the beginning of *Mbeng Muk Kei* in the sense that it is a return to the hometown for celebration and worship. It is typically referred to as *Mbeng Kate di Palei* in the Cham language. During this day, each hometown or village that has their own temple, or *danaok*, will gather in that space in the morning. The most central figures during these ceremonies are the *Po Adhia*, *Camanei* and *Ong Kadhar* priests as well as the *Muk Pajao* priestess. Finally, the last day, *Mbeng Muk Kei* is celebrated in the home and focuses on the family.

As with any religious ceremony, *Mbeng Kate* has changed over time. The celebration that was once reputedly held over one full month during the era of the Champa civilization has been shortened to a few days. The ceremony will likely get even shorter still if there are no provisions put in place for employers to allow young Cham and Roglai to return to their households. This is increasingly becoming a problem for urbanized Cham and Roglai youth, especially those who move away from Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan provinces to Ho Chi Minh City and other urban areas where there is less knowledge of Cham culture and traditions. Second, many aspects of the ceremonies are changing to sell *Mbeng Kate* to tourists as a festival. All too frequently, decisions are made at the provincial level, without consulting enough members of the Cham community. This has led to a consolidation of 'festival celebrations' into the town of *Palei Hamu Tanran*, known as *Huu Duc* in Vietnamese, and the city of Phan Rang. Economic stress has prevented members of the Roglai communities from joining in certain areas. The push 'to be understood' by the majority of Vietnamese has forced many young Cham people to sell the occasion as a form of Tet leading to the misconception that *Mbeng Kate* is a Cham New Year, which is not the case. It is, however, one of the largest ceremonies of the Cham calendar year and should be respected and enjoyed as such by the lucky visitors who are invited to join.

**BIO:** William B. Noseworthy is a PhD candidate in History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His minor is in Diaspora History and Literature. Noseworthy additionally holds a Masters of Arts in History and a Bachelors of Arts in History and Religion with minors in East Asian Studies and Jewish Studies. ■





# Wine & Dine

IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN



*La Fiesta Parfait*  
La Fiesta

# Head for the Tex-Mex Border

For anyone who has ever woken up in the middle of the night craving enchiladas

TEXT BY MICHAEL ARNOLD IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN



Lamb shoulder tacos

DANG THI NHU is one of Saigon's rare quiet streets; a place where no one goes. It's hard to say why, considering that it's only a 60-second walk from one of the busiest intersections in the inner city – and being just opposite Ben Thanh Market, it's really easy to find. Maybe no one's going to lose their way hunting it down, but if you were opening what's likely to become one of Ho Chi Minh City's best-loved international restaurants, you'd have to be either substantially confused or a particular visionary to choose this as your venue.

My money's on the latter, given that husband-and-wife restaurateurs Scott Marquis and Le Duc have done all this before. In late 2011, the couple took a tired karaoke lounge in a small hotel on nowhere street in District 7 and turned it into Scott and Binh's, a successful go-to venue for Western comfort food. **La Fiesta** (33 Dang Thi Nhu, D1 | 094 429 1697), focusing exclusively on the Tex-Mex cuisine that has proved to be Scott & Binh's most requested menu category since their annual *Cinco de Mayo* promotions began a few years back, is about to see Dang Thi Nhu get busy.

Quietly fronting the restaurant since its understated opening last month, Scott is waiting with the true patience of a chef for this new venue to start sizzling – a sensibility that has characterized his whole business approach. Putting La Fiesta together has been pure culinary work – finding the right ingredients, mixing them all together in the proper quantities and in the correct sequence and then deciding on the perfect moment to turn up the heat. Gradually, the concept unfolded with a focus on those elements that worked best with Scott & Binh's, including a rock-solid social networking strategy: the couple opened a Facebook page for the venue a full six months before opening night, which will become their primary point of contact for deliveries later on.

La Fiesta's menu reads like a friendly letter from the cook to the customer that opens with a manifesto and then almost obsessively runs through the list of ingredients for every item on offer. But that's to the advantage of the diner – in being such a thoroughly well-planned piece, La Fiesta's already running smooth, and the dishes seem like old favorites from the first bite.

It's all Tex-Mex: "This is *not* a Mexican restaurant," emphasizes Scott. "Real Mexican food is fairly simple. All the cheese, the sour cream and all that stuff, that's your Tex-Mex – that's the American influence on it. So this is a fairly traditional version of what you'd see in America, except almost all of the ingredients are made here. All of our corn products come from Saigon Tacos. Only the cheese is imported, the sour cream is imported, the lamb shoulder and the beef cheeks are imported. Other than that, everything's local. I make everything else."

Annoyingly, reviewing La Fiesta's menu proves frustrating – it's so tasty that by the time I get to thinking about the flavors and textures of each item, I find I've already wolfed down the entire dish. Fortunately, my enthusiasm is kept in check by the sheer proportions on the plate. It would probably be unfair of me to recommend that diners avoid ordering a starter or only get a main – but you do need to be warned about the size of the servings. Best advice – come to La Fiesta really, really hungry and be prepared to eat large.

We couldn't hold back from starting out





**FROM TOP:** Nachos supreme, Queso mac & cheese, Huevos rancheros verde



with the nachos supreme (VND125,000) with a selection of sauces that made an orchestra out of a relatively simple dish – and which would have satisfied us for the night had there not been more to come. We followed the initial crunch with a softer chipotle lamb taco dish (VND195,000) that was surprisingly tender, and we're not the first to discover it – Scott claims the lamb tacos and enchiladas have already emerged as their best-selling menu items. This didn't come as a surprise; the meat is easily the best lamb I've had in a good long while. The secret with lamb shoulder, he tells us, is to cook it long and slow so that it essentially tenderizes itself with its own collagen. Applied to tacos, this makes the dish easy to chew and taste distinctively wholesome. We matched all this with some icy fiesta margaritas (VND75,000) made with Pepe Lopez gold tequila and Roses lime – which had an immediate impact. It's worth noting that this restaurant pours a stiff drink.

Electing to be pure gluttons, we continued sinfully on to the *queso* mac & cheese (VND150,000) which Scott admits candidly, "obviously has nothing to do with Mexico – but it has the flavors of Mexico". For lovers of *queso*, a favorite Texan cheese melt with spicy tomatoes, this is the dish that's going to see diners leaving happy. For good measure, I also take a sample of what's probably the most Mexican dish on the menu – the *huevos rancheros verde*, which is essentially eggs on soft tacos with a layer of refried beans. These haven't been going out the gate so much as the other dishes have, but they should be – with a smattering of cheese on top, they're something like a Tex-Mex eggs Benedict.

We only just had room for dessert – Scott's recommendation is a La Fiesta parfait and he enthuses about the contrasts between the hot fudge sauce and the red-skinned salted peanuts, a recipe he's rather guiltily copied from his favorite soft-serve item from DQ.

It's probably too early in the piece to say what happens from here for Scott & Duc, but as you might expect, they've thought this part through already. He probably shouldn't mention anything yet, but he does: "Scott & Binh's is not a franchise-able business model. This one is. I would love to take it to Hanoi, take it to Danang, take it to Hue. It's five or six sauces, six or seven proteins, rice and beans and salad. It's just put together in different ways, which makes it simpler for the kitchen. You'd have to find a decent partner in each city, but this one was designed specifically so that maybe in the future, we could take it out of Ho Chi Minh City. I don't know if it'll ever happen, but the point is, it can."

While diners in Saigon will now have the privilege of watching this restaurant make its mark on the local scene, there's hope that lovers of the cuisine in the rest of the country won't have too long to wait for their turn. ■



# Dining Among History

Fabulous cuisine supported by superb delivery, sultry sounds and a landmark view. Review your day and those ahead at Reflections

TEXT BY **TAYNE EPHRAIM**  
IMAGES PROVIDED BY **CARAVELLE SAIGON**



IN A CITY that changes its clothes as frequently as Ho Chi Minh City, it's refreshing to know that there are still rare places that maintain a vestige of the Saigon of times long past, where there still lingers a touch of that old-world magic and colonial charm. **Reflections Fine Dining**, on the third floor of the Caravelle Saigon in District 1, is one such place. The hotel was once home to the Saigon bureaus of NBC, ABC and CBS, which was located

in Martini Bar during the American War. It has also been featured in both fiction and non-fiction literature set in Vietnam – for example, Danielle Steele's *Message From Nam*, and Morley Safer's memoir *Flashbacks*.

We meet after work in the adjoining Martini Bar, a hidden little gem, hushed like an old train carriage, with a subtle nod to its location in the annals of Saigon history with historical photographs on

the walls. I order a martini stirred straight up while my companion has hers dirty – stirred with the perfect amount of brine in the glass and garnished with four olives on the side. Both are excellent as is the presentation. We sip on sublime martinis in mahogany leather armchairs while the melodies of the evening's musicians, Sitti and Jason, add a little soul to the ambiance. The Filipino duo have been jazzing it up in the city's restaurants and nightlife spots





for the last four years and perform at Reflections every night apart from Tuesday and Sunday.

After drinks, the maître d' shows us to our seats – a corner table overlooking the historic Saigon Opera House. Reflections enlivens *and* sustains the historical significance of its location, right at the crossroads between old and new. Looking down onto the rain-slicked boulevard of Dong Khoi, I can imagine how this part of the city may once have felt in quieter times. From up here, the rush of noise and traffic are blissfully absent. With the soft lighting, elegant dining room, and jazz songs (they take requests: Sitti sings *Make You Feel My Love* for us) filling the air, the place evokes the nostalgia of a 1920s New York jazz bar. While the setting is all old-world charm, the cuisine is refreshingly cutting edge.

The Executive Sous Chef, Darren Watson hailing from Scotland, changes up the menu every two weeks to keep things exciting. He has worked high-end restaurants in Sydney, Melbourne, and Auckland, even serving as Australian billionaire Richard Pratt's personal chef. This November 18-23 will also see two-star Michelin Chef Thierry Drapeau from France unleash his creative approach to fine dining upon Ho Chi Minh City at Reflections.

For the appetizer, Chef Darren and his team create a veritable culinary safari, starting with duck liver snow with lychee

Riesling jelly, caramelized pine nuts and toasted citrus brioche crumbs. Contrasting textures and flavors are equally balanced. The Riesling jelly nicely cuts into the richness of the duck liver while the tender pine nuts add softness to the crunchy brioche. A glass of Australian chardonnay rounds out the dish.

The main, sous vide cooked lobster with yellow pepper coconut *veloute*, roast Mediterranean vegetables and Vietnamese pesto, comes presented with a latticed crown of pastry on top like the netting on a milliner's hat. The lobster is juicy, fresh and tastes like it's been pulled straight from the sea, with just the right level of saltiness. The accompanying coconut *veloute* sauce (poured at the table) has the gratifying creaminess of a Thai curry. Throw in the roasted zucchini and bell peppers and a base made of caramelized onions and potato hash, and the table's set for a culinary experience I'll not soon be forgetting.

For dessert we treat ourselves to white miso cream with green tea espuma sponge and macha ice cream. The macha ice cream is silky, sweet, and sensuous, melting away on the tip of my tongue, balanced with the cheeky cheesecake tang of the miso cream. It comes presented with springs of pastry and pieces of green tea sponge that look like something to be admired in their delicacy – an abstract art installation in miniature – but their soft sponge flavor weaves in beautifully with the ice cream.

We finish up with an after dinner café latte as the city winds down for the evening, the colonial façade of the Opera House below swept by headlights. The meal has been exquisite and the staff impeccable in their professionalism.

Reflections is all about dining for pleasure; it harks back to a time when you'd dine out to make an evening of it, when the atmosphere and the act of dining was as important as the meal itself. It's not about being seen, but being a part of the scene, along with the likes of Peter Arnett, David Hume Kennerly and Michael Herr.

### ***The Culinary Art of Thierry Drapeau at Reflections Fine Dining***

*This November will find two-star Michelin Chef Thierry Drapeau far from the French countryside where he draws his inspiration, and near to the bustling centre of Ho Chi Minh City. From November 18 to 23, the Caravelle Hotel will be welcoming the acclaimed chef Thierry Drapeau in Saint-Sulpice-Verdon at fine-dining restaurant Reflections. Culinary enthusiasts in the city will have a rare opportunity to experience Chef Drapeau's artistic approach to cooking, known for its unrivaled colors, aromatics and presentation, as well as its exemplary flavors.*

**Reflections Fine Dining – 3rd Floor.** For information, contact 090 690 0523 or email: [eam-fb@caravellehotel.com](mailto:eam-fb@caravellehotel.com). For reservations, visit [www.caravellehotel.com/fb-reservation.aspx](http://www.caravellehotel.com/fb-reservation.aspx) ■



# Fade to Black

Welcome to the dark side of dining

TEXT BY JAMES PHAM IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

I'M SKEPTICAL BY nature, so when I heard of **Noir. Dining in the Dark** (178 Hai Ba Trung, D1) opening up, I was leery to say the least. The concept is simple: diners choose from a selection of set menus served up by visually impaired waiters... completely in the dark. In my mind, so many things could go wrong: trapped in a dark, claustrophobic space without an easy exit, a restaurant concept more gimmick than substance, a disappointing dining experience cloaked under the guise of social responsibility.

The concept is far from new. Commercial dine in the dark establishments have been around for decades, notably in Europe and America. Closer to home, there are/were similar concept restaurants in Bangkok, Phnom Penh and Kuala Lumpur. What I wanted to know was: Would the experience leave me more empathetic to visually impaired people, ostensibly the reason why this type of restaurant was first created? Is it true that other senses are heightened if one, especially the one we use the most to gather information, is taken away? And simply, would the food be any good?

On the matter of fostering empathy, I'm undecided about the takeaway. While the experience does leave one with a newfound respect for how nimbly the wait staff navigate in the pitch dark environment (all are visually impaired to some degree), I found myself too wrapped up in the logistics of simply feeding myself — fiddling with silverware and trying to remember exactly where everything was located on the table, not to mention actually getting food to my mouth without making a mess — and dealing with the disorienting feeling of seeing nothing while having your eyes wide open, to really be in a frame of mind conducive to thinking seriously about what it would be like to be visually impaired. For that, you're better off doing something like Bangkok's *Dialogue in the Dark*, a darkened exhibition space broken up into various environments that a visually impaired guide helps you navigate. There, the confusion, the terror and yes, the empathy, are very real. That said, Noir's wait staff were excellent and proactive, always close by and ready to join in on the conversation if you wanted. Secondly,

it's widely believed that your other senses compensate for any that are no longer available. While I believe this is true in the long-term, I'm not sure my taste buds would've taken on superhuman sensitivity in the short time it took to eat dinner. However, without the assistance of visual clues (and the distraction of Instagram), I definitely found myself eating much more deliberately in an effort to identify textures and flavors in a game of I-know-what-that-is-but-can't-quite-put-my-finger-on-it. Thirdly, would the food be any good? After all, that is the reason we go out to restaurants. In the dimly lit lounge prior to locking up mobile phones and any other potential sources of light, diners choose from one of three set menus (East, West and Vegetarian) with four or five tasting portions per course (starter, main, dessert). Purposely, not much more information is provided. In that sense, diners are forced to place a measure of trust in Noir to deliver a well thought out, well executed meal.

## Shining Through

Thankfully, owners Vu Anh Tu and Germ



**While it remains to be seen whether this type of concept dining will be able to draw in repeat customers, the immersive experience itself is one that everyone should have at least once.**

Doornbos bring with them years of fine dining experience from managing outlets in places like the Sofitel Metropole Hanoi, Ly Club and the InterContinental Asiana Saigon. I interpreted the beautifully decorated restored villa that makes up the lounge area a good omen of the dining experience to come. Executive Chef Ngo Thanh Tuan has worked the kitchens of Saigon notables along the lines of Caravelle, Mövenpick and Chill Sky Bar. That much restaurant experience on the part of all three men shines through in the food, both in quality and preparation, playing with textures, flavors, smells and shapes. Not to give too much away, but I found notes of cappuccino crème, beetroot oil and wasabi in the most delightfully unexpected places. After dinner, diners are able to review the menu (which will change every two months) and see how many flavors they were able to correctly identify.

All things considered, I wholeheartedly recommend the Noir. Dining in the Dark experience, especially at its fairly reasonable price point (VND480,000 - VND560,000++ for the three-course menu, VND350,000 - VND420,000++ for any two courses, drinks priced separately). The idea behind Noir is definitely novel enough, particularly in Saigon, to be buzzworthy. The wait staff I talked to seemed thrilled to be given the opportunity to work in such a new and challenging environment and just days after opening, were handling the crowds with skill and tact. While it remains to be seen whether this type of concept dining will be able to draw in repeat customers, the immersive experience itself (plan on at least an hour and a half from start to finish) is one that everyone should have at least once. No matter what your conclusion, the Noir experience is nothing if not memorable, one you'll likely find yourself thinking and talking about for days. ■



# In the Zen Kitchen

Learn how to cook with a Japanese flair

TEXT BY MICHAEL ARNOLD IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

IF YOU'RE THINKING of mastering a new skill and you love your sushi, you'll be pleased to note that a rather intriguing new opportunity has arisen to study the secrets of Japanese cooking in one of District 1's popular international kitchens - **Japanese by Blanchy Street** (VND1.4 million for two classes, [saigoncookingclass@blanchystreet.com](mailto:saigoncookingclass@blanchystreet.com), 3823 8793). The quick-starter course - which currently runs at two consecutive Saturday afternoon sessions each month instructing in the basics of the cuisine - is the result of a unique partnership between Ilda Briosa's Saigon Cooking Class, and Ho Chi Minh City's answer to the world-famous Nobu Japanese/Peruvian fusion phenomenon, Blanchy Street.

Blanchy Street's fusion cuisine first started to turn heads when the venue originally opened above Blanchy's Tash, reinforcing its place in the Saigon culinary pantheon when it moved to its current, more accessible location in the Refinery courtyard. Cheffed by some of the biggest

names in the highly-esteemed Nobu tradition, the restaurant has some serious prestige going for it - and it's these very chefs who are teaching the new classes to students eager to try their hand at introductory-level Japanese cookery.

That's probably the course's best selling point right there - being taught in Japanese cuisine by Martin Brito and Yogo Oba is like having Michael Schumacher teach you how to drive a Honda scooter. Martin, whose background in Thai cuisine has brought the Nobu style to a whole new dimension in Blanchy's kitchen, trained with some supremely respectable cooks before cheffing a full seven years in Nobu's London venue - and even he can't match Oba's 20-year stint in the same restaurant.

The course is a new concept for Ilda Briosa's cooking-class business, although applying a business model that has largely catered to tourists interested in the Vietnamese culinary tradition to a course that teaches a foreign cooking style to both expats and local Vietnamese has been a big

challenge.

"At first, I thought it would be too difficult to get clients for this cuisine", says Ilda, who was first approached with the idea by Noelle Carr-Ellison (who has a stake both in the Vietnamese cooking class business through its partnership with Hoa Tuc restaurant, and in Blanchy Street itself). "It was only when I came to see the restaurant that I realized there was something different about it. I knew that we really needed to try it, so I said OK. The concept is the same; it's just that the client is going to be different. It's similar, just teaching the basics and doing a little skill-building, so that people can then continue to experience it by themselves at home and understand what they have on their plate."

"There are a lot of people who do love Japanese food but have no idea about what they are eating," she explains. "So the aim is to give some key so that they can appreciate it a little more. Take me, for example, I always want to know how things work. That's why I like to go to this kind of class. Of course, Japanese food is





## “They have a special technique for each vegetable and how to deep-fry it, and these are the secrets that they teach.”

incredibly popular here, because it's so healthy, it's so good... but finally when you understand the basics, you can see it's not that complicated, at least not at this level.”

### Martin Sensei, Yogo Sensei

Quietly-spoken Martin's clearly a chef first and a teacher second, although this new role is something that he's taken to rather quickly, and it's growing on him: “It was Noelle's idea to start the classes, not mine,” he jokes. “She was pushing for it. It was a bit trepidatious at first, but now I actually quite enjoy it. In the second lesson, there's a bit more to it – the first one's just to get comfortable before we step it up. This stuff's quite easy – some of these housewives, though, I don't think they've even picked up a knife before, while others are quite keen cooks. But they all normally do fine.”

“I've been doing the course for about two months now,” he continues. “They do the Hoa Tuc class twice a day – that class is huge. At the moment we've been running

one a month, but lately we've been doing several private classes. The normal class is broken up into two; so I'll take the first one and Oba does the second. But we're both here helping for both sessions. We had a group of expat ladies yesterday and they just wanted to do one lesson – but they'll probably come back and do another. We fit in with what people want.”

The course, held on the second floor of the Blanchy Street restaurant, starts with the most basic elements of the cuisine – starting off with creating a strong *dashi* stock from scratch, and building on that to make a flavorful miso soup. You'll have already learned how to make a crispy tempura by the end of the first lesson, and during the second you'll quickly move on to master salmon & cucumber *maki*, a sea grape and *wakame* salad, and some tasty chicken *gyoza*. Classes are fun, even-paced, and with the gradual introduction of cooking concepts given in both English and Vietnamese (French can be arranged on request), almost ceremonial – a very fitting vibe for this particular cuisine

tradition. In this respect, Martin does find the mood of the classes particularly curious: “Teaching through a translator is a bit strange, because it's like talking through two people,” he muses, “but it's nice to be doing it with students who are actually interested and keen, quite happy to learn. I'll be doing this for a while – I quite enjoy it, to be honest.”

Ida is also very satisfied with the way things have taken shape with the course. “It always takes five or ten minutes for the mood to warm up,” she says, “but then people start to love it, especially when they taste the food. Most people are just curious about how it works, even if they never cook it at home or only once for friends. But like the tempura, the way they do it isn't that complicated – I mean, as soon as the chef explains it, it really makes sense, but you'd never think how to do it yourself. They have a special technique for each vegetable and how to deep-fry it, and these are the secrets that they teach. I mean, when you're not working in the food industry, how else could you get the chance to enter their kitchen?” ■



# Eating in a Venetian Bàcaro

A new Venice style restaurant to indulge in

TEXT BY ROBERT OI IMAGES BY NEIL FEATHERSTONE



THE FOUNDER OF Ciao Bella who last wooed us with the new Mediterranean concept Saffron has now opened a third European concept - Portofino, just a few doors down from Ciao Bella on Dong Du. Where Ciao Bella offers hearty home-style Italian fare and Saffron dishes from around the Mediterranean coastline designed to share, **Portofino** (15 Dong Du, D1) delivers to Saigon a dining concept that's trendy in London right now - *cicchetti*.

*Cicchetti* - the plural of a single dish *cicchetto* - is a tradition from Venice best likened to Spanish tapas, but usually served in larger portions. Perhaps it is the growing international trend away from huge main meals to more modest, less gluttonous servings that is driving the popularity of this Italian concept; whatever is fuelling the fashion, it's a welcome addition to Saigon's restaurant offers. In Venice, common *cicchetti* include finger foods like olives and tiny sandwiches or halved hard boiled eggs leading into larger dishes like seafood or meats served on polenta or toasted bread and small servings of larger entrees. Portofino covers the whole gambit. Grab a friend, pull up a chair in Portofino's relaxing brick cavern with its checked blue table cloths and endearing staff and make a meal out of sharing a range of *cicchetti*.

To ease your way into the concept try the *spuntino* - bacon wrapped dates stuffed with chorizo and red pepper sauce, or fried olives stuffed with pork, cheese and chili tomato dip. Or the *crostini*: toasted bread topped with combinations as intriguing as Burrata cheese and prosciutto, smoked salmon, marscapone, cucumber, capers and red onion or fresh mozzarella and *Nduja*, a spicy spreadable pork sausage.

Then to the main event - the *cicchetti*. Owner/Chef Tony Fox has created 17 different dishes, featuring cheeses, salad, pasta, prawns, pork, beef, salmon and seafood. Highlights for innovation: *Trippa alla Romana* - tripe with chickpeas, marinara sauce and fried egg; Slow braised pork belly served on mascarpone polenta; and Mozzarella in Carozza - breaded fresh mozzarella, anchovy and basil toasted with pomodoro sauce. And borrowed from Saffron, cheese Saganaki served flaming at the table. The dishes range upwards from VND135,000, with only one setting you back more than VND200,000.

Traditionalists who enjoy their pasta can choose from a range of eight dishes, including ravioli, gnocchi, fusilli and the handkerchief pasta (more about that below).

The very hungry can opt for bigger plates - rib eye steak and lobster tail for VND495,000, BBQ seafood or whole grilled seas bass, but we can't see why anyone would want to limit themselves to one large main when the range of *cicchetti* is so mouthwatering.



FROM TOP: Spuntino, Handkerchief pasta



### Our Meal

The night we visited, Portofino unveiled its new menu after a soft opening and trial for the restaurant. A little overwhelmed by the broad choice and mouthwatering descriptions, we were happy for Tony to recommend his personal favorites.

We started with Tuscan chicken livers (VND175,000), served on *crostini*. While thick and chunky they were by no means dry, rather moist and morish, covered in a delicately balanced port and orange sauce. Next up were the dates (VND135,000), much to the delight of my chorizo-addicted review partner. These proved a surprisingly good balance of savory, spicy and sweet: baked until the bacon is crunchy and salty, the dates retain their sweetness and the chorizo adds the spice. It's a difficult combination to pull off, but Tony's team succeeded with merit. It's probably the smallest dish on the menu and you're likely to want to order a second serving.

Then came the pan fried ricotta gnocchi (VND195,000) served with tender strips of braised oxtail in a savory, meaty sauce that seemed to melt in the mouth. Ciao Bella already serves one of the best gnocchi dishes in town – pan fried to give a crispy exterior yet soft center and served in gorgonzola cream sauce. Now Portofino offers a meat lover's edition, equally flavorful and equally addictive.

For a pasta Tony chose the handkerchief pasta dish (VND125,000), *Liguan* pesto and *peconne*. This was something completely new to both of us, and a revelation. Tender pasta in sort of flattened bows, a little like a lace handkerchief to look at, with a strong-flavored freshly made pesto sauce and pecorino cheese, again a creative balance of herbaceous flavor with a contrasting cheese and smooth, slightly oily mouth-feel.

And finally – and believe us, we were getting full at this point – grilled salmon served on shrimp risotto (VND185,000). The salmon had a strong smoky flavor, full barbecue style more than stovetop grill, the delicate flavor of the pink flesh offset by the herbaceous pesto again. The risotto was moist and creamy. A great mix of flavors and textures in one modestly sized dish.

Despite our fullness we could not pass by the chance to try the dessert (all choices are VND140,000). And Tony's team insisted we try two they're the most proud of: *bomboni* and rice pudding. The *bomboni* comprises round donuts, sliced in half and filled with mascarpone served on a bed of Nutella spread and topped with a raspberry jam - eye watering to look at, delicious to eat. Rice pudding, to me, conjures unpleasant memories of boarding school dessert – so it's a dish I usually spurn in favor of something more adventurous. Here is an exception. Made with Arborio rice and mixed with honey and roasted fruits, it's a sweet, rewarding indulgence for those who cannot handle the guilt trip associated with mascarpone-filled donuts. The Arborio rice gives it larger grains, the honey is sweet but not too sweet and the entire dish was creamy and smooth.

Portofino is Saigon's newest restaurant concept and culinary adventure. A perfect destination for couples, small groups, celebrations or just to quietly indulge in something inventive. ■

**“A perfect destination for couples, small groups, celebrations or just to quietly indulge in something inventive.”**



FROM TOP: Tuscan chicken livers, Grilled salmon, Bombini & Rice pudding

# Diplomatic Drinking

Oi speaks to Francois Carteau, sommelier and director at Wine Embassy, about his new boutique and wine training course



IMAGES PROVIDED BY WINE EMBASSY

## What makes Wine Embassy unique?

**Francois Carteau:** We have brought wine accessibility to a new level in Vietnam - more choices by the glass, monthly updates, group wine tastings and we are the only wine bar using a wine dispenser. The wine dispenser can preserve an opened bottle for two weeks or longer, keeping it in perfect drinking condition, thus allowing me to recommend more wines by the glass, unlike anywhere else. Customers buy a prepaid card and can then sample our selection, along with suggestions for tapas pairing, on their own or guided by our staff. The card also offers customers special promotions and keeps track of what they poured and their favorites. Pours are dispensed in three different glass sizes: 4cl, 9cl and 12.5cl.

In November, for our second anniversary, we'll be holding a lottery where customers who use their wine card stand a chance to win prizes like a Champagne bottle, a dinner for two, a free training course and more.

**What different labels and price points of Ugarte wine do you stock? And can you name some dishes that will pair well**

## with them?

**FC:** At Wine Embassy Boutique ([www.en.wineembassy.vn](http://www.en.wineembassy.vn)) we sell the basic range of Reinales red and white in our "Below VND350,000" range, the Mercedes Egunon red and white at VND505,000, Ugarte Rioja Crianza at VND625,000 and the Ugarte Rioja Reserva at VND880,000.

Rainares is easy drinking so perfect as a starter by itself, with salad or cold cuts.

Mercedes Egunon red is more intense, powerful with firm tannins and a great balance that goes well with oven-baked red meat and roasted vegetables. Ugarte Crianza and Reserva are my favorites; pair them with a simple Australian ribeye steak with potatoes sautéed with wild mushroom and a bit of fresh ground red pepper from Phuc Quoc.

The particularity of the Ugarte wine range is their excellent value dimension. From great friendly wine to classic and well structured, I find it a beautiful addition to the Spanish selection in Vietnam.

**Tell us more about your wine training courses.**

**FC:** The wine training courses give people an opportunity to learn more about wine. For the novice, I suggest going to a weekly training class first (every Tuesday 6pm to 7pm) where you can choose one of three topics and spend a fun hour learning and tasting four wines, and at VND490,000 per person for one session it's also a great deal.

We also have a monthly training program for serious learners. The package includes four sessions (a two-hour class once a week) and covers all aspects from the basics, Old versus New World, tasting and food matching. The cost is VND3,990,000 per person.

At this stage, regular trainings are done in English, but Vietnamese versions are coming soon.

## Can customers book a course at home?

**FC:** Yes, with a minimum of eight people. Nothing's better than learning with your best friends in the comfort of your home. By customizing a menu to each client I can match all the wines within their budget and also be there to explain the pairing if needed. Think about it. The holiday season is coming!

## Can you explain more about your blending wine workshop?

**FC:** We recently had a blending wine workshop where everyone was given two white and three red wines and we practiced blending like winemakers do. Using a measurement cylinder, it brings a lot of fun for everyone as they end up creating their perfect wine, like building your own wine. We will organize it again but can also offer it as a private workshop at home.

## Describe the difference between the Wine Embassy Boutique in District 2 and the Wine Embassy Bar in District 1.

**FC:** Wine Embassy Bar (13 Ngo Duc Ke, D1) is a real wine bar with a large selection of 24 fine wines by the glass that hosts regular events, corporate and private tastings. Here, our guests can enjoy a full wine experience such as discovering new wines from our monthly updated list using our unique wine dispenser card system, combined with professional customer service and state-of-the-art equipment.

**Wine Embassy Boutique** (41 Quoc Huong, Thao Dien, D2) is our latest addition. This is a wine store that houses a well-crafted selection of wine, including some that are exclusive to our store. I have selected them all with one goal - to get the best value wine for everyone, from everyday bottles to distinct, authentic ones from France, Italy, Spain, Chile, Argentina, the US and Australia. Regular tastings are organized and some training courses are also available. At the boutique we offer convenience by having chilled bottles ready to go for last minute dinner plans (delivery until 8:30pm) and pre-dinner packages (cold cuts, cheese box and wine) for get-togethers. ■



# Mas Vino Por Favor!

The best of Rioja in Vietnam



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

WINES FROM RIOJA are internationally renowned as the best wines from Spain. This small region located in the North of Spain probably has the country's longest history of producing wine, dating back over 2,000 years to Roman times, and is the oldest and first officially recognized wine producing area in Spain, which was first chartered in 1925 by the Spanish government. Since then, the official regulatory body has imposed very strict regulations to all Rioja wineries, aiming to keep the standard extremely high, and to preserve their well-deserved reputation.

While Rioja is geographically small - within the wine area, less than 100 km separates the west from the east and at just 40 km wide - it has three very different areas within it: Rioja Alavesa (known for producing the best wines, influenced by the Atlantic sea weather and small land plots), Rioja Alta (also influenced by the Atlantic sea weather but with different soil) and Rioja Baja (perhaps producing the lowest quality wines, influenced by Mediterranean weather, warmer and drier).

Eguren Ugarte, one of the most prestigious wineries in Rioja Alavesa, presented a selection of its award-winning wines last month at Sofitel Saigon. The winery belongs to and is run by the Eguren family, devoted to the world of wine since 1870, currently in the hands

of the fifth generation of wine growers and winemakers. The winery, which I visited last year, has managed to maintain the tradition of winemaking while incorporating the latest technology in growing and producing wine, resulting in exceptional wines that have won numerous national and international awards.

The Eguren family built a beautiful boutique hotel on top of the winery in 2010. Thanks to the layout of the land in this area, the hotel acts as a perfect viewpoint located between the Sierra Cantabria mountains and the vineyards, providing guests not only with the tranquillity of the surroundings but also with incredible peaceful views of the wine growing area and gardens. With just 21 rooms and a restaurant managed by three-star Michelin chef Eneko Atxa, the hotel won an award for the best wine tourism hotel.

Amaia Urabain, Asia Director of Eguren Ugarte, was at the hotel to represent the brand. When asked what makes Eguren Ugarte wines different and better, she replied: "There are several reasons that justify our wines having won so many awards, while keeping very reasonable prices. First is the respect for the environment and tradition. Unlike many other wine producers, we own all the 130 hectares of vines we cultivate. This gives us the opportunity to ensure that

the environment is respected and that quality rather than volume is maintained as first priority. Some of our vines are over 100 years old. Obviously the yield they produce is very low, however the quality is exceptional, hence we use their grapes for our top wines. Second and equally important is the Eguren family's passion for making great wines and for sharing them; we don't sell wine to customers but to friends, we even offer customers the use and enjoyment of private cellars within our winery, where they can bring friends and family to enjoy the wines and atmosphere."

If you believe in international experts, even the entry level wines from this family have been awarded with 87 points by International Wine Cellar, with the star wine having obtained 94 points from Robert Parker. My favorite is the Crianza. It is inexpensive and delicious, especially if you consider the vinification process, with 15 months in American and French oak barrels and a further six months aging in bottle, a very elegant wine with clean aromas, smooth and excellent long final aromatic notes.

*These wines are being distributed in Vietnam by Saigon FNB, and are also available at Sofitel, Ole and Wine Embassy, where you can enjoy them with delicious food.* ■





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## >>The List

# Wine & Dine

## BARS



### Cavern Pub

Stylish venue in one of the classier inner-city locales, Cavern entertains locals and expats alike with a live band every night, sports channels on a large TV screen, and a great atmosphere. Happy hour is from 6pm to

**9:30pm (buy 2 beers – get 1 free). Live music is from 9:30pm-1am.**  
19 Dong Du, D1  
090 826 5691



### Red Bar

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

**70-72 Ng Duc Ke, D1  
2229 7017**



### Chill Skybar

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

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



### Ice Blue Bar

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

**54 Dong Khoi, D1**



### Blanchy's Tash

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

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



### Last Call

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

**59 Dong Du, D1  
3823 3122**

## Also Try...

### Cargo Bar

Cargo Bar is a dedicated music and arts venue designed and committed to delivering diverse entertainment, along with a good drink menu.

**7 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4**

### The Cube

Besides being a place for drinking and unwinding, The Cube Bar also offers unique, educational and exciting events like bartending, modern cuisine, arts & crafts and theme parties. Live music daily.

**31B Ly Tu Trong, D1  
090 336 9798/01 2088 1964  
info@thecube.vn**

### Game On

Opened in July 2013, Game On is one of Saigon's biggest sports bar, serving

breakfast, lunch and dinner. The bar also has an extensive drinks menu including coffees, juices, beers, wines, vodkas, and more. Game On also boasts a function room for corporate meetings or private parties.

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

### The Hideaway

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

glass or bottle.  
**119 Bui Vien, D1  
090 279 99 62**

### The Observatory

In just a year, this funky, cosy bar and gallery set in a French villa has become the centre of the city's underground dance music culture. Downstairs is a cosy bar serving cocktails, beer and wines, upstairs a gallery space and a separate dance venue with regular guest appearances from DJs from Asia and beyond. Open daily from 6pm til late (5am close Saturday and Sunday mornings).

**Corner Le Lai & Ton That Tung, D1.  
3925 9415  
www.theobservatory-hcmc.com**

### onTop Bar

Located on the 20th floor of Novotel

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

**167 Hai Ba Trung, D3  
3822 4866**

### Purple Jade

Purple Jade is a stylish, chic venue with exceptional world class cocktails by one of the city's award-winning bartenders 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**



# CAFÉS



## Aq Coffee

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

**32 Pham Ngoc Thach, D3  
3829 8344**



## Hatvala

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

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



## Hideaway Café

Beautifully-styled coffee house in a restored French Villa divided into numerous semi-private areas for privacy and quiet contemplation. An eminently refined venue providing a classier international-style caffeine hit without the more plastic surrounds of a franchise café. Also serves fine Western cuisine.

**41/1 Pham Ngoc Thach, D3  
3822 4222**



## L'Usine

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

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



## Café RuNam

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

**96 Mac Thi Buoi, D1  
3825 8883  
www.caferrunam.com**



## 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 Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan  
3520 9099  
www.intercontinental.com/saigon**

## Also Try...

### Cafe Terrace

A local interpretation of a European café concept, Cafe Terrace has become a popular destination for the local middle class taking a respite from shopping in the chic Saigon Centre. The main café street-side facing onto Pasteur is always busy with a mix of locals and expats sipping coffee or enjoying a light lunch or early dinner. Upstairs is a smaller café amidst fashion stores, dimly lit and cool. The menu includes savoury and sweet crepes, cakes, juices, shakes and some Vietnamese favourites.

**Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, D1  
3914 4958**

### Caffe Bene

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

**58 Dong Khoi, D1**

**3822 4012  
caffebenevietnam.com**

### Ciao Café

There's rarely a tourist who's been through inner-city Saigon and hasn't stopped in on the super-friendly-looking Ciao Café. It stands up well as an expat mainstay too, with its fashionable décor that varies from floor to floor and its classic selection of Western café and bistro favorites.

**74-76 Nguyen Hue, D1  
3823 1130**

### Du Mien Garden Coffee

A 30 minute taxi ride from downtown, but worth the effort, this unique café is renowned for its 'treehouse' feel. Set in lush gardens, it's a world away from the chaos of Ho Chi Minh City. A destination in itself, it offers much more than coffee; open from 7am until 11pm, it attracts workers, travellers and romancers alike. The locals love it (20,000 likes on Facebook!) for the coffee, the meals and most of all the gardens.

**7 Phan Van Tri Phuong 10, Go Vap.  
3894 5555**

### LightBox Cafe

This stunningly designed café 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**

### Masstige

Another newcomer to the Vietnam café scene, Korean-based chain Masstige offers European style coffee at competitive prices (40,000 VND for a mug of hot Café Latte) and accompanying light snacks. For something truly original, try the Avocado coffee or their alcohol-free chilled mojito cocktails. The name Masstige is a blend of mass and prestige, meaning 'premium but obtainable'.

**125 Ho Tung Mau, D1 (behind Sunwah Tower).  
www.facebook.com/masstigecoffee**

### Mojo Cafe

This modern, chic café, restaurant and

bar offers freshly baked homemade cakes, pastries, wood fired pizzas, light fare and superb coffee and smoothies for dine in or take away.

**88 Dong Khoi, D1  
08 3827 2828  
www.mojosaigon.com**

### Vecchio Cafe

A self-styled Little Italy that does a good job of looking the part, this venue's interior features ornate Italian décor, dim lighting, and antique furniture enhanced by Italian music. Offerings include fine meals, delicious gelato and beverages.

**39/3 Pham Ngoc Thach, D3  
6683 8618**

### The Workshop

A great find, this New York loft-style venue is hidden away up a couple of flights of stairs and well worth seeking out. Spacious and airy with lots of natural light, the central coffee bar offers an exquisite gourmet selection. Superb for setting up your laptop and getting some work done over great coffee.

**27 Ngo Duc Ke, D1  
3824 6801 / 3824 6802  
7am-8pm**

# CHINESE



## Dragon Court

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

**11-13 Lam Son Square, D1  
3827 2566**



## Dynasty

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

**New World Hotel  
76 Le Lai, D1  
3822 8888  
[www.saiгон.newworldhotels.com](http://www.saiгон.newworldhotels.com)**



## Kabin

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

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



## Li Bai

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

**Level 2, 88 Dong Khoi, D1  
3827 2828  
[www.libaisaigon.com](http://www.libaisaigon.com)**



## Ming Court

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

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



## Ming Dynasty

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

**23 Nguyen Khac Vien, D7**

## Also Try...

### Hung Ky Mi Gia

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

**20 Le Anh Xuan, D1  
3822 2673**

### Ocean Palace

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

**2 Le Duan Street, D1  
3911 8822**

### Seven Wonders (Bay Ky Quan)

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

**12 Duong 26, D6  
3755 1577  
[www.7kyquan.com](http://www.7kyquan.com)**

### Shang Palace

Designed very much after the fashion of modern upscale restaurants in China itself, Shang Palace specializes in Cantonese seafood dishes and excels in catering to large groups. A superb choice for dim sum brunches with authenticity guaranteed.

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

### Yu Chu

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

**First floor, InterContinental Asiana  
Saigon  
Corner of Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan  
3520 9099  
[www.intercontinental.com/saigon](http://www.intercontinental.com/saigon)**





# SPANISH



## El Camino

El Camino has the lively spirit of a party on the Mediterranean with the fun and friendliness of a good family venue. Affordable selection of Spanish & French wines.

Nguyen Duc Canh, D7  
www.facebook.com/elcaminovietnam



## La Habana

Cuban venue with fine Spanish cuisine, Cuban cigars and German beer. A wide range of tapas and cocktails. Great bar atmosphere and late night entertainment.

6 Cao Ba Quat, D1  
www.lahabana-saigon.com



## Olé

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

129B Le Thanh Ton, D1  
012 6529 1711



## Tapas Saigon

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

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



## VIVA! Tapas Bar & Grill

VIVA! Tapas Bar & Grill only uses the freshest ingredients, many imported from Spain, for the most authentic tapas experience in Saigon, starting from under VND50,000/plate. Cool décor, indoors and outdoors eating areas, a well stocked bar, and great wines from VND60,000/glass (sangria just VND130,000 per HALF liter). Delivery available.

90 Cao Trieu Phat, Phu My Hung, D7, HCMC  
08 5410 6721  
Facebook: "VIVATapasBar.PMH"



## Pacharan

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

97 Hai Ba Trung Street, D1  
090 399 2539



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# FRENCH



## Augustin

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

10D Nguyen Thiep, D1  
www.augustinrestaurant.com



## La Creperie

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

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



## La Fourchette

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

9 Ngo Duc Ke, D1  
3829 8143  
www.lafourchette.com.vn



## Le Rendez-vous de Saigon

A wine bistro offering a warm and friendly atmosphere. Unwind either in their stylish downstairs bar, or lounge on cozy leather seating in the upstairs section with a balcony overlooking a courtyard in an alley. The venue offers a tasty selection of wines from France to South Africa and a delectable menu of French cuisine.

9A Ngo Van Nam, D1  
www.lerendezvousdesaigon.com  
6291 0396



## Le Bacoulos

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

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



## Le Jardin

A gorgeous enclosed garden space that allows eaters to follow the example of the French colonists of 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

## Also Try...

### L'essentiel

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

98 Ho Tung Mau, D1  
0948 415 646

### La Cuisine

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

48 Le Thanh Ton  
2229 8882

### La Nicoise

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

56 Ngo Duc Ke, D1  
3821 3056

### La Villa

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

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

### Le Bouchon de Saigon

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

40 Thai Van Lung, D1  
www.lebouchondesaignon.com

### Trois Gourmands

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

18 Tong Huu Dinh, D2  
3744 4585





# INDIAN



## Bollywood

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

2213 1481 | 2245 0096 | 093 806 9433

Hotline: 0906357442 (English)

bollywoodvietnam@gmail.com

Facebook: bollywoodvietnamindiancuisine



## Baba's Kitchen

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

164 Bui Vien, D1

49D Xa Lo Hanoi, D2

3838 6661



## Ganesh

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

38 Hai Ba Trung, D1

8223 0173

www.ganeshindianrestaurant.com



## Ashoka

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

Ashoka I

17/10 Le Thanh Ton, D1

08 3823 1372

Ashoka II

33 Tong Huu Dinh, Thao Dien, D2

08 3744 4144



## Saigon Indian

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

1st Floor, 73 Mac Thi Bui, D1

## Also Try...

### Bombay Indian Restaurant

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

250 Bui Vien, D1,

9am - 10.30pm

### Curry Leaf

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

62 Hung Gia 5, D7

curryleafvietnam.com

### The Punjabi

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

40/3 Bui Vien, D1

3508 3777



# ITALIAN



## Ciao Bella 🍷 OI's Pick

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

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



*Ciao Bella*



## La Bettola

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

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

*La Bettola*  
ITALIAN RESTAURANT



## 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 [davincisvietnam.com](http://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



## La Cucina

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

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



## La Hostaria

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

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



## Lucca

A cozy bar on the ground floor and a sprawling restaurant area upstairs, Lucca's menu is Italian by nature but with an international influence: a distinctly New York-Italian oasis in a busy Asian city which delivers everything it promises. Great trattoria food, coffee and wine in a classy environment reminiscent of Brooklyn at a very reasonable price point.

88 Ho Tung Mau, D1  
3915 3692  
8am - 11pm

## Also Try...

### Casa Italia

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

86 Le Loi, D1  
3824 4286

### Pendolasco

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

monthly movie nights.

87 Nguyen Hue, D1  
3821 8181

### Pizza 4P's

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

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

### Pomodoro



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

79 Hai Ba Trung  
3823 8998



# JAPANESE



## Blanchy Street 🍣 Oi's Pick

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

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



## Achaya Café

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

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



## Monde

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

7 bis Han Thuyen, D1



## Ebisu

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

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



## Gyumaru

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

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



## Ichiban Sushi

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

204 Le Lai, D1  
www.ichibansushi.vn

## Also Try...

### K Cafe

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

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

### Chisana Hashi

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

River Garden, 170 Nguyen Van Huong, D2  
6683 5308

### Osaka Ramen

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

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

### Robata Dining An

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

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

### Sushi Dining Aoi

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

53-55 Ba Huyen Thanh Quan, D3

3930 0039

www.sushidiningaoi.com

### Yoshino

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

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



# KOREAN



## Galbi Brothers

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

**R1-25 Hung Phuoc 4, Pham Van Nghi – Bac, D7**  
**5410 6210**



## Kang Nam Ga

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

**6B Le Quy Don, D3**  
**3933 3589**  
[kangnamga@gmail.com](mailto:kangnamga@gmail.com)



## Lee Cho

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

**48 Hung Phuoc 2, D7**  
**5410 1086**



## Seoul House

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

**33 Mac Thi Buoi, D1**  
**3829 4297**



## Won's Cuisine

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

**49 Mac Thi Buoi**  
**3820 4085**



# THAI

## Baan Thai

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

**55 Thao Dien, D2**  
**3744 5453**  
[www.baanthai-anphu.com](http://www.baanthai-anphu.com)

## Koh Thai

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

**Kumho Link, Hai Ba Trung, D1**  
**3823 4423**

## Lac Thai

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

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

**71/2 Mac Thi Buoi St, D1**  
**3823 7506**

## Tuk Tuk Thai Bistro

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

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

## The Racha Room

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

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





# STEAKHOUSE



## Au Lac Do Brazil

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

238 Pasteur, D3  
3820 7157 | 090 947 8698  
[www.aulacdobrazil.com](http://www.aulacdobrazil.com)



## El Gaucho

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

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



## Indaba

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

35 Ly Tu Trong, D1  
3824 8280  
[www.facebook.com/indabacafe](http://www.facebook.com/indabacafe)



## New York Steakhouse

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

25-27 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D1



## Samba Brazilian Steakhouse

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

10C Thai Van Lung, D1  
3822 0079



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# VIETNAMESE



## Com Nieu

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

59 Ho Xuan Huong, D3  
3932 6363  
commieusaigon27@yahoo.com  
commieusaigon.com.vn



## Frangipani Hoa Su

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

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



## Quan Bui

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

17a Ngo Van Nam, D1  
3829 1515



## Propaganda Bistro

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

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



## Hoa Tuc

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

74/7 Hai Ba Trung, D1  
3825 1676



## Papaya

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

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

## Also Try...

### 3T Quan Nuong

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

Top Floor, 29 Ton That Hiep, D1  
3821 1631

### Banh Xeo 46A

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

46A Dinh Cong Trang, D1

### Cha Ca La Vong

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

36 Ton That Thiep, D1

### Cuc Gach Quan

Deservedly one of the highest ranking Vietnamese restaurants in Saigon on

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

10 Dang Tat, D1  
3848 0144

### Highway 4

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

101 Vo Van Tan, D3  
www.highway4.com

### Hum

Hum is a vegetarian restaurant where food are prepared on site from various fresh beans, nuts, vegetables, flowers, and fruits. Food are complemented with special drinks mixed from fresh fruits and vegetables.

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

### May

Fine Vietnamese fare served in a

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

3/5 Hoang Sa  
3910 1277

### Temple Club

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

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

### Nha Hang Ngon

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

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

### Thanh Nien

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

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





# INTERNATIONAL



## Khoi Thom

Tucked away on the quiet café street of Ngo Thoi Nhiem in District 3, Khoi Thom has evolved into an authentic Mexican-style cantina serving home-style dishes, many from the Mexican chef's family. With bright colors, a large breezy outdoor deck with an open bar and a long street frontage, Khoi Thom has earned respect for its adventurous hues and style since opening.

29 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3  
www.khoithom.com

## MEXICAN RESTAURANT

KHOI THOM



## XichLoBBQ

XichLoBBQ is located on Bui Vien - the heart of the backpacking area. The restaurant serves Vietnamese staples alongside Western dishes with a specialty in barbecued pork, beef, chicken and seafood. XichLoBBQ restaurant is themed on the classic Vietnamese transport, with an actual life size of the three-wheeled vehicle hanging on the wall. Food here is reasonably priced.

37 Bui Vien, D1

XÍCH LÒ BBQ



## Au Parc

One of the city's more charming international bistros in a perfect tree-lined inner-city location. Au Parc serves Mediterranean cuisine with local flourishes in a venue lightly set off by plush seating and heady exotic styling. A beautiful dining area and extraordinary menu will see this becoming one of the mainstays in your restaurant cycle.

23 Han Thuyen, D1  
3829 2772



## The Crab Shack

The Crab Shack is a restaurant and bar with a warm and stylish atmosphere housing a seafood restaurant, and a carefree with a balcony patio. Signature dishes include Cajun Crawfish and Pepper Crab. In addition to their house dishes, check out their selection of wine and beers.

11B Le Quy Don, D3  
08 3930 9542

Facebook: "thecrabshackvn"



## Berru

Berru is a family-run Turkish restaurant offering a variety of Turkish specialties including kebabs, koftas, mezzes and soups. This is one of the few halal restaurants that imports all of their halal meat.

SC 3-1 Nguyen Luong Bang, Nam Khanh, D7



## 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

## Also Try...

### Deutsches Eck / German Corner

The restaurant is fastbecoming known for its sausage, beers, and their Schweins Haxe or pork knuckles (served with white cabbage and mashed potatoes). A number of German beers to select from including Konig Pilsener, Bitburger, Koestritzer Black Beer, Benediktiner Weisse, HB-Hofbrau Weisse, Schwarzbau Exquisit, and Schwarzbau Weisse.

A001 Nguyen Van Linh St., Phu My Hung, D7  
54106695

### Boomarang Bistro

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

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

### The Deck

Located on the banks of the Saigon River, this restaurant offers great international and Vietnamese fare along with some fine cocktails. Best way to arrive is by private speed boat managed by the venue.

38 Nguyen U Di, D2  
www.thedecksaigon.com

### Elbow Room

At The Elbow Room, a rustic homage to retro Americana with its exposed brick, black and white vintage photographs, and Nora Jones soundtrack, diners can order classic American breakfasts all day. Live music upstairs on Friday nights is the city's best kept secret.

52 Pasteur, D1  
www.elbowroom.com.vn

### Hog's Breath

An Australian family diner and bar concept. Renowned for steaks, seafood and other

Western fare served in an informal environment. Smoke-free indoors.

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

### La Fenetre Soleil

Literally 'window to the sun', LFS showcases a fusion of old-world fittings (exposed bricks, antique furniture and chandeliers) with new-world elements (fur cushions, mosaic tiles and glass tables). Serves a range of cocktails, imported beer, coffee and smoothies together with a Japanese-Vietnamese fusion menu.

4 Ly Tu Trong, D1

### La Fiesta

A new restaurant of Scott Marquis, of Scott & Binh's fame, La Fiesta offers mainly Mexican food like tacos and enchiladas. Also features liqueur coffees and cocktails.

33 Dang Thi Nhu, D1  
www.facebook.com/lafestvietnam

### Refinery

A charming venue with a chequered history, the Refinery brings the best of European cuisine to the opium headquarters of the old colonial empire. Loving restoration work has brought out much of the building's architectural charm, and with a menu that delivers the finest in French dining as well as culinary flourishes from around the continent, you'll never be short of options. Stands up to multiple repeat visits.

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

### Saffron

The first thing that will strike you when you enter Saffron is the terracotta pots mounted on the ceiling. Located on

Dong Du, this restaurant offers Mediterranean food, some with a distinct Asian influence added for further uniqueness. Prepare to order plates to share and don't miss the signature Cheese Saganaki! Guests are welcomed with complimentary Prosecco, fresh baked bread served with garlic, olive tapenade and hummus.

51 Hai Ba Trung, D1  
382 48358

### Scott & Binh's

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

15-17 Cao Trieu Phat, D7



# DON'T SINK IN SAIGON

If you're thinking of starting or expanding a business here, there's a lot that could go *wrong*.

In Vietnam, sometimes the brightest ideas go hopelessly astray for the most unexpected of reasons. More often than not, the problem is marketing – dependable strategies that work on the international market can flop here, and if you're targeting the expat community and following local marketing wisdom, the writing's on the wall before you invest your first VND.

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[www.metro-solutions.asia](http://www.metro-solutions.asia)  
Contact: Kate Tu  
091 800 7160 | 08 3826 6848



# Travel & Leisure

IMAGE BY NELSON CARVALHEIRO





# In Love with Lisbon

An ode to Portugal's capital city

TEXT BY **ZARA QUIROGA** IMAGES BY **NELSON CARVALHEIRO**

NO MATTER WHERE you come from, Portugal's capital is an entirely different world. Even as a Portuguese myself, I can sense it. In Lisbon, the rich Portuguese heritage blends with cosmopolitan vibes and diverse international influences. Yet Lisbon is always down-to-earth, and that is what makes it truly soulful and inviting.

The land that now encompasses Portugal was once the home of Romans and later Muslims. The first King, D. Afonso Henriques, founded the country that would later be known for its pioneering explorations of the wider world in the 12th century. It was 300 years later that Portuguese ships sailed to the Americas and Asia, to create links that would remain until today.

Resting on the banks of a river that almost looks like a sea, Lisbon is sun-kissed most of the year. You're meant to take it easy around here. During the warmer months, its proximity to Atlantic beaches makes it appealing for those seeking to sunbathe, surf or simply relax with a seafood lunch, a chilled glass of wine and a pleasant view.

But the true essence of Lisbon is to be found in its historical quarters. The best way to discover Lisbon is by getting lost in its small cobblestone alleys - they will take you not only to interesting places, but also back in time. After





Sunset over Lisbon

you've taken your time downtown in Baixa, head to Alfama - often considered one of Lisbon's most picturesque neighborhoods. Then walk up to Castle of Sao Jorge. Take your time to observe how people go about their daily lives. Learn what the images on the cobblestone streets beneath you mean. Photograph the tile-fronted buildings that display a peculiar Portuguese style. Catch your breath in the many viewpoints you'll come across on the way and finally reach the castle atop the hill. Here, with panoramic views across the city and river, is where you'll fall in love with Lisbon.

When your legs demand a rest after walking up and down the "City of the 7 Hills," hop on one of the vintage looking trams. Tram 28, locally known as "Electrico 28" is the star tram of Lisbon and for a modest fee will take you on a voyage around some of the most recognizable landmarks and historic neighborhoods of the capital.

In Belem, another parish dominated by

curious tourists, gaze at landmarks such as the Monument of the Discoveries or Belem Tower. These monuments mark the geographical spot where Portuguese ships departed from during the Age of Exploration, more than 500 years ago, on the way to India and the Orient. Here you'll be able to look back and imagine the courage travelers had before our time. Those explorers left behind all they knew in this world to go out to the open sea and travel beyond anything their imagination could conjure up.

### Indulgent Eating

You will understand what makes Portuguese cuisine unique when you start smelling the charcoal warming up in the restaurants dotted around the city. It's almost impossible to leave the city without trying at least one *bacalhau* dish. Salted codfish is the local specialty and - through the hundreds of recipes developed to enjoy



Pastel de Nata

## EAT

### CANTINHO DO AVILLEZ

Run by the country's most internationally recognized chef, Jose Avillez, the restaurant offers Portuguese cuisine with a sophisticated and contemporary touch.

*Rua dos Duques de Braganca, 7  
www.cantinhodoavillez.pt*

### CERVEJARIA RAMIRO

Traditional Portuguese seafood restaurant with a laid back atmosphere.

*Avenida Almirante Reis 11, H  
www.cervejariaramiro.pt*

### TERRA

Portuguese cuisine centered on seafood and meat.

*Rua da Palmeira 15, Principe Real  
www.restauranteterra.pt*

## DRINK

### BA WINE BAR DO BAIRRO ALTO

A great place for Portuguese wine tastings with over 150 wines by the glass.

Best enjoyed alongside a selection of Portuguese cheeses and fine charcuterie.

*Rua da Rosa, 107*

### CHAPITO A MESA

Nestled inside an arts and circus school, this bar and restaurant serves food and drinks with some of the best views over Lisbon and the Tagus river.

Recommended for sunset.

*Rua Costa do Castelo, 7  
www.chapito.org*

### TASCA DO CHICO

Informal setting for drinks and snacks; live Fado performances at night.

*Rua do Diario de Noticias, 39*

## DESSERTS

### PASTEIS DE BELEM

Original home of the famous pasteis de Belem. This is where almost 200 years ago the recipe for globally famous Portuguese pastries that inspired the popular egg tarts in Asia was created.

*Rua de Belem, 84  
www.pasteisdebelem.pt*

### CONFEITARIA NACIONAL

Historic pastry shop satisfying sweet cravings in downtown Lisbon since the 19th century. Choosing a sweet treat may prove difficult, as you'll be spoilt with choice.

*Praca da Figueira, 183  
www.confeitarianacional.com*



Bacalhau seller



Mural about Fado

## “Not being spoilt by massive tourism, Lisbon is quaint. It will excite you but it will still allow you to spend some intimate time with her.”

it - is almost omnipresent. Traditional Portuguese meals invite you to lounge around the table, helping yourself to another glass of local wine, indulging in hours of cheerful conversation and then eating some more. By all means, dessert shouldn't be forgotten and waiters will make it a point to tell you so. Sugary and with lots of eggs, most Portuguese desserts are not only a complement to a great meal but something to be enjoyed on their own at any time of the day. Indulgence is the key word when it comes to food experiences in Portugal.

With pastry shops dominating the urban landscape, it's easy to satisfy a sweet tooth on the go as well. Amongst the many delectable treats, Pastéis de Belem takes the prize as most iconic. Originally from the area of Belem, they can also be enjoyed under the name “pastel de nata” (custard tart) at any cafe of the city or even across the rest of Portugal. To feel like a local, order a pastry with local coffee, that is, a *bica*.

When the sun goes down, feel the nostalgia while listening to the sounds of Fado, traditional local music. It doesn't matter if you don't understand the lyrics because Fado's simple raw singing accompanied by one or two Portuguese

guitars will reach deep inside you - that's something you have to experience for yourself to understand.

Lisbon was on the cover of the latest issue of *National Geographic Magazine*, and it is easy to see why international tourists have increasingly included the capital of Portugal on their bucket lists. Not being spoilt by massive tourism, Lisbon is quaint. It will excite you but it will still allow you to spend some intimate time with her. ■

**BIO:** *Zara is a Portuguese travel writer who quit her job in Dubai in 2011 to travel around the world with her now husband Ashray, from India. They're the team behind Backpack ME ([www.bkpk.me](http://www.bkpk.me)), a travel site that aims to share tips and ideas with people globally, inspiring them to travel, no matter where they come from. While A&Z combines Eastern and Western cultures, Backpack ME is all about a multicultural perspective on travel.*

**BIO:** *Nelson ([www.nelsoncarvalho.com](http://www.nelsoncarvalho.com)) is a Portuguese travel blogger and hotel manager. He has a passion for people, travel and food and as a storyteller dedicates his writing and photography to the soul of the places he visits, the people he meets and the food he tastes.*



### STAY

#### SOLAR DO CASTELO

Romantic boutique hotel in the heart of Alfama neighborhood. Great base to explore the historic districts and splendid views over Lisbon.

Rua das Cozinhas, 2 (ao Castelo)  
[www.solardocastelo.com](http://www.solardocastelo.com)

### TOURS

#### LISBON EXPLORER

A tour of Lisbon packed with culture and history led by an English speaking guide.

[www.lisbonexplorer.com](http://www.lisbonexplorer.com)

#### TASTE OF LISBOA FOOD TOURS

Foodie tours and cooking classes showcasing highlights of Portuguese cuisine.

[www.tasteoflisboa.com](http://www.tasteoflisboa.com)



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PRINCESS D'ANNAM  
RESORT & SPA



IMAGES PROVIDED BY MAISON MIKIO BOUTIQUE SALON

# A Day of Pampering

Whisk yourself away for a day of indulgence and relaxation

TEXT BY NGUYEN NGAN

MODERN CITIES ARE a cacophony of honking horns, trucks, cars, bikes, motorcycles and huge chunks of humanity. It's enough to drive anyone to seek therapeutic help, myself included. Seeking some much-needed pampering, I head to Maison Mikio Boutique Salon in the quiet neighborhood of Phu My Hung.

Treatments here run the gamut – from hair and scalp treatments using L'Oréal Professionnel and Japanese brand Milbon, to traditional foot massage, waxing and nail services. The spa offers all the services you'll need to look your best, from the latest hairstyle to fresh-off-the-runway nail trends. Maison Mikio skin care services use Nuskin products together with a machine that emits a galvanic current to massage the face and neck – one of the best ways to drive ingredients deep into the skin and also to draw out impurities, dramatically reducing the aging process by targeting its ultimate sources. They also use the latest in Ageloc technology, a treatment that revives, invigorates and firms the skin, while smoothing lines and wrinkles.

As I stepped into the salon I was immediately greeted at the door, and after a brief consultation I was told that Jun would be taking care of me. Jun was everything I needed in a stylist. He greeted me with enthusiasm, asked about my hair's current condition, and discussed what I wanted. All I said was that I wanted bangs – and I think that excited him, because it meant he had free creative reign. He examined my hair and face shape again, and explained in detail what he *could* do and what he was actually *going* to do. He even asked me if I was okay with his plans, just so we were on the same page. I really appreciated his energy and care.

The entire process was great. It took 1.5 hours to wash, cut, dry, and style my hair. I definitely recommend Jun if you're looking for someone personable, who knows hair, and is there to make you feel good about it.

To continue my day of pampering, I followed the makeover with a soothing foot massage. At VND600,000 for an hour session, they worked from my back down to my lower back then focused on feet for the final 30 minutes of so – adjusting the

pressure as needed. I enjoyed the more powerful approach, but that's just because I'm working through years of stress.

Maison Mikio was founded by Korean beauty industry experts Mikio and his sister. The spa is spacious and built around an open concept, designed with sleek black and white color schemes, smooth concrete floors and oversized mirrors in a marriage of modern and vintage elements. Floor to ceiling windows with gauze curtains make the interior feel bright and uplifting. Light jazz music plays in the background, never too loud that you can't doze for a minute, but present enough to give a lift to your mood. The staff are fluent in English, Korean, Vietnamese and Japanese, and there are separate spaces for male and female guests as well as space for couples. A bar with a full cocktail, wine and coffee menu ensures that a visit to Maison Mikio can also be a good night out.

**Maison Mikio** is located in Garden Plaza 2 (8 Ton Dat Tien, D7; Facebook: "Maison Mikio Boutique Salon"). In addition to the usual hair cutting, coloring, perm and hair/scalp treatments, the spacious two-story salon also does nails, waxing and skincare. Hair-related services are done on the cheerfully open ground level while skin treatments are cared for upstairs, in one of two VIP rooms, a massage room or a manicure/pedicure nook.

In November, the salon is offering 20 percent off on hair coloring, waxing, all skin care treatments, mani/pedi and foot massages. ■



# Living with Service

A vacation from the city within the city

TEXT BY **TAYNE EPHRAIM** IMAGES PROVIDED BY **NORFOLK MANSION**

I LIVE IN a residence that's situated within a series of noisy alleyways and surrounded by a host of even noisier neighbors, which made a staycation at the Norfolk Mansion's ([norfolkmanion.com.vn](http://norfolkmanion.com.vn)) two-bedroom apartment suite for a weekend all the more appealing. Centrally located on 19 Ly Tu Trong in District 1, the luxury serviced apartment complex comes fully equipped with a pool, gym, Jacuzzi, sauna and steam room, billiards, and even a library. Each apartment comes with a fully fitted kitchen, free wireless internet – and in some cases, a washing machine.

The interior of my apartment was awash with creamy leather couches, vanilla-colored artwork on the walls, and a flatscreen television – a good balance of comfort, space and functionality. In the airy living room I sink back into one of the cushy armchairs with a book and crank some tunes on the hi-fi system with my feet up on an ottoman.

The suite's master bedroom houses a plush king-size bed and the attached bathroom awaits me with that greatest of simple pleasures, a bathtub. The floor plans of each of the Mansion's different apartment offerings are conveniently located on their

website for downloading, and they also offer penthouses on the top floor.

Come morning, out on the palatial balcony the wrought-iron table and chairs by the balustrade provide the perfect spot for a read of the paper and a coffee before the build-up of the monsoon heat. Both bedrooms, like the balcony, overlook the evolving skyline of downtown District 1, with the Saigon River winking in between the new high-rise developments, one of which is going up right behind the premises. But not to worry, the double-glazed glass does a great job of canceling out the noise of the city. I notice the silence particularly at night.

After a sound sleep, I head for breakfast the next morning at the Mansion's restaurant, Terrazzo Café. Served daily till 9am, the breakfast buffet combines traditional local favorites like *pho* with international familiarities such as pastries, muffins and eggs. Without a cloud in sight, I opt to take my breakfast out on the terrace. I can hear the morning traffic pulsing and humming along below.

After breakfast I go in search of the pool on the second floor. After an hour of soaking up the rays and sweltering heat, I cool down

with a splash and several laps in the water. Adjacent to the pool is a covered area with wicker chairs and a regal billiards table. There is also a children's pool and play area with a jungle gym on rubber grass.

For those who want a stronger workout than laps in the pool, there's an in-house gym and even a yoga room off to the side for those who feel the need to get flexible. Tucked away in a little room off the gym is the library, a curious addition where I pick up a book to flick through at the big table while people pump weights just outside. The library consists of a couple of big bookshelves stocked with the usual assortment of paperback thrillers, travelogues and romance pulp.

Norfolk Mansion works hard to keep its high standards lavish and its guests happy. Service is attentive and discreet. Even the elevators pitch in their part, dispensing daily nuggets of wisdom in the form of inspirational quotes and proverbs from the pages of such varied personalities as Henry Miller and Steve Jobs. With all these graceful little touches, it's well worth putting your feet up and making yourself at home in the Mansion. ■





# A Visit to a Hammam

How to bathe and relax like a Turk

TEXT BY **XUAN TRAN**  
IMAGES BY **NGOC TRAN**

FEW EXPERIENCES AVAILABLE in this city are both truly ancient and singularly unique. The opening of **Villa Aesthetica** (54 Ngo Quang Huy, Thao Dien, D2) just four months ago has heralded the arrival of an experience of precisely that nature: Villa is now home to the only Turkish *hammam* in Vietnam, a form of massage and cleansing that has its roots in the days when the Roman bath entered the Islamic world – perfectly blending classical sensuality with the Quranic sense of purity. While various cultures from Moroccan to Victorian have wrestled with its inherently exotic intimacy in either puritanical outrage or with naked enthusiasm, modern *hammam* places a balanced focus on health and renewal, making it a particularly appropriate feature of a spa rapidly developing a reputation for its wholesome, non-invasive anti-aging technologies.

Villa Aesthetica was designed and built as the dream project of its owner, Australian Viet Kieu architect Leigh Lilischkies of Zenith Interior Design, whose passion for spas and spa treatments has seen her experience and learn from the best venues the world has to offer. “As soon as I check in to a hotel, I ask the cashier where the best local spa is”, she

says. “I’ve been to all the good spas in Dubai, Oman, Europe, like Italy and Monte Carlo – I try them all. So I started to adapt the good things from each spa and bring them back home.”

“I first designed a spa when I was working in Dubai,” she continues, “and I’ve always wanted to do my own. When you enjoy something, you have a passion to do it well. The villa’s been completely redone, everything out the back [a swimming pool and outdoor relaxation area] is all new. I changed everything inside. It’s just something that I enjoy, and it’s a great atmosphere to work in. I like talking with clients, I enjoy anything to do with beauty – I think every woman likes this.”

Leigh’s version of the *hammam* – just one of several specialist massage services offered by the facility – hearkens more to the Dubai tradition than it does the classic variety. “I asked them to teach me while I was in Istanbul,” she explains, “but, for me, the best experience was in Dubai, because they modify it. In Istanbul, it’s more scrubbing, washing, splashing water – it’s like you can’t really relax. In Dubai, they combine relaxation as well as cleansing. It’s gentler



and more subtle. Mine is like this. We also scrub the body, but you relax. It still purges all the dead skin and leaves you refreshed.”

### Feeling Buzzed

I elect to experience Villa Aesthetica’s age-old gold mask *hammam* treatment. The Managing Director and Co-owner Giacomo Erre leads me to the *hammam* room, in which the central *goebektas* – a raised, heated marble slab used as a massage platform – is the focal feature. I undress and cover myself with *peştemal* cotton wraps brought in from Dubai, and prepare myself with short sessions in the steam and spa rooms to work up a perspiration ready for the treatment.

I take position on the *goebektas*, stretching back onto the warm, smooth stone, illuminated in a subdued, diffused light. The atmosphere of the *hammam* is heady and exotic; each wall bears intricate tiling in contemporary and Islamic designs, and the music is distant and almost transcendent. The masseuses put on textured mitts and begin to scrub my exposed skin – insistently, if not roughly – and as they move steadily from foot to neck, my body starts to take on an intense sensation of care and nourishment.

Almost glowing by the time the scrub is over, I then indulge in a highly sensual foam rub, perhaps the highlight of the massage. The masseuses soak soft cloths in hot, soapy water and then whip them in the air to build up a gentle foam, which they then squeeze out over my skin, working their hands over me as if spreading melted aromatic crèmes – a highly intimate sensation which is close to divine. I am then cleansed, the pure water tenderly drizzled over my skin, and rubbed from head to foot with a creamy mud from the sea: Villa’s promotional materials advertise an innovative coffee treatment to “refine and smoothen the skin,” whereas I select a red wine rub from among the options available for its detoxifying properties.

I finish up with the gold mask treatment, which includes a full shampoo and head massage, reawakening the mind as I return from the elevated state of consciousness brought on by the *hammam* experience. The shampoo has a hint of lemongrass and rice – while most of the cosmetics used are the house Italian Vagheggi brand (for which Villa is the exclusive Vietnam distributor) – this is a Thai product, selected to bring an Oriental touch to this essentially Western spa technique.

Coming out of the *hammam* is a gentle descent back to reality, but the buzz takes a good while to fade. The complete gold mask treatment lasts a full 90 minutes for VND1,460,000 (or an hour without the mask for VND1,160,000), although spa enthusiasts who wish to undergo the experience as soon as possible can take advantage of Villa’s ‘bring a friend at half price’ promotion for November only – just mention “*Oi Vietnam*” to receive the discount. For now, booking in advance is essential, especially on weekends. Be prepared to feel totally relaxed and purified – like many other new clients, you may find your first Turkish *hammam* to be delightfully habit-forming. ■





# The Lady in Red

Producer: **Nguyen Tra My**

Director: **Hoang Dao (0123 426 2153)**

Photographer: **Alex Cui**

Model: **Van Quynh - 1st runner up at Miss Ocean 2014**

Make up: **Huynh Kim Hien**

Costume: **Tang Thanh Cong**











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# >>The List Travel



## An Lam Villas I Ninh Van Bay

Built amidst enormous granite boulders and natural fauna on the shores of Ninh Van Bay and inaccessible by road, An Lam Villas Resort is serenely beautiful, silent, relaxing and safe. With private pools, butler service, and superb modern facilities, the whole concept is based on respecting the ecological hinterland, celebrating Vietnam's food and culture - and service. There are 33 villas, and is an ideal location for honeymoons.

**Tan Thanh Hamlet, Ninh Ich Commune, Ninh Hoa District, Nha Trang**  
(05) 8362 4964  
reservation@anlamnvb.com  
www.anlam.com

An Lam  
VILLAS  
— NINH VAN BAY —



## Ana Mandara Villas I Dalat

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

www.anamandara-resort.com



## Princess d'Annam I Phan Thiet

The Princess is an exquisite resort with an almost celestial atmosphere that is hard to find anywhere else in Vietnam. The look of the resort is classical, bright and impeccably clean and private. The two Empress Suites are the very 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.

www.princessannam.com



## Fusion Maia I Danang

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

maidanang.fusion-resorts.com



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## Jasmine Court

Located on a peaceful and beautiful side street off Nguyen Van Troi Boulevard, only 5 minutes from the Tan Son Nhat International Airport and 15 minutes to the city centre, this boutique property with only 12 apartments is 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. With personalized service, our warm and attentive staff will make your stay with us a pleasant and enjoyable experience.

**307/29 Nguyen Van Troi, Tan Binh**  
**3844 6639 - 092 669 9033**  
www.jasminecourt.com.vn

Jasmine Court  
SERVICE APARTMENT



## InterContinental Nha Trang

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

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



## La Veranda I Phu Quoc

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-like ceilings. This is the resort of choice for guests taking advantage of this unspoiled remote tropical island destination.

www.laverandaresorts.com



## Novela Muine Resort & Spa

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

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

Novela Muine  
RESORT & SPA

# >>The List

# Health & Beauty

## DENTAL



### Dr. Hung & Associates Dental Center

A centrally located dental center that uses the latest modern equipment with a team of skilled specialists. Services include cosmetic, implant, braces, prosthodontics, pedodontics and more. Expect high quality service at a reasonable price.

**Building 244A Cong Quynh, D1**  
08 3925 7526  
08 3925 7527  
nhakhoadrhung@gmail.com  
www.drhung01.com



## Also try ...

### 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**

### Elite Dental Group

Elite Dental is an international and well-equipped clinic that provides a wide range of dental services including general dentistry, cosmetic dentistry, Implant, pediatric dentistry and orthodontics. Luxury design and their dental experts will bring you an extremely comfortable experience.

**57A Tran Quoc Thao, D3**

### 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**  
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**

### 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**

### Smile Dental Center

Quality dental care with whitening, cleaning, and orthodontic

services. Japanese equipment and techniques.

**173 Ton Dat Tien, D7**

### 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**

### 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 748**

## SPA



### Maison Mikko Boutique Salon

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

**Garden Plaza 2 Complex**  
**8 Tôn Dật Tiên, Quận 7**  
**5412 4773**



### Sweet Spa

The spa is intimate and beautifully decorated. The staff consists of both highly-skilled men and women. Sweetspa serving you from hand to toe to give real spiritual and physical relaxation. As well as sport injury therapies. After hours of meetings or full days of working, treat yourself to a relaxing massage or soothing reflexotherapy.

**www.sweetspa.vn**

**204B / 12 Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien, D2**



### 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**



## Also try ...

### 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**

### 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**

### 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**

### Kyoto Spa, Hair & Gel Nails Salon

Body massage

Foot massage

Hair cut women and men

**32 Dong Du, Ben Nghe Ward, D1 (Spa & Hair Salon)**

**8A/4D1 Thai Van Lung, Ben Nghe**

**Ward, D1 (Spa)**

**0902 983 089**

**loan\_royal@gmail.com**

**www.spakyotohcmc.com.vn**

### 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 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**

**100 Mac Thi Buoi, D1**

**1st floor, 103 Ton Dat Tien, Tan Phu, D7**



# The Invisible

## Clear alternatives to metal braces

ORTHODONTISTS ARE CONCERNED with the study and treatment of malocclusions (improper bites), which may be a result of tooth irregularity and/or disproportionate jaw relationships. Orthodontic treatment can focus on dental displacement only, or can deal with the control and modification of facial growth, which can result in straightened teeth, a beautiful smile and a harmonized face. There is an increasing demand for orthodontic treatment for children and adults for a better smile.

Straightened teeth and proportionate jaw help make dental cleaning easier and prevent dental problems such as tooth decay, gum disease, chewing and digestive difficulties, temporal mandibular joint (TMJ) disorders, among others. Having healthy teeth and proper jaw alignment also lead to efficient chewing function, preventing possible symptoms of TMJ disease such as: chronic headache and facial or neck pain.

For children, the treatment can help dental displacement, cross-bite to guide the growth of the jaw and permanent teeth eruption. For adults, orthodontic treatment can straighten crooked teeth, correct excessive overbite and/or underbite. With orthodontic treatment, dramatic changes in a person's smile and profile can be positive, bringing a beautiful smile, increasing self-confidence and in turn, a sense of wellbeing.

Orthodontic treatment usually lasts from 1.5 to 2.5 years, depending on the growth of a patient's mouth and face as well as the severity of the problem.

### What are braces?

Dental braces are devices used in orthodontics that align and straighten teeth and help to position them with regard to a person's bite. Currently, metal braces or ceramic braces are popularly used in dental clinics. These braces have a metal bracket with elastic ties holding the wire onto the metal brackets. However, braces can be an obstacle for those who have jobs where appearance and voice are important, such as singers, actors and flight attendants.

Thanks to modern technology and recent achievements in orthodontics, Align Technology has developed Invisalign, which uses transparent and incremental aligners to adjust teeth. Invisalign is a custom-made series of aligners made of smooth, comfortable and virtually invisible plastics to wear over your teeth. Wearing the aligners will gradually and gently shift teeth into place, based on the exact movements that the dentist plans out for you with ClinCheck software. Unlike traditional braces, each aligner will be replaced every two weeks, and the number of trays may vary depending on the severity of each case.

Without metal brackets to attach and wires to tighten, satisfying cosmetic demand and self-confidence for daily communication as well as teeth cleaning, Invisalign has become a popular option for those who require orthodontic treatment. Below are some advantages of using Invisalign over ordinary braces:

- *Cosmetics: Invisalign aligners are invisible so most people won't even know you are straightening your teeth.*

- *Foreseeable treatment plan and results: By using ClinCheck software, Invisalign allows patients to clearly see the treatment process and expected results.*

- *Easy to use: The aligners are easy to wear and take out when eating or brushing your teeth.*

- *Save chair time: Having no metal brackets to attach and no wires to tighten like traditional braces, Invisalign allows you and your dentist to save time spent in the dental clinic.*

To guarantee a smooth treatment process and accuracy when manufacturing aligner trays, professional, well-trained orthodontists are absolutely required. They must be Invisalign certified doctors who have undertaken Invisalign training and own an Invisalign certificate. They can give you a detailed consultation and evaluate if Invisalign is right for you. ■

**BIO: Tran Hung Lam, Ph.D.** graduated from the Ho Chi Minh City Medicine and Pharmacy University. After receiving his PhD from the University of Mediterranean, Marseille, France in 2007, he became Head of Prosthodontics Department at **Elite Dental Group** ([www.elitedental.com.vn](http://www.elitedental.com.vn)). Dr. Lam has successfully presented clinical cases of Implant at ICOI conference (Hamburg, Germany). He holds a Diplomate of the ICOI - the highest rank of ICOI member.



**Invisalign aligners are invisible so most people won't even know you are straightening your teeth.**



# Kids & Education



## School Food

Lunch gets a healthy makeover

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

A COMMUNITY OF teachers, parents, chefs and staff called The ISHCMC Canteen Committee are revolutionizing what students eat for lunch at school.

"We are taking inspiration from what Jamie Oliver did in the UK and in California," says John, the Director of Operations at Global Café, a food service provider at the International School of Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC). Last year, the canteen committee conducted a food experiment at the school to gauge students' interest in eating healthier. "We erected a temporary salad bar and set a goal of selling 40 salads a day. If we were able to hit that mark, then we knew we could go ahead with something more permanent."

The results were beyond expectations, giving Global Café the leverage it needed to implement a healthier school menu and revamp the entire food preparation system, an ambitious goal for a cafeteria that must meet the dining needs of 1,500 children in

the span of one to two hours every day.

"And that's why I was brought in," says Gabriel Boyer, an executive chef with more than eight years of experience in kitchens in the US and Vietnam. "I am here not only to create more healthy food options, but all around better, more delicious, more nutritious food and also to teach these children about good food." Last month, Gabriel lectured a class on various types of vinegar and how to enjoy them. Despite common expectations to the contrary, it proved an entertaining learning session - and there have been many requests for an encore.

The school food revolution begins with replacing store-bought ingredients and items with homemade or healthier alternatives. "We used to have an army of kids high on sugar after lunchtime. Brown sugar doesn't have the same problem as white," John shares. Store-bought juices and yogurt are replaced with organic varieties made right on the school premises.

Wholemeal flour, granola and raisins are added into the baking process as substitutes for unhealthy ingredients. The result is a hearty offering of homemade muffins, cookies, sandwiches and pizzas every day from the school cafeteria.

To the menu, Gabriel added in dishes from other cultures such as Malaysian beef rendang, Japanese chicken teriyaki, Italian spaghetti with Napoli sauce, and Argentinean sliced beef tenderloin with chimichurri sauce. "We want to introduce and educate these kids on international foods," he explains. "After all, they study in an international school, with international schoolmates, and most of them live or will live, in neighborhoods where the people next door may come from an entirely different culture."

The biggest change to the school cafeteria is the now permanent salad bar. "Our salad bar is not like others," John claims. "Lettuce, tomatoes and carrots can get pretty boring, especially for a kid. We offer many salad ingredients for them to choose from, each of these ingredients is organic, wholesome and carefully prepared within the school's kitchen. Every day there is a new salad theme. Today the theme is Tex-Mex. Next week it's Italian, Asian, Mediterranean and Middle Eastern. This way, it never gets boring because every day there is something new waiting to be found at the salad bar."





The Friday Tex-Mex salad is a delight to the tongue. A single plate is made up of no less than 10 kinds of vegetables, grains and roots of all kinds. The Romaine lettuce gives the dish a clean, crisp base. Beans and paprika add a rich, buttery flavor while the sliced onions and riped capsicum add a tongue-tingling spice. Rounded it off is a dressing of toasted cumin oil that has matured overnight. The result is a richly flavored dish whose quality, and taste, would not be out of place in a premier restaurant.

According to John, the number one reason behind the success of the salad bar is the element of independence. "We do not force these kids to eat their greens. We put a bar there and we let them know what's on offer for the day. They make the choice themselves. This is the philosophy of the school. We educate and empower. It's very motivating to see a kid walk away with a huge plate of salad and know that just then they made the healthy decision for themselves, without parents or teachers coercing them into it." ■

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:**  
 Malaysian beef rendang,  
 ISHCMC salad, Vietnamese  
 soup, Argentinean sliced beef  
 tenderloin with chimichurri sauce,  
 Gourmet selection

# Life After Kids

How to avoid the marriage rut after children

TEXT BY MICHAEL ARNOLD

WITH ALL THE sleepless nights, scratchiness and pressure from the in-laws, it's sometimes hard to understand why so many young people want to get married and have babies as soon as possible. Yes, marriage is a fine thing, but only rarely do people acknowledge the fact that it has its darker extremes – fury, jealousies, and bitter remarks are just as much part of the piece as are cuddles, back rubs, and breakfasts in bed. Throw kids into the mix, and the pressure can really start to mount.

If you're on the verge of matrimony, get ready for some hard work. Like any intimate human relationship – especially one with such close proximity, high expectations, and sacrifice of independence – marriage has all the conditions for bringing out the worst in us. The stakes are raised after you have children, when you'll find that beyond the energy you need to devote to child rearing, nurturing your own relationship is among the most important factors in your parenting.

For parents who are married or in a de facto situation, one of the problems is that the very presence of children in the house, with their constant, unrelenting demands for attention, tends to overshadow the needs of the relationship. Too many couples put off resolving their own issues for the sake of spending more time with their children – the result being to threaten the stability of the family itself.

Even so, there are some great marriages and fantastic parents out there, even in a city like this one, with its unique pressures and temptations making it even harder for parenting couples to put themselves first. For local father of two Sean Collins, one of the key factors in keeping an international marriage intimate has been to eschew a few Vietnamese traditions so as to preserve a good measure of husband and wife alone time.

Local wisdom usually sees parents co-sleeping with young kids, disregarding the more Western concept of the sanctity of the marriage bed – but Sean advises holding on to that private space. “You have to make time for each other,” he says. “Get the kids their own room, and don't let them sleep in your room after six months.” Similarly, local hospitality can sometimes interfere with a loving couple's time. “Try to control the amount of time you have visitors in your house,” he advises. “In Vietnam in particular, that can be a nightmare.”

16 years in Vietnam and a happy family home is the result of applying some fairly universal truths to a multicultural situation which can – and often does – go wrong.

“A big part of it is trust,” he says. “I think that being a foreigner in a country where she's from, you already bring yourself to a level of tolerance and understanding of being in a different society, which helps you understand that ‘I've got to work harder at this.’ I knew that going into it, so I didn't expect her to understand every idiosyncrasy that I have and vice versa. We didn't come into it thinking that it's a given thing that we were going to understand each other, so we really had to work hard.”

Steve acknowledges the pressures that living in Saigon can bring to a relationship – particularly with regards to different financial and cultural expectations – but found that having children helped rather than hindered the marriage.

“Kids seal the deal and the bond,” he says. “In the early days, we had our difficulties financially. It would have been pretty easy to say ‘it's not working.’ We never got to that point, but there were

**“To keep a relationship exciting, you always have to have the balance. Work, play, kids – it's all got to be in balance.”**

## Hire Help

For local business owner Steve Mueller,





some tough times there. When a child comes along, it's like – look at this, this is ours. It adds so much to the relationship.”

While living in Vietnam does involve additional difficulties, the one advantage families do have here is the availability and affordability of hired help. “That’s a big deal,” says Steve. “Sometimes we take that for granted. Sometimes we’re like, ‘You know what, this kid’s driving us crazy. Nanny, here you go.’ It’s a luxury here in Vietnam, you can have help in the home. It’s easy to understand how children can bring a lot more stress, but here, we can go out as a couple and not have to worry about our kids. To keep a relationship exciting, you always have to have the balance. Work, play, kids – it’s all got to be in balance. The nanny helps out a lot with that.”

So when you do acknowledge the need for balance in the relationship, how do you ensure that the time you do spend together is everything it needs to be? Mother of two Nix Juban follows some simple techniques that sound more like a couple who’ve just

met than a husband and wife who are already a fair way into a lifetime together.

“Don’t stop having dates,” she says. “We have a weekly scheduled date together – we used to call it Mondate, but now it’s moved to Wednesdate. Don’t feel guilty when you do go out, either. We talk about anything and everything without many limitations – there are no rules except being respectful to each other.”

While communication is vital, so is keeping that spark alive. “We still flirt,” she says. “We still try to look and smell nice, have our dates, watch TV series together, and we don’t worry much about the grand gestures – big gifts and so on – we just try to make the little moments count. It’s those frequent little things that are important and not the big ones. It tends to keep the momentum constant as opposed to always waiting for the next big thing.”

Nix has one final piece of simple advice parents everywhere should take to heart: “Have an active love life, if you know what I mean!” ■

## KEEPING THE FLAME LIT

Recent polls show that 55 percent of married couples are only intimate twice a month or even less – if you don’t want to become just another bedroom statistic, here are a few tips:

### CYBERFLIRTING

It’s easier to get the heartbeat racing after the kids have gone to bed if the thoughts have been floating around all day – exchange suggestive texts and emails to let each other know that tonight’s the night.

### DATE AT HOME

You can’t just shut the kids in the closet while you go out to catch a movie – but you can get a bottle of wine and candles ready before snuggling up in front of the TV. Extra points for putting the movie on pause while you make out.

### DO IT ANYWAY

Half of the problem is getting started – with kids, there’s usually only a limited time for the romantic signals to create the right atmosphere, by which time it can be too late. Trust your body to respond with its own enthusiasm even if you’re not in the mood – your marriage will thank you for it.

### SHOWER POWER

You have to take a wash anyway – doing it together saves both time and water, so it’s great for the environment as well as for your libido.

### TIME TO GO TO BED

Lots of married couples do not go to bed at the same time. Remember that both of you have to be under the sheets – and be awake – if anything’s going to happen in there.

### HOW DO I LOVE THEE

Remind each other that you’re in love, not just bunking together. Compliment each other, hug a lot, and be romantic – try writing love letters and hiding them for each other to find.

### WATCH THIS, KIDS

You don’t want to behave inappropriately in front of your children, but it’s still important to let them know that you’re happy together. Don’t be shy to kiss or hold hands while your kids are in the room – and teach them to respect your privacy when you need to be alone.

### DOCTOR, DOCTOR

You agreed to be in this relationship for life, so if you’re facing problems the two of you can’t resolve by yourselves, seek professional advice. Ask at one of the international clinics that has a counseling service, or seek medical attention for physiological impediments to your love life – don’t shrug it off as unimportant.



# >>The List Education

## INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS



### ABC International School (ABCIS)

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

#### Enquiries and Admissions

Tel: 5431 1833/34/35/36

Email: [office@theabcis.com](mailto:office@theabcis.com)

[www.theabcis.com](http://www.theabcis.com)



### British International School (BIS)

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

#### An Phu Primary Campus

225 Nguyen Van Huong, D2

3744 4551

[apprimary@bisvietnam.com](mailto:apprimary@bisvietnam.com)

#### An Phu Secondary Campus

246 Nguyen Van Huong, D2

3744 2335

[apsecondary@bisvietnam.com](mailto:apsecondary@bisvietnam.com)

#### Tu Xuong Primary Campus

43-45 Tu Xuong Street, D3

3932 0210

[txprimary@bisvietnam.com](mailto:txprimary@bisvietnam.com)

[www.bisvietnam.com](http://www.bisvietnam.com)



### Deutsche Schule Ho Chi Minh City International German School

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

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

12, Vo Truong Toan, An Phu

08 37 44 63 44

[info@igs-hcmc.de](mailto:info@igs-hcmc.de)

[www.igs-hcmc.de](http://www.igs-hcmc.de)



We leave no question unanswered

### EUROPEAN International School Ho Chi Minh City

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

730 Le Van Mien,

Thao Dien, District 2, HCMC

[www.eishcmc.com](http://www.eishcmc.com)



### The International School Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC)

The most established school in Ho Chi Minh City is celebrating 20 years of success in 2013. ISHCMC is the only school in HCMC with full accreditation to teach all three IB programs to students from 2 to 18. ISHCMC is fully accredited by both the Council of International Schools (CIS) and the New England Association of School and Colleges (NEASC), two of the most prestigious international accreditation organisations. ISHCMC has 975 students from over 50 different nationalities enjoying recently upgraded facilities.

28 Vo Truong Toan, D2

[www.ishcmc.com](http://www.ishcmc.com)



### Renaissance International School Saigon

Renaissance is an International British school providing an inclusive curriculum based upon the British curriculum complemented by the International Primary Curriculum and International Baccalaureate. The school has made a conscious decision to limit numbers and keep class sizes small to ensure each student is offered an education tailored to meet his or her individual learning needs. It is a family school providing a stimulating and secure learning environment with first-class facilities including a 350-seat theatre, swimming pool, mini-pool, play-areas, gymnasium, IT labs, music and drama rooms, science labs and an all-weather pitch.

74 Nguyen Thi Thap, D7

3773 3171 ext 120/121/122

[www.renaissance.edu.vn](http://www.renaissance.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**



### The American School of Vietnam

The American School of Vietnam (TAS) is a young school that has been granted candidacy by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), representing 20 nationalities. TAS provides an American-based curriculum with rigorous performance standards and a variety of academic offerings including Advanced Placement courses, university credit courses through our partnership with Missouri State University, and an Intensive ESL Program for English Language Learners.

**177A, 172-180 Nguyen Van Huong,  
Thao Dien ward, D2, HCMC  
www.theamericanschool.edu.vn  
08 3519 2223 , 08 3519 2224  
info@tasvietnam.edu.vn**



THE AMERICAN SCHOOL  
OF VIETNAM



### The French International School Saint Ange

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

**188A2, Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien, D2, HCMC  
0120 304 8875  
saintange2.vn@gmail.com  
www.sa-saigon.com**



## Also...

### American International School

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

**Elementary School (102C Nguyen Van Cu, D1)  
Middle School (35 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh)  
High School (781/C1-C2 Le Hong Phong, D10)**

### APSC Compound

**36 Thao Dien, D2  
Thu Thiem Campus (Kindergarten, Primary, Middle & Senior School)  
East-West Highway, D2  
3742 4040  
www.aivietnam.com**

### Canadian International School

Now in its fifth year of operation with a student population of 700 students in grades K-12, CIS- VN has received approval from the Ministry of Education and Training in Vietnam and the Department of Education and Training in Ho Chi Minh City to accept both Vietnamese nationals and expat nationals. The school's language of instruction is English.

**No 86, Road 23, D7  
www.cis.edu.vn**

### Canada Vietnam Kindergarten

According to the average age of each class as well as the physiology and psychology of each age, CVK has deployed a curriculum that ensures the balance between study and playtime, Vietnamese and English learning.

**Street 23, Tan Phu, D7  
5412 3028  
www.cvr.edu.vn**

### Horizon International Bilingual School

Offers curriculum for kindergarten, primary, secondary and high school. Classes are taught in English and Vietnamese. Offers scholarships for children who achieve excellence in school.

**6 - 6A - 8, Street 44, D2  
5402 2482  
www.hibs.vn**

### International School Saigon Pearl

ISSP is an elementary school for children 2 to 11 years of age. Offers an academically rigorous American curriculum. The school has several smartboards, projectors and an

independent IT suite that allows students the opportunity to interact with technology to enhance learning.

**92 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh  
082227788  
www.issp.edu.vn**

### Schools of North America

Offers a dual curriculum - instructing students in a Vietnamese program directed by the Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) in tandem with an American program aligned with the State of California. Students graduate after accumulating 248 credits which is equivalent to high school graduates in the US.

**Street 5A, Trung Son Residential Quarter, Binh Chanh  
402 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D3  
www.sna.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  
www.ssis.edu.vn**

### Singapore International School at Saigon South

Commenced operations in August 2008, The Singapore International School at Saigon South (SIS @ SS) is a purpose-built international school campus that has a capacity of 625 students. It operates classes from kindergarten to senior high school.

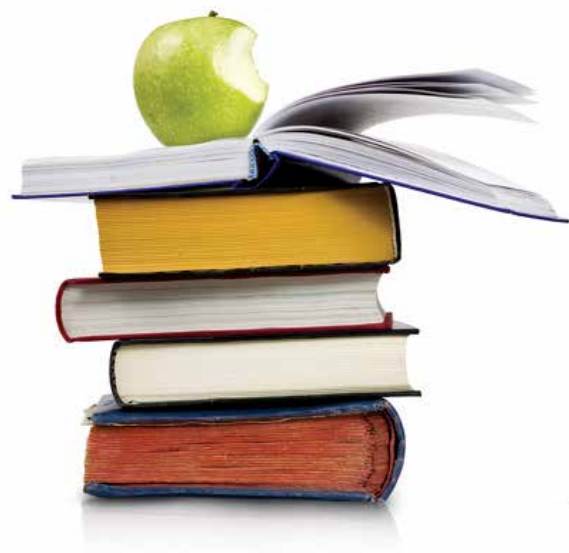
**No 29, Road 3, Trung Son Residential Area, Binh Chanh  
www.saigonsouth.sis.edu.vn**



### Vietnamese Language Studies (VLS)

Vietnamese Language Studies (VLS) is established as a highly effective and professional Vietnamese language school for foreigners in Vietnam. For 20 years, VLS has focused on making learning Vietnamese an enjoyable, beneficial and meaningful part of life for our students. It is our passion to provide you with the experience of living in Vietnamese, not just learning. Our extensive training experience and serious commitment for excellence will make your "investment" personally rewarding and professionally productive in Vietnam.

**093 404 4669 / 091 337 3286  
www.vlstudies.com  
contact@vlstudies.com**





# Faces & Places



## A Taste of Germany

Deutsches Eck/German Corner (A001 Nguyen Van Linh, Phu My Hung, D7) celebrated its one year anniversary with a German style BBQ, plenty of beers, an authentic German waitress and plenty of friends.

IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN



## A New Partnership

Bios Wellness Cuisine restaurant on 61 Xuan Thuy in District 2 teamed up with Unicity to offer customers a healthy and nutritious dining option.

IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN



## Journey to Japan

HIS Travel agency ([www.hisvn.com.vn](http://www.hisvn.com.vn)) joined the General Consulate of Japan and the Youth Cultural Center to help those who want to study, work and travel to Japan

IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN





*Your workplace*

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# The Landmark



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Economic Times to honor  
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Apartments & Office Complex
- **THE BEST MANAGER**  
in caring for staff benefits in  
District 1 by Trade Union of  
District 1, HCMC
- **TOP 1000 ENTERPRISES OF  
TAX CONTRIBUTION 2013**  
by Vietnam Report JSC in  
cooperation with the Journal of  
Taxation, the General  
Department of Taxation
- **GOLDEN DRAGON AWARD**  
presented by Vietnam  
Economic Times to honor  
contributions made by  
foreign-investment enterprises
- **EXCELLENCE IN  
MOTIVATING STAFF**  
performance and CSR activities  
in District 1 by Trade Union of  
District 1, HCMC
- **EXCELLENT TRADE UNION**  
in District 1 by Trade Union of  
District 1, HCMC

5B Ton Duc Thang St., District 1, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

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