



oi

VIETNAM

OCTOBER 2014

WHAT A HOOT!

Live Parrots and Owls
With Your Coffee

PAGE 24

SHINE A LIGHT

Turn the Lights Off,
It's Time to Eat

PAGE 50

OH, GROW UP!

Find Your Inner Child
in Bangkok

PAGE 74

THE
ROYAL
TREATMENT

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and The Huy

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Nộp lưu chiểu tháng 4/2014

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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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Contents



WINE & DINE

RESTAURANT REVIEWS

A French restaurant opened by an emperor's granddaughter, eccentric Korean food, and Cantonese specialties are part of this month's culinary journey

54

FEATURES

P10 DATEBOOK

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

P16 TROI OI

See why Kobe beef, dog meat and a bike-sharing program made our noteworthy numbers this month

P18 THE BULLETIN

Checking out the latest promotions and openings

P22 DAD, YOU'RE A TOUGH ART CRITIC

Fun and great alternatives to throwing away your child's piles of artwork

P24 WHAT A HOOT!

An in-house staff of live parrots and owls are ready to greet you at this whimsical café

P26 LIVING AMONG THE DEAD

Out of desperation, a community of displaced people decided to build a neighborhood above a cemetery

P28 HOW TO BUILD A BOAT

See how a team of skilled locals construct a catamaran

P50 SHINE A LIGHT

Two restaurants are bringing the dine-in-the-dark concept to Saigon, we speak to both owners

P74 OH, GROW UP!

From over-the-top action packed selfies to teddy bear tea parties and a treehouse resort, time to reverse the aging process and be a kid again



COVER STORY

THE ROYAL TREATMENT

The luxury market is a new but rapidly growing segment in Vietnam and its people are developing a taste for only the best of what the world has to offer

IMAGE BY NEIL FEATHERSTONE

34

P84 BEHIND THE FORBIDDEN CITY

Promoting and preserving the ancient cultural heritage of Hue through one-of-a-kind royal robes

P90 MY LIFE AS

A shoe shine boy and the struggles of roaming the streets for clients

COLUMNS

P32 LEGAL EASE

A mother's worry of losing her child if her German husband wins custody overseas

P33 SAIGON MYTHBUSTERS

What is a "cultured" neighborhood? Do the numbers on the trees indicate their age?

P79 POSTCARDS FROM VIETNAM

A summer in the cool mountains of Sapa turns into an annual art festival

P80 LIFE'S A TRIP

Mattress runs, fat fingers and blurring the line of what's legal and illegal to get that free and/or cheap travel deal

P92 HOME INTERIOR

You don't have to scream, shout or use tons of velvet to make a bold statement

P93 HIGHER LEARNING

Defining excellence in Early Years setting

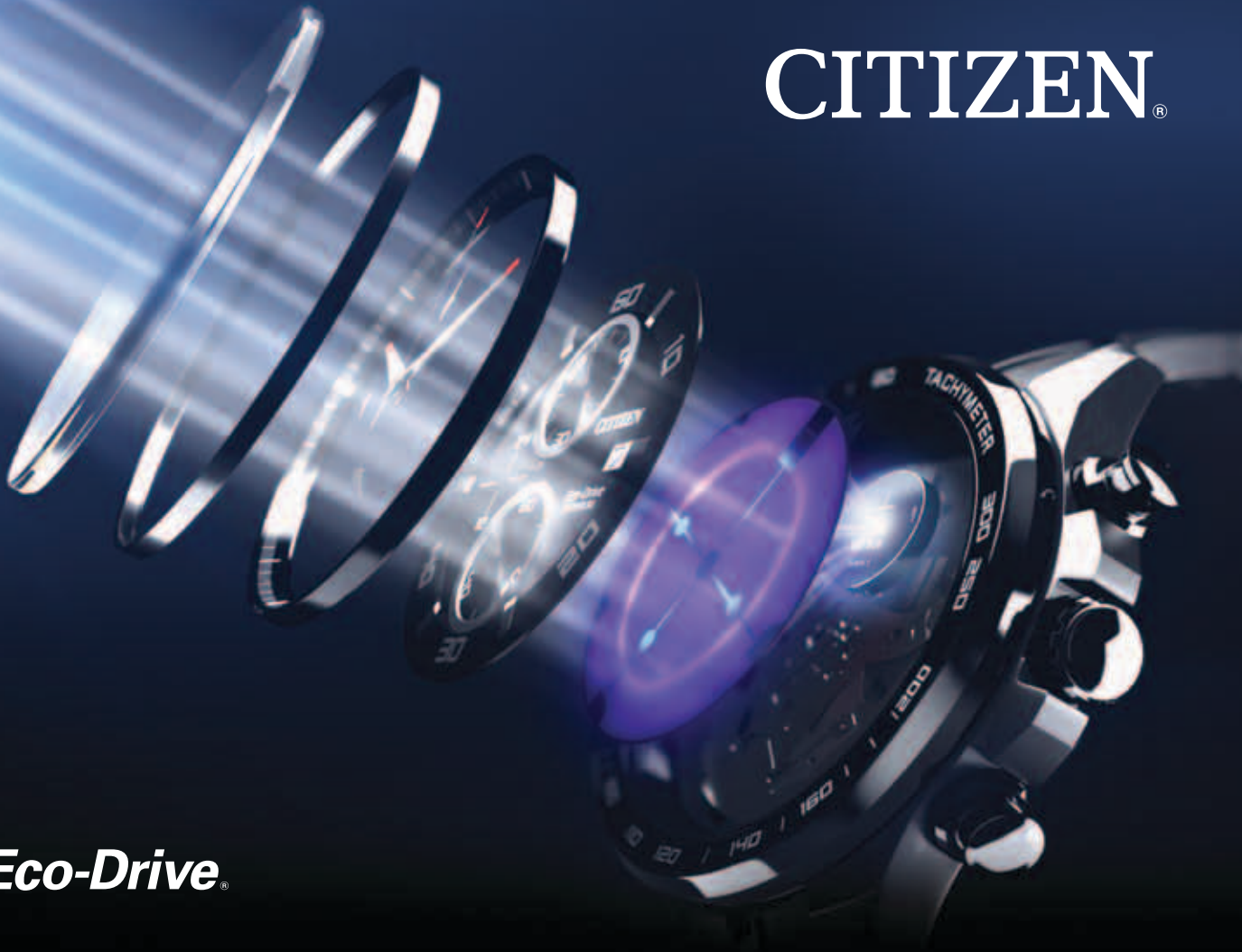
P97 ARE YOU A MEMBER?

A humorous look at the ups and downs of a crosscultural relationship

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Datebook

What's on in Saigon this month...



OCTOBER 4

What: Deutsches Eck/German Corner One Year Anniversary Party

Where: Deutsches Eck/German Corner (A001-003 Nguyen Van Linh, Hung Vuong 1, Phu My Hung, D7); 4pm to late

About: To celebrate its first anniversary, the restaurant will be serving 20 German beers (Bitburger, König Pilsener Draught, Erdinger, Hofbrau, Benediktiner and more) with plenty of special offers, discounts and a lucky draw. A German style BBQ will be available and served by a "real" German waitress.

Contact: Call 5410 6695 or email nhahanggocduc@gmail.com for more details

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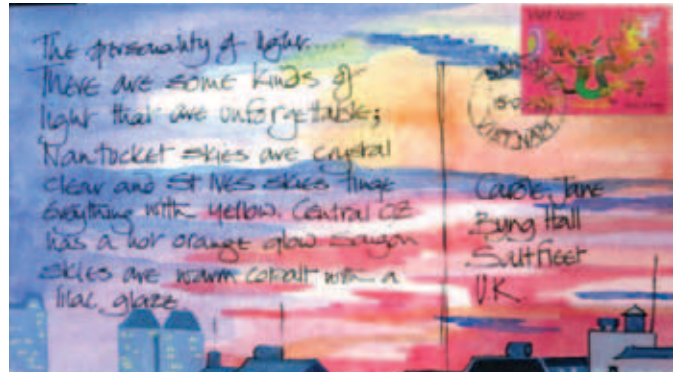
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OCTOBER 7

What: Drawing Saigon

Where: VinSpace Art Studio and VinSpace Garage

About: Bridget March is a professional artist from the UK who specializes in watercolor paintings and now offers a short course to teach the techniques needed to be more successful with this challenging medium.

Contact: Visit www.vingallery.com for more details

OCTOBER 8

What: 20 Year Anniversary Charity Gala Dinner

Where: The New World Saigon Hotel (76 Le Lai, D1); Ticket priced at VND4,200,000 per person and includes a one-night stay with breakfast for two in the Residence Club Deluxe room.

About: To celebrate its 20th anniversary, The New World Saigon Hotel will host a charity event and dinner. At 8am a traditional lion dance will take place along with an *ao dai* performance. The evening begins with cocktails, Champagne and hors d'oeuvres followed by a five-course dinner, which has been expertly paired with fine wines. Entertainment includes an illusionist, live acoustic performances, a DJ and a live auction to support Christina Noble Children's Foundation. All proceeds from ticket sales will go to charity.

Contact: Email Ly.Le@newworldhotels.com for more details



OCTOBER 10

What: Canadian Thanksgiving Pot Luck

Where: Body by Jovie (Block B, Riverside Residence, Nguyen Luong Bang Street, D7); 6:30pm; Free if you bring a pot luck dish

About: Although it's a Canadian themed event, guests are welcome to bring any international dish they like. Prizes will be awarded for best dish. There will be a Zumba kids demonstration and all new attendants will receive a free three-day trial pass for yoga, Pilates, Zumba or TRX Suspension classes.

Contact: RSVP by October 6 to info@bodybyjovie.com



OCTOBER 10

What: French Pop with Singer Sophie Maurin

Where: IDECAF (28 Le Thanh Ton, D1); 8pm; VND160,000

About: Sophie Maurin is a classically educated singer/songwriter who has taken her country by storm with her lyrics and the sweetness of her voice. Her first album, *Sophie Maurin*, revealed a talent that could be inherited from Scott Joplin on the piano, the Beatles at Abbey Road or the Double Six in front of a blank page: lots of freedom, lots of rigor and lots of invention.

Contact: Call 3823 9968 for more details

OCTOBER 10

What: Second Annual AusCham Scramble

Where: Vietnam Golf and Country Club (Long Thanh My, D9)

About: Entry fee of VND2.6 million (members), and VND2.9 million (non-members), gives players: Green (4 Ball Scramble format) and caddy fees; AusCham Scramble shirt and hat; breakfast, lunch and dinner, drinks; buses to and from the golf course; and prizes including a chance to win a Harley-Davidson. Proceeds from the day will be donated to charity.

Contact: Email office@auschamvn.org or call 3832 9912 for more details



OCTOBER 10 - 12

What: Oktoberfest

Where: Deutsches Eck/German Corner (A001-003 Nguyen Van Linh, Hung Vuong 1, Phu My Hung, D7); 4pm to late

About: To celebrate Oktoberfest, the world's largest beer festival held annually in Munich, Bavaria, Germany, German Corner is holding a three-day event showcasing German culture. Traditional Bavarian fun is supplied by a BBQ with pork knuckles, sausages, pretzels and more. And don't forget to wash it all down with a choice of 20 German beers – all served by a “real” German waitress. And to keep the fun going, there will be a lucky draw, a beer drinking contest, arm wrestling challenge and plenty more.

Contact: Call 5410 6695 or email nhanggocduc@gmail.com for more details

OCTOBER 11

What: Art Market

Where: The Cube Bar (31B Ly Tu Trong, D1); 10am - 4pm

About: Vendors will sell handmade arts and crafts, paintings, drawings and limited edition prints. Photographers are welcome to showcase their works as well. This is a great opportunity for art lovers to come and grab original designs.

Contact: Visit www.vingallery.com for more details


OCTOBER 14

What: Art Babble – Not Everyone is an Artist

Where: The Snap Café (32 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2); 7pm




About: As part of a more inclusive approach to culture and art in Asia, VinGallery has started a program where guest speakers from the art community will talk about art and photography. The program opens with Bridget March and her summer in Sapa, the life and culture of ethnic minorities and changing young lives – which will be available as an illustrated book in 2015. Future talks are scheduled for November 5, 25 and December 9. Sessions last 40 minutes, with networking at the bar afterwards.

Contact: Visit www.vingallery.com for more details



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OCTOBER 15 & 16

What: The Mist

Where: Saigon Opera House (7 Cong Truong Lam Son, D1)

About: Performed by Arabesque, The Mist is a new theatrical show that depicts Vietnamese farming life through contemporary dance, live music, colorful lighting effects and audience interaction. The Mist tells the story of farmers in a village going about their everyday routine in the early morning mist, such as tending rice paddies, husking rice and preparing for the early morning market. These activities and emotions are expressed through symbolic dance movements combined with the use of traditional working clothes and authentic rural props, so as to deliver a typical Vietnamese countryside experience. The live music is improvised against the backdrop of the dancers. The Mist is choreographed by the directors from Lang Toi and A O Show.

Contact: For tickets email reservation@themist.com.vn or call 094 933 6133

OCTOBER 18

What: Charity Bike Ride for Ho Tram Water Safety

Where: Two Starts: Cat Lai (6am, 140km) or Long Thanh (7am, 80km). Finish at Ho Tram Community Pool

About: Third annual bike ride from HCMC to Ho Tram to raise money and awareness of water safety in Vietnam. Ho Tram Water Safety is a consortium of people and organizations concerned by the high incidence of children drowning in Vietnam and committed to improving the level of water safety in the Ho Tram region.

Register at The Bike Shop in District 2, entry fee of VND1.6 million includes BBQ, beers, bike shirt and return bus transport.

Contact: Visit Facebook: Ho Tram Water Safety for more details



A O SHOW



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*Terms & Conditions

- Applies only to international flights to Vietnam
- 01 ticket per boarding pass
- Boarding passes must be no more than 07 days old
- Valid until 30th November 2014



A O SHOW










OCTOBER 20 - NOVEMBER 29

What: The Landmark Health Club Annual Squash Tournament

Where: The Landmark Health Club (15th & 16th Floors, 5B Ton Duc Thang, D1)

About: Competitors from men, women, beginner, intermediate and advanced levels are welcome to compete in the Annual Squash Tournament. Registration fee for non-members is VND500,000 and includes all tournament matches. Registration starts from October 1 -15. Matches begin October 20 and the finals tournament on November 29 (prizes will be awarded on this day). The Landmark Health Club features a fully-equipped gym, yoga studio, rooftop swimming pool, saunas, and the only squash court in central Saigon.

Contact: For more info, call Viet at 3822 2098 ext. 176/090 380 4057 or email hc@thelandmarkvietnam.com

OCTOBER 21 - 24

What: Ta Lai Longhouse Children Camp

Where: Cat Tien National Park

About: Send your children on a jungle adventure at the Ta Lai Longhouse. This month's camp has a special program incorporating the iPad. Through guided instruction using various apps on the iPad, each workshop teaches a practical skill to give kids a greater understanding of the great outdoors and the world around us. VND6 million per child includes all expenses.

Contact: Visit www.talai-adventure.vn for more details

OCTOBER 24

What: Anchorsong (Case Study, Thoughts Recordings - Tokyo) & Kay Suzuki

Where: The Observatory (corner of Le Lai & Ton That Tung, D1); 10pm; VND100,000

About: Since moving to London in 2004, Kay has been heavily involved in its diverse club scenes and has a debut on the BBC's award-winning party/label CO-OP in 2007. While releasing remixes, re-edits and original production on several labels in Europe, the US and Japan, he also launched his own label Round in Motion in 2010, and subsequently his first album, *Consciousness*. The first single *Music*, which featured West African traditional musicians, has become a cult hit in South Africa's deep house scene.

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

OCTOBER 24 & 25

What: Balade en France

Where: Hotel Equatorial (242 Tran Binh Trong, D5); 6pm - 11pm; Adult tickets are VND150,000 in advance, VND300,000 at the door; Children (6-14), VND120,000; free under 6

About: Around 1,800 people are expected to attend this two-night event. Visitors can buy an entrance ticket granting access to the event, including entertainment and games. Coupons sold for VND20,000 each can be exchanged for food or beverages.

Balade en France is the annual rendezvous for Francophiles who want to discover and learn more about French cuisine and wine.

Contact: Email catherine.tran@diplomatie.gouv.fr for more details



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OCTOBER 25

What: Thristian Richards

Where: The Observatory (corner of Le Lai & Ton That Tung, D1); 10pm;
VND100,000

About: One of the original architects of the Boiler Room, which has grown to become a globally respected and popular underground music show, Thristian has built a reputation as a passionate and exciting DJ, demonstrating a natural talent as a music selector. As the Lead Programmer/A&R for Boiler Room, he's responsible for the dynamic and eclectic line-ups that have become synonymous with Boiler Room sessions from London to Los Angeles and Berlin to Cape Town. Supporting act will be DJ Hibiya Line and Nic Ford.

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

OCTOBER 25

What: Arts for Mobility Presents Vietnam's Young Virtuosos 2014

Where: Saigon Opera House; VND500,000/adult; 6pm refreshment and art auction, 7:30pm - 10pm concert

About: Arts for Mobility, in conjunction with Saigon Chamber Music, will showcase musical talents from young virtuosos. Compositions by Bach, Mozart, Schumann and others will be performed with a charity auction during intermission.

Contact: Visit www.artsformobility.com for more details




UNTIL OCTOBER 30

What: Autumn Galleria

Where: San Art (3 Me Linh, Binh Thanh); Tuesday - Saturday (10:30am - 6:30pm)

About: Here autumn takes shape by means of drawing, painting and photography. Visit the fictional school from Thao Nguyen's paintings, meet a family in their TV time framed inside Phan Quang's photograph, contemplate in front of Nguyen Thai Tuan's gate, see nature through Le Phi Long's eyes and come back to a hidden reality of death with Nguyen Van Du. Last but not least, take a peek at Bich Phuong's painting the way her subject looks at you.

Contact: Visit www.san-art.org for more details

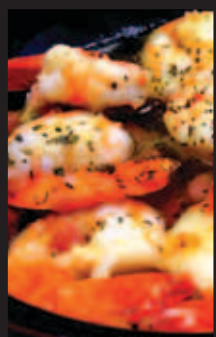
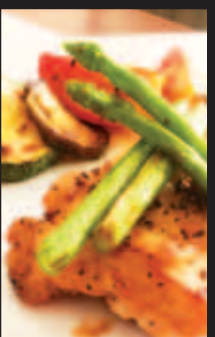



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THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW



SOURCE: WWW.INSIDETHEMAGIC.NET / PIXELSANDPAPERS.WORDPRESS.COM

OCTOBER 31 & NOVEMBER 1

What: Saigon Players' Rocky Horror Halloween Madness

Where: McSorley's Square (4 Thao Dien, D2); Film starts at 7:30pm

About: This is the annual screening (with shadow actors) of one of the most famous cult movies of all time - *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*! Come dressed in your fishnets or stilettos or as your favorite character in the movie. They will provide props for the audience participation sections. Proceeds go to Operation Smile Vietnam and Viet Hearts.

Contact: Email saigonplayers@gmail.com for more details

NOVEMBER 1

What: Saigon Melbourne Cup

Where: Reverie Hotel in Times Square, 11am – 4pm; USD150 a ticket

About: Hosted by AusCham, the event is a local celebration of the annual Australian horse race event, the Melbourne Cup, held on the first Tuesday of November and dating back to 1861. The Saigon Melbourne Cup will have special horse races where people can purchase horses with cash to win prizes from sponsors. The cash will be donated directly to charity.

In keeping with tradition of the Melbourne Cup's Fashions on the Field, there will be Fashions on the 'Gon which will be divided into two categories: The Pro Show (10 Vietnamese models dressed in *ao dai* will wear striking hats designed by Kan Kanemura exclusively for the Saigon Melbourne Cup) and The People's Performance.

Guests can register in advance for some expert tips on the catwalk provided by Soul Music Academy.

Contact: Email events@auschamvn.org for more details



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Troi Oi

The country by numbers



OVER 5 MILLION

dogs are killed annually for meat in Vietnam. According to the Asia Canine Protection Alliance (ACPA) Vietnam statistics, Vietnam ranks second on the list of Asian countries which eat the most dog meat, following China, which kills 10 million canines per year.

The main sources for dog meat in Vietnam are smuggled from Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, in addition to domestic dogs that are stolen.



FIRST

Kobe beef farm in Lam Dong Province will soon be producing meat for consumption by 2015. Nguyen Tri Duc Vu, director of Kobe Beef Corporation, the company that owns the farm, said the quantity would be limited at first because the farm will only be able to produce 50 cows per year.

"These Vietnamese-raised cattle are only 50 percent Kobe cows, which means they are half-Kobe and half-Vietnamese by blood. It will take some time to produce purebred Japanese Kobe cows," Vu added.

The first generation of hybrid Kobe cows will be bred with the DNA of American wagyu to produce the second generation, which will have 75 percent Kobe DNA in its blood. The same process will be applied to the second generation to produce a third generation with 100 percent Kobe DNA.



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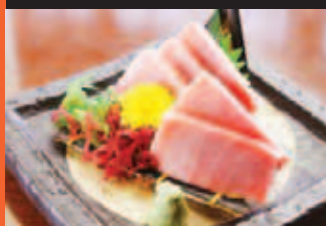
Seafood sashimi salad



Amberjack



Yellow tail



Otoro sashimi



Chutoro tuna



Taraba-gani



5 major cities in Vietnam will host a pilot bike-sharing program in 2015. The proposal for the program was submitted by the Transport Ministry late last year and has garnered support from Deputy Prime Minister Hoang Trung Hai. As part of the plan, by 2015, cities must submit a detailed roadmap to address traffic issues and improve public transport. Bike-sharing schemes have seen incredible success over the past two years in major cities like New York and Beijing. China's Wuhan and Hangzhou bike-sharing take the crown for the largest in the world with 90,000 and 60,000 bicycles, respectively.

Since details about Vietnam's bike-sharing program have yet to be released, it will be interesting which model is adopted. Many programs, such as New York City's Citybike, are designed for quick 30-45 minute trips while others - the German Rail Company's "Call a Bike" - encourage trips of up to 48 hours.

BILLION

dollar highway cracks after opening. A long crack has appeared on a new expressway connecting Hanoi to the rural northwest just a few days after it was opened to traffic. Investors blamed the soft ground it was built on.

The crack was discovered in a section between Yen Bai to Phu Tho province on the 245km Noi Bai – Lao Cai Expressway, which drew a USD1.5 billion investment from the Vietnam Expressway Corporation (VEC).

The Ministry of Transport has instructed VEC to fix the crack and issue warnings to those traveling on that portion of the highway. According to VEC, the crack spans over ten meters and emerged in a section built over a rice paddy. The company has announced that it is monitoring possible sinkage on the road.

VEC said the damaged road was designed and built by the Keangnam Construction Company, which followed the proper protocols for surveying and treating the loose foundation.

Le Kim Thanh, deputy general director of VEC, said the crack was an "unexpected fault because it appeared in the middle of the street and not near survey points. It was affected by two strong typhoons and heavy rain. Flooded land in the surrounding area has accelerated the sinking. The results of our survey will determine whether the sinkage is the result of natural causes or poor construction."



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Promotions and News in HCMC and beyond...



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Have you been searching for a professional Brazilian waxing service? With the ever-growing desire for the pre-eminent wax, SiLK Waxworks (88 Xuan Thuy, D2; www.silkwaxworks.com) has officially arrived. Offering beauty services for all areas of the body, including Brazilians and 'boyzilians,' HCMC now has a charming beauty salon for men and women in the form of SiLK to do just that. Priding itself on quality and class, their waxperts are meticulously primed in this specialist area to grant the best possible results for their clients.

SiLK Waxworks is a bespoke service salon in that they use the most suitable wax formula for all different areas of the body. They use hard wax for boyzilians/Brazilian/face and a softer wax for the upper & lower body, leaving you unburned and beautiful.

THE REVERIE SAIGON HOTEL SET TO OPEN

The Reverie Saigon hotel is set to open this winter within the new 39-floor Times Square building in District 1. The hotel will redefine urban opulence in Vietnam with 286 guest rooms and suites; five dining and nightlife options, with restaurants ranging from Cantonese to Italian; as well as the longest bar counter in Saigon – the length of a city block. There will also be an outdoor pool, a 1,200 square meter spa and fitness center, 16 function spaces, a helicopter pad, and a fleet of high-end vehicles to serve guests – including two limited edition Rolls-Royce Phantom Dragons.



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RENAISSANCE RIVERSIDE HOTEL SAIGON EVENTS

October 20 - Vietnamese Women's Day Indulgence

Take a break from the hard working day and celebrate Vietnamese Women's Day with an indulgent treat. First glass for ladies is free of charge. Cocktails from VND120,000++/glass at Atrium Lounge – 5th Floor.

October 24 – Beer Night

Didn't get enough Oktoberfest? Get the weekend off to a flying start with a great beer night. Free flow of beer – including a complimentary homemade spicy chips and dips set.

VND170,000++/person at the Atrium Lounge – 5th Floor

October 31 - Escape the Halloween Crowd

There's surely no better way to experience your Halloween than by dipping into a special Halloween cocktail crafted by a Ghost Mixologist. Set of three cocktails is priced at VND300,000++ at the Atrium Lounge – 5th Floor

Visit www.riversidehotelsg.com for more details

MAISON MIKIO PROMOTION

In October, Maison Mikio Boutique Salon (8 Ton Dat Tien Street in the Garden Plaza 2 Complex, Phu My Hung) is offering a free scalp care for customers receiving haircuts. And during Happy Hour (9am-12pm, Tuesdays-Fridays) all hair services (excluding re-growth and highlighting treatments) are 30 percent off while nail services are 20 percent off. The salon and spa offers clients a spacious yet intimate setting for salon and beauty services such as hair styling, coloring, manicures, pedicures, skincare and waxing. Call 5412 4773 or visit Facebook: [maisonmikio](https://www.facebook.com/maisonmikio) for more info.

GO EXPLORING

Resident historian Tim Doling's long-awaited publication on walking tours through Saigon/Cholon (discussed in *Oi's* March 2014 issue in the article *Living in the Past*) was released last month and is now available at Fahasa Bookstore (40 Nguyen Hue, D1). *Exploring Ho Chi Minh City* will teach you more about the history of this city in half an hour than you'll have learnt during your entire stay here – and by following Tim's trails for yourself on foot, you'll soon learn to spot living examples of Saigon's heritage.

HAIR BAR DISCOUNT

The recently-opened Hair Bar (68 Ngo Duc Ke, D1) is offering *Oi* readers a 30 percent discount on hair services, simply mention "Oi Vietnam magazine" when booking a service.

The 'bar' is a new salon concept where customers can get their hair washed, blow dried, and then styled while enjoying a cocktail or two. This promotion is valid until the end of October.

THE BEAN STORE

The Bean Store (399 Vo Van Tan, D3 and B3-10 Union Square Vincom A, D1) recently became the first and only soy-based café to introduce soy ice cream in Ho Chi Minh City. From October 15 to 31, both locations will offer a "buy 1 get 1 free" soft serve soy ice cream.

The café specializes in soybeans – soybean pudding and bean curd are the most popular. Both are based on a soy milk jelly, made mixing soy milk with a natural gelatin. The puddings are then mixed with various flavors (matcha, pandan leaf, chocolate or vanilla) and then poured into molds and chilled to create a kaleidoscope of individual mini-desserts.

The bean curd puddings use the same soy base, but are then paired with a host of different extras from lotus and longan (the Bean Curd Lolo Mix), pomelo, mango and watermelon (the Bean Curd LA Mix) or the more traditional hot ginger syrup.

Visit Facebook: [TheBeanStoreVN](https://www.facebook.com/TheBeanStoreVN) for more details.



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AN LAM NINH VAN BAY PROMOTION

The resort has launched a Luxury Family Retreat package for VND9,650,000 per night. The package includes: One night at Lagoon Villa for two adults and two children (under 12 years old) sharing parents' bed; Half board – Dinner for 2 adults and two children with daily themed dinner (buffets or set menus); Round trip shared speedboat transfer service; Refreshing welcome drink at Lounge and daily fruit basket in villa; Complimentary services: kayaking, snorkeling, fishing and walking trail; Babysitter on request; and a Special daily kids' activity program. The promotion is valid from November 1 – December 18. Contact reservations at (84) 058 3624 964 or email reservation@anlamnvb.com.



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AU LAC DO BRAZIL DELIVERS

Au Lac do Brazil (238 Pasteur, D3) is now offering delivery for those who want to enjoy the taste of Brazilian cuisine at home. Log on to either www.eat.vn or www.chonmon.vn to order. Choose between 10 different dishes, based on their normal Churrasco dinner but now in a lighter form. Serving Saigon for more than 10 years, Au Lac do Brazil was the first authentic Brazilian Churrascaria in Vietnam that brought the all-you-can-eat Brazilian style BBQ dining concept – meat is brought to your table on skewers by a passador and served to your heart's content.

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Dad, You're a Tough Art Critic

Alternative options to binning your child's mounting artwork

TEXT BY MICHAEL ARNOLD

I MAY HAVE been a little overenthusiastic in purchasing a professional artist's easel and brush set for my two-year-old, but I've always been big on encouraging my kids to be as creative as possible – and when I found myself wandering past the row of art supply shops on Le Loi, I just couldn't resist. It turned out to be a great idea – we got set up on the balcony in the relative cool of the late afternoon, her wearing a painting apron and beret, me playing some inspiring music and trying my best not to be annoyed at her for paying more attention to mixing all the blobs of paint together on the palette instead of applying them to the canvas.

Eventually she seemed to get the point, and over time, she managed to turn out a healthy pile of masterpieces – each individually named, dated, and signed by the artist herself, the signature sometimes obscuring the entire painting. This wasn't the full extent of her oeuvre, either – I was rapidly compiling a collection of sketches, mixed-media collages, painted statuettes, brown Play-Doh sculptures and even full-scale 3D paper and string installations, each representing different phases in the artist's career. Priceless works, all of them, for any would-be collector – although it was quickly becoming obvious that the practicality of maintaining my daughter's personal art museum was going to require rather more cupboard space than we had available.

The problem of how to deal with a child's artworks is perhaps one of the most common parenting challenges there is, alongside where to send them to school and how to prevent them from getting a disease. For those more sentimental among us, the guilt that follows the heartless disposal of a study in crayon executed by your own flesh and blood can be so overwhelming that it can see you getting up in the middle of the night to fetch it back out of the trash just to make you feel like a better parent. For my own part, I tried to convince my eldest that the best storage facility for some of her more esoteric creations was the bucket-shaped art repository under my desk – but she was too clever to fall for that and burst into tears. From then on, whenever she

presented me with one of her creations, she would always open by begging me not to use the “art repusitty.”

One has to be sensible, however, and most parents would be very well-advised to draw the line somewhere. My recommendation is to institute a category system to help make the tough decisions. Divide the works into three: those that are to be kept in permanent archive ready to be exhibited at the artist's 21st birthday celebrations; those that are for temporary display on the fridge door or for hanging from the light fixtures until new creations move in to replace them; and those for (discreet) filing on the dark side of the moon.

Beyond the Fridge

The trouble only really begins when you run out of fridge real estate for category-2 items. One of the more ingenious solutions to this problem I've seen – especially useful for parents of high-output *wunderkind* – is to establish a whole art wall somewhere in the house, where there's enough space for a floor-to-ceiling display. Special bonus points go out to parents who involve their child in setting it up: hanging colorful display cords, beads, and novelty hooks all

While you're getting creative with your displays, don't forget that you live in a city where professional art framing is about as cheap as it gets.



prepped for the exhibition.

While you're getting creative with your displays, don't forget that you live in a city where professional art framing is about as cheap as it gets. For those masterpieces truly deserving of the name, there's little to stop you from wandering along Tran Phu and getting your child's best-of-the-best series squared off into matching deluxe hardwood frames, and it won't overly affect your coffee budget. If you want to be even more ambitious than that, talk to the artists about getting a large canvas print made of your favorite. At a cool four by three meters, Junior's latest *My Family* watercolor may well become a prominent talking piece dominating the lounge.

Too many artworks to have framed? Why not publish a book? We've all seen

the lavish wedding albums that are a must-have for local newlyweds (if you got married in Vietnam, you're likely to have one of these already). Drop in to any of the wedding photo studios that are everywhere in the city and get a quote for producing a handsome volume of your child's artworks with a plush leather cover. If you're looking for something a bit more down-to-earth, it's also relatively inexpensive to have a book designer lay out a smart-looking, perfect-bound volume of artworks and photographs of your child. Our own magazine offers a book publishing service that can handle work like that – drop us a line if you'd like the details.

Of course, the clever application of modern tools can help you to throw away the cake and eat it too. No iPad-

wielding infant is going to complain that you've tossed out her stack of paintings if you've taken the time to properly scan or photograph them first and load them onto an app like *Artkive* or *Canvasly*.

Your digital collection can be put to a number of creative uses too, with numerous local and online services offering custom-made products emblazoned with any photograph you care to upload. Try turning your child's best artworks into a carry bag, set of mugs, deck of cards, t-shirt – anything. Create cute name cards for passing out to new friends at school who want to exchange phone numbers. Placemats, mousepads – many countries even allow you to order genuine custom postage stamps printed from any photo you send them via email. With the commercial art world ready to create any object you desire based on your children's innate creativity, never again will you be stumped coming up with new presents from Vietnam for the grandparents. Of course, you could always just send them the originals – grandparents tend to have mighty big fridges. ■



What a Hoot!

A whimsical café that pairs cute critters with cups of coffee

TEXT BY **NPD KHANH** IMAGES BY **NEIL FEATHERSTONE**



TUCKED AWAY IN Phu Nhuan is **PetMe** (179 Tran Huy Lieu), a small narrow café attracting curious customers eager for a unique view with their coffee. From brightly colored parrots and cockatoos to owls and tiny parakeets, there is no shortage of feathers ruffled here. The opportunity to interact with the birds is irresistible, especially since some can cost up to USD2,500.

“We knew we were doing something no one had done before in Vietnam but we certainly did not expect for people to like it so much,” says 27-year-old owner Nguyen Ba Le. “Until earlier this year, I was still working full-time as a digital

designer. The idea of opening up a café came to me when I thought I had spent enough time in an office job. I wanted to try something new, but opening a company is so restricting. I have always adored parrots since I was a little kid so I thought, ‘Let’s make a place for bird lovers. Let’s make a place for people who have never thought about birds as pets to find out what having one may be like.’”

Most of the birds roam the café freely, flying from shoulders to outstretched arms, even sometimes perching themselves on the café’s stockage - harassing the staff for a bit of syrup. The birds are friendly with people, having been trained by Le, and the

few chained parrots are new additions that require further training.

“Most people when they come in for the first time expect meek birds in cages or on chains,” Le shares. “But the parrots don’t really behave like birds. They are more like cats or dogs, except they don’t smell. They like to be petted. They like to play with toys and to make trouble. There’s a sweet spot on their heads which if you scratch just right, they absolutely love it. They don’t fly around nearly as much as, say, a sparrow would. They like to walk and climb. A couple of our parrots, if you put them down on the ground and leave them alone, will walk to the backroom on their own into



“Most people when they come in for the first time expect meek birds in cages or on chains.”

their cages and go to sleep like cats.”

For Le, the challenges of keeping a bird café are unique - and costly. And in a region where the term “bird flu” can still incite mass panic, Le’s first priority is health and safety for both his flock and his customers. With no specialized veterinarians or medicine for these specific breeds in Vietnam, they are first vaccinated in Bangkok before being transported to Vietnam, and every three months receive regular checkups. The birds are also rotated in shifts, with only five to seven in the café at one time while the rest receive some downtime and care in the backroom. The entire staff have

been educated on how to care for and handle their fellow ‘colleagues.’

“A lot of people come to us nowadays because they read about us in newspapers, see us on TV, or see their friend’s photos with our birds and we have our crowd of loyal customers. Parrots live a surprisingly long time. Small parrots can live up to 30 years while bigger cockatoos can live as many as 80 years. So when you have a parrot as a pet, you effectively have a friend for life. To accommodate more guests, we plan to open up a second floor next month where the star feature is a nursery where you can see baby parrots in all their natural glory.” ■



Living Among the Dead

An entire neighborhood built on top of a graveyard

TEXT BY **NPD KHANH** IMAGES BY **NEIL FEATHERSTONE**

IT GOES BY many names: "BT Blank Development Zone" by city planners, "Special Black Zone" by the Vietnamese National Post Office, and "Cemetery Alley" by those who live there. Officially, it's known as alley 344 Chu Van An in Binh Thanh District.

"I actually call it 'Labyrinth Alley' because people get lost in it all the time. Mostly outsiders and young children who aren't familiar with the layout yet," says Lo Ky Thang, the alley's guard for the last 15 years. "Cemetery Alley is because, well, it used

to be a cemetery. The bones are still down there." Thang is a second generation resident and, aside from keeping the peace in the neighborhood, often leads those who get lost safely out of the alley.

From the main street, Cemetery Alley is similar to countless other alleys that crisscross Saigon, but hidden behind its dusty, twisting pathways and sleepy façade is a fascinating story of a maze built on a wartime cemetery roughly 60 to 70 years ago. During the American

War and the subsequent change in regime, the cemetery was abandoned and in the chaos, poor rural people looking forward to a new future moved in. They seized the plot of land and started building with little regard to infrastructure guidelines, building codes or that they were literally living on top of corpses.

The alley itself consists of a one main axis from Chu Van An road that goes about 250 to 300 meters long before opening up to another main road. From this single axis



“As far as the government is concerned, these houses and their inhabitants don’t exist while the ones with some paper to them get a pseudo, one-size-fits-all legal status.”



branches numerous smaller alleys that crook, turn and interlock with each other with no determinable pattern, forming a veritable warren. Some of the smaller alleyways lead nowhere while other seemingly dead ends lead to secret pockets where houses are unnumbered. Government officials called these houses the blank houses and on paper, neither the houses nor their occupants exist.

“They have no proper documentation,” Thang explains. “These are the oldest houses in the entire alley, some 60, 70 years old. They were built back when this was still an open-air cemetery. The construction was illegal. The people don’t have documents with them. To sort them out is to comb through 60 years of undocumented history and a couple of hundred households all without proper certificates of residency to their names. As far as the government is concerned, these houses and their inhabitants don’t exist while the ones with some paper to them get a pseudo, one-size-fits-all legal status. Less headaches that way.”

So the locals decided to write their own addresses. A handful are numbered based on Chu Van An, others on the nearby No Trang Long street. On various walls, helpful maps and directions have been painted. The National Post Office is unable to deliver mail into the alley because none of their postmen are capable of navigating the passageways. “They drop it off at my place instead and I do the delivering,” says Thang.

Another problem residents had to tackle was the water supply. Cemetery Alley had electricity but no running water. Back in the 80s, the government attempted to build a pipe system through the neighborhood, however the project was called off after two days when construction workers struck the graves below. As a result, the water business is shared by a handful of outside merchants who deliver and sell truckloads every day.

“You’d be surprised by the number of places built on top of bones inside this city,” says Le Thanh, Thang’s wife. “I think sometimes people forget that Saigon is a city that has seen a lot of war and death. I know of at least one park built on top of a graveyard - Le Thi Rieng Park is even bigger than us. As far as the folks in this alley are concerned, let the living do the living and the dead do the dying. It’s what we’re good at.” ■

How to Build a Boat

IMAGES BY NEIL FEATHERSTONE

Corsair Marine (www.corsairmarine.com) allowed Oi access into their workshop while the team was in the process of building a Seawind 1250 model for a client. Using the same technology as those applied in Formula 1 race cars, a process called vacuum infusion is used to form fiberglass/carbon fiber hulls. This is an eco-friendly closed mould process producing very strong, lightweight products while also containing all chemical odors within the vacuumed area. While many of the marine specific components come from Europe and the US, the workmanship is done by highly-skilled locals. ■







A Mom's Fight

Between the Vietnamese and German court, who has final say when it comes to custody battles



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,

After having been married for almost 10 years, my husband and I have decided to divorce. He is German and I am Vietnamese. We have two kids, five and seven, who both have dual nationality. We got married in Vietnam and we will apply for the divorce in Vietnam as well. I am very concerned about the custody of the children, especially since my soon-to-be ex-husband has told me that he wants to go back to Germany to live. He also mentioned that he intends to submit a request to a German court in order to obtain full custody of our children. Between the Vietnamese and the German courts, which one has the final say on this matter and is there a scenario in which I will lose custody of my children?

IT IS COMMON knowledge that dividing the rights and obligations of divorcing parents regarding their children is the most difficult and painful part of a divorce, especially when the children are as young as yours.

In order to answer your questions, we've reviewed the Vietnamese Marriage and Family Law of 2000, which is also applicable to a divorce between a Vietnamese citizen and a foreigner permanently residing in Vietnam. Even though this law will be replaced on January 1, 2015, the rules applicable to divorces with a foreign element will not fundamentally change thereafter and our comments below will remain applicable under the new law.

The Marriage and Family Law gives the Vietnamese civil court competence to consider and decide on any divorce case. With regard to the children, the power of the Vietnamese judge when deciding on a divorce must be exercised within the framework as described below.

The Marriage and Family Law states that after the divorce, the former husband and wife are still required to look after,

care for, educate and rear their minor children. In principle, both parents must mutually agree on who will directly rear the children and what will be their respective rights and obligations towards their children after the divorce.

If the parents fail to reach such an agreement, the Vietnamese court shall decide to assign one parent to directly rear the children on the basis of the children's best interests in every aspect. The judge will most notably consider the relationship between the children and each of the parents and what would be best for the children's education and rearing. The parent who does not directly rear the children will still have the right to visit them. This right may only be restricted in exceptional cases, where the parent directly raising the children requests the court to do so because the other parent would abuse their visiting right.

Under the current law, the court must take into consideration the children's aspirations if they are aged nine years or older. From January 1, 2015 the age will be lowered to seven. Furthermore, children less than three years of age shall, in

principle, be assigned to their mother for direct rearing.

If such would be in the interest of the children and at the request of one or both of the parents, the Vietnamese court may consider and decide to change the parent directly raising the children at a later stage.

Failing to obtain the custody rights here in Vietnam, your husband may try to request the same before a German court. We are no experts in German family law, but from quick research we understand a German court would normally only accept to consider the merits of the case if your children were actually living in Germany.

Without your permission and without being granted full custody rights over your children by a competent Vietnamese court, your husband cannot just take your children to Germany. Doing so may even qualify as international child abduction, which is a serious crime and something that you would both obviously rather avoid.

Finally, you may note that even if a German court issues a decision regarding the custody of your children while they are still living in Vietnam, such decision will not have any force in Vietnam and will therefore not bind you or your children until it is recognized and enforced by the competent Vietnamese authorities. In practice, this process is often time-consuming and foreign court decisions are not easily recognized and enforced in Vietnam.

Beyond all legal considerations, we hope that you and your husband will be able to cooperate with the objective of putting the interests of your children first, so as to avoid the pain of a family fight in the court room.

*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*

High Cultured Trees

Tracking trees and a morally respectable neighborhood explained

IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN



THE MYTH

Is it true that the numbers on the trees in the city means how old they are?

THE WHITE NUMBERS painted on the trees are their ID numbers. Under Vietnamese regulation 64/2010/ND-CP, like humans, trees in Saigon have their own ID number and a profile to match that number. Currently, there are approximately 900,000 catalogued trees in the city (as opposed to shrubbery or other small plants). These trees are under the care of various companies under the city authority, with each company holding responsibility and jurisdiction over particular zones of the city. They use the ID numbers to keep track of individual trees in any particular district, ward or street. Each of the 900,000 white ID numbers you see on tree trunks around town corresponds with a single file in databases kept by plant maintenance companies. These files hold information on the tree's background (planting date, age, species, plant zone, soil type, degree of sun exposure, etc...), medical history (diseases and nutritional history) and maintenance schedule.



THE MYTH

What do the alleyways that have the sign “*khu pho van hoa*” mean?

“*Khu pho van hoa*” (cultured neighborhood) is a title granted to a community that has met seven economic, social, political and cultural standards set out by the government. To achieve all the requirements, the following must be achieved:

- Residents of the neighborhood must earn above average income
- Low to no unemployment rate in the area
- Low to no social vices (drugs, prostitution, delinquents, excessive alcohol consumption, excessive outdoor trash, drunk men peeing in public (actually stated), and crime)
- High education level
- Aid programs available for the elderly or people with chronic illnesses inside the community as well as outside
- Organize cultural programs to raise community involvement, as well as positive and active participation in various current political issues

In short, the title “*khu pho van hoa*” means the area is affluent and morally respectable.

For the authorities who govern the ward and district of the neighborhood where it's located, they are entitled to government grants and an increase in official budget, making it a title highly sought after. Anyone who wants to hold a top management position in the Ministry of Culture must prove that their community has reached this recognition. However, achieving one, much less all seven, of the above criteria is not easy, which has prompted officials to blur numbers in an attempt to obtain the dubious title of “*khu pho van hoa*.” – **NPD Khanh**



A close-up photograph of the front of a dark blue car. The image focuses on the chrome grille, which has vertical slats, and a portion of the headlight on the left. The background is a solid blue color.

THE ROYAL TREATMENT

In a country where the average income is USD200 a month, Gucci beach sandals priced at USD365 can come as a shock. But the luxury market is booming in Vietnam, its nouveaux riches are snapping up Bentleys, yachts and Harley-Davidsons, offering proof of how much the country has changed after decades of war.

The new generation wants to enjoy life and pamper themselves with luxurious things. They indulge their urge to splurge on social-status symbols and branded goods, and sophisticated travel are high on many people's wishlists. And as the economy continues to grow, the shopping-spree looks set to continue.



TEA FOR TWO

PARTAKE IN SAIGON'S AFTERNOON DELIGHTS

TEXT BY JAMES PHAM



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Park Hyatt scones with clotted cream and jam, Raspberry mille feuille, Hazelnut dome with crunchy sable center

TODAY, FEW NICETIES feel as indulgent as spending a leisurely afternoon without a care in the world, sipping tea and eating tiny sandwiches and beautiful cakes. For that, we have the British to thank - and more specifically the British royalty for shaping the ritual of afternoon tea as we know it.

In 1600, the British East India Company was established to forge new trade routes and establish ports and trading relationships with India, the Far East and Southeast Asia. While the original prize was spices, it wasn't long before other luxury items like tea, indigo and silk found their way back to England. Favored by English kings, the company was granted

wholesale powers to use military force, if needed, to occupy places with which they wished to trade, resulting in conquests in Bengal and Bombay in India and the seizing of Reunion and Mauritius islands from other colonial powers.

In the late 17th century, King Charles II and his Portuguese wife, Catherine de Braganza, were responsible for popularizing tea amongst high society, replacing ale as the national drink. As tea was highly taxed, it was enjoyed only by the privileged.

However, as sources of imported tea expanded and taxes fell, it was adopted by the common class, often with a full dinner, leading to the term "high" tea as it was

served on the dinner table. The practice of having tea in the late afternoons, however, was actually called "low" tea, typically served on a coffee table in the drawing room, the precursor to the quaint tea service we know today.

Tea legend has it that in the early 1800s, the Duchess of Bedford Anna Maria Stanhope, one of Queen Victoria's ladies-in-waiting, began asking for a pot of tea and a few baked goods in the late afternoon to stave off what she called a "sinking feeling," before a late dinner was served at 8 or 9pm. It wasn't long before she invited friends to join her, kicking off the fashionable social ritual now known as "afternoon tea."

IMAGES BY JAMES PHAM; RASPBERRY DESSERT IMAGE PROVIDED BY PARK HYATT



Renaissance Riverside Hotel Saigon

TOP TIERED SERVICE

The Renaissance Riverside Hotel Saigon serves up afternoon tea in both its Lobby Lounge, overlooking the bustle of Me Linh Square and its expansive Atrium Lounge, a soaring space on the 5th floor, bathed in natural light streaming down more than 16 stories from the massive skylight above. Gracious strands of lanterns dangle above while soothing music fills the elegantly modern space occupied by plush armchairs and sofas in the center and tables and chairs around the perimeter.

While there are no hard and fast rules on exactly what to serve for afternoon tea, Chef Minh Cong Dan follows the tried and true formula of bite-sized sandwiches, followed by scones with jam and cream and finally an assortment of cakes. "Afternoon tea should have something for everyone," says Chef Dan. His sandwich tier includes a ham and cheese on white, a vegetable Mediterranean on ciabatta, a chicken sandwich and a salmon on wholemeal. A lovely, flaky scone is served with cream and strawberry jam, along with a fresh fruit choux à la crème and a delicate macaroon. The sweets tier features British fruit cake with dried cherries, raisins and grated orange, a chocolate biscuit, a chocolate-dipped

strawberry and a petit four. The tea selection includes English Breakfast, Earl Grey, jasmine and mint. Coffee lovers can opt for brewed coffee instead.

For the sweet tooth, the Afternoon Rose Tea for two is a delightfully pink affair, featuring strawberry mousse, blueberry macaroons and a host of beautifully decorated sweets.

"Westerners usually eat a light, healthy lunch, while Vietnamese prefer a full lunch," says Chef Dan, explaining why the ritual has yet to become as popular among Vietnamese. "But it will catch on. When friends go out for coffee, it's all about the conversation. And there's no better place to have a relaxing time!"

Afternoon tea (VND200,000++ / VND180,000++ per person for the Rose Tea service) is served in the Lobby Lounge and the Atrium Lounge at the **Renaissance Riverside Hotel Saigon** (8-15 Ton Duc Thang, D1) daily, between 3pm-6pm.

GOLDEN MOMENTS

Park Hyatt's Park Lounge revives the civility of afternoon tea, from live piano and violin music to ornate, silver teapots and delicate bone china cups. The lounge recalls the heady days of the Golden Age of travel with dark wood furniture and

cognac leather tufted chairs set against the backdrop of gold: from the gold-on-gold carpeting to the pale yellow walls to the golden afternoon sun streaming through the plantation shutters.

Pastry Chef Bertrand Sommereux recreates all his favorites for the Saturday Afternoon Tea, a buffet of savories and sweet treats. "The key is in having a balance. A balance of colors and a balance of tastes," he says of the tray of assorted macaroons including passion fruit and caramel. Notes of acidity found in the lemon bars on brown butter shortbread are designed to balance out the sweet richness of the silver-leafed hazelnut dome and the traditional apple tarte tartin. Guests looking to quell that "sinking feeling" can feast on savory bites that include chicken Waldorf on milk panini and quiche Lorraine. Scones with clotted cream and strawberry jam are served at the table, along with a selection of white, black, green or oolong teas and a range of herbal infusions.

Afternoon tea (VND570,000++ per person on Saturdays, VND390,000 on weekdays and Sundays) is served in the **Park Lounge** of the **Park Hyatt Saigon Hotel** (2 Lam Son Square) daily, between 2:30pm-5:30pm.



Shane Grover

SEAFARING NATION

VIETNAM'S YACHTING INDUSTRY IS ABOUT TO SET SAIL

TEXT BY MICHAEL ARNOLD
IMAGES BY NEIL FEATHERSTONE

WHEN THE CONSTRUCTION of Vietnam's first international-standard marina began on July 7th this year in Nha Trang, it signaled the end of years of speculation as to whether or not a project of this kind could really get off the ground in this country. Numerous attempts have been made to cut through the administrative barriers that have held back many would-be investors – a large marina in Saigon has been planned on several occasions – but until now, the greatest barrier to progress has been not so much financial or bureaucratic, but rather one of bewilderment at the sport of recreational yachting itself. With no culture of 'going out sailing for pure enjoyment's sake' to speak of in Vietnam, the benefits that a

truly world-class marina could bring to this country have been difficult for key stakeholders to fathom.

The development is something that Shane Grover, Projects and Contracts Manager for locally-based shipbuilding firm Seawind, has been anticipating for years. It couldn't have been better timed – within a fortnight of this issue going to press, Seawind will be delivering one of the firm's larger catamarans up to Nha Trang, where its new owners will take a few days' cruise around the bay before heading out on a round-the-world trip. The fact that this is even allowed to happen under Vietnam's strict marine regulations (it would have been impossible just 12 months ago) is proof enough that a huge paradigm shift is underway that could

well take the country into a new sailing era.

Until Nha Trang's Ana Marina opens for business (the current estimate is April 2016), there's little reason for boaties to drop in. "If you own a boat in Hong Kong," says Shane, "and you want to sail to Thailand or Malaysia, you've basically got to skip this whole beautiful coastline and go all the way around Vietnam – because one, there's no infrastructure, and two, you're basically not allowed to come here, superyachts included. It's a crazy situation – generally these people, they've got money that they're willing to spend. Most of them just pass through, because it's just too difficult. It's just thousands of dollars that are getting passed up on every time."

Part of the problem is that Vietnamese



Pulse

“Danang, Nha Trang and Phu Quoc — I don’t know when, but eventually they’re going to be huge for yachting”

culture doesn’t really have anything resembling recreational boating. “It’s virtually unheard of,” says Shane. “When we first started trying to launch boats a few years ago, we had a 52-foot catamaran. They asked us what it was for. We said ‘sailing.’ They said no, what does it do? Is it for fishing? ‘No, it’s for fun.’ There was nothing to compare it to. If you say ‘boat’ in Vietnam, you think of one of those timber fishing boats.”

“It’s changing,” he observes. “In Nha Trang, you see people building little motor boats, you see people going parasailing with them. We do have Vietnamese people coming in saying, ‘I’ve got money to burn, I want to buy either a big yacht or a Bentley.’ They’re not yachties, they just want something nice and flashy. Asia has the most potential for growth in the yachting industry. But I feel that the industry here is going to be much more based around big, expensive yachts rather than your traditional sports boats and so on. It’ll be more about the TV, the sound system, the bar – all that sort of stuff as opposed to the actual sailing performance of the boat. That’s OK, it still helps the growth for the other areas. But I think at the moment what’s holding things back here is that it’s so easy to buy a Bentley and it’s so hard to buy a boat. What do you do with it? At the moment there are no marinas, you’re not going to buy a big boat and have it parked at anchor somewhere that’s inaccessible. The infrastructure’s got to be there.”

FINGER ON THE PULSE

A flourishing yachting community in Vietnam could see big changes to Seawind’s own business. One of the most successful cat building firms in Australia, the company

made the move to Ho Chi Minh City in 2010 with the acquisition of Corsair, an American trimaran firm that had shifted base to Vietnam back in 2006. The relocation was in response to rising competition from a flood of cheaper European vessels that had entered the Australian market during the GFC – with rising labor costs and a high Australian dollar (and without industry protection from the Australian government), local consumers were finding it far cheaper to import a boat rather than to purchase one homegrown.

“The initial plan wasn’t to pack up shop and move to Vietnam,” explains Shane. “We needed a means to be able to stay in business, so we decided to look at producing small components in Vietnam and build in Australia, but when we bought into Corsair, we very quickly became aware that wasn’t the way to do it. There are so many advantages to building boats in Vietnam. The cost was one of the top reasons for coming out here, but perhaps more importantly, the workers have a far better attitude to their work. We’re getting far better quality out of Vietnam than we were out of Australia.”

The main advantage in employing Vietnamese workers has proved to be the pride locals take in their work. While Seawind’s Australian boat builders were each able to put together the entire vessel on their own, the firm’s Vietnamese workers can each build their own small part, but form a more cohesive team – by implementing the correct systems and training, Seawind is getting better products off the slip than it was back home. Part of the reason for this is lower labor rates afford the company the luxury of spending more time polishing up and paying attention

to detail. Boats take a significantly higher number of hours to build here, but many of those hours go into fixtures – resulting in a higher quality vessel.

“Because of low market expectations for Vietnamese products, the number one priority in shifting production over here was that we have to build better boats than we were there,” Shane explains, “because even if we built the same boat, it would tend to be perceived as being of lower quality. So we had to make visual improvements. You walk into a boat parked next to the same model built in Australia, you needed to be able to walk into the Vietnamese boat and think, ‘Wow, this must be the Australian one.’ We give a lot of feedback to the workers in the factory – they love that, they love being told what we’ve been doing is far, far better on boat number 10 than what we were doing on boat number 100 in Australia.”

“We’re the only boat builder like us in Vietnam,” he adds. “And we’re by far the biggest. The next down is a little place building canoes. There’s nobody like us in Vietnam.”

Now that Seawind has cracked the proper procedures necessary to register cruising vessels in Vietnam, the firm has found itself well-situated to deal with the prospective industry boom. So far, the company has had only marginal sales within Vietnam (the majority of those sold to foreigners who are likely to moor the vessels in Thailand until things improve here) but it has already begun to put strategies into play that could double their production in the near future. Part of that plan involves the launch of a new entry-level model designed to service the rising interest in yachting locally at the grassroots level – a six meter trimaran under the Corsair range they’re calling the Pulse, due to hit the market in January next year. The beauty of this model is that there’s no outboard motor – and thus no need for registration of the vessel under Vietnamese law. “This takes away all of the barriers to owning a boat,” says Shane. “As soon as you have an outboard, you’ve got to register. Without one, you can buy it and sail straight off the beach into Nha Trang Bay. This boat would fall into that category.”

Shane sees the Ana Marina as the first step in consolidating a yachting culture that will cause a national boom in the industry. “It’s good to hear things are actually happening,” he enthuses. “Danang will also be a big marine precinct. We see Danang as being like a Gold Coast area – it’s got the potential to be a big refit zone. They don’t want to fill Danang with lifestyle boating manufacturers. They want something nice, they want to be able to say we’ve got these marinas – so the Danang government is definitely on board for a marina to be built there too.”

“Danang, Nha Trang and Phu Quoc – I don’t know when, but eventually they’re going to be huge for yachting,” he adds. “It’s going to take those first few people to take the risks, break through the wall and figure out how to do it. Only then will people start to follow.”

Check out photos of Corsair’s boat building process in this month’s *Through the Lens* on page 28



THE HARD RIDE

VIETNAM'S LATEST STATUS SYMBOL

TEXT BY ROBERT OI
IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

IN LATE NOVEMBER 2013, Lawson Dixon was a worried man.

Five years after first approaching Harley-Davidson US for the rights to open a franchise in Vietnam, conquering a grueling vetting process which saw 70 other applicants eschewed in favor of the family-owned UAE-based company Lawson works for – and overseeing a several million dollar investment in a state-of-the-art showroom and service center – he was worried he'd overestimated Vietnamese interest in the famous motorcycle brand.

"Before we opened, people knew we were coming, but the Vietnamese kept their hands in their pockets," he says. "We pre-sold a handful, but we did not get anywhere near the level of deposits we

were anticipating and that was a concern. It wasn't until we physically opened that people could see the showroom and our commitment to the market and could tell that we were the real deal."

"Then the floodgates opened, and we've been struggling to catch up ever since. We've never had much more than two weeks' stock in hand since we opened. We've had people come in and ask: What's the most expensive bike you have? And when we've pointed it out, they say 'I'll take it.'"

By the time Harley-Davidson opened its doors on November 30 last year, there were an estimated 400 Harleys in the country, all gray imports. Since November last year, the company has sold and

delivered more than 200 new bikes to eager Vietnamese consumers, at prices ranging from VND370 million (~USD17,400) for an entry-level Sportster model to VND1.9 billion (~USD90,000) for the top-of-the-line 110 cubic inch (1800cc) CVO Limited, which comes with a high-end touch screen infotainment system and new twin-cooled twin-cam v-twin engine. Sales are running around double expectations and at around 20 motorcycles a month, showing no sign of slowing down.

Harley-Davidson's rapid success in Vietnam has been aided by several regulatory changes in recent years. The first, in tandem with the nation's admission into the WTO, was the removal of a blanket ban on the importation of motorcycles with engines larger than 175cc. That was followed, the day after the showroom's opening, by a government announcement easing of licensing conditions for owners of high-powered motorcycles.

Previously, if you wanted a license to drive a large bike, you had to first buy it, then join a government-run motorcycle club and wait for the club to invite you to sit for the license – literally leaving people owning bikes they weren't legally allowed to ride. The change took effect last March. "The timing was right," notes Lawson.

Taxation in Vietnam plays a disproportionate role in the pricing of new Harley-Davidsons. Taxation effectively doubles the price of bikes with engines larger than 800cc: import duties are 47 percent, luxury tax 20 percent, and then VAT gets added on top. Perplexingly, bikes

“The thing about Harley-Davidson is its authenticity. It’s inimitable. People tattoo it onto their bodies”

with engines between 500 and 800cc attract a whopping 75 percent import duty.

Price appears to be of little concern to Vietnam’s Harley buyers, who defy any demographic stereotype: The company has sold the same model 1690cc Street Bob to a 17-year-old and a 73-year-old. “The 73-year-old, he decided when he was a kid that one day he was going to own a Harley-Davidson – and finally, that day came,” says Lawson.

The majority of sales are of Sportster models, which are at the lower end of the price scale, but are more accessible and easier to ride due to their size. Buyers typically then customize and accessorize from a comprehensive range of genuine factory add-ons, for example: handlebars, hand grips, chrome nuts and bolts, even seats. Some buyers will have several seats and change them out depending on whether they’re riding alone or with a passenger.

CRUISING ALONG

Harley-Davidson is, of course, much more than a brand: it’s a lifestyle. And Lawson’s team supports local chapters of the Harley Owners Group (HOG) in Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi and Phnom Penh. Worldwide, HOG has grown to more than one million members since its formation as “an original social network” 30 years ago. Harley-Davidson created HOG as a way for customers to engage with the brand in an environment where everyone is equal.

Through HOG, which has clubrooms at the back of the Harley-Davidson complex in District 7, Lawson’s team organizes advanced rider training, social events and regular rides ranging from local day events to a road trip all the way to Phuket, Thailand.

“The thing about Harley-Davidson is its authenticity. It’s inimitable. People tattoo it onto their bodies,” says Lawson.

Buying a Harley-Davidson is not something owners consider lightly. “It’s not uncommon for people to go to the dealership 20 times before they buy a bike. It can start with just a cap or a t-shirt, and then people get slowly immersed into the brand.”

Once you buy the bike, that experience continues. It’s not a functional tool to get from A to B – it’s much more than that. “Harleys are a bit noisy, agricultural in terms of execution – they have a personality and a heartbeat which sets them apart from every other brand. No one else can capture that essence. Its biggest attribute is the undeniable ‘Harley-ness’ that no one else can replicate.”



Lawson Dixon

Adding: “It’s purely a leisure brand. This is a very, very selfish acquisition, very much a personal reward. But invariably, when someone buys a bike, we notice the whole family gets sucked in – the kids, the wives, the girlfriends. That’s why we’ve leapt from being the newcomer to market leader within weeks of opening.”

Harleys are about cruising, not speed. Drive a Harley and you sit upright, not hunched over racing machine-style. “A Harley is happy doing 30kph. You’re not trying to race anyone; you get to look around you.”

A big earner for the Harley-Davidson showroom in Ho Chi Minh City is the merchandise – both for locals and visitors. Brand lovers can buy anything from Zippo lighters, riding gear, casual fashion to mugs and other souvenirs with or without Saigon livery in an area as smartly-merchandised as any modern shopping mall retail store. Lawson says it’s not uncommon to see a

taxi pull up outside and seven Aussies climb out and buy a few shirts each. Vietnam is one of a number of countries served by the Singapore Asian regional office established when Harley-Davidson US recognized the need to develop markets outside the US and Europe where the recession was denting sales and growth.

Entering the local market, even from a Singapore base, was executed with extreme caution given the fractious history between Vietnam and the US. “A lot of Harley-Davidson’s customers in the US are veterans and had direct experience with Vietnam and the company did not want to disenfranchise them by saying ‘we’ve now got a dealership in Vietnam,’” explains Lawson. “So they carried out a lot of market studies to make sure the brand would be accepted here and to make sure the launch was handled properly.”

Ten months on, all that research has paid off. Harley-Davidson is a new luxury status symbol clearly here to stay.

THE ONE PERCENT

WHAT THE VIETNAMESE *NOUVEAU RICHE* ARE DOING WITH THEIR MONEY

TEXT BY NPD KHANH
IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN

"IF I HAVE to describe the Vietnamese wealth management industry in one word, that word would be 'primitive,'" says Afonso Vieira, the managing director of Total Wealth Management, a Singaporean company with offices in Singapore, Tokyo, Shanghai and Ho Chi Minh City. "You can ask the financial service department of any bank - HSBC, Citibank, Vietcombank - and they will tell you the same thing. As of right now, 2014, wealth management in Vietnam is almost non-existent. We are at the beginning of the beginning."

Wealth management is a term often overheard in boardrooms at Fortune 500 firms and read about in the **Financial Times** but to pinpoint its exact definition is not easy. Wealth takes on many forms, from non-physical financial products such as intellectual properties, stocks and bonds to physical assets such as real estate and artworks. To manage all forms of wealth requires a collective expertise from various fields and industries.

For Afonso, the principle of wealth management is saving and investing with the final goal of preventing losses. "There is nothing exciting or grand about wealth management. In fact, if there's anything exciting about it, then most likely you are working with the wrong individuals or with the wrong company."

There is only a single requirement to becoming Afonso's client - having USD100,000 cash exclusively for investment. Total Wealth Management specializes in financial wealth, dealing largely with non-physical assets. According to him, while most people want to do something with their money, few know how to at the level that a wealth manager does. "So we set an objective for that money. We set a target return and a maximum volatility. Then we get down to exactly where to put the money," he explains.

FLAUNTING IT

Real estate, despite not being a core area of expertise, remains the number one favorite investment of their Vietnamese clients.

For expat clients, mutual funds make up the other favorite. Outside that, the sky's the limit. Their list of clientele includes both local Vietnamese and foreign expats. Japanese businesspeople take up 36 to 37 percent of the group while the Vietnamese make up only one percent. The Vietnamese clients tend to be bigger money wise (it is called assets under management in the industry) than Japanese clients. "In Vietnam, people are not looking for advice on financial planning or investment. What they are looking for are short-term bets. Where should I put my money right now to double it in the next six months to one year? Or, if they are not looking for bets, they are looking for recognition."

"In Vietnam, people are not looking for advice on financial planning or investment. What they are looking for are short-term bets"

And many are willing to pay exorbitant sum for this recognition. Afonso says premium credit cards sell extremely well in developing countries and not nearly as much in countries already with a long history and experience in financial investments. A classic example is the HSBC premium account. To be eligible for one, a client has to deposit USD50,000 into an account. This money only earns 0.1 percent interest per year, and a deposit equivalent placement like a very low risk sovereign bond fund pays five percent per year. In return, premium account holders enjoy the privileges of being called an HSBC premium member, can conduct their

banking business in the VIP section of the bank and are offered free coffee every time they visit. "Five percent interest per year equals USD2,500. You essentially pay them USD2,500 per year... for free coffee," says Afonso.

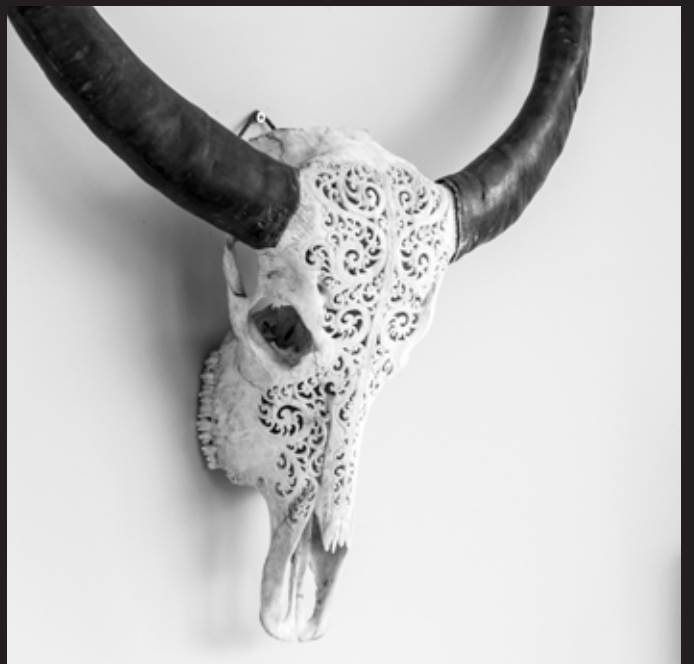
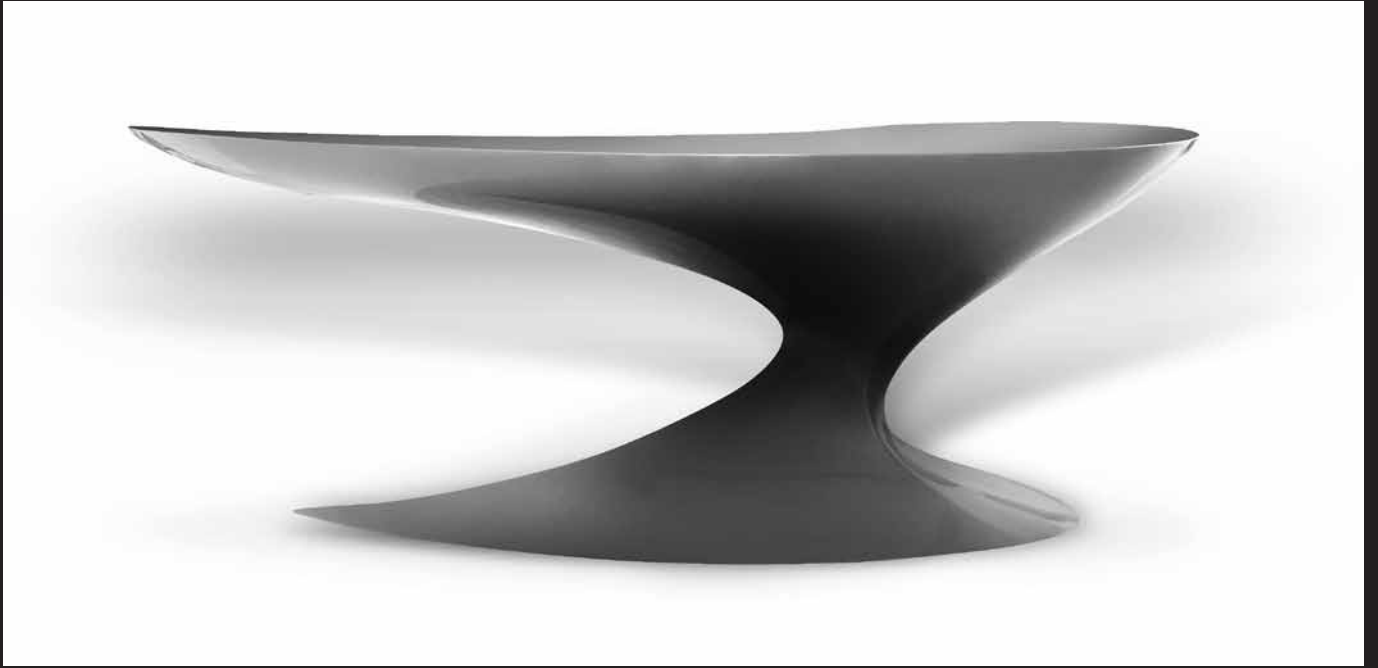
Despite being what Afonso describes as "a completely nonsensical financial product," the HSBC premium accounts do extremely well in Vietnam. It is also far from being the only one of its kind. The Vietnamese financial market in particular, and emerging Asian markets in general, are filled with similar financial products where the end goal is not to gain in financial terms or even to protect against losses but simply to buy their owners recognition.

"In developed countries, I don't have to tell this to the clients, they already know. But here, even if I try to explain it to my clients the answer will be the same. 'I don't care. I want that card. I want to be recognized. I want to be a VIP.'"

The reasoning to this may not be logical, but it is a normal reaction for a country as young as Vietnam. "Imagine just 10 years ago you had no money at all and now you are a millionaire, well you want to have little things that recognize you as a little different, because you have money," says Afonso.

This proves to be the same underlying theme for the Vietnamese financial market as a whole. According to him, the relative immaturity of the local financial market is a phase it will quickly grow out of as part of a natural growth process that every single country has to go through. "Historically, Vietnam is a rich country but as a unit, it has only been a country, a government, since the 1940s. The financial market itself didn't start until a little more than a decade ago so it's not very reasonable to expect the people to be wholly educated in financial investments nor for the market itself to have the same depth and scope of markets many times older. The US in the 1920s was exactly the same. Vietnam will grow in the same direction, only much, much faster. From here on, it can only go up."





BLACK BIRD FLY

SAIGON'S NEWEST EXCLUSIVE PLACE FOR EXCLUSIVE THINGS

TEXT BY JAMES PHAM
IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

"A LARGE SHOP selling miscellaneous goods" or "very strange or unusual"? It's hard to describe which definition best fits **Black Bird's Bazaar** (41 Street 41, D2), set to open in late September/early October. One side of the large space is anchored by Lacanche range cookers, equal parts luxury kitchen appliance and work of art, a home chef's dream stove sporting five burners and three ovens, hand-forged in Burgundy, France. The other side is an explosion of colorful mosaic table tops with light reflecting off the Moroccan tables and chairs covered in intricately punched *maillechort* (a pewter-like metal alloy of zinc, copper and nickel). There are a few antiques scattered around the space for good measure, a circa 1900 Italian inlaid cabinet and a 1860 chest featuring detailed brass *bouille* work.

But what stands out in a sea of standouts are two one-of-a-kind creations that defy labels. To call them a table and a lamp would seem an insult. Like most artwork, the sleek freeform 'table' evokes thought. Some see a bit of the *Starship Enterprise* meets Ridley Scott's *Alien* with a dash of yin and yang. "Actually my inspiration was things from the sea: a shark, fish. Also planes, boats and aliens. Mostly aliens," laughs Guillaume Yon, the artist behind *Kalista*.

The product of a 3am epiphany, *Kalista* was a three-month project comprising 86 layers of steel, welded together and then grounded to a fine finish. Guillaume then painted it using imported Ferrari California pigments, mixed according to the official formula. "I drew it in one go and then said, 'Let's build it.' I had no idea what I was getting myself into. Technically and mechanically, this was a real challenge. If she was a solid piece of steel, she'd weigh a ton, easy," says Guillaume of the 350kg structure. "*Kalista* means 'the beautiful one,' a figure of femininity. So the table is a 'she.' She's a functional sculpture. It's not fair to call her a table. Because of the finish, you have to be careful with her," he continues, nervously eyeing a couple who have lightly touched *Kalista*. "All nice things require attention," the swashbuckling Guillaume says with a mischievous smile.

CRAVING FOR CREATIVITY

Born in France, Guillaume's history is as eclectic as his showroom. "I grew up all over the place. I studied Biology but my interest in making things came from watching my father do all kinds of jobs.

We lived in Spain for a time where my father made windsurfing boards and boats. I've always made things, too: boats, guitars, I've worked on cars, I've designed houses, I've been a musician for a long time... I've always been obsessed with the arts."

Back in the showroom, Guillaume runs his hand over an enormous 1.6m wheel, the iron rim of a 200-year-old Cambodian cart which he's sandblasted smooth and installed dozens of LED lights around the inside perimeter. "There's something about spiritual DNA from things that come before," he says of repurposing artifacts. "A friend of mine bought a whole bunch of wheels from old carts. They were made from rosewood, teak, ebony — precious woods literally left to rot. He didn't know what to do with the rims, but when I saw it I immediately knew it was going to be a lamp."

A little over a year ago, Guillaume found himself in Indonesia searching for his next destination. A chance recommendation led him to Saigon where he "immediately got this feeling that there was so much to do. It's inspiring," he says. He feels his creativity has blossomed *because* of living here, not in spite of it. "I feel what I'm doing is purely original. Because there's not much going on here, it's not polluted by many outside influences. It pushes me to be more creative and more original in my inventions. [In Vietnam,] people are craving creativity. It's easy to import things that have already been done. But the original..." he opines while gesturing towards *Kalista*. "There's a new generation of artists and musicians who are creative in their own way, taking what they have and putting it into motion. The new beginning is interesting."

But is Vietnam ready for a USD23,000 range cooker or a USD40,000 Ferrari paint-coated sculpture? "The Vietnamese have started traveling, to be in contact with more and more influences and cultures, so of course, the interest will rise. The more you discover, the more you're curious, the more refined you get in your own appreciation for things. When you know, you appreciate more," he says of the showroom's antiques and Lacanche line. "I live in Saigon. I live in Vietnam. Ideally, I'd like to have 100 percent Vietnamese clients," he says.

Guillaume is hoping to make the space a true bazaar, a collection of very different objects and styles. "This space is just a platform for things I really love."

THE STAR TREATMENT

DOES VIETNAM HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO COMPETE
IN THE LUXURY TRAVEL INDUSTRY?

TEXT BY MICHAEL ARNOLD

TRY IT: SHOW anyone overseas a photo of one of Vietnam's unspoiled, gorgeous tropical beaches – taken at one of those wordlessly beautiful resorts on Phu Quoc, Con Dao, Ke Ga or Ninh Van Bay – and ask them to guess which country they're looking at. Without clues, no one in a million years will pick Vietnam. Thailand, maybe, or the Maldives – but not here.

That right there is the Achilles' heel of the Vietnamese tourism industry: nobody but the backpackers knows how beautiful this place can be, and backpackers don't have the money to spend the night at high-end resorts. Ask anyone who's never been here what they imagine Vietnam to be like, and they'll inevitably talk about the dense jungles they've seen in classic war-era films rather than the graceful, tree-lined boulevards of central Saigon (what few remain, that is) or the country's extraordinary 3,260 km coastline. The sad truth is, the world at large just doesn't see Vietnam as a country capable of

delivering the cream on the cake.

For high-end travel service providers – particularly those that fall into the burgeoning luxury industry – operating in Vietnam can thus be a major challenge. There are clients out there with their private jets who are certainly in the market for the kind of service where they can snap their fingers and have their every whim attended to, money being no object – but convincing them to touch down at Tan Son Nhat is another story.

Even so, the luxury sector remains a tempting category to work in: statistics released at a recent World Travel Market expo in London showed that the world's highest net worth individuals (those with liquid assets of over a million dollars) are rising in number, with the majority of new millionaires turning up in emerging economies like Brazil, Russia and China. Since the international travel economy began to show signs of recovery in 2011, sales for premium air travel and luxury

hotels have approached 10 percent growth annually – and while Italy, France and the UK are still the most popular destinations for luxury travelers, Cuba, Vietnam and Cambodia are stepping up as new destinations for the wealthy.

With figures like that, traditional logic might suggest that establishing an elite tourism operation in this country is a fairly good bet right now. As it turns out, this is not necessarily the case. While many mid-level operators dream of the lucrative markups that luxury-category tourism offers, Vietnam's near-invisible reputation as a five-star-plus destination has made this uphill work.

FIVE-STAR PRICE, ONE-STAR SERVICE

Successful attempts to establish a genuine luxury operation that remains viable beyond the initial stages of optimism and enthusiasm is something of a rarity here. Tourism marketing specialist John, who



has worked to promote the luxury travel sector in Vietnam for several years now, has seen a number of businesses make similar mistakes in shooting for the top two percent of international travelers.

"There are some common pitfalls here," he says. "Three star operators chasing the high-end tourism dollar often have very little understanding of what they're getting into. They talk about 'redefining luxury' and providing extraordinary levels of service, but in the end they can't offer anything beyond merely staying in a five-star hotel or traveling in a Mercedes, which is the bare minimum of what's expected by the market sector. They don't appreciate the fact that Vietnam's infrastructure is largely inadequate to meet what most high-end travelers would expect from a luxury destination. They focus on planning these grandiose tours, but when they get clients, they find they're unable to implement the services they thought they could achieve. Unlike with budget tourists, you can't just make it up as you go along. Everything has to be perfect."

"They usually end up compelled to go after the flashpackers for survival," John adds. "That just ends up diluting their brand. They use the term 'luxury' as a tool to maximize profit, and then they lose the confidence of their intended market."

While there have been a fair number of flops, one firm that has managed to survive for a good decade in this category is an agency simply entitled Luxury Travel, which was founded by Pham Ha right at the beginning of the five-star tourism wave. Ha still enthuses about the industry: "The luxury travel segment is a huge opportunity for Vietnam," he says. "The market for luxury travel is expanding and Vietnam has many tourism resources which are ideal for the luxury and ultra-luxury markets, but these are yet to be exploited. They will bring enormous benefits to the country."

Ha is quick to dismiss the limited conception of luxury that has proven the downfall of many other startups. "Luxury is not and should not be as simple as going to five-star hotels," he says. "This is a very narrow definition of luxury. Luxury travel is helping visitors to benefit from the best products and the most comfortable services. But it's more a question of understanding the clients, anticipating their expectations, and offering them a real customized experience, something unique especially designed for them and for no one else."

"The essence of luxury travel is to listen," he adds. "I mean that luxury travelers, beyond being amazed by the destination they're visiting, want to experience the real and authentic Vietnam, to live an experience that no one else will. One example of how we attempt this is the Emperor Cruises we're about to launch on ultra-luxe boats in Nha Trang Bay this January – journeys on gorgeous traditional junks including limousine and butler services, cocktails at sunset, a vast choice of activities, and so on. Luxury operators have to be very selective and position their expectations on a higher level compared to the local standards, in order to match those of tourists who are used to a very luxurious standing in their daily life in Western countries. But it is an exciting challenge making things change within Vietnam."

A relatively new entrant into this market sector is Gingko Voyage, the manager of which, Jeremy Odoux, is under no illusions about the challenges the company will have to face in order to reach any level of success. "Compared to popular luxury travel destinations in the region such as Thailand, Bali, Singapore or Hong Kong, it's easy to see that these destinations offer better infrastructures and connectivity than Vietnam. Despite that, significant efforts in this field have, in the past years, seen the development of key infrastructures here that will surely

contribute to the development of luxury projects in Vietnam."

One of the chief complaints wealthy tourists have about services in this country is a distinct lack of finesse in the manner in which they are carried out. "The essence of luxury travel is more about the experience, the service, the exclusivity, the individuality and the authenticity," notes Jeremy. "Today's luxury travel offers a wide variety of activities, ranging from beach holidays and cultural tourism to adventure trips – but whatever the activities are, the high quality of service and uniqueness of the experience remain the key expectations. Beside the infrastructure and facilities, well-trained and qualified human resources are a requirement in order to deliver and constantly maintain a high level of services to luxury clients who are ready to pay more but who, in return, also expect more. The lack of well-trained and qualified human resources in Vietnam is a real challenge, and not only in the tourism sector."

With ongoing developments and improvements in service levels, Vietnam may well be on track to offer what the market defines as genuine luxury-standard tours – in greater and more reliable volumes than it does now – in the very near future. Agencies with a clear vision of what luxury clients expect and who dedicate themselves to absolute standards of service do have a good chance of turning wealthy heads and succeeding in bringing the luxury category dollar to this country. In the meantime, however, the absence of dedicated promotions by the Vietnamese tourism administration targeting wealthy travelers means operators such as Luxury Travel and Gingko must work to demonstrate the viability of Vietnam as a luxury destination by themselves – in the face of a market that up to now simply doesn't believe. Whether those attitudes change or not largely rest on their efforts. ■



Wine & Dine

IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN







FOR ILLUSTRATION PURPOSES ONLY

Shine a Light

A candid interview with the owners of *Blackout* and *Noir*. *Dining in the Dark* about sensory deprivation eating, learning about each other, and how they are *not* the same

INTERVIEWED BY **NPD KHANH** IMAGES BY **NGOC TRAN**

EVER TAKEN A bite of something with your eyes closed - a tomato, a slice of peach - then had trouble identifying the flavor? That surprise you felt at finding out you'd actually bitten into a cucumber, not a melon, is behind the increasingly popular "dark dining" phenomenon.

Upsides to eating in the dark are obvious. There's no need to worry about whether you're repulsing your date with that shrimp tail stuck in between your front teeth. Using the wrong spoon isn't an issue, either. But the real draw is the heightened sense of taste. Dark dining is based on the theory that flavors are intensified when people can't see what they're eating.

With roots in Europe and North America ("Dark dining" began in Switzerland with *Blinde Kuh*, said to be

the first eatery to introduce sight-free dining when it opened in Zurich in 1999), the playful concept is fast spreading across Asia with restaurants in Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Phnom Penh and now Ho Chi Minh City. In the same month, not one but two dining in the dark restaurants will open here on the same street.

At the time of our interview **Blackout** (74/7D Hai Ba Trung, D1) owned by Alexander Egert had recently opened while **Noir. Dining in the Dark** (178 Hai Ba Trung, D1) co-owned by partners Germ Doornbos and Vu Anh Tu was slated for its grand opening at the end of September.

Both restaurants operate on the same principal concept - pitch black restaurants, visually impaired waiting staff and set menus. However, that is where the

similarities end.

Have you met Alexander/Germ?

Alexander: No we have not [met], but I have heard of Germ while looking for staff.

Germ: I haven't even heard of Alexander and his restaurant until very recently. We had no idea that someone else in Saigon was working on the same concept at all.

Why did you decide on a dine-in-the-dark concept?

Alexander: It was by chance for me. Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to visit a dine-in-the-dark restaurant in Phnom Penh. I had heard a lot of positive reviews and it was

a great experience. I grew to like the concept but I had some reservation about the food. Coincidentally my restaurant Camargue on Hai Ba Trung was undergoing some changes at the time and since I am an entrepreneur, I thought this was something new I wanted to try out and do better.

Germ & Tu: We already had plans to open up our own restaurants. We are both veteran professionals in the food and beverage field so we know how competitive the restaurant business in Saigon is. To succeed in this market, a restaurant has to be truly unique. We also wanted to work in the social responsibility aspect of the business. Dark dining restaurant concept is a perfect fit. It has never been done in Vietnam before and by employing visually impaired people we bring awareness to the disability community in Saigon and bring them more opportunities. We also give a percentage of our revenue to the visually impaired community.

How will your interpretation be different?

Alexander: By doing it very well. The concept is already a unique experience, combined with good food, it is already a winner. The key is execution. Blackout is small. It can take 10-12 diners at a time and I'm perfectly happy with that because that means I can pay more attention to each of the customers.

Germ & Tu: We actually took the concept one step further. Noir, Dining in the Dark is only the first part of a duo. The second part, Dining in the Light, is our own creation that has never been done anywhere else. Of course we cannot reveal too much about it because it is not yet open. I can tell you it involves lighting visual effects though and will open in two months. We also want to go deeper with the 'in the dark' concept. You see, the dark reveals many things that we normally don't pay attention to, 70 percent of our sensory input is sight. Take away that 70 percent and suddenly you start noticing things about the other 30 percent that you have never noticed before. In the future, we will develop other activities in the dark, such as team building, events, interviews or blind dating, literally. We have a lot of space in Noir, enough to seat 50 people at a time. We can do a lot with all that space.

Did the concept have to be approved by the government since it is unconventional for a country like Vietnam?

Alexander: Not as far as I know. I have existing paperwork for my restaurant Camargue and so far, the government workers have been supportive.

Tu: Not at all. We actually received a lot of support from the government. We also got a tax cut which we never even thought of until our HR staff informed us of that.



Germ Doornbos and Vu Anh Tu

Is the restaurant for adults only?

Alexander: No, children can come as well as long as their parents are okay with it. I've already had a nine-year-old customer.

Germ & Tu: We only admit children older than 10. Younger children may be too scared of the dark to enjoy themselves. Of course, there's also a safety issue as some children like to run around.

Can you tell us about the hiring process?

Alexander: I contacted the blind people association and various nunneries that take in visually impaired people. That was when I found out about Germ. He was way ahead of me in picking up staff. I got a list of people who were interested in working for me and from that list I made the first phone interview.

Germ & Tu: The hiring process is exactly like that for normal non-visually impaired waiting staff, with some changes to accommodate the unique nature of the job. Equality is a part of our concept and we would like to let our staff know that they have equal opportunities with everyone else. Visually impaired people don't have a lot of experience in the food and beverage industry of course, so we account for that and have very intensive training for our staff.

The language barrier is often a problem here, so will the lack of visual aid make it even more difficult for customers

and waiters to understand each other? And what language will service be conducted in?

Alexander: I have not had that problem. The menu and wine choice is chosen before the guests enter the dark dining area. My staff also speak surprisingly good English, definitely enough for simple communication. In both English and Vietnamese.

Tu: We have three languages available: English and Vietnamese, of course, and also Mandarin Chinese from one of our visually impaired staff.

Will servers guide your hand to the plate and offers helpful tips like: "This course is eaten with a spoon"?

Alexander: No. In general we want to let people experience and explore for themselves. The customers are led to their tables and if they need to go outside for the restroom then they are led outside. Each table has its own visually impaired waiting staff and the room has one supervisor with night vision goggles on to prevent anything from going wrong.

Germ & Tu: The customers do receive help, but not so extensively. Our staff lead them to their tables and give them some instructions, such as 'I'm pouring the wine from your left and there is hot soup on your right.' Other than that, we like to leave people to their own devices.



Alexander Egert

“People like the experience and the fact they can concentrate on the food and the conversations without distractions such as their smartphones or taking snaps for Facebook for once.”

How will hot liquid factor into the menu? Are there any ingredients that are unsuitable for dining in the dark?

Alexander: Not much at all. The key is the layout of the dining set. We serve each individual menu on a tray with high rims. The food is put in little bowls and the wine in thick stone cups, not stem glasses. Also people eat very carefully in the dark so even if there is a spill, the worst you can end up with is a tray with spilled food inside. I have not had this problem so far.

Not ingredients particularly but rather certain food. For example, sauces. Camargue is a French restaurant. My chef is versed in French and Mediterranean cuisine. French cuisine is famous for its sauces, but sauces are not suitable for dining in the dark because it's so easy to make a mess.

Tu: They are factored in with care of course. Unlike many other dark dining restaurants, we don't use special dining sets. Our bowls and cutlery are exactly like that of a normal restaurant, except sturdier. Part of our concept is the focus on senses other than sight. We want our customers to not only focus on the food but also from normal dining items that they normally don't think

much about. We want them to hold up a wine stem glass and be aware of its texture and its weight in their hands in ways they have never done before. I think people underestimate themselves too, because so far we have seen the dark diners eat very carefully. They don't make rash movements that may cause spills. Of course we tend to stay away from making dishes too hot or too cold just in case.

We tend to stay away from extreme spices and flavors. Our menus are secret. The customers only know that it's Oriental cuisine or international cuisine or vegetarian cuisine. More than that they do not know. This heightens the experience but we don't want to create anything too surprising.

Darkness also enhances our state of fear. Do you think this will detract from the experience?

Alexander: As far as I can see, no. Our feedback thus far has all been positive. People like the experience and the fact they can concentrate on the food and the conversations without distractions such as their smartphones or taking snaps for Facebook for once. There is always a giggling moment at first of course but that's part of

the experience. Then again, I have not had to deal with a Vietnamese person with a fear of ghosts and darkness.

Germ & Tu: No we don't. Before we decided on this concept we tried out many dine in the dark restaurants in other countries and from their experience we can see this is not a significant issue. People enjoy the focus on food, sensations and the uninterrupted conversations. The darkness is not so scary when you are there with your friends or family. Even in the event the experience is no longer enjoyable for a customer, we do have our normal lit restaurant right next door.

Many see this concept as a novelty concept people will try only once - how do you plan to get repeat customers?

Alexander: I have not had to deal with this problem at all. So far, when people like the experience they tend to come back with their friends and families and these friends and families in turn come back with their friends and families. In a way, they are already repeat customers. I have also been approached by tourist companies. So no, I don't worry about this at all.

Germ & Tu: By serving very good food. The concept may be seen as a novelty and in a way, it is. But the core of dining is good food. We believe if we do that correctly, repeat customers won't be a problem. Besides, there are 10 million people in Saigon many of whom are young and eager for new experiences. I think a 50-seat restaurant does have breathing room with a market of 10 million people.

Do you think there is room for two dine-in-the-dark restaurants in the city?

Alexander: Yes, I do. How many French restaurants do you see in the city? How many Italian restaurants? They all live, don't they? If a city is ready for a new concept, then it is ready regardless of how many restaurants run on the same concept. If it is not ready, then even one restaurant won't make it. As a matter of fact, I think this is a good thing. Competition improves the quality of the product and service and if you are doing business in Asia and you are doing a good job, eventually you are going to have to think of copycat competitors. I look forward to Germ's restaurant opening day. When it happens, I will go there and I will try out their restaurant and I will congratulate him. Maybe he will do a better job than I do, in which case, maybe we will start a trend in Vietnam. In business, it's always good to be known as the one who starts the trend.

Germ & Tu: I think there are. When we started we thought we were the first one to pioneer this concept then we found out about Alexander's Blackout. But in a way, our concept is different. We have our own supporters and we are both veteran food and beverage professionals. We think we will do just fine.

Additional reporting by Christine Van ■

The Panda Express

Oi interviews Tauriq Brown, Co-Founder and Managing Director of foodpanda Vietnam, on the success of the company's online food delivery service



Tell us about foodpanda.

Tauriq: foodpanda was established in May 2012 with Singapore as its first market. foodpanda (www.foodpanda.vn) and two affiliated brands - hellofood and Delivery Club - are now active in over 40 countries including Thailand, Pakistan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Russia, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Brazil, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Qatar, Nigeria, Morocco and Ghana.

What potential do you see in the Vietnamese market?

Tauriq: Vietnam has over 36 million internet users thus an internet penetration of 39 percent as of January 2014 and coupled with a rising purchasing power, the Vietnamese food delivery market is one of the fastest growing in the region, attracting interest from international investors.

With the great potential for growth, the Vietnamese market is ready for the online food delivery business model and we strongly believe that Vietnam is one of the ideal markets for our company.

How has partnering with globally-recognized franchises such as Jollibee, Pizza Hut, KFC and Subway increased your brand presence in Vietnam?

Tauriq: We are now outright the leading online food court in the Vietnamese market by offering the easiest, fastest and most convenient ways to order food. The partnership with these mega food and beverage chains has helped us improve our world-class customer experience, as well as complementing our culinary variety. Through

the partnership, we have exercised a range of co-branding and cross marketing activities which benefits all parties in strengthening our market positions, both locally and globally.

What cities in Vietnam are you currently operating in?

Tauriq: foodpanda is now operational in five large cities: Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, Danang, Nha Trang and Can Tho. We currently have over 1,000 partner restaurants in Vietnam including popular international chains and local favorites.

What has made it possible for foodpanda to achieve the largest market share in this industry?

Tauriq: Our service is available on various platforms such as our website, mobile apps, Livechat and a toll-free telephone hotline to enable our users to browse menus and order their favorite food anytime, anywhere in the most high-tech and trendy way. Moreover, the prices of the online menus are identical to those on the restaurants' menus. For our partner restaurants, we provide a unique, unlimited revenue channel that they may never have access to.

How has the introduction of the foodpanda app changed your business strategy?

Tauriq: Smartphone and mobile apps have changed how e-commerce and online marketplaces work. foodpanda, from the early stages, has set our eyes on becoming a mobile company. With the introduction of our various mobile apps in early 2013,

we have become the leader in the global marketplace. Since then, we have regularly introduced updates to the app to improve the user's experience.

Mobile penetration in Vietnam is at 20 percent as of January 2014 and 60 percent of smartphone owners have made purchases on their phones. This has further given motivation for us to focus on mobile strategy, particularly in the Vietnamese market.

What strategies have you used with partner restaurants to increase delivery sales?

Tauriq: We have the best marketing and sales resources working at foodpanda as well as knowledge and collaborations with local and global ecommerce networks (40+ foodpanda countries, Lazada, Zalora, etc.). By growing our marketing teams significantly and gaining a thorough understanding of the market over the last two years, we can now offer customized and targeted marketing strategies to each restaurant.

We're a unique marketing channel, enabling our restaurant partners visibility in the online and mobile space.

How has foodpanda changed the way people eat in Vietnam?

Vietnamese people have come to embrace the convenience and ease that foodpanda offers. foodpanda, in a nutshell, is an online food court offering the largest variety of food choices. We have changed the perception of 1) ordering food non-traditionally and 2) that ordering food online is unhealthy. We allow people to enjoy foodpanda every day and still have a healthy lifestyle. This is where they do not need to compromise their lifestyle choices. foodpanda saves them time and offers them great convenience.

Tell us about the company's plan for the future.

Tauriq: foodpanda has recently received another investment of USD60 million, which shows the confidence our investors have in foodpanda's future. The funds will be used to further increase our growth rate, expand our partner restaurant network, improve customer service and consolidate our market-leading positions. In Vietnam, we will further expand to other cities, improve the food selection on foodpanda with more of our users' favorite international and local restaurants, ensure timely delivery and to provide the best experience for our users. ■

A Food Trifecta

Cantonese dim sum, barbecued meats and wok fried specialties all under one roof

TEXT BY **MICHAEL ARNOLD** IMAGES PROVIDED BY **SAN FU LOU**

FINDING AN ORIGINAL take on a major world culinary tradition isn't easy, sometimes with more misses than hits. Newcomer **San Fu Lou** (Ground Floor AB Tower, 76A Le Lai, D1) is one that actually succeeds in delivering an innovative dining experience – with its sparkling modern *nouveau Chinois* décor and show kitchen concept standing behind a solid menu of Cantonese favorites.

San Fu Lou's interior design is exceptionally easy on the eye – as with the gorgeous Chill Bar upstairs, it's the brainchild of famous Dubai-based architectural firm dwp, laid out with their signature open spaces and snaking partitions. Their design here is a funky, modern take on the classic Chinese teahouses you might have seen in old Kung Fu movies – a mezzanine terrace winds around a central opera stage, which here takes the form of the open kitchen. Despite being right in the center of the dining area, the show kitchen isn't a distraction

to diners – who are invited to look on while the chefs do their magic – and it's intended to serve as a demonstration of the restaurant's strict food preparation standards.

The finishing touches are very fine – the décor is trendy, the tables inset with reimagined Chinese porcelain tiles bearing rich, earthen-colored ceramic tableware. The ambient music isn't classical Chinese ensemble pieces or vapid Mandopop, either – it's light techno jazz. All of this hits the mark as being perfectly cool.

If you take a stroll around the glass paneling, you'll notice the show kitchen is laid out in three distinct divisions. This is an important feature, as it's part of the restaurant's 'trinity' concept – which the three owners have spelled out in verse, brushed reverently onto its walls in large Chinese characters like ancient poetry. "San Fu Lou" translates as "The House of Three Blessings," and this is chiefly manifested in the three main categories on

the menu – dim sum, BBQ and wok – each of which has its own designated kitchen area. It's done beautifully – the BBQ area has an open hearth with tender, dripping meats roasted on a spit over applewood; the dim sum area has its collection of large bamboo steamers; the stir-fry area with its glowing woks.

With such a chic veneer, you'd imagine that a night at San Fu Lou is going to make a big dent in your eat-out budget – but you'd be mistaken there. Prices are mid-range and set at rates families can afford (although this is probably going to be one of the restaurant's main obstacles, in that it looks more expensive than it really is). While this is something for the restaurant to worry about, it works in favor of the customer – diners can order a veritable smorgasbord of dishes from across the menu and eat better for less. It's certainly worth ordering more items in terms of the quality of the cuisine, too – with all its flashiness, San Fu Lou doesn't attempt to dazzle the diner with odd food experiments or zany fusion recipes; the food is just balanced, healthy and well-presented.

Just for Fun

It must be observed that, much to the relief of the casual dining set, San Fu Lou isn't pretending to be wildly authentic either. This is a blessing, as Cantonese cuisine – the real stuff that is – can tend towards being mildly *Fear Factor* by nature: trust me, chicken feet are the least of your worries. The restaurant focuses instead on the more agreeable task of serving tasty dishes from the Canton region. The dishes are classics, and not overpowering. The meats are lean and juicy. Most of the meat is relatively bone-free, too, which is a

"With such a chic veneer, you'd imagine that a night at San Fu Lou is going to make a big dent in your eat-out budget – but you'd be mistaken there."



Xiao long bao



godsend if you're used to picking Chinese fish dishes to pieces. Spices are fresh and well-balanced – there's actually nothing to offend the nostrils or the palate here, making this one of the more approachable venues in its category.

We went ahead with a few recommended favorites from across the menu's three-style range. We started with a combination chicken, duck and pork platter (VND185,000) – very moist and tasty – set off by sautéed French beans (with spicy shrimp paste – and a pleasant, Cantonese one rather than the odoriferous Vietnamese delicacy) at VND75,000. These were very crisp, fully absorbing the flavor of the meat and sporting a cheeky burn. Those dishes were nicely offset by a Hong Kong-style steamed grouper (VND155,000) and duck

black truffle dumplings (VND65,000). While the fish was unusually well-done, it was devoid of any unpleasant odor and went down well, while the dumplings tasted wholesome and light.

The dish I was particularly curious about was the *xiao long bao* (you may know them as Shanghai soup dumplings) which at VND90,000 are made ("just for fun," I was assured) of dough blended with food coloring that rather closely resembles Play-Doh. Each cooked *xiao long bao* is a different color, although they're uniform in taste – filled with a rich mince and broth. While this can make them difficult to eat (bite from the wrong angle and the scalding soup will dribble out over your chin) by making a cautious approach, you'll be rewarded by its taste and warmth

FROM LEFT: Sautéed French beans with spice shrimp paste platter; Hong Kong-style steamed grouper; San Fu Lou fried rice; Combination chicken, duck and pork platter

on the tongue.

We finished off the meal with fried rice (with shrimp, scallops and squid chili paste) at VND135,000, which was worth its higher-than-average price for its intense flavors unusual in such a dish – and a plate of salted egg buns (VND40,000) for dessert. These are not as salty as you might expect – the filling is a delicious milky custard that will please absolutely anyone.

The venue is located behind the New World Hotel and with its 3am closing time, it's well-positioned to tempt hungry clubgoers well past midnight. ■





FROM TOP: Escargots de Bourgogne, Elisa



Regal Fare

Conjuring up French flavors in a tropical garden setting

TEXT BY TAYNE EPHRAIM IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

FOR ELISA, PROPRIETRESS of **La Closserie d'Elisa** (52 Ngo Quan Huy, D2), Vietnam runs deep in her blood, both figuratively and historically. Her grandfather was Bao Dai, the last emperor of Vietnam, and for both her and her family, Vietnam is a place of sad memories, reconciliations, and new beginnings.

Before arriving in Vietnam, she worked as an interior designer at a Parisian architecture studio, and it shows. Every aspect of the restaurant has been incorporated into the design, including coconut trees, one of which almost intrudes on the look-in kitchen with its

bustling black-shirted staff rushing to prepare orders.

"Before I made the restaurant, all this was just long grass and coconut trees," she explained. "Everything here I designed myself," she says of the kitchen, the bamboo thatching on the high-vaulted bar, the arc lights hanging in the coconut trees, down to each item on the menu, each hand-chosen and crafted by Elisa.

La Closserie d'Elisa takes its name from a famous Parisian restaurant that was once the haunt of such personages as Salvador Dali and Ernest Hemingway, La Closserie d'Lilas, and like that bastion of French

cuisine, Elisa hopes to replicate the same reputation as its namesake.

A *closserie* is French for courtyard, and as I am shown to my table in the covered open-air dining area, my first impression of the place is something between the long backseat of a Cadillac and a covered Mediterranean courtyard. White wood, wall-spanning leather seats and coconut trees in the fan-blown Saigon breeze set the ambiance.

"Is this the menu?" I asked the waiter, indicating a bound scroll on the table. It could just as easily be part of the table adornment. From the floral arrangements to the sharp angles of the black napkins in their glasses, everything has its place, meticulously ordered and arranged.

The menu options range from White asparagus with *mousseline* sauce (VND180,000) to Scallops on a bed of leeks (VND420,000). It's a small menu, but each choice has been burnished with Elisa's special touch. "I don't like clutter. I like to keep things simple. The menu is small, but every dish is special." She likes to remain in complete control of her restaurant, even going personally to the markets herself every morning to buy the day's ingredients.

For starters I ordered the Burgundy snails, *escargots de Bourgogne* (VND190,000). Like most Saigonese I enjoy the odd plate of *oc*, but Elisa's secret snail recipe is another level of mollusk delight entirely. Stuffed with a garlic and parsley paste, the *escargots* were bright and buttery to the palate. They are accompanied by a two-pronged snail fork and the aid of some gripping forceps employed especially for the purpose. It's a little tricky at first but you quickly get the hang of it and soon find yourself hankering for a second serving.

The main course was a beautifully displayed *boudin noir aux pommes* (VND310,000), presented as a wheel of stuffed sausage slices atop a lotus-like arrangement of apple slices with a bowl of mash on the side. The blood-black boudin sausages had a lush, pudding-like texture to them, and had a rich flavor that is hard to corner but nonetheless extremely satisfying. The apple slices offer a sweet edge and the mash tops it off like the cream on a chocolate sundae.

For dessert I chose a *mousse au chocolat* (VND120,000), Elisa's own recipe. The dish comes served in a chilled glass like a candle of melted chocolate wax. The chocolate was decadent and creamy, not too sweet and not too bitter. It left me feeling like a schoolboy guffawing in delight over mom's cooking.

Things have come a long way on the dining front since Elisa first came out here more than a decade ago. "Before it was all just beer and cognac," she tells me. But now we find ourselves spoiled for choice, awash with options, with La Closserie d'Elisa among them. ■



Don't Call it Fusion

An unconventional twist to stolid Korean cuisine

TEXT BY MICHAEL ARNOLD IMAGE PROVIDED BY WON'S CUISINE

SINCE ITS UNDERSTATED reopening on Mac Thi Buoi some 18 months ago, **Won's Cuisine** (49 Mac Thi Buoi, D1) has enjoyed a somewhat gentle renaissance. It's only now that it's beginning to gather notoriety as one of the city's most important Korean venues – and not for reasons of authenticity, but rather for straying from the norms. Even if you're not particularly partial to Korean food, this is the one that will win you over – and it all comes down to the restaurant's fascinating proprietress Alexis Won, who has infused so much of her own quirky tastes into the menu that she's completely ignored the conventions of the cuisine.

The result is neither an exercise in fusion nor localization – it's just a slice of Alexis' own personal Korea, and it's perfectly dreamy. Every item on Won's menu is the way it is for essentially personal reasons: Alexis being a finicky eater with eccentric tastes, this means that each of the dishes are fastidiously healthy, pathologically flavorsome, and one-of-a-kind. "I'm always eating things my own way," she confesses. "If I go to McDonald's, I dip the french fries in the sundae. I eat *kimchi* soup with cheese. My whole menu is based on my own style."

Blending her own special recipes with those loved by her family, Won's cuisine is straight from the heart, and you can taste it – even the *kimchi* we snack on while choosing our main dishes is an eyebrow-raiser. *Kimchi* is supposed to be tart and astringent – not Won's: "We make it every

two days," Alexis explains. "Mature *kimchi* is sour. We make our noodles fresh, and only fresh *kimchi* goes with fresh noodles. It's not really economical to make noodles like that – most Korean restaurants here import theirs or use instant noodles. But I can't stand the taste of instant and I worry that the imported stuff might have Chinese chemicals in it. So we just make them anyway. Our margins are lower, but at least the taste is good."

A Twist on the Familiar

Every item on the menu seems to have its own similar story. We start with a selection of dumplings: "Korean dumplings are normally too large," she says. "So I asked an Italian chef to suggest how to make smaller ones. I call them 'baby dumplings' (VND150,000) – you'll only find them in my restaurant." The deep-fried dumplings (VND150,000) are based on a similar experiment, twice-fried to keep them crispy and thoroughly drained of oil to keep them light. You'll be hard-pressed finding other deep-fried dishes anywhere else that actually taste like they're good for you. The vegetarian dumplings (VND120,000) are stuffed with sweet potato noodles, of all things – that just came out of Alexis' imagination, and they're unreal.

Familiar Korean dishes each have their own twist. The soft bean curd soup (VND140,000) is made richer and sweeter by slow-boiling the seafood and vegetable broth

for longer than is usual. The mixed Korean pancake set (VND150,000) tastes more like a tempura, with the odors from the herbs completely removed by using the pancake mixture with ice water. Won's fine beef ribs (VND420,000) are unmistakable for their quality. As she puts it, "I only use American beef. I'm picky and cheap meat just smells."

The menu's presiding dishes are the *shabu shabu* noodles – we select the beef fillet with assorted veggies (VND390,000/2 people) which proceeds like a four-course meal. It begins with a rich vegetable soup in pork bone broth, which becomes a regular hotpot once you crunch through a good portion of the veggies. As the remainder of the soup begins to evaporate, Won's homemade noodles are added to produce a creamy stir-fry not unlike a soupy pasta. This dish has a twist – finish the noodles, and a saucer of rice and egg are added to the remainder and cooked as delicious fried rice. "Customers have asked me for the rice as a standalone dish," Alexis tells me, "but it's impossible – you can only get that taste at the end of the process."

Sadly, Won's other specialty was unavailable on the meal we dined – if you want to try zombie octopus here (Google it) you're advised to call ahead to check if they have it. The cuisine is dramatic in its simplicity, and you'll leave the venue feeling that no matter how much you've indulged, you've still ended up doing your body a favor. ■



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Baby dumplings, Deep-fried dumplings, Mixed Korean pancake set, Shabu Shabu noodles with beef fillet and assorted veggies, Won's fine beef ribs, Vegetarian dumplings

>>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 tea house, 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 Bui, 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 IO, 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



Kabin

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

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



Li Bai

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

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



Ming Court

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

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



Ming Dynasty

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

23 Nguyen Khac Vien, D7

Also Try...

Hung Ky Mi Gia

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

20 Le Anh Xuan, D1
3822 2673

Ocean Palace

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

2 Le Duan Street, D1
3911 8822

Seven Wonders (Bay Ky Quan)

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

12 Duong 26, D6
3755 1577
www.7ryquan.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



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



Vival

Specializing in Andalusian cuisine, this restaurant is a family venue that can also serve as a bar. The restaurant is furnished in an eclectic style, from the modern blue glass and stainless steel bar, to the traditional wine barrels that serve as tables.

R4-28 Huong Gia 4, Tan Phong, Phu My Hung, D7
5410 6721



Pacharan

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

97 Hai Ba Trung Street, D1
090 399 25 39

Baba's Kitchen
164 Bai Vien, District 1
49D Xa Lo Hanoi, District 2
Phone: 083-838-6661 & 083-838-6662
Open 11am to 11pm
North & South Indian food
Halal & vegetarian dishes
Of course we can cater!
order online at vietnammm.com & eat.vn
"Baba brings India to Vietnam"

wok n'roll
American Chinese Food
Full Menu
www.woknroll.vn
We wait hand for you!
SUPER FAST DELIVERY!
0122-690-8881
Address: Hung Vuong 1 E006, Phu My Hung, District 7

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 downstairs with space for private functions and alfresco dining on an upper floor. The menu changes weekly, the food is fresh and the wine list carefully collated.

98 Ho Tung Mau, D1
0948 415 646

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.lebouchondesaigon.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 & 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.

S9-1 Block R13, Bui Bang Doan, D7

5410 1989



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.



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 🍷 Or'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.labettolasaiigon.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. 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 🍣 Or'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, spaghetti, pizzas, steak and special Japanese sweet desserts.

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



Chisana Hashi

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

River Garden, 170 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
6683 5308



Ebiisu

Serving neither sushi nor sashimi, Ebiisu'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
38245355
www.yakatabune-saigon.com

Mondo

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

Osaka Ramen

This sleek, open-kitchen contemporary

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

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

Robata Dining An

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

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

Sushi Dining Aoi

Sushi Dining Aoi is one such restaurant, where the whole atmosphere of the

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

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

Yoshino

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

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



KOREAN



Galbi Brothers

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

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



Lee Cho

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

48 Hung Phuoc 2, D7
5410 1086



Seoul House

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

33 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3829 4297



Won's Cuisine

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

49 Mac Thi Buoi
3820 4085



THAI



Baan Thai

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

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

Koh Thai

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

Kumho 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 rooky styling and a great attitude – and some of the most finely-presented signature Thai cuisine you'll see in this city, much of it authentically spicy. Long Live the King! Reservations recommended.

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

STEAKHOUSE



Au Lac Do Brazil

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

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



El Gaucho

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

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



Indaba

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

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



New York Steakhouse

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

25-27 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, DI



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, DI
3822 0079

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**Venue/ Địa điểm: RENAISSANCE
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8-15 Ton Duc Thang, Ben Nghe,
District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

Time/ Thời gian:

Night Bazaar:
17.00-21.00, 8th, November 2014

Day Bazaar:
9.00-16.00, 9th, November 2014

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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
commnieusaigon27@yahoo.com
commnieusaigon.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
(deliveries: 3602 2241 or 091 400 8835)



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 Hanoi's 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



Bahja

Algerian restaurant serving North African delights such as couscous, tajines and desserts. The unique Mechoui set dinner is a popular choice and perfect for groups (available with prior notice).

87-89-91 Ho Tung Mau, D1
093 787 2010 (French, Arabic, English, Finnish)



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 Khang, 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...

Boomerang Bistro

Located in The Crescent by the lake, the spacious Boomerang 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.boomerang.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
lafiestavn@gmail.com
www.facebook.com/lafiestavietnam

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

Skewers

Take your taste buds on a Mediterranean fling. This long-running family restaurant serving Greek favorites feels like fine dining but is as casual as you care to be. Always prepared with the freshest ingredients, the quality of the fare is consistent and authentic. Cuban cigars and a serious wine list are some of the venue's finer drawcards.

9A Thai Van Lung, D1
www.skewers-restaurant.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

Travel & Leisure

IMAGE BY JAMES PHAM





Installation Art
Baan Silapin



IMAGE PROVIDED BY MAGIC ART MUSEUM

Oh, Grow Up!

Finding my inner child in Bangkok

TEXT AND IMAGES BY JAMES PHAM

On average, at age five we engage in creative tasks 98 times a day, laugh 113 times and ask 65 questions. By age 44, the numbers decline drastically to two creative tasks a day, 11 laughs and six questions. — Study conducted by the University of California (UCLA).

TRAVEL TENDS TO bring out the best and worst of us. Confusing situations, unfamiliar foods, indecipherable languages, inevitable delays — they are all part and parcel of the travel experience. It's how we choose to deal with them that defines our experience. Gripe on everything that's different from home like a grumpy old man? Or embrace those "same same but different" elements with the wide-eyed wonder of a child?

"All the pathos and irony of leaving one's youth behind is thus implicit in every joyous moment of travel: one knows that the first joy can never be recovered, and the wise traveler learns not to repeat successes but tries new places all the time," said historian Paul Fussell.

So it was that I was determined to tap into my Inner Child, the Wonder Child, my True Self — that part of each one of us that revels in playfulness, innocence, wonder and joy — in the most unlikely of places, Bangkok, the City of Angels but perhaps better known for its devilish adult pleasures. With advice from mapmaker extraordinaire Nima Chandler of the whimsically illustrated Nancy Chandler Maps (www.nancychandler.net), I set out to find the very best grown up versions of childhood fantasies to help me rediscover my Inner Child.

#Selfie

The Oxford Dictionaries' Word of the Year for 2013 was "selfie," originally squarely the domain of teeny boppers and self-obsessed celebrities (I'm looking at YOU, Kim Kardashian.) But then the Pope did it. So did President Obama with the Danish Prime Minister. And ever since Ellen broke Twitter with her star-studded selfie at the Oscars,

it's perfectly okay for adults to get in on the photographic self-love.

Opened in April of this year, the Magic Art Museum is the third such exhibition space in Bangkok devoted to all things selfie, couple and the group shot. The museum consists of 60-70 painted illusions and backdrops set up in four main galleries. Capture yourself running from zombies or getting pitchforked in the nether regions by a red, horned devil while clinging to a spiky tree in the Thai Horror Zone, appropriate considering the love affair Thais have with anything supernatural. Or row a boat with a tiger in a floating market or escape the jaws of a crocodile in the Thai Culture Zone featuring backdrops of everyday Thai life or popular tourist attractions. Go crazy in the Funny Zone, escaping sharks bursting out of an aquarium or in Photo Land, with its giant pirate ship and myriad of props.

Some of the backdrops are great for selfies, some require one of you to play photographer (museum staff are on hand if you're traveling solo) and others are designed for groups of three or more. Stickers on the floor indicate the best place to stand to capture 3D effects but other than that, patrons have to figure out poses for themselves, sometimes needing to take a photo sideways then rotating it or working out how a slanted floor works to capture perspective. "All the art is made by Thais, either artists or students from famous universities," says Pook. "And 80 percent of



Magic Art Museum

“All the art is made by Thais, either artists or students from famous universities. And 80 percent of our guests are adults!”

our guests are adults!”

Located on the 7th floor of MBK mall (National Stadium BTS stop), **Magic Art Museum** is open daily, 10:30am – 10:00pm. Until the end of October, admission for international visitors is THB350 for adults and THB180 for children (regularly THB500 / 220). See www.magicartmuseum.com

Dessert Alert

Teddy bear tea parties find their adult reincarnation at the whimsical Mr. Jones' Orphanage, a cake shop straight out of a children's book. “The concept is a fantasy, of an old man building an orphanage in an abandoned building, allowing children to do things their parents would have forbade like eating a lot of sugar, cakes and milkshakes,”

explains creative director Roberto Giordano. Gothic gargoyles line the façade of the shop, while the interior is designed to look like a conservatory set in an old church. The main entrance evokes the nave, while dozens of teddy bear “orphans” (complete with individual information cards) look on from the balconies. One side of the bakery houses an open kitchen which produces everything fresh daily, the irresistible smell of cookies, waffles, pancakes, and crème caramel settling like a blanket of unadulterated joy over the magical space.

On the other side of the shop, a gigantic carousel is set to host the mother of all tea parties, with more teddy bears seated around the room, while wooden carousel horses and hundreds of paper airplanes

dangle above. While the low ceiling of the upstairs library is perfect for wee ones to run around, the clientele is decidedly adult. “It’s one of the most creative spaces in the city,” says Pamela, here on a Thursday afternoon with a girlfriend, sipping a Wanna Wanna Have milkshake (vanilla caramel, chocolate, macadamia nuts) and slowly savoring a slice of Mr. Jones’ Secret Cake (*shhhhh...* the “secret” is Grand Marnier).

Mr. Jones’ Orphanage is one of the playful venues owned by the Fico Group, which also counts the Dickensian factory-themed Iron Fairies bar and restaurant, the 1940’s USA bomb factory-themed gastro pub Bangkok Betty and Maggie Choo’s, the chic Shanghai-style underground cabaret bar, in its portfolio.

Since opening its first store in the Thong



Mr. Jones' Orphanage



Baan Silapin

Lor area of Bangkok in 2012, success has come quickly, striking a chord with adults looking to indulge their sweet tooth in a playful setting. A second Mr. Jones' Orphanage opened the following year in Siam Center, centered around a train theme. Tracks suspended in the air run through the space, and large moving wooden gears adorn the ceiling. "Trains are important to this location," says Roberto. "There's a connection to a real train at the [attached] BTS station and you can get on the train that takes you to Sugar Hills," the massive cake display housing dozens of desserts including Kit Kat Cakes and Chocolate Mud Pies. Four other Bangkok locations are set to open this year and the bakery has franchised its first international location in Sapporo, Japan with 14 more of the dessert restaurants to roll out over the next three years.

Visit the original Mr. Jones' Orphanage at SeenSpace Thonglor 13, Bangkok. Other locations include Siam Center, Empire Tower and Central World. Milkshakes and cakes start at BHT130, with waffles, pies, pancakes, cupcakes, cookies and a selection of savory items rounding out the menu.

Art House

Forget Kermit and old socks with button eyes. Baan Silapin, or the Artist's House, is where adults can enjoy classical Thai puppetry. Set in an old wooden house directly on Klong Bangkok Yai, an offshoot of the Chao Praya River, Baan Silapin is a space dedicated to the love of art. "The owner is an artist, an architect," says Lalita, one of the members of the Kum Nai Hun Lakon Lek puppet troupe. "He wanted to make this gallery to show artwork and [the process of making art, like] painting and woodcutting. It's for art, not for business." There's an exhibition space upstairs and you'll often find local students sprawled about, sketching and drawing. There are free classes on puppetry and Thai classical dancing on the weekends.

The main attraction, though, is a short puppet show performed by Lalita's puppet troupe. Unlike Vietnamese water puppetry where puppeteers are hidden behind screens, the professional Thai classical dancers are clothed all in black with full black face masks, gracefully moving in sync with the puppets they control. It takes three people to operate a single puppet, one each to control the right hand, the left hand and head, and the feet. Today's performance tells of the monkey god Hanuman capturing Benyakai and involves a war, a fake corpse and some serious puppet smooching.

Puppet shows daily at 2pm except for Wednesdays and Sundays, but calling ahead (02-868-5279) to check the schedule is recommended. While Baan Silapin is becoming increasingly popular with river tours, it is possible to get there by taxi (access via Charan Sanitwong Soi 3 or Phetkasem Soi 20). Admission is free and there is a small coffee shop on-site along with very reasonably priced gifts and postcards.

I, Robot

What kid doesn't dream of a future filled with robots programmed to serve our every whim? The future is now at Hajime Robot Restaurant. Customers order food using a



Hajime Robot Restaurant

tableside touch screen and a countdown timer lets you know when to expect the giant Japanese robot to zip along a German track motion system bringing your dishes to the table.

"Hajime means beginning or first," says Chatchanat Paojaroen, Senior Operation Department Manager. "The owner visited a robot exhibition in Chiang Mai and came up with the concept to have robots serve food to customers, the first ever restaurant with this concept in Thailand." Our conversation is interrupted by "Gangnam Style" blaring over the speakers as the robots launch into a full-fledged dance, complete with cowboy hand movements, one of seven songs on rotation every 30 minutes (more often if there are a lot of children), including Thai and Japanese favorites.

"I think what attracts people is the robots," says Chatchanat. "But the ambience and the high quality menu ingredients bring them back." Nearby office workers crowd the restaurant during the week while weekends are dominated by families looking to feast on the New Zealand beef and Japanese Wagyu, tiger prawns, salmon steaks, lamb chops and as much sushi as you can eat in an hour and a half.

The 144-seat restaurant came at a 30 million baht investment with an even larger restaurant operating in Pattaya and one with talking robots planned for Chiang

Mai early next year.

The Hajime Robot Restaurant is located on the 3rd floor of Monopoly Park, a short taxi ride from the city center. The Shabu Shabu buffet is priced at BHT 359 and the Yakiniku BBQ at BHT 499, including free flow of soft drinks and desserts. See www.hajimerobot.com

No Adults Allowed

Few things evoke happy childhood memories like a backyard tree house. No rules, no chores, no parents. Pull up the ladder and you're in your own world with a best friend for company or maybe just a stack of comic books or a boxful of baseball cards.

Weary city dwellers in the know escape to the Bangkok Tree House, a collection of 10 themed "nests" set on Bang Krachao, an unexpected island oasis of green just across the Chao Praya River from downtown Bangkok. Looking very much like Saigon's Thanh Da area, the so-called "Green Lung" of Bangkok is just six miles from the financial district of Silom, but a world away with its dense coconut and papaya groves and elevated pathways perfect for bicycling.

The eco boutique hotel is the brainchild of Joey Tulyanond. "When I first biked here in 2007 and saw how special the area was, I knew I wanted to build something but it had to be in line with the environment both architecturally and philosophically," he says. "My instructions [to the architect] were actually contradictory: I wanted the design



IMAGE PROVIDED BY BANGKOK TREE HOUSE

Bangkok Tree House

to fit in with the environment but it also had to stand-out. The architect did this by using very geometrical lines (the rooms are shaped like boxes) but used organic materials and colors that blended with the surrounding.”

Each room has a different theme, including larger-than-life butterflies, fireflies and ants. The hexagonal bamboo latticework evokes a honeycomb structure in the Bee Hive room, while all the “nests” have a lovely indoor / outdoor area with rainfall showerheads enclosed by bamboo privacy screens. The website even lists a River Nest comprised of an inflatable bed set in the middle of the Chao Praya River. While the hotel is definitely green, using solar and wind power to generate electricity for the outdoor areas, it’s not quite *that* green. “That was for a photo shoot,” explains Digital and Social Media Manager Rinrada Kroeksupharak. “Water levels are unpredictable, then there are the waves from the boats. We wouldn’t want our guests waking up in the middle of the ocean. But a lot of guests have been

asking about it, so who knows?” she says.

For guests who tire of lazing on the rooftop hammocks or watching life roll by on the river while having free pineapple mint ice cream, complimentary bicycles await to explore the island. Nearby, there’s the Ban Nam Pheung Floating Market (although a misnomer, as the market is by the canal, with very few boats actually on the water) and a 200-year-old wat featuring a giant Buddha statue. Ride past the Joss Stick House with its classes on incense stick making to the other side of the island to find the quirky Siamese Fighting Fish Gallery with dozens of jars housing colorful Thai bettas of every variety. In the evening, set aside an hour or so to go on one of the hotel-organized firefly boat tours, checking out the lampu trees along the shore that flicker like Christmas trees with hundreds of fireflies. The boat owners are trained by Kasetsart University, known for its research on fireflies, and a hotel staff member will come along to translate.

“This area really is special, particularly

because it is so close to Bangkok,” says Joey.

“We can’t stop development, but we all can try to make the development fit in with nature as much as possible, meaning... letting the environment determine the design.” For the nature-loving kid-at-heart, the firefly tours and all-day ice cream are just a bonus to this urban tree house getaway.

Doubles start at BHT 4,590, inclusive of breakfast and fireflies boat tour. To get to the hotel, take a taxi from the Bang Na BTS station to the Bang Na Pier. Public ferries leave every 20 minutes for the five-minute crossing. A short 400 meter walk along the elevated sidewalk takes you to the hotel. See www.bangkoktreehouse.com

Comedian Gilda Radner once said: “While we have the gift of life, it seems to me the only tragedy is to allow part of us to die, whether it is our spirit, our creativity or our glorious uniqueness.” Here’s to your Inner Child leading you to wonderful places on your travels! ■

The First of Many

Growing education through art



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



ILLUSTRATION BY BRIDGET MARCH

I AM SITTING at my studio window that overlooks the mountains and rice fields of the Sapa valley. It is dawn, and a rose and blue sky is the backdrop to the magnificent landscape that rolls down the valley into the purple haze of distant hills, villages, waterfalls and bamboo groves.

I had never been to Sapa before when I arrived wide eyed in early June to be the artist in residence at Sapa Rooms for four months. I had been invited to spend a cool summer in the mountains in return for a contribution to the owners' charity endeavors that supports one of the poorest schools in the district.

I started by meeting the 140 children of the remote school who spent a frenzied morning drawing everything they know from mountains to pig sheds and caged birds to roaming roosters. They produced hundreds of drawings that would be the inspiration for my work and their labors were rewarded with sacks full of donated shoes that we

had brought up from Hanoi on the train.

The next stage of my induction was to walk the trekking paths of Lao Chai, Ta Van, Ta Phin and Ban Ho to meet the people, visit their homes and experience the magic of walking through these timeless farmlands where rice, corn and fruit have been grown in the same way for hundreds of years. Ancient carvings on huge boulders along the lower slopes of the valley offer evidence that some of the rice paddies, still cultivated today, may be many thousands of years old.

It has been a rich and fulfilling summer. I have designed products that will be sold to provide a sustainable income for the schools. My final exhibition has morphed into Sapa's first annual art festival. The many and varied artists of Sapa wanted to support our efforts and are donating a percentage of any sales to the children. Their enthusiasm and friendship has fuelled my creativity these past months.

I only have a few days left in this

mountain paradise. The festival opens on September 20th and runs through to October 18th. Next year, I will be back to set it up again and hopefully, through this event, we can raise the profile of the art of Sapa and continue to raise money for education for many years to come.

I arrived as the last fields of rice were being planted and now it is harvest time in the mountains. The corn was gathered in a few weeks ago and the traditional wooden houses are festooned with perfect strings of corn cobs drying in the sun to make flour. The mountainsides have turned from green to bright yellow. In the late afternoon sun as mists rise up from the river, the orange September sun turns the fields to burning gold. It's time to move on.

If you would like to know more about the work I did in Sapa and the products that resulted, please drop me an email at bammah@hotmail.co.uk. ■

Travel Hacking 101: Part 2

Fat fingers and 'mileage runs' for cheap (or free!) travel



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



IN LAST MONTH'S column, we talked about "travel hacking," the art of maximizing the value of every resource (be it time or money) with the goal of traveling for very little money (with "free" being the ultimate goal) or getting perks (upgrades, benefits, deals) that would normally be beyond your budget.

While credit card bonuses are by the far the fastest way of earning mega points, the really good deals are reserved for US residents and to a lesser extent Canadians and Australians. This month, I'd like to share some tips from the travel hacking community that can be used for readers based here in Saigon.

Sign Up for EVERYTHING

Since deals/bonuses pop up at various hotels/airlines at different times of the year, the only way to stay abreast is to sign up for everything — frequent flyer

programs, hotel memberships, travel website newsletters... Sure, this means you'll be getting tons of promotional emails, but that is the 'time' cost of travel hacking. (Try setting up a separate email account for sign-ups and have it forward to your main account. That way, your main account won't get bogged down with too much spam.) You can cut down on the sign-ups by focusing on accumulating miles on one airline per alliance. While that means you'll get less emails, you might also miss specials on niche airlines. While I don't fly Vietnam Airlines that often, a newsletter alerted me to a special sale, so later this month, I'm heading to Hong Kong for less than USD150 return, taxes in!

Maximize Your Spending

Even having a rewards credit card, travel hackers will rarely settle for a single "dip."

Instead, double dip by going to the online shopping portal of your main airline. You'll at least be able to double your miles (once for purchasing through the portal, once for using your credit card) and usually more (using retailers that offer multiple miles per dollar spent). Serious hackers will try for the triple or quadruple dip, going to a separate site to buy e-gift cards or to get cash back on purchases (like www.bigcrumbs.com) for their favorite e-retailer. Even if you don't need to buy anything at the moment, you can still take advantage of bonus deals by buying gift cards for later use. (Keep in mind, though, that the spirit of travel hacking means not buying things you don't need just to score points, or leaving a balance on your credit card on which you'd have to pay interest.)

Mileage and Mattress Runs

Mileage runs (taking flights) and mattress

runs (staying in hotels) represent traveling in order to reach up the next level of benefits. Whether or not you actually want to go to a particular destination may not even be relevant. Hackers look for the best CPMs (cents per mile), focusing on ways to extend the trip or add a few extra (read: unnecessary) connections. An example earlier this year from FlyerTalk was a four-day return trip from Boise, Idaho (USA) to San Francisco to Frankfurt to Johannesburg, scoring 23,000 elite qualifying miles (which sometimes can't be bought or are much more expensive to buy than regular miles used for free tickets) for a little over USD1,200, costing just over 5 cpm. It's not pretty, but one run like this may set you up for waived luggage fees or free VIP lounges for a whole year with your newfound elite status. While this isn't for me (I fly well, but spending days in planes and terminals isn't my thing, no matter what the reward), I have done mattress runs, more to get a bonus than to reach a certain level. Mattress runs often require you to register separately for a specific deal, even if you're already a hotel member. Again, this is where signing up for everything comes into play. On a recent trip, instead of staying a full week at a hotel as initially planned, I broke it up into two bookings of three nights each, in order to take advantage of a deal where you'd get a free night for every two (non-consecutive) stays. For the night in between, I explored a different part of town. Packing and unpacking was a bit of a pain, but for a free night valued at about USD140, it was worth it.

Fat Finger Fares and Promo Codes

Now onto the potentially 'shadier' side of travel hacking. Fare glitches, mistake fares or colloquially "fat finger" fares (the result of clumsy typing, like leaving out a zero somewhere) are the fares that are obviously too low to be sustainable, perhaps due to a decimal point in the wrong place, a currency conversion error or something else. An example could be a certain routing where the fuel surcharges (which could comprise up to 70 percent of the fare) simply get left out due to a glitch known as "fuel dumping." A well-publicized example earlier this year was a New York City to Oslo return fare for USD370. Or maybe instead of costing 150,000 points per night for a hotel, it's listed as only 15,000. Travel hackers will comb the internet for glitches on international sites, not just from their home country. However, consumer advocate Chris Elliott says: "I'm all in favor of smart travel strategies, but there's a difference between being an enlightened passenger and being a liar. If you're old-school, like me, then hacking is wrong... In every case, there's a clear line between right and wrong. Just because something isn't illegal doesn't make it right."

Other ways to bend the truth, as it were, are adding a title like "Dr." to your name

or saying it's your birthday/honeymoon in order to get extra perks or better service. There's also the use of promo codes or Friends & Family discounts that weren't intended for you, like those reserved for members of the military, government or certain corporations. Sometimes you may not be asked for proof when you check-in for your cruise, car rental or hotel, but if you are, be prepared to pay full price or walk away (or in some cases, even be charged the full price *after* you've already used the service). I asked Chris Guillebeau, travel ninja extraordinaire about the morally gray area of travel hacking. "I don't feel like I'm taking advantage of anyone, including companies. Most of them are happy for people to earn points and miles. Even with mistake fares, sometimes they honor them and



"When I was first getting started, I spent a lot more time building my initial mileage balances and learning the ropes. Sure, you can get consumed by it. Be careful."

sometimes they don't — when they do, I think they earn goodwill. When they don't honor them, that's okay — there will be another opportunity at some point."

With the power of social media, companies are increasingly honoring glitch fares to avoid bad press, but in any event, it's wise not to book non-refundable items like accommodation or tours until you're sure your original purchase will stand. As someone who's travelled to every single country (all 193 of them!), Chris knows a thing or two about travel hacking. Among the things he's done is buy USD500 Business Class flights from Malaysia to Vancouver, get a hair loss consultation at a doctor's office in exchange for miles (despite having a full head of hair) and purchase USD60,000 worth of dollar coins from the US Mint, returning them to the

bank in a shopping cart. When I asked him whether he's ever done anything he's regretted in the name of cheap/free travel, Chris said: "Can't think of anything. Though there were probably a few times when I wondered how much time I was spending on something compared to the miles received. Overall, though, it's been very much worth it and I haven't been troubled by anything."

Join the Community

Travel hacking obviously requires a significant amount of time and persistence, scouring the internet and making friends within the community who will contact each other with the latest too-good-to-be-true deals that may only last for a few hours until companies notice an inordinate amount of people booking a particular product. About the time he spends travel hacking, Chris says that "these days, not too much — maybe a few hours a month. When I was first getting started, I spent a lot more time building my initial mileage balances and learning the ropes. Sure, you can get consumed by it. Be careful."

For many true travel hackers, checking forums on FlyerTalk or MilePoint which may comprise hundreds of threads is part of their daily routine, not only to monitor deals but to keep track of changes to the system, like the move from Delta Airlines to award miles based on ticket prices instead of actual miles flown starting next year, certainly impacting the usefulness of mileage runs. For newbies and those with less time, sites like Chris' Travel Hacking Cartel (www.travelhacking.org) are a great option. The Travel Hacking Cartel tracks more than 170 blogs, websites, forums and newsletters to curate the best offers, promising that half their deals are available worldwide and that members will earn a minimum of 100,000 miles a year spending "at least 30 minutes a month working the system." I took them up on their 14-day USD1 trial and found deals available for Asia including a new shopping portal from Singapore Airlines, 3x Flyer Bonus points for Bangkok Airways flights made on your birthday in 2014 and a link to a website in Dutch which would get you instant Platinum status on a new Accor account.

"Asia is a great market right now, especially with the budget airlines. The legacy carriers like Singapore Airlines and Cathay Pacific are my favorites worldwide, but it's usually much easier to earn miles for their use through the US programs. Anyone can do this regardless of where they live," asserts Chris who leaves us with his top four tips for those wanting to break into travel hacking: "1) Pay attention. There are always a lot of deals happening, many of which don't require signing up for cards. 2) Try to earn miles for things you do every day. 3) When booking travel, go through a portal that awards a bonus (without costing you any more, of course) 4) See step 1." ■

>>The List Travel

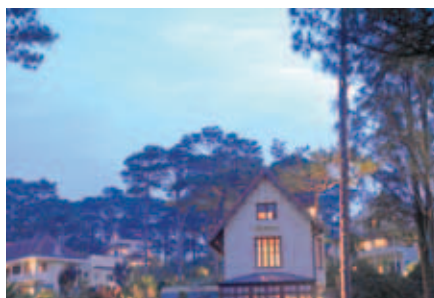


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Living

IMAGES BY ALEX CUI



Behind the Forbidden City

This ao dai collection took inspiration from the ancient royal robes that were in vogue during the Nguyen Dynasty. It combines three dimensional hand embroideries of phoenixes and dragons - Asian symbols of royalty - with intricate cast bronze decorations. The collection represents an idealized image of Asian beauty - luxurious and seductive while evoking mystery and intrigue. These unique designs were specially created to promote and preserve Vietnam's cultural heritage.











Model: **Tra My, Dua Hau**

Costume: **HULOS by Huynh Hai
and The Huy**

Photographer: **Alex Cui**

Make up/Hair: **Huy Tuan**

Communicator: **Hoang Dao & MY
Communications**

Location: **Ky Long Art Gallery**



My life as... a shoe shine boy

INTERVIEWED BY **LE PHUONG LINH, PETER LE, DO DANG TIEN,**
CHIEU-AN TON NU IMAGE BY **NGOC TRAN**

MY NAME IS Son and my hometown is Nam Dinh Province. I'm 26 years old. After I finished secondary school back in my hometown, I went to Hanoi to work and I've been here for 10 years already. I work for the railway and when I'm not working for the railway, I shine shoes.

There are three kids in my family. I'm the youngest. My brother and sister live in the countryside. They work in the fields as farmers or they just sell small goods here and there. I have a wife and a one-year-old daughter. My wife farms in the countryside and I work in Hanoi. Any extra money I make I send home to my family. It's not a lot of money because the cost of living here is quite high, but usually I send about VND1 million back a month. It used to be easy to save money. Now, money loses its value so quickly I just can't save as much anymore. It doesn't matter how hard I try.

During the weekends, I start work at 8am and keep shining shoes for the whole day. From 8 to 9 in the morning is when I get the most customers. That's when they're usually sitting at cafés, having their coffee, reading the paper, or just chatting with each other. But for my job, I basically just wander around the Old Quarter for the whole day. In the afternoon, I go back to the guesthouse in Phuc Tan to have some lunch. I rent my own room. I don't share the space with anyone. I take another break for some food from 6pm to 6:30pm. By 7pm the sky is starting to get dark, so I'll continue wandering a little longer and then stop. As for my job with the railway, I have to work all day and the pay isn't high either, VND2 million a month. On weekdays, I start at 8am and finish at 4pm. Afterwards, I make time to go shine shoes for another two or three hours.

When I see a potential customer, I just invite them to get their shoes shined. In general, rich people want their shoes shined more often. When I shine a pair of shoes, I give the customer these plastic flip-flops to wear while I'm shining. Beside dress shoes, I can also polish athletic shoes with water and soap. I charge VND7,000 for each pair of shoes. Normally, I polish shoes for Vietnamese people. If I offer the service to Westerners and they accept, then I'll do it. If they don't want it, then I move on. There are a lot of shoe shiners who will beg Westerners, even try to take their shoes off for them, but that's not how I do it, I won't beg. Most of my customers are regular customers. I like regular customers because while I'm shining their shoes we can joke around a little.

Room to Walk

The hard part about this job is always having to walk around to find customers. That's when you can get caught by the cops. Several years ago, the cops started trying to catch shoe shiners. And if they caught us, it

wasn't just to fine us, they put us in jail. For the first offense, we'd get 15 days in Dam Dau jail in Dong Anh. The second offense was three months at Ba Vi. The third offense was six months, and so on. In Dam Dau jail they didn't make me do much, they just locked me up. But in Ba Vi, they say the inmates have to tend cows and stuff. Luckily, I've only been to Dam Dau. [Laughs]

When I first started shining shoes, we used to carry our polish and brushes around in a special wooden box. But ever since the cops cracked down, we've had to disguise ourselves. We put our gear in shopping baskets or plastic bags. But at least these days the cops don't chase us like they did a few years ago. Now it's only when they get a special order that they come after us. I don't know why they target shoe shiners. The only thing I know is that they get the order from higher up. Maybe they think we're homeless people and we're bad for the city's image.

Hanoi has changed a lot since I started working here 10 years ago. The streets used to have more room to walk, but these days there are so many cars and motorbikes, it's very cramped now. Back in the day, shoe shiners would have their own turf, and each one just worked their own area. But by the time I started working in Hanoi, the system had already broken down. When I first started, there was a lot of competition, but not anymore. Now there aren't many shoe shiners left in Hanoi. Us ones that are left, we avoid each other. If I see there's already a shoe shiner at a café, I won't go in.

In general, I love the sense of freedom this job gives me. I don't like the feeling of being tied down. For example, I wouldn't want to be a security guard because it would force me to sit still all day. But then sometimes I look at people with stable jobs, and then I look at myself, just wandering around aimlessly my whole life. Then I pity myself.

I have no idea about the future of this job. My friends don't even do this job anymore. As for me, for now I'll just keep on doing what I'm doing. If I could choose another job in the future, I'd want to be a taxi driver because it's easier to earn money. I've got some friends who've become taxi drivers. I'd like to learn to drive, but I can't afford to pay for the lessons. Mainly, though, I have to think about the future of my little girl. I have to find a way to put her through school so she can have a higher education than I got. We can't have her end up just wandering around endlessly like her father. [Laughs] ■

Additional editing by **Gerard Sasge**.
It's a Living: Work and Life in Vietnam Today is available in paperback on Amazon or as an e-book on iTunes (scan code).



A Bold Understatement

While George Costanza may think it's a good idea to drape himself in velvet, the same is not true for your home



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.



IMAGE BY CHRISTINA MURPHY



IMAGE BY WESLEY MOON

GONE ARE THE days where a matching set of wood furniture, polished to the point of reflection, was the height of class. The most welcoming and dynamic spaces are characterized by a mix of materials and textures that imply the interesting and well-rounded nature of their owner. A tall order for an interior? Perhaps, but not as hard as it sounds.

Texture refers to the tactile nature of a material's surface — the way it feels, or the way it looks like it feels. If you've read the previous two columns on color and line, you're probably getting the hang of how this works. Different textures will impact the way that we perceive a space: soft and cushy surfaces seem warm and inviting, glossy and sleek can denote modernity and efficiency and rough or natural might invoke a casual tone. Texture includes fabric, but also materials and finishes — wood, metal, paint, glass, lacquer, leather, and the like. Think about the endless variations on wood alone: polished, unfinished, salvaged, exotic, antiqued or distressed.

As with anything else, it's always possible to have too much of a good thing. Relying too heavily on lush textures such as velvets and chenille can wind up looking a bit... well, heavy. An abundance of glossy, man-made surfaces feels sterile without a touch of the rough or natural.

Using contrasting textures in a space will accentuate the differences between them, and also give the eye a place to rest.

Pattern mixing has had a major moment in fashion recently and the principles are more or less the same in interiors. The simplest rule to remember is to maintain contrast between two patterns so they can each stand alone. Easy combinations include a floral with a stripe, geometric with a figural, or ethnic with an animal print. Scale matters, too. In fashion, a smaller scale print is generally more flattering on a petite frame. In your space, a small chair probably won't do justice to a pattern with a large repeat, and a large piece can be overwhelming in a small pattern.

Just one note for the pattern-fearless fashionistas among us: no matter how bold or funky your style and how high-quality your materials, using all printed cotton or linen fabrics will lack sophistication and depth. Add a cut velvet, jacquard or embroidery to take it up a notch.

The sitting area by Christina Murphy has a lot going on pattern-wise, but it manages to be bold without overwhelming. The limited color palette is part of this. Notice how the floor visually melts into the walls and ceiling? The mirrored chest in the corner is a clever

choice; reflecting the wallpaper adjacent to it, the piece virtually disappears. Scale-wise, the two largest expanses (walls and floor) are in complete contrast to one another, allowing the wallpaper to take the lead. A small-scaled ticking stripe on the chair, small tile pattern on the daybed pillow, and medium ikat on the chair, the source of the room's color palette, round out the pattern play.

If you're sticking to a neutral color palette, pattern and especially texture are your friends. Even calm, soothing spaces need visual interest! Although the Wesley Moon living room gives the impression of effortlessness, the designer thought carefully about how to balance and layer textures. Wood, metal (both polished and rough), glass, linen, and velvet are all present. Even the most pattern-phobic will acknowledge that use of the element here is subtle and balanced.

Ready to explore pattern and texture in your own home? If you're nervous, start with something small and low-commitment. Experimenting with pillows on your sofa is a great option for this: it's fairly inexpensive, easy to change with your mood and can showcase how different elements work together. You'll be moving on to bigger things in no time! ■

Crucial Beginnings

Defining excellence in Early Years Settings

TEXT BY **KERRY PERANDIS-COLE**

A 2001 REPORT from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) analyzed 12 industrialized countries' Early Years' policies and service provisions and concluded: "Quality early experiences promote children's short-term cognitive, social and emotional development along with their long-term success in school and later life."

Striving to do things right from the beginnings of a child's education is an investment in excellence and can safeguard against social and financial consequences resultant of poor education later on.

At schools, "child centeredness" can be a misleading term describing 'good practice.' Adult direction and didactic teaching is common due to play and activity schemas being developed by teachers with children having little control over regulating learning opportunities authentically. Children may be given some freedom by being 'allowed' to explore and make minor choices within suggested and constructed learning opportunities, but they are not truly able to explore the potential of what it means to be a genuine decision maker, collaborator, mentor, teacher, advisor and representative of their own critical thinking.

Children should be respected as young citizens having rights and needs and the capability of making democratic decisions about things which affect them personally, such as friendships, meals, social seating arrangements, the physical environment and their own curriculum content.

Evidence of excellence in a school:

- Teachers and children engaging in learning processes together through collective investigations of ideas and concept development.
- Children involved in short or longer term project work in which children themselves take a lead role in the focus for learning, with their teachers adopting a more facilitative role.
- Children, whose ideas, skills and interests are shared openly, explored and utilized as personal motivators for learning and teacher input.
- Children and teachers working

together to respond to, challenge and extend ideas and knowledge.

- An environment enabling children to be leaders. Practices which cultivate personal self-assuredness and competencies. Evidence of children developing and leading their own learning activities.
- Children as authentic decision makers – through consultations, meetings and opportunities to review learning and in-class practice.
- Children exposed to multi-modal ways of communicating and expressing ideas (beyond writing, drawing, role play and constructing).
- An environment where children's efforts, ideas and creativity are invigorated.
- Timetables allowing for uninterrupted blocks of time so that ideas, learning and possibilities are not hindered by constraints and can evolve.
- Learning environments that

demonstrate a respect for the learners and the learning occurring.

- Well-appointed orderly, aesthetic, logically arranged physical spaces with evidence that children are able to access materials and resources as needed and where maintenance and routine tasks are a shared responsibility.
- Class displays describing pedagogical values and rich records of learning methods which children and teachers review, revisit, reflect upon, add to and recognise as a process.
- Teachers who ask: What do you think? How do you know? What made you decide? How can you do this differently? What problems did you encounter? And many other open-ended questions which incite thinking and teach children to become deeper theorists for framing their own questions.

Kerry Perandis-Cole is the Key Stage Leader for Early Years and KS1 at Renaissance International School Saigon (www.renaissance.edu.vn). ■



>>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
www.theabcis.com



British International School (BIS)

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

An Phu Primary Campus
225 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
3744 4551
apprimary@bisvietnam.com
An Phu Secondary Campus
246 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
3744 2335
apsecondary@bisvietnam.com
Tu Xuong Primary Campus
43-45 Tu Xuong Street, D3
3932 0210
txprimary@bisvietnam.com
www.bisvietnam.com

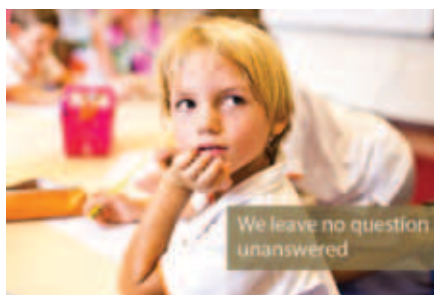


Deutsche Schule Ho Chi Minh City International German School

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

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

12, Vo Truong Toan, An Phu
08 37 44 63 44
info@igs-hcmc.de
www.igs-hcmc.de



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



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



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





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



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)**

APU International School

Operating since 2004, APU International School is a private coeducational international school enrolling students from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Instruction is conducted in English, but there is an English Language Development (ELD) program available to students who require it. It is currently a member of the College Board, and is an official SAT testing site.

**Elementary (501 Lac Long Quan, D11)
Middle and High School (286 Lanh Binh Thang, D11)**

www.apu.edu.vn

Australian International School (AIS)

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

**Xi Campus (Kindergarten)
190 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
Thao Dien Campus (Kindergarten & Primary School)
APSC Compound**

**36 Thao Dien, D2
Thu Thiem Campus (Kindergarten, Primary, Middle & Senior School)
East-West Highway, D2
3742 4040
www.aivietnam.com**

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.cvk.edu.vn**

Global Indian International School

Offers Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), and the Global Montessori Plus Program. The school's Nine Gems model is a proprietary tool to achieve a balance between academics and experience, mental and physical development, fine arts and performing arts, language skills and creativity, personality development, ethics and entrepreneurship.

**172 Nguyen Van Thu, D1
www.globalindianschool.org**

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**

Little Angels International Preschool

Offers nursery and kindergarten classes and provides full-time or part-time childcare and kindergarten services for children 4 months through 5 years.

**159/12 Hoang Van Thu, Phu Nhuan
3844 3719
www.little-angels.edu.vn**

Montessori International School of Vietnam

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

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

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**

Smartkids

Focuses on the holistic development of the child and combines Montessori, Steiner and Reggio Emilia philosophies into its program. Also offers childcare for young children until 6 years old.

**1172 Thao Dien Compound, D2
3744 6076
www.smarthidsinfo.com**

>>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
nhahhoaidhung@gmail.com
www.drhung01.com



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

spas

An Nam Spa

Housed in a beautiful nine-story building with different areas for men and women, guests can enjoy a panoramic view of Saigon while calming their senses in a relaxing sanctuary.

26-28 Dong Du, D1

Dermal Essentials

Dermologica, a Los Angeles-based company, is a revolutionary skin treatment system. Call Dermologica's therapists for a complimentary Face Mapping consultation.

108 Pasteur, D1

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

Flamingo Spa

Flamingo Spa is an authentic Thai spa where all ingredients used are imported from Thailand. Guests arrive in a clean and friendly atmosphere for an optimal relaxing experience. Men, women and couples are welcome, and they offer a wide range of massages along with a sauna, jacuzzi facilities & VIP rooms.

13B Le Thanh Ton, D1
3822 1074
091 243 9601
FlamingoSpa.vn@gmail.com
Open 10:30 am to close 11:30pm

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 Bui, D1
1st floor, 103 Ton Dat Tien, Tan Phu, D7



Maison Mikio 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

MiMi Clinic & Spa

Prestige Spa for celebrities holding frequent beauty events – and therefore one of the best-known local brands in medical aesthetics for over 10 years in HCMC.

32 Dong Khoi, D1
090 387 6666

Miu Miu

Spa with an elegant and charming décor, offering facials, body massages, and manicures. Pervaded by exotic oils and aromas, the staff provide counsel on unique skin-care products from Thailand and around the world in English, Vietnamese, and Japanese.

4 Chu Manh Trinh, D1

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

Nano Nature Spa

The spa is a partner of many different cosmetics corporations based in France and the US. Modern facilities are airy with advanced equipment in the industry.

140 - 142 Pasteur D1
3822 4130 - 382204132
097 219 6969

Saigon Spa

Recommended inexpensive spa treatments with a full spa menu.

1st Floor, 47 Dong Khoi, D1

Sense Spa

Sense Spa is a massage, skin, and body care haven with a plethora of high-end imported creams, lotions, and serums.

54 Dong Du, D1



Silk Waxworks

Located right in the heart of District 2, SiLK is a concept boutique that specializes only in waxing services for both men and women. Their waxperts are trained in hygiene, speed and quality to clear a path of silky, smooth and sleek adventures for your hoochie and coochie. Owing to its expertise in waxing, SiLK are your go-to for high-grade hair removal.

88 Xuan Thuy, Thao Dien Ward, D2
http://www.silkwaxworks.com
08 3519 1588

Spa InterContinental

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

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

The Prime - Spa For Men

American skin treatments for men from top brands such as Dermologica and Lab Series. Equipped with imported machines from Europe. The spa has five therapy services, including basic skin care, professional skin care, intensive therapy, eye therapy, body therapy – and a Prime special service package.

192 Le Lai, D1

Tri Siam

Well-respected salon on the edge of town, offering manicures & styling.

76C Hai Ba Trung, D1

Xuan Spa

One of the most luxurious spas in Ho Chi Minh City, Xuan is located inside the five-star Park Hyatt hotel. Services include packages such as Urban Retreat Package, Apricot blossom – Mai, Bamboo, and more.

2 Lam Son Square, D1

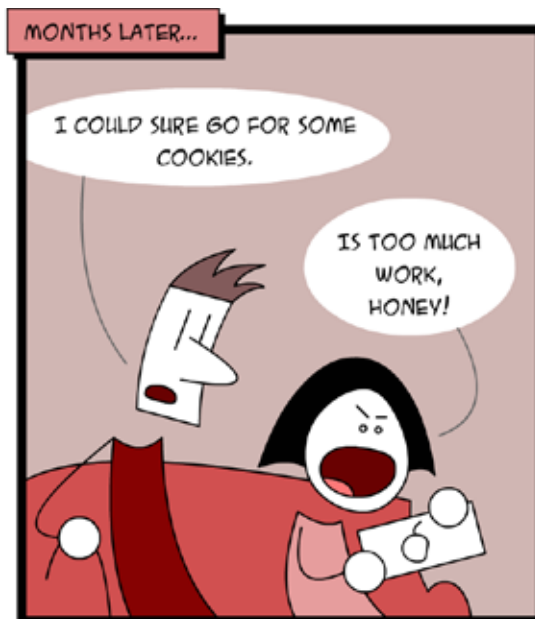
Yuri

A full-range Korean beauty salon in the Lotte complex, with a chief focus on beautiful hair styling.

3rd floor, Lotte Mart, 469 Nguyen Huu Tho, D7
3775 2990; 093 481 8085

THE VIETNAMESE WIFE, WESTERN HUSBAND CLUB

BY DAVID PERRY



For more *Vietnamese Wife, Western Husband Club* cartoons, visit www.vwwhc.blogspot.com

Faces & Places



The Travel Bug

The International Travel Expo is the largest travel expo in Southeast Asia and has been held every year for the last 10 years. This year's expo was a collaborated effort between Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand.

IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN



Model Behavior

The winner was announced for the Elite Model Look Vietnam 2014. She will compete with other candidates from all over the world in the International Elite Model Look this November in Paris.

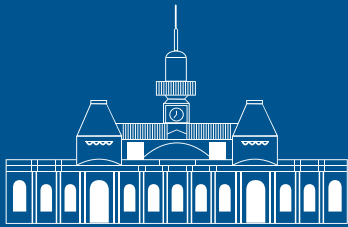
IMAGES BY NEIL FEATHERSTONE



Mickey's in Town

For the first time in history, the Disney Live! Show came to Vietnam. AIS was proud to host a visit from the Disney characters who came and met the AIS Primary School children at the Sports Center. A small group of 40 AIS students also participated in a Disney Bike Safety course to make them better and safer riders.

IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN



**International School
HO CHI MINH CITY**

Energized • Engaged • Empowered

Because at ISHCMC we understand that out of the box thinking leads to originality and innovation.

Today's students need to do more than memorize information in traditional classrooms. They need a more evolved approach to education that allows them the freedom to pursue their passions fearlessly. In addition to a strong academic foundation, they need opportunities to be creative, innovative and analytical, all of which lie at the heart of the ISHCMC philosophy.

**Come and see
the difference we can make
in your child's life.**



COGNITA
TEACHING EXCELLENCE

28 Vo Truong Toan, District 2
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Tel: +84 (8) 3898-9100

Email: admissions@ishcmc.edu.vn

www.ishcmc.com

Why we love out of the box thinking



**Nozomi & Thijmen, Early Explorers
ISHCMC Students**



**TRUONG NGUYEN
THAO NGUYEN**

- DEPAUL UNIVERSITY - \$56,000 USD
- DREXEL UNIVERSITY - \$75,000 USD
- LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO - \$60,000 USD
- ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY - \$64,000 USD
- SUNY GENESEO - \$64,000 USD



TRINH NGOC HIEU

- UNIVERSITY OF LA VERNE - \$60,000 USD
- UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI - KANSAS CITY (UMKC) - \$76,000 USD



NGUYEN NGOC XUAN

- ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY - \$120,000 USD



LE NGOC TRUYEN

- UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA - \$20,000 USD
- UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA - \$56,000 USD
- UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI - KANSAS CITY (UMKC) - \$68,000 USD



APU International School

ENROLLING NOW 2014 - 2015

AMERICAN CURRICULUM K-12

- Every year, APU graduates received over 2.5 million USD in scholarship from well-established World and US universities.
- 85% of APU Graduates make the Dean's List at well-established US universities.
- 80% of APU Faculty hold Master and Ph.D. Degrees from well-established universities in US and the World.
- 100% of parents surveyed say they are confident APU enables their children to lead a fulfilling intellectual, personal and professional life in the future.



VALEDICTORIAN 2014 - HO HOANG DUY

- UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI - KANSAS CITY (UMKC) - \$76,000 USD
- UNIVERSITY OF DENVER - \$68,000 USD
- SPRING HILL COLLEGE - \$96,000 USD



NGUYEN VAN QUOC CUONG

- FLORIDA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY - \$64,000 USD



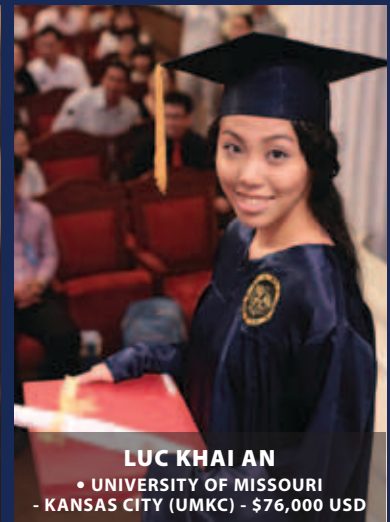
LE MAU QUAN

- SUNY PLATTSBURGH - \$64,000 USD



BENNER DAVID TAYLOR

- THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF VIETNAM (AUV) - \$30,000 USD



LUC KHAI AN

- UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI - KANSAS CITY (UMKC) - \$76,000 USD

Other APU graduates have also been awarded scholarships from University of Washington, UCLA, UT Austin, Pennsylvania State University, Drexel University, Seattle University, University of Minnesota, University of Denver, Columbia University, Niagara University, and other well-established Universities in the US.

APU International School

286 Lanh Binh Thang St., Ward 11, District 11, HCMC

Tel: (84-8) 3962 4897 - 3962 4898 | HOTLINE: 0939 886 286 | Fax: (84-8) 3962 4899 | www.apu.edu.vn - info@apu.edu.vn