



VIETNAM

NOVEMBER 2015

COMIC RELIEF

Vietnam's Comic Book
Industry Gets a Jumpstart

PAGE 18

DINE WITH A VIEW

Indulge in Japanese-Chinese
Cuisine Overlooking the River

PAGE 58

SAVAGE ISLAND

Discover the Remotest
Polynesian Island

PAGE 80

WUNDERKIDS

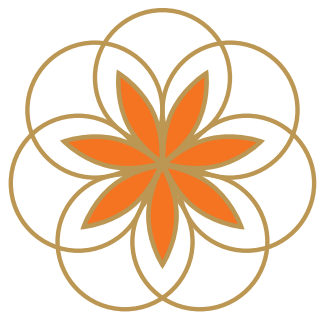
Raising a Prodigy Starts
With the Parents

PAGE 82

Stories *of the* Sea



NHÀ XUẤT BẢN THANH NIÊN



EUROPEAN

International School Ho Chi Minh City

A NOBEL TALENT SCHOOL



Early Years Centre (Age 2-5) • Primary School (Age 6-10) • Secondary School (Age 11-18)



730 Le Van Mien | Thao Dien | District 2 | Ho Chi Minh City | Vietnam
Tel: (+848) 7300 7257 | Email: info@eishcmc.com

www.eishcmc.com





THE SHELLS

resort & spa

PHU QUOC



The Shells Resort & Spa offers both panoramic seaview rooms & suites or oversized jungle-styled villas with courtyard. Wake up every morning to the best view imaginable. An extensive collection of ocean view deluxe, ocean view grand suite, family suite rooms and courtyard villa exude a sense of ultimate luxury within a contemporary and chic resort.



Ganh Gio Beach, Duong Dong Town, Phu Quoc Island, Vietnam
Tel: +84 77 371 8888 | www.shellsresort.com

DEVELOPED BY TRAN THAI GROUP



EVERYWHERE YOU GO

Director **XUAN TRAN**
Managing Director **JIMMY VAN DER KLOET**
jimmy@oivietnam.com
Managing Editor **CHRISTINE VAN**
christine@oivietnam.com
Deputy Editor **JAMES PHAM**
jpham@oivietnam.com
Associate Publisher **KHANH NGUYEN**
khanh@oivietnam.com
Editorial Intern **ALEX GREEN**

Graphic Artist **KEVIN NGUYEN**
kevin@oivietnam.com

Staff Photographer **NGOC TRAN**
ngoc@oivietnam.com

For advertising please contact:

NGAN NGUYEN 
ngan@oivietnam.com
090 279 7951

CHAU NGUYEN 
chau@oivietnam.com
091 440 0302

HANH (JESSIE) LE 
jessie@oivietnam.com
098 747 4183

HANNIE VO 
hannie@oivietnam.com

General **advertising@oivietnam.com**

Inquiries **info@oivietnam.com**



This Month's Cover

Location: **Pullman Danang Beach Resort**
(www.pullman-danang.com)

ƠI VIỆT NAM

NHÀ XUẤT BẢN THANH NIÊN

Chịu trách nhiệm xuất bản:

Giám đốc, Tổng biên tập

Nguyễn Xuân Trường

Biên tập: Quang Huy - Quang Hùng

Thực hiện liên kết xuất bản:

Metro Advertising Co., Ltd

48 Hoàng Diệu, Phường 12, Quận 4

In lần thứ ba mươi hai, số lượng 6000 cuốn,
khổ 21cm x 29,7cm

Đăng ký KHXB: 2633 -2015/CXB/18-135/TN
QĐXB số: 452/QĐ-TN

Chế bản và in tại Nhà in Gia Định
Nộp lưu chiếu tháng 11/2015

Website: www.oivietnam.com



Located on Dong Khoi,
the most beautiful street
of Saigon, with balcony
view to the Opera House



Our popular homemade style food and drinks



Catina noodle



Banana cake



Lemongrass & Lime juice



Catina drink



Welcome in. Make your self at home. | Opening hours: 8 AM - 8 PM
151/6 Dong Khoi St., D1, HCMC – Tel: 08 3827 5555
www.facebook.com/cafecatina

Contents

WINE & DINE

RESTAURANT REVIEWS

Fusion is the buzzword with Bamboo Chic's innovative Japanese-Chinese cuisine and Eleven Café's Italian-Asian dishes. And keeping it all-American is TrnT's barbecued ribs, pulled pork sandwiches and cornbread



58

IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN

FEATURES

P9 DATEBOOK

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

P14 THE BULLETIN

Checking out the latest promotions and openings

P16 TROI OI

Find out why a submarine, tourist visas and taxes made it into our list

P19 COMIC RELIEF

Vietnam's budding comic book industry

P21 A FORGOTTEN CHILDHOOD REVISITED

From beggar to photographer, read Lee Nguyen's story

P24 BACKSTAGE PASS

Exclusive access behind Vietnam International Fashion Week

P26 GROUNDS & HOUNDS

Free puppy cuddles with your beverage at this cafe

P30 GARDEN STATE

A playground for romantics and street artists alike

P32 FLORAL ARRANGEMENTS

Flowers don't just belong in the garden

P80 SAVAGE ISLAND

Discover the Remotest Polynesian Island

FESTIVE CELEBRATION AT INTERCONTINENTAL NHA TRANG



CHRISTMAS HIGH TEA

Chef's signature sandwiches, Christmas sweets, glue wine, and aromatic TWG tea or Illy Coffee.

VND 300,000++ per person
5 to 31 December 2015
2:00pm – 5:00pm
Lobby Bar



CHRISTMAS EVE BUFFET DINNER

Unlimited seafood, Christmas special BBQs, east-meets-west delicacies, and lot of Christmas desserts

VND 1,900,000++ per person including
beer and soft drinks
Thursday, 24 December 2015
From 6:30pm
Grand Ballroom



NEW YEAR'S EVE COUNTDOWN PARTY

Grand buffet of Vietnamese and international fine culinary, lucky draws, and non-stop entertainment to celebrate the New Year

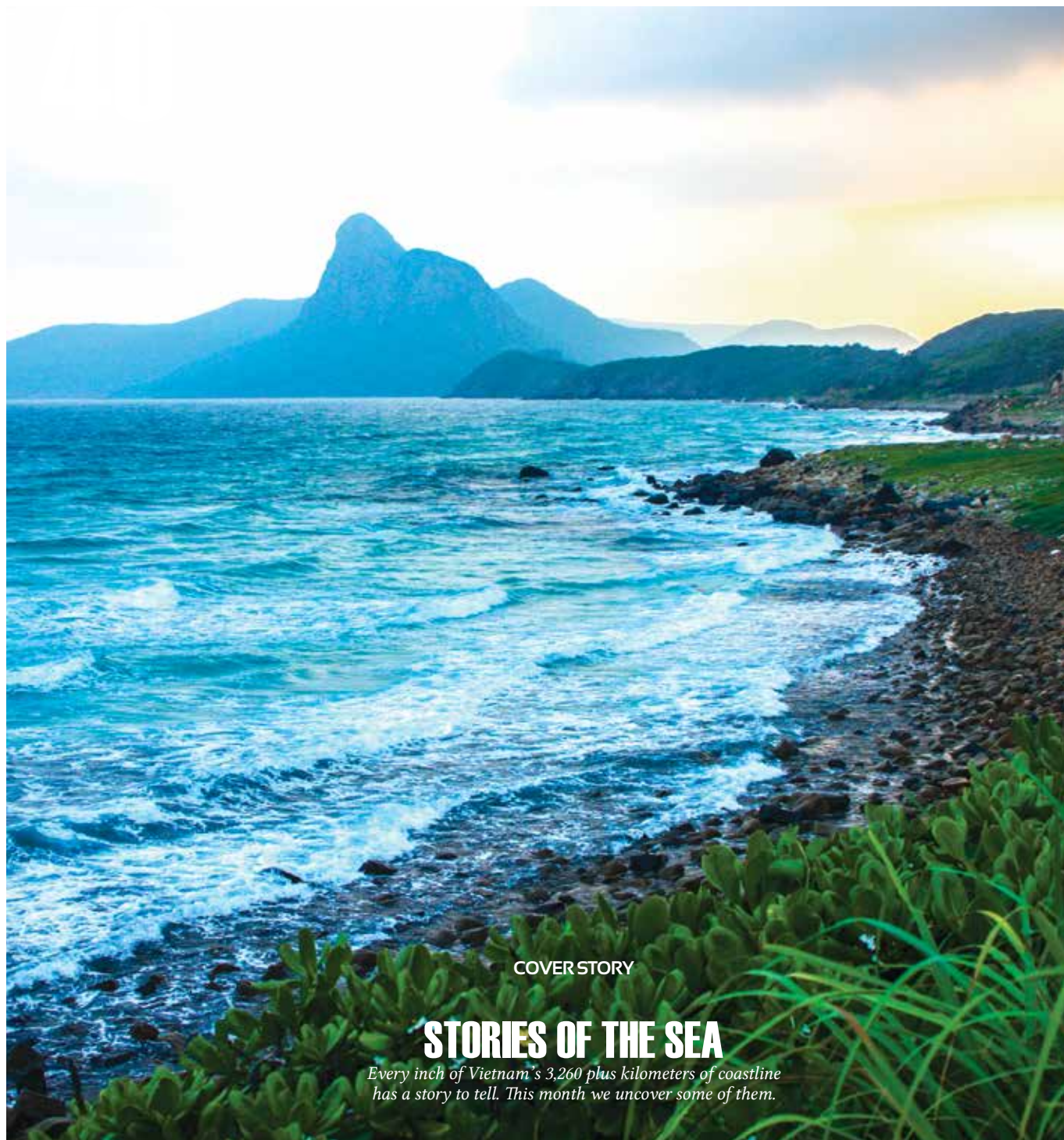
VND 2,588,000++ per person including
fine wine, beer and soft drinks
Thursday, 31 December 2015
From 6:00pm
Grand Ballroom

For more information or to make a reservation,
please call +84 58 388 7777 or email fb.reservation@icnhatrang.com
or visit nhatrang.intercontinental.com



INTERCONTINENTAL®
NHA TRANG

In over 170 locations across the globe including HONG KONG • LONDON • NEW YORK • PARIS



COVER STORY

STORIES OF THE SEA

Every inch of Vietnam's 3,260 plus kilometers of coastline has a story to tell. This month we uncover some of them.

IMAGE BY JAMES PHAM

P86 LAIDBACK LOMBOK

An island next to Bali where tourism is still in its infancy

P92 WUNDERKIDS

Bringing out the 'genius' in children

COLUMNS

P36 LEGAL EASE

How street food is regulated in Vietnam

P37 FOUND 404

Vietnam's version of Shopify

P38 HOME, SWEET, HOME

Setting the right mood lighting at home

P39 MONEY TALK

The risky business of stocks, mutual funds and exchange-traded funds

P64 CHEERS!

The wines from down under

P65 CHUC AN NGON!

Dressing up smoked salmon

P94 TAIL TALE SIGNS

Tips on traveling with pets inbound and outbound

P95 HIGHER LEARNING

The importance of a good parent-teacher relationship

Datebook

What's on this month...



What: A Night of German Music

Where: HCMC Conservatory Hall (112 Nguyen Du, D1); 7:30pm; VND150,000 for standard entry and VND300,000 for a VIP ticket

About: The Ho Chi Minh City Conservatory Hall will host an evening of classical and baroque German music with pianist Dr. Eva Joo Eun Young and violinist Dr. Felix Olschofka. Dr. Young graduated from the Vienna State Conservatory with distinction, and has played worldwide with highly renowned orchestras. She currently lectures masters' courses at the Ho Chi Minh City Conservatory of Music. German-born violinist Dr. Olschofka has toured the world as a soloist, concertmaster and chamber musician. His work has been recorded and released by several major radio and TV stations and he holds multiple degrees from global institutions. The pair will perform J.S. Bach's Sonata for Violin & Harpsichord in E Major, W.A. Mozart's Sonata for Violin & Piano No. 18, K 301 in G Major, and J. Brahms Sonata for Violin & Piano No. 3 in D Minor.

Contact: Call 090 303 4112 for more info

NOVEMBER 8 & 9

What: Georges Bizet's *Carmen*

Where: Saigon Opera House; tickets start at VND400,000

About: Bizet's *Carmen* is one the most famous, successful and most performed operas in history. Telling the downfall of young soldier Don José as he falls for the fiery gypsy, Carmen, who leads him astray from his childhood sweetheart, before abandoning him for the inimical toreador, Escamillo. Its premiere in Saigon is being organized by the HCMC Ballet and Symphony Orchestra in cooperation with La Frabrique Opera (France) and will feature French opera artists Sophie Leleu and Olivier Trommenschlager in the roles of Carmen and Don Jose, respectively. This year marks the 140th anniversary of *Carmen's* debut as well as the 140th anniversary of Georges Bizet's death, suddenly passing away three months after its debut.

Contact: Visit www.aoshowsaigon.com/opera-house for more info

NOVEMBER 14

What: Based on Kyoto

Where: The Observatory (5 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4); 10pm (free before 11pm, VND100,000 after)

About: Based on Kyoto are a world-acclaimed live electronic music duo with a wonderfully organic creative process. Mesmerizing live performances weave guitars, synths, strings, ethereal harmonics and imaginative melodies over pulsating beats and driving rhythms. A scintillating mix of nu jazz and deep house, Based on Kyoto brings a unique flavor to the electronic scene.

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



090 879 1412

12 - 14 Mac Thi Buoi St. Dist. 1, Ho Chi Minh



090 7292 725

44 MAC THI BUOI, DIST. 1, HCM

NOVEMBER 14

What: Second BGV HCMC Football Tournament for Charity

Where: RMIT University (702 Nguyen Van Linh, D7); 8:30am – 5:30pm

About: Does your team have what it takes to compete for the title and be crowned champions in the name of a good cause? The second annual inter-company 5-a-side football tournament takes place this month and prospective champions must be registered prior to this date. All proceeds from the tournament go to support local registered charities throughout Vietnam, and as well as registration, BGV also calls for sponsorship for the event, both cash and in-kind. Don't get too friendly however; there is a special prize for the top goal scorer in the competition, who will be rewarded with air tickets to Thailand.

Contact: Contact Nga at nga.nguyen@bbgv.org for more info

NOVEMBER 20

What: Oskar Offermann

Where: The Observatory (5 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4); 10pm (free before 11pm, VND100,000 after)

About: Berlin-based disco, house, and techno maestro Oskar Offermann returns to Saigon for the second time for a night of seamlessly mixed electronic music. His tracks have a dark depth to them that will satisfy the soul as they effortlessly shift from floor-shaking beats to after-party chill with strong hip-hop influences and hints of dub techno. Oskar's second full length LP, *Le Grand To*, drops on November 13.

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



W|www.acc.vn E|acc@acc.vn



Effective treatment of chronic and acute pain, sport injuries, childhood spinal and foot problems.

Relief from pain without drugs or surgery

Flat feet & Foot problems

Elbow injuries

Wrist pain

Sport injuries

Headaches, etc.

We treat

Disk syndrome

Back pain & Neck pain

Knee pain & Ankle pain

Shoulder pain & injuries

Ho Chi Minh City

A | 161 Hai Ba Trung, Dist 3
T | (84-8) 3939 3930
M | +84 946 74 00 66

Ha Noi

A | 44 Nguyen Du, Hai Ba Trung Dist
T | (84-4) 32 656 888
M | +84 9656 888 28



NOVEMBER 20

What: Dutch Open 2015

Where: Tan Son Nhat Golf Course (6 Tan Son, Go Vap), 10:30am

About: Organized by the Dutch Business Association of Vietnam, the tournament is a great way to make key contacts while enjoying a round of golf surrounded by stunning scenery. Registration takes place at 10:30am, followed by a light lunch at 11:30. Golf begins at midday, with a golf clinic operating from 2:30pm to 5:30pm. The afternoon sees networking drinks followed by an international buffet dinner and the awarding of prizes. Entry fee is VND3.2 million for the tournament and VND2.5 million for the golf clinic. Entrants are encouraged to bring swimsuits in order to take full advantage of the Jacuzzi and sauna facilities on offer. Proceeds go to charity, and DBAV are accepting in-kind and prize sponsors until November 13.

Contact: Contact dutchopen@dbav.org.vn for more info



**NOV
20-28**

What: Lawrence and Holloman by Morris Panych.

Where: Saigon Outcast (188 Nguyen Van Huong, D2); 8pm; VND350,000 in advance, VND400,000 at the door.

About: Dragonfly Theatre Company presents *Lawrence and Holloman* by Morris Panych. First performed in 1998, Panych's play stretches black comedy into a nihilistic void that draws the audience inexorably into its deliciously twisted humor. Telling the story of pathologically pessimistic and suicidal Holloman, who is taken under the wing of the perennially optimistic Lawrence, the play plumbs existential depths as the bizarre plot of Lawrence and Holloman's meaningless lives unfolds. Highlighting probing questions as to the nature of happiness and life itself, the sinuous roles of the two protagonists are delectably dark.

Contact: Visit www.facebook.com/dragonflyvietnam for more info

NOVEMBER 21

What: Heart Institute Gala

Where: GEM Center (8 Nguyen Binh Khiem, D1); 6:30pm

About: The gala will consist of a welcome cocktail, a five-course French menu with a Vietnamese twist from celebrity chef Jack Lee. The theme is *Magic Circus* and there will be live performances and entertainment, in addition to live and silent auctions for a range of prizes, with proceeds supporting children suffering from heart disease.

The Heart Institute of Saigon was created in 1992 with the mission to offer high-quality care to Vietnamese patients suffering from heart diseases, particularly children.

Contact: Visit www.cmi-vietnam.com for more info

NOV
21



What: Prisma – The Night Run

Where: Truong Van Bang, D2; 5:30pm-10:00pm.

About: The event is an explosion of color and sounds as participants run through the night along a 4km course. Joggers, walkers and strollers are also welcome. Prepare to be doused in fluorescent paint, run through kaleidoscopic tunnels and wave your glow sticks as laser light shows flicker in time to the music. Last year, Prisma run attracted more than 7,600 participants and this year they hope to bring even more people together.

Late registration closes on November 14 and costs VND600,000 per person, or VND570,000 per person for a group of 10-19.

Contact: Visit www.prismarun.com for more info

NOVEMBER 20-24

What: The Seventh Golden Cashew Rendezvous

Where: Independence Palace Saigon (108 Nguyen Du, D1), Rex Hotel Saigon (141 Nguyen Hue, D1) and the Cashew Exhibition Center (Tanimex-LA, Tan An City)

About: The Vietnam Cashew Association (VINACAS) hosts the Golden Cashew Rendezvous to showcase a number of the most important events of the Vietnamese cashew industry in 2015 over a three-day event. Day one is registration, followed by entry to the Vietnam Cashew Exhibition. Day two sees an opening panel followed by a scientific seminar, a satellite meeting and forecasts for 2016 in the global cashew market, ending with an event for the Silver Jubilee of VINACAS. Day three sees a meeting of the Global Cashew Council, as well as delegation leader meetings, followed by buyer and seller meetings, as well as factory and cashew orchard visits.

Contact: Visit events.vinacas.com.vn for more info



**Health Insurance
Travel Insurance
Employee Benefits**



www.bluecross.com.vn | 1800 577770

**LE MERIDIEN
SAIGON**

3C Ton Duc Thang Street,
District 1, Ho Chi Minh City
T +84 8 6263 6688
lemeridien.com/saigon



Le **MERIDIEN**

IN THIS NOVEMBER

**SURF + TURF
BUFFET NIGHT AT
LATEST RECIPE**

Every Friday + Saturday , from 18:00 to 22:00

An evening to enjoy a traditional land-meets-sea offering with a carving station of **Australian Beef Prime Rib** and **Canadian Lobster**.

Only at VND1.290.000** per person including free flow of wine and soft beverage.

For more information or to make a reservation please call +84 8 6263 6688 or e-mail: 03529.LatestRecipe@lemeridien.com

N 10° 46' E 106° 42'
DESTINATION UNLOCKED

Latest Recipe

NOV
26



What: 15th Annual AmCham Thanksgiving Turkey Shoot Golf Tournament and Lunch

Where: Vietnam Golf and Country Club (The Club House, D9)

About: The day begins at 6:30am, and the event kicks off with an 8am shotgun. The tournament takes place throughout the morning with plenty of prizes to be won. At 12:30pm, the award ceremony takes place alongside a roast turkey banquet, with the event ending at 2pm. Registration must be completed by November 16, 5pm, and prices are VND1,760,000 for a VGCC full member, VND2,220,000 for VGCC floating member, and VND2,600,000 for AmCham members or invited guests.

Contact: Visit www.amchamvietnam.com/events for more info

NOVEMBER 27

What: Heartbeat Presents youANDme

Where: The Observatory (5 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4); 10pm (free before 11pm, VND100,000 after)

About: More than just producers, youANDme provide a steady heartbeat that pumps talent throughout the world via their labels Rotary Cocktail Recordings, Polymorph and CUTZ.ME. As producers, they are sought after by top brands such as Space Ibiza, Sonar Festival in Barcelona, and their work is regularly included in BBC Radio1's Essential Mix. Their music runs deep, with funk and soul themes cutting through shifting styles of house, techno, dub and electronica with an effervescent groove.

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

NOVEMBER 28

What: Rodion

Where: The Observatory (5 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4); 10pm (free before 11pm, VND100,000 after)

About: Rodion is the Roman maestro of spaced-out, futuristic electronic music. Heavily influenced by soundtrack composers such as Morricone and Goblin, his sweeping soundscapes take their cue from a diverse range of musical influences, drawn together by his classical training and raw love of electronic music. Rodion has been hailed as the "new genius of Italian Dance music," and his space-age sounds are certainly ahead of their time, blending heavy disco with danceable obscurities such as Mexican techno, synthesizer funk and innumerable electronic sounds that defy description.

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



STAMFORD SKIN CENTRE
LASER DERMATOLOGY CLINIC



A NEW LASER TREATMENT FOR NAIL FUNGUS

THE SYMPTOMS OF NAIL INFECTION
You may suffer from nail infection (Onychomycosis) if you have one or more of the following symptoms:

- Discolored nails
- Yellow streak under the nail
- Distorted or thickened nail
- Brittle, crumbly or ragged nail
- Nails separated from the underlying skin
- Build up of debris (nail fragments, skin) under the nail
- White spots or streaks on the nail surface



BEFORE & AFTER

TRUST YOUR SKIN TO A DERMATOLOGIST !

WE SPECIALIZE IN

- **Aesthetic Dermatology**
(Acne, Wrinkles, Hypertrophic and Keloid scars, Botox and Restylane injections)
- **Laser treatment**
(Toe Nail Fungal Infection, Warts...)
- **General Dermatology**
(Eczema, Psoriasis, Rosacea, Skin infections...)
- **Hair and Nail Disorders**

- **Laser Dermatology**
(Acne Scars, Melasma, Freckles, Facial Rejuvenation, Spider Veins, Hair Removal...)
- **Skin Cancer Evaluation, Treatment and Removal**
- **STD screening and treatment**
- **Hepatitis B, C, and HIV treatment**

99 Suong Nguyet Anh, District 1, HCMC
info@stamfordskin.com

 (08) 3925 1990
www.stamfordskin.com



casa Italia
Restaurant & Pizzeria



VIETNAM EATS
Where Eats Meets West

HOTLINE:

08 38 244 286



FREE DELIVERY IN D1,3,4,5

86 Le Loi, D1, HCMC
08 38 244 286 / 0128 582 4675
www.casaitalia.com.vn
info@casaitalia.com.vn



Enjoy the convivial atmosphere and experience that is 'Casa'

NOVEMBER 28

What: Family Discovery Trail

Where: District 1, 9am-12pm

About: The Parent-Teacher group of Saigon Star International School welcomes you to the inaugural annual scavenger hunt in the heart of historical District 1. All families with children aged 3-12 are welcome to take part.

Families (two parents and two children) may purchase tickets at VND1.2 million, with a 20 percent discount for those who register by November 10, and a 10 percent discount for those that register by November 17. Thirty percent of proceeds go to Heartbeat Vietnam, a VinaCapital Foundation that funds life-saving operations for the most financially disadvantaged children.

Attractive prizes include a free two-night stay at Da Nang's Azura Apartment with a USD500 Al Fresco voucher, a two-night stay at Villa Aria, Mui Ne, a two-night stay with activities at Tai Lai Longhouse in Cat Tien National Park, USD700 off a Summer School program or USD1,000 off school fees at Saigon Star International School, a gift certificate from Paintball Saigon, and many more.

Tickets sold at Al Fresco Thao Dien (89 Xuan Thuy, D2), from Saigon Star International School (Residential Area No. 5, D2), or via email at familydiscoverytrail@gmail.com.

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

NOVEMBER 28

What: St. Andrew's Ball

Where: Park Hyatt Saigon (2 Lam Son, D1); VND2.5 million; 7pm - midnight

About: St. Andrew is the patron Saint of Scotland, and his feast day is traditionally celebrated with food, music and dance, all held under a blue and white saltire. St. Andrew's Day opens a season of Scottish winter festivals, followed by Hogmany and Burns Night, and is a key part of Scottish culture. The ball at Park Hyatt comprises of welcoming champagne, followed by a three-course meal with imported haggis and a whisky tasting, accompanied by Scottish dancing (the traditional Ceilidh where couples dance in circles) and bagpipe music.

Contact: Email standrewsballsaigon@gmail.com for more info



**NOV
29**

What: Terry Fox Run 2015

Where: Phu My Hung, D7, 7am-10am

About: The event welcomes individuals, families and groups to take part in a fun race to raise money. The Terry Fox Run in Vietnam raises money for cancer research and treatment within the country, and has so far funded the purchase of pathology equipment, an oral cancer-screening project, and is currently reviewing project funding for oncology research and pathological training at the Oncology Hospital of HCMC. In 2014, more than 16,500 participants raised over VND1.353 billion, a target the foundation hopes to exceed this year.

Contact: For more info, visit terryfox.canchamvietnam.org.



SAIGON STAR
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

ENGLISH CURRICULUM



QUALIFIED & CARING STAFF



SMALL CLASS SIZES



COMPETITIVE FEES

**Residential Area No.5,
Thanh My Loi Ward, D2
(08) 3742 STAR / (08) 3742 7827
www.saigonstarschool.edu.vn**

The Bulletin

Promotions and news in HCMC and beyond...



FESTIVE SEASON AT PULLMAN DANANG BEACH RESORT

Perfect for families or for a romantic getaway, Pullman (www.pullman-danang.com) is celebrating the Christmas period in style this year. The Christmas Eve Dinner, hosted by their Epice restaurant, will include a traditional Christmas buffet, accompanied by live music, a magic show and surprise gifts for kids from Santa Claus. Tickets are VND1,400,000 for adults, and VND700,000 for children aged 6-12. New Year's Eve will be celebrated with a gala dinner also at Epice. A live band and magic show will provide the backdrop for the buffet dinner, complemented by house wine and beer. Tickets are VND2,300,000 for adults and VND1,150,000 for children. Azure Beach Bar will host a countdown party from 10pm to 1am and will feature a live DJ and canapés.

ALLIED PICKFORDS
The Careful Movers™



Scan this for more info

Trust Allied Pickfords to make your move simpler, seamless and stress-free. Relax, we carry the load.



Allied Pickfords Vietnam

HANOI: Room 302, 3rd floor, 12A Ho Xuan Huong street
Office: +84 4 3943 1511

HCMC: 8th floor, Miss Ao Dai Building, 21 Nguyen Trung Ngan street, D1
Office: +84 8 3910 1220
www.alliedpickfords.com.vn



GREEK FETA TELEME & GREEK STYLE YOGURT

Specializing in manufacturing and trading Greek style Feta & Yogurt under natural fermentation methods.

The products are 100% fresh pasteurized milk, they do not contain any additives nor preservatives.



Greek Style Strained Yogurt - 1kg



Greek Style Strained Yogurt - 170gr



Greek Style Yogurt - 170gr



Greek Feta Teleme - 200gr



Greek Feta Teleme - 1kg

164 Cong Quynh st., Pham Ngu Lao ward, D1
08.38373248 - 08.38373253
www.zeusdairyprod.com - zeusgreekfeta.com
info@zeusdairyprod.com - sales@zeusdairyprod.com

DUMPLING SUNDAYS AT RACHA ROOM

Thai restaurant Racha Room (12-14 Mac Thi Buoi, D1) will be offering special Dumpling Plates every Sunday for VND50,000. Choose from their innovative selection such as chicken and okra curry puffs with yogurt and caramel, steamed prawn and ginger dumplings with peanut chili soy, coconut braised lamb dumplings with rendang curry sauce, and much more.



EXCLUSIVE PARTNERSHIP

Citibank and Song Be Golf Resort have entered into an exclusive partnership, making it easier for Citibank customers to obtain a Premium Gold Membership. The collaboration offers all customers and members the convenience of monthly interest-free payments when purchasing membership or services at Song Be, offered exclusively through Citibank's 0% Paylite Equal Payment Plan.

Song Be Golf Resort is Citibank's first exclusive golf partner in Vietnam and will provide premium golf facilities and services for Citibank's global customers through its highly selective Citibank Privileges program. Customers and members can look forward to a series of exclusive by-invitation events and special offers next month.



A WORLD AWAY

Book a mid-week stay at Sanctuary to receive:

- 30% discount on accommodation (*includes late check-out*)
- 20% discount on food at Sandals Restaurant
- 10% discount at our online store

Conditions apply

Visit www.sanctuary.com.vn for details and bookings.

Hãy đến với Hồ Tràm vào các ngày trong tuần để nhận được:

- Giảm giá 30% tiền phòng (*bao gồm ưu đãi trả phòng muộn*)
- Giảm giá 20% khi dùng bữa tại nhà hàng Sandals
- Giảm giá 10% khi mua hàng tại cửa hàng trực tuyến

Để đặt phòng và biết thông tin chi tiết vui lòng truy cập
www.sanctuary.com.vn

SANCTUARY

BEACH RESORT • HO TRAM

Ho Tram Hamlet, Xuyen Moc District, Ba Ria Vung Tau, Vietnam
T: +(84) 64 3 781631 info@sanctuary.com.vn

Troi Oi

The country in numbers



8%

reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 has been pledged by the

government, an equivalent of around 787.4 million tons of carbon dioxide. Deputy Chief of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment's Hydrometeorology and Climate Change Department, Nguyen Khac Hieu, has stated that Vietnam can only allocate USD3.2 million of the USD21 billion required to achieve the larger goal while international donors will be courted to make up the shortfall. Emission reduction will be mostly focused in the transport and communications sectors, alongside agriculture and land use. Vietnam's average temperature has risen by 0.5 percent in the last 50 years, while average sea level has risen by about 20 centimeters.

USD25

will be the new fee for single entry visas, down from USD45, as the government seeks to boost tourism. Multi-entry visas will drop from USD95 to USD50, while longer-term visas will range from USD95 - USD155. The

figures were announced on the finance ministry's website on October 13, and the changes will go into effect from November 23. Finally, for tourists who enter Vietnam to travel on through Laos and Cambodia, before returning to Vietnam to fly home, the visa fee will drop to only USD5. More international flights operate from Vietnam compared with Laos and Cambodia, and the drop in visa prices will hopefully encourage travelers to visit Vietnam as part of a three-country package.



USD283 MILLION

will be spent expanding Tan Son Nhat Airport. The project, which will take place over the next five years, will expand the footprint of the airport by around eight hectares, allowing 82 airplanes to be parked at the same time, doubling the current capacity. Deputy Minister of Transport Nguyen Nhat stated that in 2014 the airport handled 22 million passengers and 406,000 tons of cargo. The terminals will also be upgraded as part of a planned expansion of passenger capacity to 25 million passengers per year by 2020. The Civil Aviation Authority of Vietnam also seeks to expand Da Nang airport, which received 5 million passengers in 2014, a growth of 15.6 percent on the previous year. Such expansions will help deal with increased visitor numbers prior to the completion of Long Thanh Airport, located in Dong Nai Province around 40km from Ho Chi Minh City. The first phase of the Long Thanh project will begin in 2019, and is expected to cost USD15.8 billion.

2,500

cubic meters of water were released every second from a Chinese reservoir 200km upstream of Lao Cai last month. The release caused flooding in Lao Cai Province as the Hong River surged, water level reaching a peak of 81.41 meters on October 11. There are more than 80,000 dams in China, around 25 of which span the Hong River. The two largest are Namsa, which contains 260 million cubic meters of water, and Madusan, which contains 551 million cubic meters. Together with a number of other smaller dams, Chinese reservoirs can hold nearly 50 percent of the water volume of the Hong River section in Vietnam. While Lao Cai was the worst hit by these recent floods, effects were also felt in Yen Bai Province and as far downstream as Hanoi.



USD2 BILLION

worth of fruits and vegetables will be exported from Vietnam in 2015. According to the Vietnam Fruit and Vegetables association, USD1.4 billion was exported in the January-September period, and exports are on track to hit 2 billion. Vietnamese fruit and vegetable exports have been growing 26.5 percent annually, and local businesses are eyeing new markets such as Italy and Russia, as the trade continues to grow. Dragonfruit, watermelon, longan, and lychee are the staple exports, with dragonfruit particularly successful in the US market. Imports of individual fruits must be separately approved, and according to Dr. Dat, of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the US is expected to approve imports of Vietnamese star apple and mango by the end of 2015.

89

new tax defaulters have been listed by Hanoi in a 'name and shame' strategy. The

back taxes from these businesses amount to nearly USD13.78

million, with Real Estate company Quang Thai topping the list with over USD464,000 in unpaid tax.

Hanoi's tax office stated that it will continue to take tough measures against defaulters, particularly repeat offenders and those who refuse to cooperate. Hopefully this

latest name and shame initiative will run more smoothly than the last. In July 2015 more than 600 businesses were publicly shamed as tax defaulters by various tax agencies across the country. The Ministry of Finance, however, had to swiftly step in to make apologies, as dozens of businesses were wrongly accused. Despite these problems, since July the Hanoi tax office has collected more than USD306.1 million in back taxes.



9.5

meters is the length of a miniature submarine produced by Thai Binh businessman Nguyen Quoc Hoa. The submersible, named the Hoang Sa, weighs nine tons and is 3.5 meters wide. It is an upgrade upon Hoa's previous machine, the Truong Sa 1, which he built in 2013. The Hoang Sa includes computer-guided steering, is capable of traveling over mud for short periods

of time, and is constructed entirely from local materials. Hoa hopes to prove that Vietnam can create an indigenous submarine industry, rather than simply importing submersibles from abroad.



**No.62, Duong So 65, Tan Phong,
D7 (Near Lotte Mart), HCMC**

Restaurant: 0837 751 219

Peter: 01234 60 2200

Kim: 0909 60 1127

**www.dutchrestaurant.vn
info@dutchrestaurant.vn**

Comic Relief

Can Vietnamese comics win readers' hearts?

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



THE FIRST COMIC book series published in Vietnam was in December 1992; 23 years later the first comic book company founded entirely by professional comic artists was launched. While Comicola (short for Comic Online Alliance, www.comicola.com) is a young company, opened in January 2015, it has already gained the status of its Western counterparts Marvel and DC Comics, at least in Vietnam. The reason for Comicola's incredible surge of popularity is two-fold: its commitment to developing a sustainable comic book industry in Vietnam and it has funded and published seven different titles.

Their first publication was the revival of *Long Than Tuong*, a popular title highly praised for its distinctive artistic style, creative plotline and propaganda-free, faithful rendition of Vietnamese history. However, the series was also famous for being canceled, despite its huge fanbase, after a year of publication on the bi-monthly comic magazine T3. The reason for its cancellation is the same problem that has plagued the local comic industry since its conception: the lack of financial sustainability.

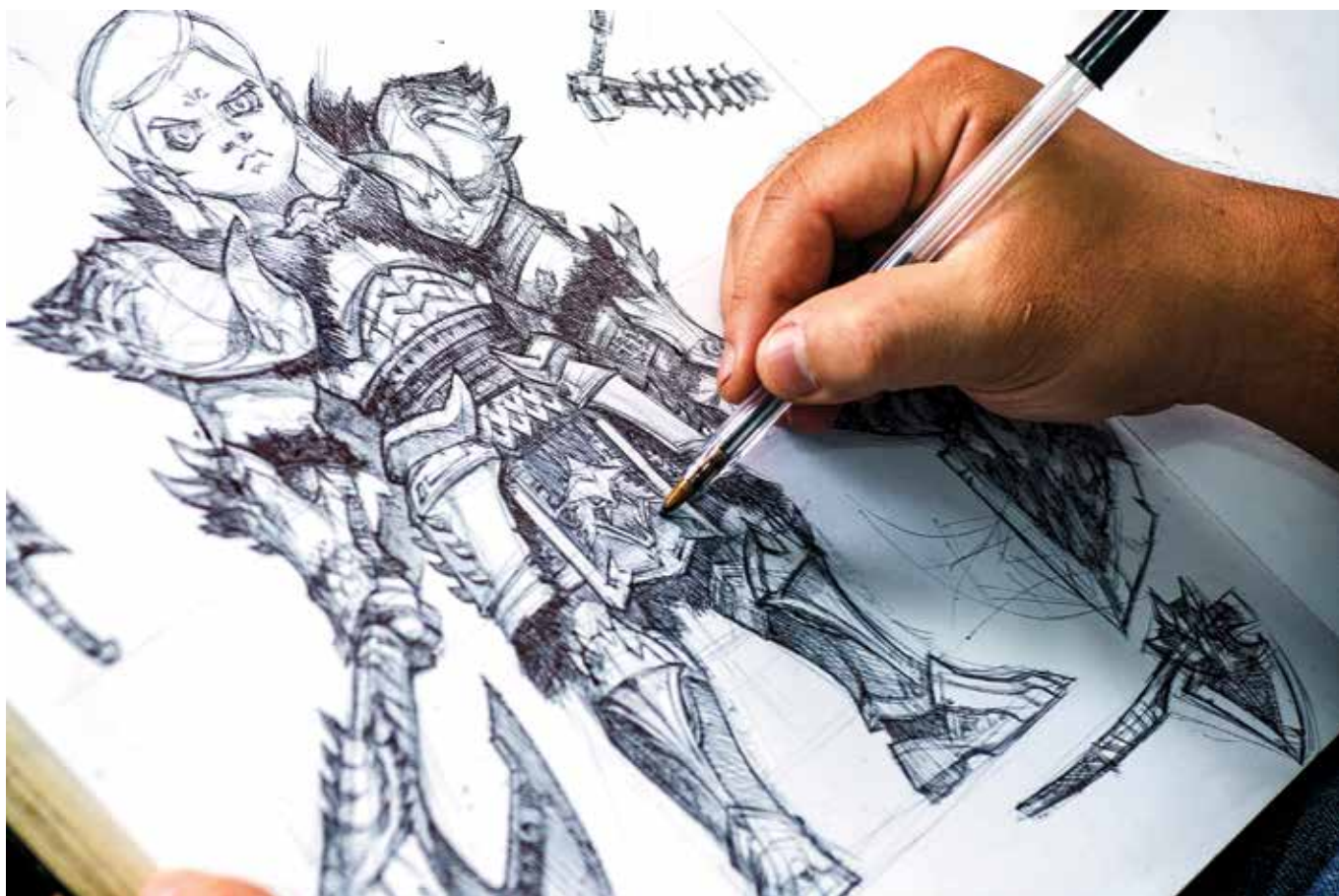
"We wanted to publish Phong Duong Comics' *Long Than Tuong*, but no publishers would give us the time of the day, so we thought the only way we could make *Long Than Tuong* see the light of day again was if we were to publish it ourselves and somehow sell enough copies to guarantee a second volume," says Hoang Anh Tuan, co-founder of Comicola and team leader of BRO, a professional comic book group with more than 10 years experience.

"I have worked as a comic artist for more than 10 years. Speaking from experience, I do not know of any comic artists or groups that can make a living from writing and selling comic books in Vietnam other than my own," Tuan claims. The industry here suffers from both a lack of backing capital and profitability.

"For imported titles from Japan, China, Korea or America, the production cost is lower and most series already have some reputation and fanbase to guarantee enough sales. For locally-grown titles however, not only are the production costs higher, the reader pool is also smaller. And that makes Vietnamese comic books poor investment options," he adds. "Most

publishers and investors realize that pretty quickly. Even a big name title like *Long Than Tuong* is no exception."

Traditional publishing is not an option, according to Tuan. Fortunately, modern technology offers an alternative. "Self-publication with crowdfunding for capital and marketing costs is the answer," he explains. "In 2013, when I heard that Phong Duong wanted to publish *Long Than Tuong* again and was looking for a publisher that believed in them, the answer came to me. Vietnamese investors aren't necessarily people who love and intimately understand comics whereas the people who love and breathe comics - the artists, the fans, us - don't have the financial resources to fund its publication. In the traditional model, the artists were left at the mercy of the publishers and investors because of their lack of financial independence. But modern publishing has changed. Crowdfunding platforms like Kickstarter or Gofundme have been incredibly successful. The balance of power has shifted from big investors to a community of dedicated fans. So I called up Phong Duong Comics and proposed my plan to them. They agreed



very quickly and together we drew up a plan to crowdfund and publish *Long Than Tuong*. If the model succeeded, we would then establish a comic book company on that proven model."

On November 20, 2014, crowdfunding for *Long Than Tuong* started and, because of its existing fanbase, the event was covered by the media and, within six weeks, the two raised VND330 million, making it the first and most successful crowdfunded comic project in Vietnam to date. Publication for the title started soon after and by December 31, 2014, the first volume was once again available to fans after ten years of absence. Following this success, Hoang Anh Tuan of BRO, Nguyen Khanh Duong of Phong Duong Comics and 'Black Cat' Dang Ngoc Minh Trang created Comicola. Today, the company has 31 artists working for them and has successfully published six additional titles, each with a crowdfunded investment of at least VND100 million.

Their website receives 100 to 200 orders daily, but Tuan believes the young company must do more. "As of today, we have not broken even. The crowdfunded capital helps with the cash flow but it's not enough," he confesses. "The comic magazine model in other countries works because they have advertising potential. In contrast, there are few businesses in Vietnam that would want to advertise in a comic magazine."

Comicola has started seeking other sources of income aside from book sales. "The crowdfund model allows us to sell other things aside from just the comic book. We can sell extras like T-shirts with painted comic characters or figurines. We are also testing online ads. In the long term, we plan to create a dual system of online and offline comic book production. The comic book industry in Vietnam is very much a wild zone. To survive, we need to create a harmonious ecology." ■



A Forgotten Childhood Revisited

One man's journey from beggar to photographer

TEXT BY **MICHAEL ARNOLD** IMAGES BY **LEE NGUYEN**



RISING FASHION PHOTOGRAPHER Lee Nguyen has a very striking pose of his own that's a deliberate study in making other people feel uncomfortable. Tilting his head with its close-cropped spiky haircut and smoothly-trimmed beard, he folds his hands on the tabletop and rests his cheek gently on his knuckles, his gaze steady and beautifully hungry, as if daring you to look away.

No, it's not a come-on, and it's not a look he's picked up in the industry. This is a living flashback 25 years into Lee's past; this is the way he learned to beg for the sympathy of others just to win a few scraps from their dining room table. For all his vogue styling and laddish Australian accent, Lee's origins in rural Phu Yen are far less than merely humble – in fact, they're miserable.

"I remember everything when I was younger, somehow I remember everything," he says, having returned to Vietnam semi-

permanently several months ago in order to pursue his photography career. It's been a very long time since Lee and the rest of his family left Phu Yen for Melbourne – he was just 11 years old. His father had spent the previous eight years there as a migrant before finally achieving citizenship, sponsored by a brother who'd arrived in the country as a boat refugee in the mid-80s.

"When my dad left, I was still very young," he says. "I hadn't gone to school yet. But even when he was still there, our family was very poor. I had to go to different people's houses near lunchtime, just to stand near the door and watch them eat. Obviously, when some kid is looking hungry while you're eating, you're going to share something."

"Every day I changed house, the next day I'd go to another one," Lee says. "I have a very clear memory of one family, a mum and a dad and their two kids eating, and me, I was there holding the door, a

big wooden door. Some families like them would ignore me, so I remember moving a bit closer. They had a block of wood in front of the doorway, so I had to step over it. I'd stand there or lie around, watching them. Eventually they had to offer me some food. I remember so clearly one time that I really wanted to eat some bananas. They were on a family altar. I wanted to eat them so much. It was an old lady's house. When she had a nap, I used rocks and chucked them up there to get the bananas. She hit me when she found out."

Watching Lee demonstrate his begging technique is fundamentally disturbing – it's not the first time I've seen this look on a human face. Living in Saigon, it's difficult not to see the street kids, the waifs selling chewing gum and lotto tickets, the grubby, sleepy-eyed children buzzing around the markets hoping to be noticed whenever someone takes out their wallet to make a payment. Frequent exposure triggers more



irritation than compassion in most; those who've never experienced a desperate need before find it almost impossible to register genuine empathy, and reasons not to offer help swiftly come to mind.

Sudden Rush of Memories

For Lee, who emerged from that very situation, being confronted by his own history after returning from abroad was every bit as disarming as you might imagine it would be. Australian life was tough but better than starving and begging – and although the memories of his childhood never faded, years of living without hunger meant that they rarely came to the surface. By the time he was invited to go back and visit the mother country by a friend, he was simply looking forward to seeing Vietnam again and indulging in the nightlife of Saigon.

"It was my first visit. I was partying, you name it," says Lee. "You know how the

foreigners here are. I didn't have any local Vietnamese friends. Then one night we were at this restaurant, we were drinking, there were a lot of girls, working girls and stuff, you know what you do. It was past midnight, and after the meal I just turned around and saw a boy holding on to the wooden door, doing exactly what I did back then. Just watching me eat. Somehow you know, like a flashback, it all came back. *Bam bam bam bam...* a lot of images."

Hit hard by the sudden rush of memories, Lee asked the boy to come in. "The restaurant wouldn't allow it," he says, "so I said I'd pay for him, he's my friend, if you don't let him in I'm not going to come here anymore. And the boss says ok, let him in. The kid is like, still standing like that, trying to sell me a lotto ticket. I said yeah, I'll buy them all. Eat first. And I was just watching him eat like he'd never eaten anything. I started crying. I could see myself right there, a mirror. I was in tears and everyone

was looking at me going 'what are you doing?' Everyone started leaving, they said, 'are you going to come with us?' I said 'no, I'm staying with him.'"

"At that moment, my head was so empty," admits Lee. "I couldn't feel anything. I started walking home from that restaurant. It was raining, I was drunk, very emotional, and my head kept flashing back to those images. And then I saw the kid just running up, and he gave me a hug, the biggest hug: 'Thank you, Uncle.'"

Lee's experience was a jolt back to reality, and he soon found himself on the road to Phu Yen to search for his roots. After an afternoon driving through the rural areas, he realized he was lost. Entering a small village, he saw the living conditions of the children there were even worse than those of his own childhood, and as he started asking questions and taking photos, he discovered that their difficulties were far deeper than he imagined.



"This one, the father was a fisherman and got trapped under his boat and drowned," says Lee as he starts talking me through his images. "At that time his wife had cancer. They had four kids, from 12 down to five. When I went to their house, I talked to their mum, she couldn't move. Swollen neck, lying on the ground, they didn't have a bed."

"These kids collect snails," he says, moving on. "They work the whole day and make about VND15,000 between them. It's a really poor area, there's a Chinese factory there, and it's polluted bad. No one complains about it, a lot of people there work for that factory. You see old people and young kids only, wandering around, catching frogs and snakes. They use the leftovers for dinner, and pick fruit. They're like hunter gatherers."

As Lee traveled farther through the region, he began to rely on his camera to connect with what he saw. He would

interview the children he captured with his lens to learn more about them and establish a rapport, and in the process became more emotionally involved with their situation.

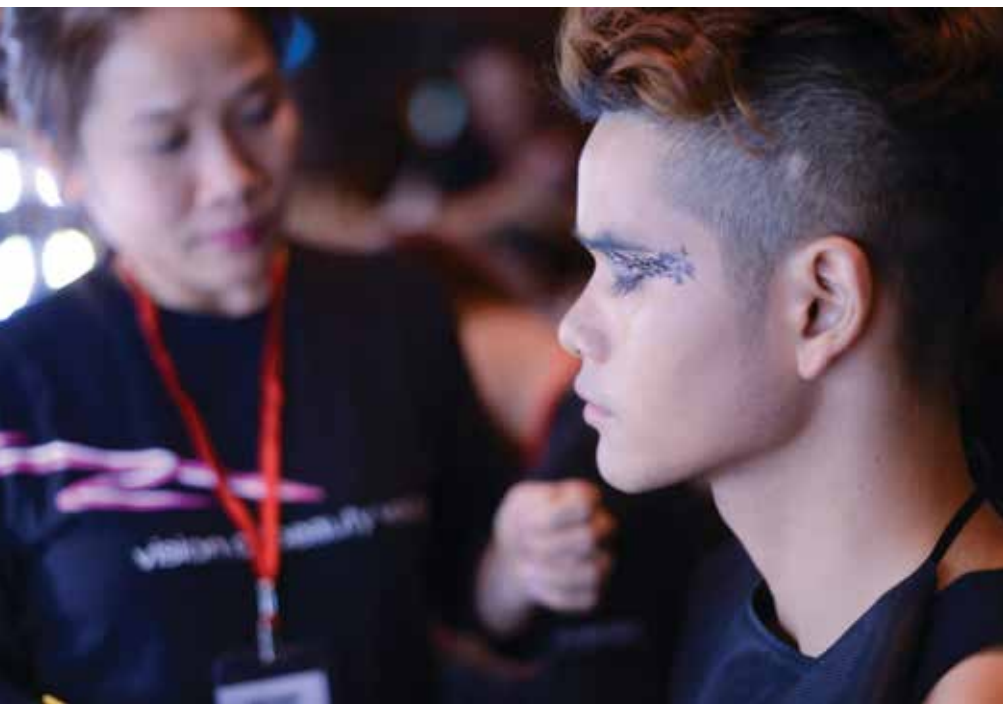
"This girl with long hair washing in the river," he shows me. "I was standing on the other side. She was just like this, you can tell it's not a clean river but you can see every muscle. The reason why it's blurred is to obscure her identity – she could be anyone. This one, the father was electrocuted, the mother had leukemia. This orphanage I've now been to regularly. The nuns like people to donate, but not too much. They don't want the kids to think they can get money like that, or they'll think that everyone will give them things for free. They want to kids to know how to fight for their lives."

Lee's first images were taken almost in total bewilderment as he tried to come to terms with his forgotten childhood, but he soon discovered that his photos had

unexpectedly captured something other than the suffering of Vietnam's rural children.

"I don't think my pictures show poor kids here," says Lee, visibly humbled by the children's faces even now. "My pictures show the moment that they enjoy life. This kid in the orphanage, I said 'show me your beautiful face,' and he pulled at his eyes and went *argg...* I think I just want to show that. My whole intention in taking a photo is in that moment of joy you only see in children like that. Despite everything they're like, 'I'm happy with what I am and what I have now.'"

"I'm not showing anyone that they're hungry or suffering," says Lee. "All the kids on the street here in Saigon, you can see them all wandering around. Don't be too distant. They're not showered, yeah, they're dirty. But there's something about the happiness in their life that really reflects all of us." ■



Backstage Pass

What really goes on behind the curtains at Vietnam International Fashion Week

TEXT BY **MICHAEL ARNOLD** IMAGES BY **DAVID DREDGE**

H'HEN NIE LEANS down to peer through a tear in the heavy black curtain separating the runway from the backstage area as Luong Thi Hong Xuan next to her reaches hungrily into her snack pack for another rice cracker. There's not much of a view from back here – we only manage a glimpse of the models as they glide out into the sparkling lights and step carefully over the folds of their sweeping gowns. Behind us, Kha My Van gazes distractedly into her phone as she makes another attempt at the perfect selfie, her hair draped in absolute symmetry over her ruffled Francoise Lea Cellier frock; she glances up to grin sheepishly at a photojournalist before resuming with her own snaps. To my left, K'Broi and Vo Thanh An joke in cheeky faltering English with a visiting Polish beauty, the three of them wrapped awkwardly in fabrics that will look stunning the moment they step out on stage a few moments from now.

Don't worry if you're not yet familiar with these names – they're all fresh-faced celebrities barely out of their reality TV platform and primed for a shot at the real fashion world, and they're being treated to a remarkable graduation ceremony. The Vietnam International Fashion Week, the second of its kind ever held in Ho Chi Minh City and following just ten months after the inaugural event, is an extravaganza of towering runway beauties

and breathtaking designs, held to put this country definitively on the high fashion register. This is one of those things that observers five years ago would have shaken their heads at and said would never happen in dusty old Saigon with its unshakable preference for conical hats and open-toed shoes. It's still often said that there is actually no fashion industry at all in Vietnam – and the Fashion Week is a very deliberate effort to challenge that presumption.

As with last year, Vietnam's Fashion Week is a patchwork of neatly interlocking elements. It's convened in partnership between Singapore-based FIDÉ Fashion Weeks – headed by billionaire philanthropist and Asian Couture Federation founder Dr. Frank Cintamani – and local media production firm Multimedia JSC under TV & fashion entrepreneur Le Thi Quynh Trang. Many of the special guests and leading industry figures are connected to FIDÉ and the ACF in some form, working in cooperation to realize the latter organization's mission "to inspire, support and promote the highest levels of Asia-based fashion design artistry to the Asian and global markets." On the Vietnamese side, Multimedia's TV properties provide the raw materials for the shows – models are for the most part *Next Top Model* alumni, and *Project Runway* designers take up a number of the event's

show slots. Advertising for its sponsors also draws heavily on Multimedia's not-insignificant proprietary promotional resources. Take a close look, and you'll see that the whole web is a self-supporting lattice of interweaving handshakes – an impressive structure of recursive deals that has made the impossible here possible.

The pertinent question is whether or not a web of industry associates and television show competitors really constitute the state of Vietnamese fashion and the national industry's emergence as a strong regional player. Critics have their doubts; the VIFW committee is eager to prove otherwise. Speaking at the event's press conference a fortnight earlier, Multimedia's Le Thi Quynh Trang expressed her confidence in the potential of the Fashion Week to bring to the world a new perspective on the potential of the Vietnamese fashion market. At the live finale of this season's *Vietnam's Next Top Model*, celebrity guest Julien Fournié – a French haute couture fashion designer and one of the key presenters at the Fashion Week – gushed over the talent he'd seen since touching down in HCMC, stating: "In fact, it's very easy to understand that nowadays we need new figures, we need new faces... during the 90's, girls came from the Ukraine and Russia. During the [2000's], they came from sometimes Italy and sometimes Brazil. But, for the future and for tomorrow, they have to come from Asia and of course Vietnam. So I'm very excited to see the new faces here."

Ripple of Gravitas

Several days after that finale, the Vietnam International Fashion Week kicks off at the Gem Center. The local celebrities are out in force, eager to stamp out their obligatory shots on the red-carpeted stage, which seems to be open to anyone brave enough to step up and face the entourage of flashing cameras. Dubai-based designer Ezra Santos wears one of the biggest smiles, pleased as punch to score an invite to present his latest signature collection, predominantly a series of wedding gowns in nude pink – "I wanted to use one color this time," he enthuses, "because a nude pink color for any woman brings out their tone and their skin color. It makes every woman beautiful." To the highly-respected Santos, the Saigon event is certainly proof enough that Vietnamese and Asian fashion is on the rise: "Come on, Alexander Wong, a lot of Asian designers are doing very well in New York and Paris. I do believe it's maybe because of what's happening in China, so it's about time that they recognize that."

The backstage area is your typical fashion show rush; the designers fuss over their creations as lanyard-bearing minions grab and shift and poke their way around the big names fiddling gracefully with their straps. There's a high level of security tonight, as show sponsor PNJ is about to unveil their jewelry collection, and every girl is wearing what looks like several thousand dollars' worth of gems

around her neck. One of the guards steps on a girl's gown and finds himself on the receiving end of a toxic glare from one of the models' handlers: "If she fell over..." he spits angrily, drawing his finger across his neck and pointing right at the guard, who stares guiltily at his shoes. The models would laugh, but they're clearly extremely nervous as they line up to step on the catwalk. Miss Universe Vietnam 2013 Truong Thi May shouldn't have anything to worry about, but she's visibly trembling – she presses her hands together and raises them before her nose in earnest prayer, bowing and whispering for confidence as if standing at the temple. She flashes me a terrified smile and I give her an encouraging nod as she begins her careful, studied footsteps out to the runway, while I shake my head and wonder if I haven't imagined that this little exchange actually took place.

This is my second night back with the models; the previous evening I'd been competing with Polish journalists for a brief interview with veteran Japanese bridal couturier Yumi Katsura, celebrating 50 years in fashion with us here in Saigon. The Poles are awfully persistent – they've come on another reciprocal arrangement, filming *Poland's Next Top Model* in Vietnam and providing their contestants to the Fashion Week as European runway talent. Ms. Katsura is a little flustered trying to judge which of their competing models performed best in her outfits (which were among the most extraordinary of the entire week); when it's my turn, she shuffles next to me heading for someplace a bit quieter as if on tip-toes, suddenly looking very weary of the entire performance.

She's grateful to be here, however. "As a designer, I will go anywhere where our products are welcome," she says, "and also where we are invited. So as a designer, that is my career, that is my job."

"I feel that Vietnam is almost as it was 20 years ago in Japan," she observes. "It's developing, so it's worth looking at the Vietnamese market compared to the Japanese world or European countries. Actually, I've already done this in Japan. When I started in bridalwear 50 years ago, only three percent of women were wearing wedding dresses there, so I've done this in a developing country before. I have the same feeling in Vietnam right now. It's very exciting."

Ninety-one-year-old Italian designer Renato Balestra echoes her enthusiasm as he prepares for what is likely to be one of the last shows of his long career. "I wasn't able to say no to Mr. Cintamani," he says brightly of why he's decided to take part here. "They put on such beautiful shows all around Asia, and I had never been to Vietnam." While he takes the regional fashion industry at face value, he does have his criticisms: "It depends on country to country, because each country brings to fashion their roots, their traditions. Of course, some of them have to become more international. They are a little *too much* in touch with the roots. If they want to



show in New York, or Paris, or London, or Rome, they must become a little more international."

There's a discernible ripple of gravitas backstage as one of the event's most important models glides past the baby ones like a floating statue. One of the VNTM boys whispers across to a counterpart from PNTM, "That is Thanh Hang. She is supermodel," and they nod in shared awe. Hang is dressed in a staggeringly glamorous gold Valenciani number that plays about her curves like liquid metal. She descends regally on a patchy office chair pushed towards the rear of the open changing area and is attended to by her outfit's designer, Adrian Anh Tuan. Both of them are themselves pieces of the FIDÉ/Multimedia puzzle; they were both *Top Model* judges last season, and Hang has been appearing in Fashion Week sponsor advertisements for months already.

As they flutter about preparing for the launch of Adrian's new line, their

camaraderie with the former contestants on the show is evident, and it's this observation that I take home from all of this – the entire production with all its complex network of forces has become something of a joint effort, and almost a family affair. There's nothing forced or pretended going on here – this is the groundswell of Vietnam's fashion industry, and wherever it goes in the future, it all begins here. It may be cobbled together, but it's still the real thing.

Perhaps Frank Cintamani himself puts it best in his final speech that closes this year's Fashion Week: "People from beyond the shores of Vietnam have now heard what it is we're doing here. It benefits both the international designers, and of course the local designers. As an organization, we are extremely, extremely confident that this country has what it takes to become a fashion capital of the region. So I would like to wish Vietnam the greatest success, and you have always our support." ■

HO TRAM
OPEN 2015

— FEATURING —

- SERGIO GARCIA -

and many more...

T: +84 (0) 64 378 8666

E: EVENT@HOTRAMOPEN.COM

🐦 @HOTRAMOPEN

ASIA'S GRANDEST STAGE

VIETNAM'S FIRST MAJOR
GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP

3-6 DECEMBER 2015



THE
BLUFFS
HO TRAM STRIP

THE GRAND
HO TRAM STRIP

TROON®



FREE ENTRY - REGISTER NOW!

WWW.HOTRAMOPEN.COM

PHUOC THUAN, XUYEN MOC, BA RIA - VUNG TAU, VIETNAM
ONLY TWO HOURS FROM HO CHI MINH CITY VIA LONG THANH - DAU GIAY EXPRESSWAY



GOLF IS THE TALK OF THE TOWN

THE WORLD'S BEST GOLFERS PREPARE TO VISIT VIETNAM FOR THE INAUGURAL

HO TRAM OPEN DECEMBER 3RD – 6TH

WITH HEADLINERS SUCH as Sergio Garcia, Darren Clarke, Rob Rock, Geoff Ogilvy, Vietnam's number 1 Michael Tran, alongside a cast of the Asian Tour's finest, the event mantra – Asia's Grandest Stage – appears more than fitting.

To add even more interest – the event promoters have just announced Brian McFadden, formerly of Westlife will be headlining the entertainment program.

To mark the occasion, a special promotion was unveiled by Brian himself, as he took to Twitter saying he would dedicate a wellknown song to a lucky fan, and personally invite them to Ho Tram to be on stage with him for his performance of Flying Without Wings – a huge hit from Brian's time as part of Westlife.

He said: 'Tweet #AsiasGrandestStage to @HoTramOpen for your chance to have me sing Flying without Wings to you on stage @TheGrandHoTram.'

He continued: 'I will pick a winner at random, and they will be my personal guest on Friday December 4th @HoTramOpen with hotel room thrown in!'

The promotion is being mirrored on the Ho Tram Open Facebook pages allowing fans the best opportunity to win the experience of a lifetime.

Fans have been quick to take to social media to try and win and you can understand why!

"Wouldn't it be great for a fan to have such a memorable moment during the Ho Tram Open," commented Ben Styles, Vice President Golf & Residential Development, Ho Tram Strip. "We discussed the idea with Brian we all agreed it is exactly the type of initiative Ho Tram stands for. We want to bring golf and entertainment together and invite spectators from all across Vietnam and South-East Asia to enjoy the event and importantly the evening parties!

"I can't wait for December to roll around," remarked McFadden in a recent statement. "The vision of this event is off the charts and as soon as I heard the plans I had to be a part of it. The people of Vietnam have always been such great supporters of mine and I can't wait to headline at Asia's Grandest Stage."

Brian will perform on Tuesday evening (December 1st 2015) at the exclusive Ho Tram Open Gala Dinner, as well as playing at the Ho Tram Open Poolside Groove, headlining on Friday evening (December 4th).

To keep fans and visitors entertained, The Grand Ho Tram will be hosting a Poolside Groove party from 5pm – 1am each day of the Championship (Thursday 3rd thru Friday 6th December). Poolside Groove tickets will be available to spectators and guests when their tickets are redeemed at Ho Tram.

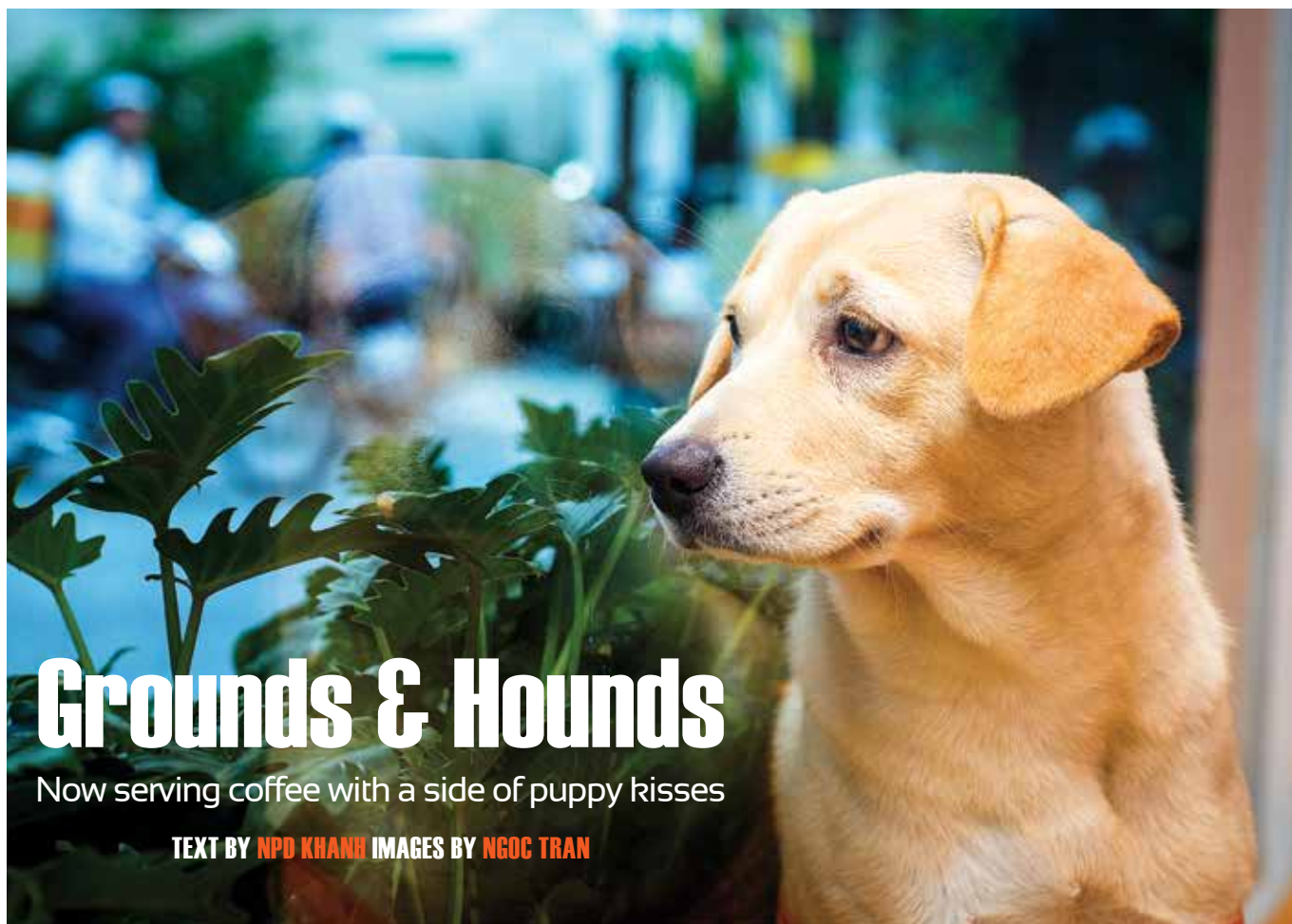
The Grand Ho Tram has very clear ambition to become the home of world class entertainment for Vietnam and South-East Asia and recent developments around the Ho Tram Open adds further weight to that masterplan.

"The vision around the Ho Tram Open is exactly what golf needs right now," commented Jed Moore, Tournament Promoter. "We don't view this as just a golf tournament, it is a date in the diary for sports fans, party goers and the general public to enjoy. We have built in activities across all corners of the resort and have opened the doors to all who want to join us. Brian's addition gives us further fan engagement opportunities and will provide stellar entertainment for our guests and spectators."

A gesture that has been very well received is the tournaments decision to make all tickets free. Sports and entertainment fans have been taking the opportunity to register for tickets to avoid disappointment. In addition, packages are soon to be unveiled for the Ho Tram Open with 1, 2 and 3 night options being made available at select local hotels.

For more information about the Ho Tram Open including player bios and sponsorship options, visit www.hotramopen.com and follow @HoTramOpen or call +84 64 378 8666





Grounds & Hounds

Now serving coffee with a side of puppy kisses

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

ONE OF THE newest cafes to pair refreshing beverages with cute animals in Saigon recently celebrated its first birthday last month. Hachiko (14 Hoa Sua), a two-storey cafe centered around dogs is nestled along a small street off Phan Xich Long in Phu Nhuan District. The cafe is named after the legendary loyal akita (a large breed of dog originating from the mountainous northern regions of Japan) dog Hachiko. Hachiko's story dates back to the 1920s, when he was purchased by university professor Hidesamuro Ueno in Japan. Every morning as Ueno headed off to work, the kindhearted akita would accompany him to the train station. Hachiko would sit there patiently until the end of the day, ready to greet him upon his return home. This happy routine came to an end in 1925 when Ueno died unexpectedly at work - leaving Hachiko waiting, watching trains arrive and hoping for a reunion that would never come. Over the next 10 years, the loyal dog continued to hold vigil each day for Ueno at the station until his own passing in 1935.

By choosing to name the cafe after the famous canine, the owner wanted to celebrate the bond between man and man's best friend. "We created Hachiko as a space for dogs and dog lovers," says Dang Xuan Tu, the manager. "Saigon is a city full of migrants and there are a lot of dog lovers who cannot afford or whose landlords do not allow dogs. These people are the reason why we opened the cafe. We would like nothing more than for people to come here

for a drink with friends or come with their laptops to work among the dogs, or play with them if they are up to it."

The cafe receives an average of 200 visitors during the week and triple that on weekends. Their pack numbers close to 40 canines, from over 20 different breeds including shih tzu, chow chow, dachshund, akita, and even a Tibetan mastiff. "Running and keeping a pet cafe afloat is much more difficult than most people imagine," says Tung. "It's not just, 'Oh, let's open a cafe and put some dogs in and start raking in the cash.' You need to plan for everything or you'll keel over soon from losses. Maintenance is very important." The idea of pairing coffee and pretty dogs is not a new one in Vietnam. In Ho Chi Minh City alone, a search for dog cafe turns up 203 different locations in various districts. However, only about a third of them survive past their first birthday.

"There are many hidden expenses in this business, and it's quite easy for a new cafe to nosedive into bankruptcy even when they are careful," he explains, referring to the various costs that go into the dogs' healthcare. The high number of animals in an enclosed space means that a slip in hygiene can easily spark an uncontrollable, and very expensive, outbreak. Also during the outbreak the cafe would be forced to close until the animals are better, ending its main source of revenue and leaving the business's survival in jeopardy.

As a preventative measure, the dogs are

fully vetted and kept under constant care with frequent health checks, a balanced diet and scheduled vaccination shots. And if customers wish to bring their dogs to the cafe, they will need to show proof of vaccination. The cafe also splits their dogs into smaller packs and rotates them on shifts to make sure they have plenty of rest.

Vietnam is not the first country to adopt the pet cafe model, but in a nation where the dog meat trade is going strong and dog restaurants are no strange sights, a dog cafe holds a unique and, at times, precarious position in the community. Tung says he sometimes fears the possibility of his companions being dognapped, but despite their fear, Tung and his boss tend to stay away from the 'to eat or not to eat dog meat' debate that's currently going on.

"It's a complicated issue," he explains. "On one side, this is something that has existed in our culture for a long time. On the other, many owners see their dogs as friends, companions, and even family members. Who would want their family to be kidnapped, butchered and served up on a plate? But is it right to condemn the eaters when most of us also eat meat?"

"I don't think condemning and criminalizing the people who eat dogs will solve the problem," Tung continues. "What we want to do at Hachiko is to do a very good job and show people how beautiful a friendship between dog and human is, then maybe we can sway the hearts of those who never saw dogs that way before." ■





Garden State

Saigon's latest playground for skaters, betrothed couples and graffiti artists

TEXT BY NDP KHANH IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

LOCATED BETWEEN DISTRICT 7 and Nha Be District is a studio and entertainment hub that has been steadily growing in popularity since it opened a year ago. En-Dee Garden (915/22 Le Van Luong, Nha Be) is a spacious complex comprising of a garden, an outdoor cafe and restaurant, and a two-storey building that houses a set that resembles a 19th century English countryside estate. The space also includes a spine ramp for skateboarding, facilities for rollerskating and BMX biking, and cultural events like street art are frequently held here. Founded by husband and wife team Nguyen Huynh Duc (Danny) and Trinh Yen Nhi (Nancy), the 1,500sqm land was Danny's VND6 billion wedding gift to his wife. The name En-Dee is the phonetic initials of their names.

"We met in Australia where we both attended university," says Danny. "After graduation, I became a pilot for Vietnam Airlines and she became an accountant. Because of my work, we had to relocate to Vietnam and that was how everything started." The move, while facilitating Danny's career, served to limit his wife's

prospects. Very quickly they found out there were few attractive job opportunities for Nancy's qualification and a sedentary life as a housewife was an unattractive option for the couple.

"I asked her what she wanted to do with her life if money wasn't a problem," he continues. "She said she wanted to do something beautiful, something memorable. We had our wedding about two years ago and it was a great experience for the both of us, but through conversations with friends, we realized that it was not necessarily the same for other couples marrying in Vietnam. That was when the idea of creating a romantic, glamorous set for wedding shoots and videos came to us. With that decided, we established a company, worked together to create the concept and vision, and found ways to finance our dream and here we are, one year later."

The first year of operation was a long trial and error process as the couple learned the ropes of the business. They made mistakes and had to make revisions to their original idea. Despite the various problems and their lack of business

experience, the couple persevered. Though it has often been compared to Saigon Outcast in District 2, the District 7 garden complex focuses mainly on its expansive green space, family-friendly activities and wedding shoots. Danny says he only recently learned of Saigon Outcast and the many comparisons being made between the two. "I didn't know what Saigon Outcast was until a visitor told me En-Dee felt very much like Saigon Outcast. So I visited them to see if the comparison was true. It was great. Everything was really interesting and I think they did a great job. I didn't feel like there were a lot of similarities in the way we do things but since we both aim to become an entertainment and activity hub for internationally-minded young people, the comparison is probably unavoidable."

Going forward, the couple has few plans other than to continually learn, evolve their business and enjoy their time with each other. "We have not broken even and it probably will be years until we make a return on our initial investment," says Danny. "And we are okay with it. Our friends say we are both crazy for spending our money that way and that, if they were us, they would put that money in the bank and live a cushy life instead of working so hard for little return. But we don't see things that way."


He adds: "When our future children ask us about our dreams, I want to be able to say that mom had this dream and dad helped the best he could to make it happen and that we have no regrets." ■



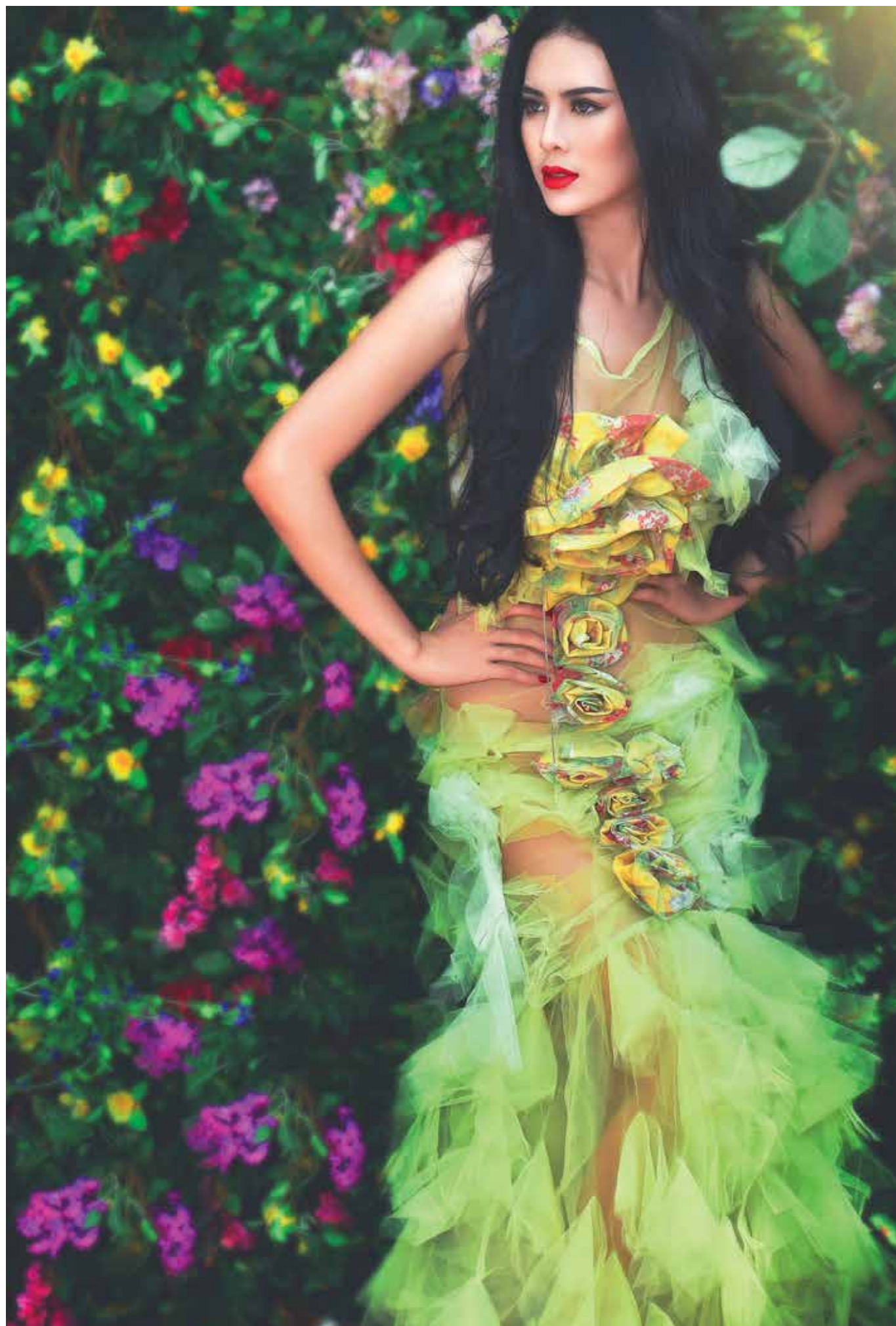
Nancy & Danny

A woman with long dark hair and red lipstick is sitting in a garden. She is wearing a black, short-sleeved, knee-length dress. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is a dense garden of red roses and green foliage. The lighting is soft, creating a romantic atmosphere.

Floral Arrangements

Whether they're trailing yards of roses or framed by a cloud of blue tulle, these ethereal floral dresses bring the romance of the garden onto the red carpet. 







Elegant Model Agency
Contact: **Quang Troc** (Canton Dang)
(US: 714 602 4111; Vietnam: 090 872 1880)
Model: **Le Sang**
Studio: **Cuu Long Studio**
Makeup: **Kiwi**
Stylist: **Do Nghia**
Designer: **Tuyet Nhung Cuu Long**

Safe Eating

Ensuring the quality and safety of street food in Vietnam is easier said than done



After having obtained legal experience in his home country the Netherlands and in Cambodia, **Marijn Sprokkereef** is currently an associate of **Audier & Partners**. Audier & Partners is an international law firm with presence in Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi), Myanmar and Mongolia, providing advice to foreign investors on a broad range of legal issues.

Dear Marijn,

My name is Daniel and I've been working in Ho Chi Minh City as a journalist for about three years now. I love eating street food and I have even written a few stories about it. My friends from Europe will be visiting soon and I want to introduce them to the city's street food culture and take them out for a delicious bowl of *hu tieu* or *banh mi*. However, they are concerned about hygiene and I don't want them to spend their holiday in bed with stomachaches. Does the government even have laws on food safety and, if so, are they actually enforced?

I AM PRETTY sure that every foreigner living in Vietnam has had a stomach upset at least once after eating from a street food vendor. Contrary to what you – or your friends – may think, there are actually a lot of rules about food safety in Vietnam, the most important one probably being the Law on Food Safety of 2010. This law and its implementing decrees cover a wide range of food-related topics, including rules on food production, food advertisement and labeling, prevention of food safety incidents, education, communication and the State management of food safety.

More specifically relating to your question, in 2012 the Ministry of Health issued a circular that regulates, among other things, food safety for street food establishments. The term “street food” is defined as food and beverages for instant eating and drinking that are sold on streets or at public locations such as stations, tourist sites, festivals, etc.

The circular states, for example, that the water used to prepare instant food and drinks at street food establishments must be in accordance with technical regulations of the Ministry of Health. Furthermore, street food vendors must be “clean and neat” and, when they are in direct contact with food and drinks, they must use disposable gloves. Also, tables, chairs and cabinets used for the sale of food and beverages must be at least 60

centimeters from the ground. In terms of certification, street food vendors are officially required to have a certificate of training on food safety knowledge, as well as a health certificate issued by the local health authorities.

In order to make sure these rules are actually complied with in practice, the government has issued another decree in 2013 on the sanctions for violating food safety regulations. According to this decree, such sanctions may include: cautions, monetary fines, forcible destruction of food, compensation for the costs of food poisoning, and withdrawal of food safety certificates. To give you some examples, a fine of between VND300,000 and VND500,000 can be imposed for failing to ensure that chopsticks are sufficiently clean, and a fee of between VND500,000 and VND1 million can be imposed for using water that fails to meet the technical regulations on food safety. If unsafe food leads to food poisoning, a street vendor may be fined between VND1 and VND2 million.

Rules and regulations aside, in Vietnam it often boils down to the implementation and enforcement of the law. One of the issues in this regard has been the unclear separation of tasks and powers between the various ministries and government agencies that are involved. Despite recent joint efforts by

the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the use of inter-disciplinary inspection teams, food safety is unfortunately still a matter of concern to many people in Vietnam. Not just because of the risk of food poisoning, but also because of hidden, more serious issues, such as the use of forbidden pesticides. On the other hand, recent reports by the World Health Organization show that Vietnam is making good progress on food safety. Furthermore, food safety is also on the agenda for the various free trade agreements that Vietnam is currently negotiating.

It is fair to say that Vietnamese law deals extensively and in great detail with food safety, but when it comes to enforcing them it seems that there is still some work to do. But for your friends, please tell them not to worry too much. With you as their guide, I am sure they will be in good hands and I have no doubt that they will enjoy Vietnam's mouthwatering street food. *Bon voyage et bon appétit!*

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

Haravan

Vietnam's Shopify



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

FROM THE OUTSIDE, Haravan (a shortened version of the Vietnamese phrase “*hai ra vang*,” meaning to pick gold like you pick fruit) resembles Shopify and, indeed, at its core they both have the same mission and operate the same way. Shopify's website states: “We focus on making commerce better for everyone, so businesses can focus on what they do best: building and selling their products. Today, merchants use our platform to manage every aspect of their business – from products to orders to customers, selling online, in retail stores, and on the go.”

This is also what Haravan is doing. It's a platform for shops, retailers and new SME (small and medium-sized enterprises) ecommerce merchants to run their businesses offline and online. To the average Vietnamese user, it may look like a WordPress clone, where you can create a website using provided free and paid templates. But Haravan takes WordPress and Shopify's basic core concept and expands on it considerably, placing it firmly into a Vietnamese context. This is rare in Vietnam, where copying is rampant but shallow. Haravan is a case where the cofounders identified a problem and then found a model that fit. They started with Vietnam's burgeoning underserved SME ecommerce market, researched various models, and ended up with a Shopify clone. Haravan provides the following:

- It has an API for third-party providers to create more features and provides a POS platform for offline businesses to manage their inventory, marketing and ad integration.
- Haravan coordinates with local logistics companies to automatically provide logistics services to SMEs.
- The company connects with prominent payment gateways like Smartlink and VNPay.
- Haravan provides a full customer service toolset which includes integrating emails, newsletters, call



centers and chat services. Users can easily manage all of this through their dashboard.

- Given Vietnam's forum-heavy social media space, Haravan provides forum integration for SMEs. This means Haravan works directly with forums to embed a store into forum comments. Sounds weird, right? For example, if I am a shop owner, I can comment and have my store website embedded directly into a comment. The user interested in my products doesn't have to leave the forum to shop. Haravan works directly with forums like WebTreTho and 5giay (both among the top 30 most visited websites in Vietnam) to build the embedded ecommerce stores inside their forums.

- In line with forum integration, Haravan provides Facebook crawling. It helps Facebook Page sellers by crawling orders placed in comments and messages on their Facebook Page, and then organizes everything into a dashboard.

Haravan started with SMEs as its main focus because Huynh Lam Ho, one of

the five cofounders, was a merchant himself. “I started out selling stuff online but I wanted to start an offline store too. And with one store, it wasn't bad, and after that we had this vision of opening ten stores in our second year. After the second quarter, we had three stores total. That's when we started to feel the burn of managing inventory, customers, cost, suppliers, etc. With our small omni-channel operation we had to keep building tools to help ourselves. And we thought, ‘I bet others have the same problem as us.’”

Huynh's goal is for the company to become a low-end outsourcer for everything merchants need. Haravan's numbers reflect its potential. Since its official launch in September 2014 (and starting sales in December), it has accumulated 24,000 free trial users, of which 1,700 (seven percent) are paying a monthly subscription fee of at least VND170,000. The team has grown to over 50 employees. If it can execute its vision successfully, it has a path to be one of Vietnam's most influential companies in the next five years. ■

Bright Ideas

An illuminating lesson in lamps, fixtures and bulbs to create a flattering home



David J. Campbell is the Design Director at Villa Royale Treasures and Tearoom (www.villaroyaletreasures.com) in Thao Dien, District 2, Saigon.



WHEN MOST PEOPLE embark on a design project, a lot of thought goes into furniture style, color palette, texture and materials. But to highlight all of these choices you need the main component - lighting. This essential part of your design scheme can showcase colors, evoke drama and set a mood. But always remember: good lighting is not just about a pretty chandelier.

Very rarely do we walk into a room and marvel at how beautifully it has been lit and how the light is radiated - and that credit most certainly goes to the designer. When lighting is flawless it very rarely gets noticed. In a perfectly lit room, you will always look and feel your best, at ease, relaxed and comfortable.

One of the biggest missteps to design is overly bright lighting. You don't want your friends visiting your home or apartment to feel like they've walked into a doctor's clinic as this lighting sets a very intense mood. Fluorescent tube lighting is definitely in the no-go zone; it makes everything look washed out and often leaves you feeling fatigued.

Poor lighting can alienate the furniture and people, it can generate a ridged and uncomfortable environment. Low wattage bulbs are imperative. They set a great mood when used correctly, and look inviting and romantic.

Always remember you don't need to light the whole room. Well-lit rooms have layers of light that contrast perfectly. A great example is the right lamp which can make all the difference when paired with a dimly-lit bulb and amazing shade.

Using lighting for a dramatic first impression is what you want, but all rooms need to be multifunctional for reading, watching television, dining or entertaining. Lights with dimmers are key to dramatically changing a room's mood, allowing you to set a mood depending on the occasion and, financially speaking, they're great energy savers! Let's not forget the old saying "less is more," as over lighting is far less forgiving than under lighting.

Track lighting, pendant lights, lamps, recessed lighting, wall-mounted fixtures or chandeliers, to name only a few, all

have their place and when used correctly to layer a room can be used to create a sense of ambience, can create an atmosphere, and importantly facilitate the room's functionality. You love your artwork and key pieces, so what better way to showcase them than by illuminating with halogen lights or track and down lights. This will transform any room instantly with not just one focal point but many.

Without question your best lighting is free - natural light. Utilize this resource by taking into account the direction of your room in relation to sunrise, sunset and the glare pounding sun emits.

The one luminescent lighting feature not to be overlooked is candles, an interior designer's final touch. They come in varying heights, colors, scents and shapes. Every room is magically transformed with flickering lights and that rustic warm feeling candles emit.

So there it is, the color and design layout of a room is important but lighting is paramount in enhancing your space and making it feel warm and inviting. ■

The Risk Factor

Buying stocks versus mutual funds and exchange-traded funds



Sven Roering is a partner and financial planner at Total Wealth Management PTE. Ltd (www.t-wm.com). He holds an Economics Degree from Rhodes University in South Africa, and is a candidate in the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) program, having successfully completed level 1 and is currently working towards the level 2 exam.

Dear Sven,

I read one of your previous articles where you explained the potential benefits and pitfalls of buying stocks on the Vietnamese stock exchanges. You mentioned a few companies that could potentially produce attractive returns for investors. I am a novice investor and do not have the time to manage a portfolio of stocks myself. I am also afraid that holding individual stocks might not diversify my investment portfolio sufficiently according to my risk profile (I don't like taking too much risk), and would leave me prone to experiencing losses that I would like to avoid. I have read that mutual funds and ETFs give beginners easier, less risky access to financial markets. Could you explain a bit more about these, and which options I could potentially access locally and internationally?

YOUR QUESTION IS very relevant to anyone with any form of investable capital available to them, as mutual funds and ETFs (exchange traded funds) have become extremely popular options for investors looking for a destination to park their savings.

Mutual funds and ETFs are collective investment vehicles. In the days before collective investment vehicles, individuals would access financial markets mainly through a stockbroker, and hold a few individual stocks which a broker would sell to them without any consideration for their risk profiles or return objectives. This led to a market situation where too many individual, unsophisticated investors participated directly in the market, trading mainly on rumors and speculation, leading to asset bubbles and subsequent market collapses like the Wall Street crash of 1929.

A mutual fund is set up by a group of professional investors who agree to buy company stocks or any other investable securities according to a strict set of rules. The rules dictate the level of risk the manager will be able to take on the investment portfolio, and the type of securities they will be able to buy. Mutual funds will usually comprise of securities

purchased using capital provided by those who manage the fund, and the fund will also be open to the public to allow outside investors to purchase a share of the fund, and enjoy a proportion of the returns which are experienced.

You can buy shares or "units" in local funds which invest in Vietnamese stocks and bonds. A great option is the Vietnam Equity Fund managed by Dragon Capital. This fund is UCITS compliant, meaning it conforms to European regulatory and disclosure standards. You can buy units directly through the company.

If you would like to buy shares or units of funds internationally, you can do so through platforms such as assurance wrappers or fund supermarkets, available from your independent financial adviser.

ETFs operate in the same manner that mutual funds do, however instead of investors buying units or shares from the company that operates the fund, shares of the fund trade publicly on a stock exchange just like any company share. The price of an ETF share is therefore subject to the laws of supply and demand, whereas the price of mutual fund shares is directly related to the value of assets held in the fund. For example, you could find a situation

where the assets currently held in the ETF have a relatively high value, however if other investors believe that the price of these assets will fall in the future, this will have a negative impact on the current price of an ETF share. When it comes to a mutual fund, if the assets currently held in a fund have a relatively high value, the value of one share in the fund will be proportionately high.

An example of a locally-listed ETF is the SSIAM HNX 30 managed by Saigon Securities. The fund aims to track the performance of the 30 biggest companies listed in Hanoi. You will often find that many mutual funds will hold ETFs in their portfolios.

Mutual funds and ETFs are fantastic options for novice, and even experienced investors to save and compound wealth over the mid to long-term. However, as with any investment it is important to do research and conduct necessary due diligence on the specific aspects of a fund before investing. Obtaining research from third party sources to assess the experience of the fund manager, strategy, investment holdings and historical risk-adjusted returns are critical when choosing a fund. ■

Stories *of the* Sea

Dotted with isolated islands and labyrinthine archipelagos, Vietnam has a long and intimate relationship with the sea. In this edition, *Oi* looks at the ways in which Vietnam's maritime past remains closely connected to its developing present.







Dam Trau Beach

The Island of **Heroes**

From Hell to Heaven on Con Dao

TEXT AND IMAGES BY JAMES PHAM

“CON DAO IS an island of heroes, a great historical monument... It will be the property of the people and an invaluable asset for many generations,” declared General Secretary Le Duan on visiting the island in 1976. It was the year after the island’s infamous 113-year history as a penal colony came to an end, first under French and then South Vietnamese rule.

An archipelago of 16 islands approximately 230 kilometers south of Ho Chi Minh City, Con Dao today refers both to the group of islands as well as its largest and only permanently inhabited island of Con Son. Although there is archaeological evidence of the islands being inhabited as far back as 3,000 years ago and subsequently occupied by seafaring Portuguese, British and French in the 16th

to 18th centuries, it’s mainly known to the Vietnamese as an island housing a long line of national heroes, starting with Lady Phi Yen. Embroiled in a civil war in the late 18th century, her husband, Nguyen Emperor Gia Long sought French support to bolster his cause. Lady Phi Yen objected, hoping to settle the matter without foreign intervention. For her supposed crime of treason, she was banished to Con Dao.

Con Dao’s isolation and harsh but livable conditions made it an ideal place to house prisoners. A century after Phi Yen, the islands became home to the largest prison complex in all of Indochina, beginning with 2,000 mainly political prisoners in 1862. Over the next 113 years, it’s estimated that more than 20,000 lost their lives here out of the many tens of thousands who

suffered unspeakable atrocities behind its thick walls, with crystalline blue waters and dense green forests acting as natural jailers. The islanders often say that for every inhabitant, there are three ghosts roaming the hills and beaches of the islands previously known as “hell on earth.”

Forty years on, and Con Dao looks more like heaven than hell. Turtles, dugongs and dolphins swim its warm waters. Approximately 80 percent of the island is national forest, with just one road winding its way down the coast from the airport in the north, past the ultra-luxe Six Senses Con Dao, through the center of town, and down to the port where fishing vessels refuel and shelter. The island is shaped like a bear, with its back to the mainland, and the town at its belly. Everything seems to come in twos here: two banks, two stoplights, two mini-marts on an island that leans more towards catatonic than sleepy.

On a hazy morning, I make the drive back out towards the airport, headed for Dam Trau, one of the island’s prettiest beaches. With only 7,000 residents, half of whom are military personnel, long stretches of road go by before I see another person. Just before the airport, I turn off the road, past the memorial to Prince Cai, Lady Phi Yen’s son, tossed into the sea by his father for making too much noise on the journey. The tar gives way to sand as my motorbike fishtails the rest of the way, finally stopping in front of a beautiful stretch of golden sand beach, anchored by a mass of boulders on one end and thick jungle on the other. Like everywhere else on Con Dao, the beach is blissfully free from mass tourism, with only

a few simple huts of bamboo and hastily poured concrete serving up snacks and drinks. Nylon beach chairs and hammocks sway in the breeze and a smattering of tourists down beers and seafood on the otherwise secluded beach. It's this sense of wild rusticity that beckons people to the island.

"I came here seven years ago with my husband," says Lua, originally from Bac Lieu in Vietnam's south. "I heard there was a good opportunity to make a living and that life was better here." She's sitting in front of her small house in Zone 1 (out of 10 residential zones on the island), her hands sorting through a pile of squash and cucumbers she's plucked from her garden. "We were farmers back in Bac Lieu, too, but here we can fetch five times the price. The islanders have a saying: 'If you're poor, you eat fish. If you're rich, you eat vegetables.'"

It wasn't only economic promise that brought Lua to Con Dao where she's expecting her first child this month. "It's quiet here, even compared to country life in Bac Lieu. There's very little crime. Last week, there was news about some guy who snatched a gold necklace at the market, but he wasn't from around here. He doesn't know how the island works. With only one main road, where are you going to go? When a crime happens, all they have to do is block the road at both ends, where the planes leave and where the ships leave."

She's referring to Ben Dam, the newly built port 10 km south of town, where sailors can hole up for months at a time to wait out bad weather. I make my way along the beautifully rugged coast, sheer cliffs to my right, waves pounding the shore to my left, passing picturesque Bai Nhat (Shy Beach), that only appears during low tide. Almost where the road runs out, I find myself amidst a nondescript grouping of beer joints, karaoke parlors and girlie bars. "Most of the crimes that happen on the island, they happen at the port," says Phong who works for the island's one television channel. "It's sailors getting drunk with nothing to do and getting into fights. Otherwise, the island is practically crime-free." Con Dao is the kind of place where there are no paid parking lots because you can simply leave your bike on the side of the road, more often than not, with your keys in the ignition.

Friendly Ghosts

The locals believe that the island's peacefulness is in part due to its spiritual nature, where the friendly ghosts of revolutionaries known to most foreigners simply as street names still linger – Le Duan, Ton Duc Thang, Nguyen Van Linh and Pham Van Dong, to name a few. "The dead watch over the living," says Bui Luong Ran, a 10-year transplant from nearby Vung Tau. "I remember coming here 30 years ago as a young man and running along the beach. As the sand flicked up, so did little pieces of bone. Every inch of this island has the flesh and bones of fallen heroes. I think that makes people afraid to do evil. Even visitors feel it. When you step



Vo Thi Sau's grave in Hang Duong Cemetery



View from So Ray

off the plane, life slows down. Bad thoughts go away."

Out of all the names that passed through Con Dao's ghastly penal system, none is more attached to the island than Vo Thi Sau, a teenaged resistance fighter who at 17, threw a bomb into a patrol of French soldiers in a market near her home of Dat Do, Ba Ria. For her crime, she was brought to Con Dao and executed at 19. The town is rife with memorials to this young martyr, from the cell where she spent her only night on the island, to a memorial park in the center of town which houses glass cases full of gifts that the faithful bring to her. There are dresses, jewelry, hats and purses, and most touchingly, items of a personal nature – tubes of lipstick, bottles of nail polish and perfume – items a modern 19-year-old would've liked. But it's at the Hang Duong Cemetery, just past the town's central market, where most people come to pay their respects. I join a group from Hanoi who've flown in just for one night to visit the cemetery, where the remains of the prisoners have been gathered to find a final resting place. In the past five years or so, a tradition has

developed of visiting the cemetery in the dead of night, when it's said to be most spiritual. The group has brought offerings with them – fresh flowers, paper money and bags of fruit – and we make our way past the gleaming white gates, past the towering memorial obelisk and into the cemetery grounds. The air is heavy with acrid smoke from the paper offerings and incense. In the dim lighting, I can barely make out shadows walking within the shadows, people wandering throughout the grounds to place incense sticks by the hundreds of graveside posts, some named, but many not. Most of the commotion, though, is centered around one grave, the largest of them all, the one of Vo Thi Sau. She, along with her fallen comrades, have become guardian angels of the island, known as the Altar of Vietnam. "There are beaches everywhere, but there is only one Con Dao," says one of the Hanoians, explaining why they've only come for one night. Most of the Vietnamese who come to the island are here on a pilgrimage of sorts, either to ask the guardian angels for a favor, or returning to pay tribute for a wish granted.



Minh and Thu

Cried Like the Rain

Everywhere you look on Con Dao, the legacy of the past remains. High up in the mountains stands a watchtower that looks out over the town and the islands in the distance. The place is known as So Ray, a hard labor plantation where prisoners were sent to grow crops in the dense jungle. It's hard enough scampering up a steep incline over twisted roots and sharp rocks to the top, almost unimaginable for someone malnourished and without shoes. Then there's the 914 Pier right on the town beach, a testament to the number of lives lost in its construction. Most visible of all are the prison complexes to the north of town, their tiger cages and bleak interiors a sobering reminder of the evils man can inflict on each other. When the island was liberated in 1975, there were 7,448 prisoners freed, with 157 choosing to stay behind to rebuild the island. They were joined by waves of settlers from the mainland, some doing their patriotic duty, others in search of a new life.

Among them were Doan Huu Hoai Minh and his wife Nguyen thi Anh Thu, two artists from Can Tho who arrived in 1984. "The government called for young people to come and settle on the island," says Minh. "We were in our thirties with three young children. We had never been to Con Dao before, but relatives had come before and said life was peaceful here with nothing but clouds and sky and water and mountains. It was very wild at the time – only about 1,200 residents and 1,000 or so soldiers. We worked making banners and signs and decorating the city streets. Life wasn't easy with unstable electricity and shortages because supplies only came in once a month on a cargo ship."

"I remember the whole island coming down to the pier to meet the ships. We cried like the rain," remembers Anh Thu, "even if we didn't know anyone coming off the ships. But because none of us were from the island, every new person felt like family, even if it wasn't our family."

"For sure, there were hardships," says Minh. "We had to ration our rice, but we were never hungry. After work, we'd just walk down to the beach with a lamp and a trident and hunt for crab and fish in the shallow waters. I think that's how people still view Con Dao, though, as a deserted, forgotten place — like that cartoon with two prisoners in striped uniforms sitting on an island with only a coconut tree between them," he laughs.

"Our son went to university on the mainland and when his first girlfriend's parents found out that he was from Con Dao, his mother cried," Anh Thu remembers with a cackle. "The parents of his second girlfriend threatened to commit suicide if they got married. The thought of

their daughter going to live on Con Dao, with nothing to do other than sit and eat turtle soup was worse than death". Her husband adds: "I remember the tourists in the 80's bringing huge barrels with them. We thought it was wine, but fell down laughing when we discovered they were bringing fresh water because they didn't think the island had any!"

Even now, thirty years on, Con Dao is still regarded by many as a backwards blip on the map. "When I told people that I was moving to Con Dao, they kept asking me if I was running away from a broken heart," says Thao, a bubbly 20-something from Saigon. "Either that, or they asked if I was coming here to play with the monkeys. But life here is truly peaceful. There's no traffic, no struggle to compete. In Saigon, people look at what you're wearing from your shoes all the way up. Here, no one cares."

Now, slowly though, word is starting to get out about the pristine beauty of the Con Dao Islands, a throwback to what Phu Quoc must have been like 20 years ago. The government has issued long-term plans to develop the island, building up its infrastructure in preparation for mass tourism. Some, like Lua, aren't particularly worried. "I live in Zone 1, the closest to the airport, closest to the best beach on the island and even though there have been rumors for years about development, I haven't seen anything yet. I think more tourists would be a good thing because that would mean more people would know about our island."

Not everyone is so optimistic, though. Ran, the General Manager of Con Dao Resort, says of plans for development: "I'm both optimistic and pessimistic. I'm happy because that will mean more investment and better lives for people on the island. But I'm worried because if the changes



Tiger cages at Phu Tuong Prison



Town Promenade

come too quickly, it will destroy what makes the island special. Now, the flights are expensive and limited, and that forms an economic gateway to regulating the number of tourists. If the numbers increase dramatically, that will surely change the community spirit and friendliness of the island."

The studio of husband and wife artists Minh and Anh Thu is filled with paintings of quiet, shady streets and long stretches of deserted beaches. "That's one of the reasons why we paint," says Anh Thu, "to document the way life is now because we

know it's going to change. Sure, we'll see improvements like better roads, schools and hospitals. But we're afraid of losing the appeal of the island. Con Dao is the pride of the whole nation, not just of the people on this island."

The sun sets over the town promenade, where soldiers and teens sit on the stone embankment and look out to the sea beyond. A smattering of vendors sell snacks to the small crowd that's gathered to watch a pick-up game of beach football. Among them is Phuc, 21, who came here for a visit three years ago and never left. "People are

different here. They weren't raised around competition like on the mainland and it shows in their nature. I don't even miss the big supermarkets or the cinemas. In Saigon, you come home and close the door. You're making your own prison. Here, it's a better way of life." I ask him if he believes that the island is protected by the ghosts of comrades past. He nods. "I pray to them. I pray for peace. For my family and for myself." Catching his gaze over the spirited game happening below, and out to the glassy sea beyond, I ask him if he's found it. "Yes, I guess I have." ■

IF YOU GO...

Go: Con Dao is served by air and sea. Flights are operated multiple times a day by VASCO, a subsidiary of Vietnam Airlines. There's also a 12-hour passenger ferry from Vung Tau (www.oscvietnamtravel.com) for roughly USD10, subject to weather conditions.

Sleep: There are a growing number of mini-hotels, all in the town center but without direct beach access. Two of the nicer options, both with gorgeous private beach and swimming pool, are the secluded Con Dao Six Senses (see page 46) out towards the airport and Con Dao Resort (see page 48), just south of town.

Visit: There are no organized tour companies in town, per se. Most tours are offered through the hotels and cover visits to the cemetery, prisons and beaches. Depending on the season, trips to the neighboring islands are also possible to visit the nesting hawksbill turtles and for snorkeling and diving. Driving on the island is very easy and motorbike rentals are available for about USD5 per day. The new Con Dao Museum (10 Nguyen Hue) makes for an excellent introduction to the island.



Con Dao Museum

Heaven on Earth

Finding bliss at Six Senses Con Dao

TEXT BY JAMES PHAM | IMAGES PROVIDED BY SIX SENSES CON DAO

WHEN SIX SENSES Resort opened on the tiny island of Con Dao almost five years ago, it seemed a curious partnership. An ultra-luxe, resource-hungry resort on a quiet island known mainly for its history as a prison colony, a "hell on earth". Five years on, and both have come into their own.

I arrive at the resort, set just off the main road, minutes from the airport. Having dusted off a fruit skewer in the Welcome Sala, I'm soon led through the Marketplace, a collection of shopfronts where guests can book experiences, spa treatments and shop. But amidst the retail therapy, I spot Deli'cious, a shop serving

up 21 complimentary flavors of ice cream and sorbet. I wink at the little Vietnamese woman behind the counter because with flavors such as Honey & Espresso and Rhubarb & Ginger on offer, I have a feeling we're going to be friends.

Located on a 1.6 km stretch of pristine bay, Six Senses Con Dao Resort is a collection of one, three or four-bedroom villas that feature spacious indoor / outdoor living areas. I'm guided along wooden walkways to Villa 211, a pleasing beach house with a bedroom on the upper floor, sitting atop a gigantic open plan bathroom on the ground floor. The bedroom is almost

Robinson Crusoe-stark in comparison: rope pulls for drawers and window blinds cleverly designed around a rope and pulley system. The word "rustic" comes to mind, but then I notice the touches of luxury: a welcome bottle of champagne, a box of truffles in the fridge, satellite TV. And I imagine this is how Robinson Crusoe *might* have lived had he met up with Sir Richard Branson instead of Friday.

I later bicycle down to the beach and swimming pool (electric buggies are available), past villas of stone and wood, and strangely find the public areas deserted, considering the beach is a wide expanse of A-ma-zing, fine sand gently lapped by a glassy blue-green sea. The lovely pale blue pool is equally empty. "Even when we're fully booked with 140 guests, you'll rarely see them other than at breakfast and dinner," says Patrick Hoffman, Director of Food and Beverage. "The beach is clean, really shallow. There are no jelly fish, no currents for parents to be afraid of, but the guests simply enjoy the privacy of the villas."

I take advantage of the serenity, sprawled across one of the comfy oversized loungers, thoughts of a recent Coconut and Mango ice cream with a side of biscotti and macaroons only fueling my next craving.

There are two restaurants and two bar options on site, including a Vietnamese Kitchen serving up local fare and the casual chic By the Beach restaurant, with



its fluffy pillows that dare you to sit up straight. The extensive menu belies the size of the compact kitchens, with menu choices spanning the globe, from Indian butter chicken to house-made pappardelle with Con Dao seafood and chorizo carbonara. Maybe it's because I've spent the day swimming, bicycling, reading and lazing about that I find myself uncharacteristically craving healthy menu options. Soon, an Herb crusted tuna Niçoise salad comes to the table. I Instagram it (yes, I'm one of *those* people) and immediately someone comments: "OMG! WHERE!?" By the time I've finished the main of Charred spiced angus beef fillet over a bed of watercress, cumin and roasted carrots, the sun has set against a soundtrack of tiny waves just steps away.

Back in the villa, a mound of work awaits, but the purposely dim lighting and the heavenly bed with the buckwheat pillows I pre-ordered conspire to make me power down. "Dimly lit rooms are part of our philosophy," Patrick tells me over breakfast. "Bright lights simply don't work with our palette of natural colors. The spaces are cozy and relaxing; they shouldn't be places for working." I have a feeling he'd turn off the internet router if he could, and for once, I almost wouldn't mind.

With its floor-to-ceiling glass doors thrown open to the early morning sun, sea and sand, breakfast at By the Beach is a sensory experience. The extensive

offerings include make-your-own Mimosas and Bloody Marys and a live waffle/French toast/pancake station with accouterments like berry compote and Dalat honey, all included in the room rate. Today, however, I can't believe that I'm jonesing for the homemade granola with fresh pomegranate kernels and a side of vanilla yogurt. When I find myself reaching for a green shooter of pineapple, broccoli, ginger and cilantro, I can barely recognize this healthy, sun-kissed version of myself.

After breakfast, I get a sneak peek of the resort's back of house, where neat kitchens house racks of handmade pastas and breads, home cured salmon and sea bass. In a way, Six Senses has become a mini-city, purifying its own ground water for drinking and generating its own electricity. Its gardens grow cucumbers, tomatoes, zucchini and herbs and its sustainability mission has it collecting empty wine bottles to build walls, reusing filtered grey water for gardening and replacing plastic straws with stalks of lemongrass.

Other than a few excursions to visit the historical sites on the island and trips to neighboring islands for snorkeling, diving and to watch Hawksbill turtles laying eggs, there aren't a lot of things to do. "By not giving guests too many choices on what to do... 10am volleyball at the beach, 11am table tennis, etc., guests don't feel guilty doing nothing," says Patrick.

Gazing at the huge canopy bed set right

on the beach, I'm already slightly regretting booking a Hit the High Spots trek to So Ray, a fruit plantation in the mountains tended by prison labor during French colonial times. But we're soon on the 1.3 km hike that starts off deceptively easy. By the time we near the top, the heat, humidity and steep gradient have me longing for my villa's plunge pool. But my efforts are rewarded with views looking down on the town and bay far below, a troupe of inquisitive macaques for company.

On the way down, I can't help but reflect on the island's history as "hell on earth," juxtaposed against this gorgeous resort where every need is catered to, all set on a perfect cove beach. After dinner, I head to the resort's observatory to gaze at the stars, strikingly clear with almost no light pollution to fade their glitter. All the constellations from my childhood are there, and the Milky Way cuts a dusty swath across the night sky. Through the telescope, I see Saturn, tiny but startlingly clear in all its ringed glory. Every few minutes, the telescope needs adjustment to keep the speeding planet in focus. The realization dawns on me that I'm looking at heavenly bodies light years away. But for me, right here, right now, Heaven is a place on Earth.

Doubles start at USD595++, including breakfast. Visit www.sixsenses.com for more info. ■





Max Relax

Con Dao Resort offers an affordable getaway on one of the island's best beaches

TEXT AND IMAGES BY JAMES PHAM

SET ON THE long stretch of An Hai, a scenic, sweeping beach just south of town, lies the Con Dao Resort. With 93 comfortable rooms in two hotel blocks (one newly built), the resort is ideally situated to help you make the most of your Con Dao getaway.

While the island has its share of guesthouses and mini-hotels, Con Dao Resort is unique in that it is the only property with rooms starting at less than USD100 that boasts its own swimming pool and its own wide stretch of private beach,

two must-have amenities for any perfect beach vacation.

"The sand here is fine and sugary," says General Manager Bui Luong Ran. "The salinity of the water is ideal as well. It doesn't hurt your eyes and you can swim all day without your skin feeling sticky." The resort is backed by lush green mountains and fronted by calm, blue waters, so guests have a choice between mountain or sea views. When your perfection quotient has been met by lazing about the Bay of Con Son or taking

a dip in the palm-fringed swimming pool or playing a set of tennis on one of only two courts on the entire island, Con Dao Resort offers tours to explore the other parts of the island including the historical sites of the famed prisons and the spiritual Hang Duong Cemetery where Vietnamese tourists flock at midnight to say prayers; picturesque Dam Trau Beach by the airport with its long stretch of golden sand; hiking through the jungle to Ong Dung Beach; or trekking up to the former So Ray Plantation for expansive views of the bay below. Off-island day trips include visits to the island of Hon Tre Lon (Large Bamboo Island), where General Secretary Le Duan was imprisoned by the French, and the island of Bay Canh, where sea turtles come to nest.

Whether your itinerary has you exploring the national park and diving the clear waters or simply catching rays by the sea, Con Dao Resort makes for a stylish yet comfortable home on the island. CoCo Restaurant with its floor-to-ceiling windows affording views of the pool and the ocean beyond serves up a hearty buffet breakfast in the mornings with a live egg station, hot dishes and fresh fruit. Come back for Asian and Western favorites at reasonable prices served during lunch and dinner including Thai Seafood Salad (VND150,000), Grilled Chicken with Honey (VND120,000) and Sweet and Sour Pork Ribs (VND140,000). Seafood can be cooked to order at market prices and the bar serves up beer, cocktails and spirits.



Within walking distance of the resort is also a row of seafood restaurants where you pick your still-living protein (shrimp, crab, lobster and more) and your cooking style (steamed in beer, stir-fried with tamarind, crispy fried), all to be downed with a few cold beers. Venture a little further and you'll get to town, an orderly and very walkable area filled with museums, cafés and a picturesque boardwalk where kids come out at dusk to play beach football. Walk in the other direction and find your way to the Van Son Pagoda on Nui Mot Mountain with panoramic views out to sea. Motorbike rentals are available just across the street from the resort for USD5 per day.

Those lucky enough to visit Con Dao can look forward to getting away from it all. With stunning beaches, friendly locals and a quiet, laid-back vibe, Con Dao is by all accounts what Phu Quoc was 20 years ago, before the unfettered construction and unsightly ills of mass tourism — pristine, blissfully underdeveloped and value-for-money.

The Con Dao Resort has five room types, beginning with the Standard Mountain View (doubles start at VND1,600,000) up to the luxurious Sea View Suites which have the best uninterrupted views of beautiful, palm-tree lined An Hai Beach. All rooms include buffet breakfast and airport transfers. Expect friendly service, reflecting island hospitality, where guests are welcomed as family. For more, visit www.condaoresort.vn ■



The Hands of Hoi An

Once again, the port city is booming with arts and crafts

TEXT AND IMAGES BY JAMES PHAM

SITUATED WHERE THE Thu Bon River meets the East Sea, Hoi An enjoyed a long history of maritime trading, stretching as far back as the 2nd century BC with the Sa Huynh civilization. Later controlled by the Cham people in the seventh to tenth centuries, spices and silks made Hoi An one of the most prosperous Southeast Asian port cities along the so-called Maritime Silk Route. In the 16th to 18th centuries, Japanese, Chinese, Dutch, and Indian merchants passed through the city before the river silted up and trade moved northwards to Da Nang. As a center

of trade, Hoi An's arts and crafts scene blossomed, exporting ceramics, silk and carved wood to far-flung locales. Today, the townspeople point to its rich history as to why these professions have survived and even thrived, with hundreds of workshops dotting the city, churning out tailored clothing, embroidery, leather goods, shoes and more. On the outskirts of the city are also villages dedicated to single crafts for centuries.

Nguyen Thi Duoc has lived in the pottery village of Thanh Ha, on the banks of the Thu Bon River, for all her 92 years.

Her easy smile reveals teeth blackened by years of chewing betel nut. Dressed in bright blue polka dot pajamas, she walks hunched over to the potter's wheel that's manually powered by the rhythmic kicks of one of her grandchildren. Once she sits down, though, her wobbly gait gives way to surprisingly steady hands that encompass a lifetime of experience. "I was born in 1923 right here in Hoi An," she starts. "This village was founded by three people from Thanh Hoa, in Vietnam's north, in the 16th century. Our family has been making pottery for six generations now. I come from a big family, 10 brothers and sisters. I'm the only one still alive. My husband died 30 years ago. I've also outlived my three children who died in the war.

"The Hoi An of my childhood is nothing like the Hoi An of today. When it rained, it flooded. I remember wading through the mud up to my knees on the way to school. I guess it wasn't really a school. Because all the kids worked with their parents during the day, we went to a tutor at night, learning by oil lamp. I don't have any pictures of my childhood; no one had a camera. Hoi An was a poor, countryside town back then. My family made pottery, simple things for home use: big water urns, bowls, lamps and the like. I was 13 when my mom taught me how to make pottery. I was glad to help because I could see her working so hard to take care of all of us. They'd work all during the day and into the night, churning out a hundred pots a





day. The women made the pottery while the men looked after the heavier work of cutting the wood, loading the kilns, preparing the clay... At that time, the clay was from the river bed or from the rice fields which helped lower them, making them easier to irrigate. Now, the clay is still from Quang Nam, about 10-15 km from here. We'd load our finished wares onto boats and sell it to people in nearby Da Nang, Quang Binh, Quang Tri. Since the tourists have come, though, they've changed the way we work. Gone are the simple designs that were big and heavy. Now it's all about decorative elements. We make whatever sells. But in a way, it's still keeping the tradition alive. I can't imagine not making pottery. It's what has clothed and fed our family for many generations. It hasn't made us rich. I've never been to Saigon or Hanoi. The furthest I've been is Da Nang to visit relatives. We're not rich, we're not poor, but our family is together."

All in the Eyes

At the carpentry village of Kim Bong, 25 year-old Uyen sits with a wooden Buddha statue wedged between his feet. "It's all in the eyes," he says deftly adding the finishing details. "These statues are just like people. They need you to put a soul into them. Just one slip of the hand means you'll have to throw the whole thing out. They're

like us. A misstep and they're disabled, something you can't fix."

Uyen has been carving since he was 13, following in the path of his uncles and grandfather. "It's my passion," he says. "Carving combines many arts in one. You need patience and perseverance. If you've

Nature provided the materials and I contributed my skill. I can see myself growing old doing this.

been drinking or had a day off, it's hard to regain the focus you need." Clients come to the workshop, usually with a design in mind – a picture, some words, a half-conceived image and choose a type of wood

– jack fruit, doussie, coffee, among others. But it's up to the craftsman to bring the idea to life. "We have a lot of freedom in what we do; the details are up to us," says Uyen. "That's what I love about this job – the creativity, sketching out the finished form, looking at the characteristics of the wood to incorporate them into the design.

"When I first started out, it was hard, hard on the back to sit in one place for so long. I got headaches from trying to concentrate for hours on end, especially when you're already tired. There's an intensity required. I've been at this more than 10 years but I'm still just an apprentice. I don't know when I'll become a true craftsman. It takes years of training and a lot depends on your natural ability. Every year, there are competitions where you can demonstrate your skill and get government certified. I'm lucky that there are lots of craftsmen at the workshop where I work, so I can learn from them. Here, one person takes the carving from block of wood until the very end, so it's all on you. But that's what I like about it. You can look at the finished product and know that this is a combination of Man and Nature. Nature provided the materials and I contributed my skill. I can see myself growing old doing this."

All around Hoi An, hands are busy weaving, embroidering, carving and sewing, as they have for centuries. ■

The Fishermen of Mui Ne

TEXT BY JAMES PHAM | IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN AND JAMES PHAM



MEANING “CAPE OF Escape,” Mui Ne has long been a hub for fishermen using either side of the promontory to find safe harbor from bad weather. Launching small boats and coracles headlong into the waves, they make their living from what the sea provides. A shantytown of makeshift huts, cafes and ragtag convenience stores caters to the fishermen who are here just for the season. Waiting for his crew to assemble, Tam, 42, speaks about life on the sea.

“I started fishing when I was 17. When I first started, I thought it was a great job, not like the farming work I did before where it was backbreaking work and you only got paid at the end of every harvest. Here, you go out in the afternoon, come back in the morning, and you get paid right away because there are always buyers waiting on the beach to take whatever we catch. Sometimes we bring in VND3 million - VND5 million worth of seafood. On a lucky night, we might even bring in VND9 million - VND10 million. Two million goes to the boat owner right off the bat for expenses and what’s left is divided into two: one part for the owner and the second part is split between the rest of the crew. I used to work on some of the bigger boats where we’d be out for weeks at a time, but my back started hurting. Bigger boats mean bigger, heavier equipment. I stayed home for a few months to rest, but staying home means no income, so I started up again going out with the smaller boats. Sometimes it’s scary. I remember one time we got caught in an F5 storm and it took us hours to get back to shore. That was the one time I thought I might die. But nowadays, it’s rare to be caught out like that with the more accurate weather forecasts. I mean, it’s better to be safe than sorry. It’s not worth your life.

“The work isn’t so hard. We work with 15m-long nets which drag along the sea floor. We’ll leave them in the water for about three hours each time. We rest in between, and then we haul them up. Sometimes we’ll catch 100kg or even a ton of squid, small shrimp and fish. There are lots of boats that go out, but the ocean is vast, so it’s like cars driving on the highway – we learn to stay out of each other’s way. Every boat’s different, too. The coracles go out for the night and come back early. Our small boat goes out at about 3 in the afternoon and gets in at around 7 am. We’ll spend an hour or two sorting out the nets, mending them and doing other



It's not a bad life, but my son is now 17, the same age as me when I started [fishing] and I'd never let him do this. I'm not sure there's a future in it.

types of maintenance, and then you get to go home. It's not a bad life, but my son is now 17, the same age as me when I started and I'd never let him do this. I'm not sure there's a future in it."

All along the beaches and banks around Mui Ne, fish brokers congregate to play middleman between the fishermen and the market stalls. They patiently wait, scales at the ready, to trade in whatever the day's catch is. Tam Teo, 50, is one such fish broker.

"My day starts out at 2 am when I'll make the rounds and go wherever the fishermen come in – the beaches, rivers and markets. You never know what you're going to get from day to day. It all depends on the ocean. Some days, there's nothing. Last night, there were a lot of waves, so today, it's just been little crabs. There's not

much profit in them. I bought these for VND10,000 a kilo and I'll sort them out by size. The little ones fetch VND15,000 a kilo for people to pickle or salt. The bigger ones can be steamed and they'll go for VND35,000 - VND40,000. It's not much, but it'll be enough to pay for my gas and some food. My dad used to be a fisherman, so I've been around the sea all my life. It's not for me, though. One time, I went out on a fishing boat and panicked because I couldn't see any houses or land, just the ocean in every direction. It was too big. I need the ground under my feet.

"Fishing is a hard life. Everyone knows someone who's disappeared on the sea, their bodies never having been found. When my father saw it was getting hard, he quit. He said you never know when you're going to die. It was hard as a kid whenever

he'd be out fishing. We'd be sitting at home wondering how he was doing and whether he'd come home safely. The fishing industry now is too modern, they're catching too much. Our resources are dwindling. If the fishing industry dies out one day here, I'm not sure that I'd be sad because there's nothing joyful about it. None of my brothers followed in my father's footsteps; they mainly work for the government. My son is in 8th grade now and I want him to get a desk job. But for me, I'll stick with this until I'm old. When I think of working in an office, I feel sick. With this, I'm my own boss. I can stay home and sleep whenever I want. I don't have to think a lot and get headaches. Here, you say what you're thinking and do what you want. It's not a great life, but it's my life." ■



The Phan Thiet Fish Market

TEXT AND IMAGES BY JAMES PHAM

IT'S JUST AFTER four in the morning and I'm greeted by an overpowering smell of fish and brine and diesel that hits me like a wall. Bright lights slice through the darkness to reveal a flurry of activity, a strange, purposeful symphony that is the Phan Thiet Fish Market.

The Bay of Phan Thiet is recognized as one of Vietnam's most productive fisheries, with more than 50,000 tons a year of seafood hauled up from its waters. The 2,000 or so registered trawlers often go out for weeks, returning only when their holds are full. The proceeds from the catch are divided roughly into thirds. A third for the boat owner, a third to cover expenses and a third for the crew of 12-15 men. But

they are only the beginning of a long line of people who handle the seafood before it finds its way into homes and restaurants across the globe.

First in line are the fish brokers who've bid on the entire boat's catch. With a notebook at the ready, they record everything taken off the boat. The fish brokers have a small army working under them, unloading, sorting, weighing and cleaning the fish to make them market-ready. The work is backbreaking but pays anything from VND100,000 - VND300,000, as long as you're ready to put in a 15-hour day. On the docks, hands expertly sort the catch by type and size, poking out from

under conical hats and rubber boots. Some of the seafood is processed to be flash frozen and exported, some is destined for local markets as far away as Saigon. As black turns to grey, the next set of middlemen gather to bid on the seafood laid out for display — tuna, rays, eels and an occasional shark among the offerings. Voices are raised, staccato bursts of back and forth, giving rise to the Vietnamese expression of “dan cho bua,” or “people of the market”, an often derogatory expression to denote someone loud and brash. But it's only money, and once the deal is done, all is forgiven, because there's always more to be bought and sold tomorrow. ■



Wine & Dine

■ IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN





Dine With A View

Innovative Japanese-Chinese cuisine at Saigon's latest chic dining space

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



LE MERIDIEN'S **Bamboo Chic** (Level 9, Le Meridien Saigon, 3C Ton Duc Thang, D1; 6pm – 1am) may just be getting warmed up, but it's arrived in Ho Chi Minh City at the right time. From the décor to the dishes, Bamboo hits classy, well-pitched tones at the extremes of good taste and tunes in to the resonance of the space in between. In terms of the interior, this translates to a very comfortable approach to fine dining – plush bubble chairs stand for high-backs as you kick back and enjoy a five-star meal without the white tablecloth.

Diners start their meal with a free welcome drink of the day – we had a curiously flavorful cranberry juice with vanilla in a shot glass – but consider yourself well-advised to follow that up with a real cocktail from the bar. Part of the pizzazz of the Bamboo Chic concept is a certain boldness when it comes to its menu items, and in the case of beverages this extends to a healthy and inventive take on contemporary mixology. We had a Bamboo signature cocktail of light and dark

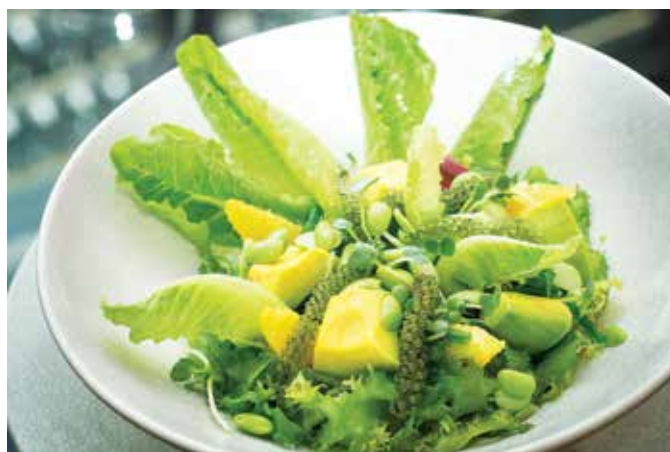
rum with pineapple and citrus as well as a very fruity gold mojito with mango – both VND160,000.

One of the dangers of feasting on healthy Japanese/East Coast Chinese fusion food is that there tends to be little incentive for dining in moderation, and so we decided to gleefully indulge. We started with a paradigm of this crossover cuisine – a Peking duck sushi roll, paired with another variety using crispy filo prawn (VND190,000). Served on a checkered plate like chess pieces, this dish was an immediate eye-opener – easy on the rice and big on moist, tasty filling. Based on this starter alone we asked after the chef who created it; you can see Chef Cong fussing about in the open kitchen area, a young master we expect to hear more of in coming years. Bamboo Chic is lucky to have him for the time being.

Hand rolls are a relatively fashionable member of the sushi pantheon these days – Bamboo's version is intriguing here for using a braised beef cheek reminiscent of

the French tradition topped with seared scallop medallions (VND230,000). We followed this with one further taste-tester before our mains – a vegetable wakame salad (VND150,000) that deliberately blends diverse and opposing tastes and textures to achieve a Zen of the in-between – citrus, creamy avocado, sesame dressing, edamame beans, and seaweed. Take these elements together in each bite to explore the realms at the edges of your sense of taste.

One more appetizer? Why not. Bamboo's seafood lemongrass broth (VND230,000) is proof positive that spicy and hot are not the same thing – this dish has an almost medicinal burn that doesn't smart in the slightest. Immensely comfortable on the belly, this dish has an unexpectedly dense sweetness and a whiff like barley tea that leaves you feeling as if you've just enjoyed a session at the spa. We're then snapped back to attention by the crispy prawn *kataifi* (VND250,000) served on a warm plate with a moreish tomato paste chutney that carries a hint of ginger.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Peking duck sushi roll; Vegetable wakame salad; Crispy sprawn rataifi; Wok-fried udon; Crispy pork belly; and Le baba savarin cakes

It's hard to say whether or not we overdid things on the earlier dishes, because the two mains that the kitchen rolled out next were possibly worthy of more distinction had we tried them on an empty stomach. If you're not Japanese, udon noodles count more as an exotic treat than as comfort food, but Bamboo's wok-fried udon (VND480,000) impressively set with a deshelled Canadian lobster is warm, lightly creamy, and tastes like home no matter where you're from. The standing ovation, however, goes to the crispy braised pork belly dish (VND270,000) with its paper-crisp skin, braised for twelve hours so it's almost as soft as ice cream, with only the thinnest sliver of fat deep-fried at the edge so that it cracks between your teeth like toffee. It's served with a small serving of noodles piled up like a pasta dish with

shards of cucumber and crisps of deep-fried pink ginger. This is the dish you'll want to Instagram, so have your phone at the ready.

One more. Nothing on the menu is heavy enough to preclude dessert – we enjoyed Bamboo's le baba savarin cakes (VND290,000) soaked to the core with Hibiki 12yo single malt, served with fresh mango and matcha chantilly. The cake holds its shape but has the texture of an ice-cold gelato for those who appreciate the taste of good liquor.

Bamboo Chic is working on a lunch menu – when they launch that at some point down the track, you can be assured of a good meal, but this is a venue that really comes into its own at night, right at that point between glitzy glamor and meditative wellness, when the magnificent view over the Saigon River can be fully appreciated

at its maximum depth. With big ticks for class, comfort, healthy cuisine and that stellar view, this venue simply cannot fail to impress.

For November only, Bamboo Chic is offering a two-for-one deal on wine by the glass and sake cocktails between 5pm-8pm, and on Sapporo draught beer from 5pm until close. ■



The Restitution of Fusion

Finding your way to mouthwatering dishes influenced from across the globe

TEXT BY JOEL ZORILLA IMAGES PROVIDED BY ELEVEN CAFÉ

WITH GREENHOUSE WINDOW panes, rustic dark brown leatherback chairs, empty wine bottles strategically perched throughout and friendly waiters, the recently renovated **Eleven Café** (29 Le Anh Xuan, D1) is adding fine dining to its already popular café space. It's that all encompassing place where you can sit with your laptop to write your next novel, bring your partner for an anniversary dinner, or have a power lunch to close that contract. This is owner Tran Nguyen's own concept for a restaurant/café hybrid serving Asian fusion food with innovative, experimental drinks.

Eleven Café had my undivided attention when they brought out the first round of drinks. The Salted plum and spondias (golden apple) juice (VND65,000) was one of the most exotically wonderful drinks I've had, and in a country full of exotic drinks

on every corner that's saying something. Just the right amount of bitter, minty flavor with a bit of what can only be described as a mild green mango taste and, of course, the salted dried plums at the bottom that serves as a textural, refreshing journey. The drink was a recreation of the one Tran found on her trip to Australia, which she hopes to share with her customers in Saigon. My companion ordered the Blueberry Yoghurt smoothie (VND60,000), a comfort drink that takes one back to 1950's Americana at a blueberry stand after an afternoon of harvesting.

After our drinks, the appetizers started to arrive. The Japanese scallops served with sweet potato, creamy truffle sauce and bacon powder (VND119,000) was fluffy and delicate, the truffle sauce and bacon bits the perfect complement to the small, tender scallops, and a spoonful of Vietnamese

sweet potatoes topped the dish wonderfully - my only complaint was that I wanted more. The second appetizer was Ginger and truffle ravioli mushroom wontons served with poached egg, Vietnamese basil and truffle sauce (VND115,000). It was the best of both worlds in one delicious bowl of decadence, a phenomenal fusion of Italian and Asian cuisine that had the look of ravioli with the flavor of a wonton blanketed with their in-house foamy truffle sauce and poached egg that made an already creamy sauce even creamier. It was a delicious introduction that left us in hungry anticipation for the main dishes. Out came beautifully presented Roasted duck breasts with lemon leaf, duck spring rolls and caramelized apple (VND215,000). The breasts were cooked perfectly medium rare, and was redolent of my last trip to France. While the duck breasts were perfectly tender and juicy on their own, when dipped in the creamy pumpkin sauce served on the side or eaten together with the caramelized apple salad, the combination leaves you screaming for more. My homesick American companion ordered the Roasted tenderloin beef served with boiled bok choy and mashed sweet potatoes (VND215,000) with a tamarind reduction sauce and beef bone marrow perched on top of the tenderloin. Everything about it, from the spectacular presentation to the juicy tenderness of the steak, which could be cut with a butter knife, was topnotch gourmet.

Now I must digress to talk about the plating and presentation of the entire series



from the drinks to the desserts. Every plate is a piece of art that even Gordon Ramsey would applaud. For the conclusion of our food adventure we ordered the most outrageous looking dessert on the menu, and it was truly so in every sense of the word - the Mango strawberry yogurt (VND90,000) came with a bed of frozen milk shavings covered in kebab-style roasted, ripe mango chunks as well as diced strawberries, mango glazed jelly and yogurt. It's like a tropical carnival of sweets that seems to have come straight out of Rio de Janeiro - airy and light yet sexy and packed with flavors. The second piece was a bit more sophisticated than its flamboyant counterpart. The Brownie mascarpone with pistachio garnish and homemade coffee (VND90,000) was a comfort dessert all the way though, from its classic homemade brownie to the two accompanying elements of Italian excellence: the fantastic mascarpone and the cup of coffee to dip the brownie in. *Molto bene!* ■



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Salted plum and spondias juice; Roasted tenderloin beef; Japanese scallops; Mango and strawberry yogurt; and Brownie mascarpone pistachio and coffee

Charred is the New Black

Delicious low and slow American barbecue with a kick of dynamite

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

BARBECUE IS POPULAR throughout the world and Vietnam is no exception. The idea of barbecuing meat conjures images of hibachis, pits or propane-fuelled grills where folks can pile on meat until grilled to their liking. This past year, American-style barbecue has made quite the splash in Saigon. Americans do it differently and aren't content to simply grill meats over a flame. Aficionados in that part of the world adhere to the 'low & slow' method of extracting the most flavors possible by smoking them over various types of wood at low temperatures for long periods of

time. It's a methodology that requires more patience, but the delayed gratification rewards those willing to wait.

TnT BBQ (3 Dang Tran Con, D1; open for lunch and dinner, and does deliver) has made the transition to a proper brick and mortar restaurant after two years as a delivery-only establishment to increase the options for those seeking out smoked meat feasts. Strolling through their front door, one is greeted by savory aromas from their barbecue pit wafting through the air. The scent is distinctive and a sure sign of proper barbecue. The menu is splayed across a

blackboard covering an entire wall, and the décor is all wood, from the floors to the walls, to the tables and chairs.

TnT is the combined effort of Logan Tisdal and Mark Ton, who hail from Oklahoma and Southern California, respectively. "We wanted to bring a taste of home to Saigon," explains Mark, who grew up working in his family's restaurants in Chicago and Hanoi. "We missed the Sunday barbecue with cold beer so we're focused on making TnT as authentic as possible to stay true to what we had back in the States." To do that they import all the wood used to smoke their meat from Oklahoma, using applewood for the poultry and hickory for the beef and pork. In addition, other than the pulled pork, which is sourced locally, all their meat is imported from the US.

After putting in their time in the smokers, the meats are finished on a custom-built barbecue pit to bring them up to temperature before making their way to your table. The chicken comes either in original flavor (VND55,000) or dynamite (VND60,000), which as the name suggests, packs more spice to heat up their original sauce. The first thing you'll notice about these drumsticks is their size; these birds aren't local. The pulled pork comes as a plate of meat (VND139,000 for 200g) or as a sandwich (VND100,000) and is a tender and tangy traditional favorite. The sandwich is



Chicken and BBQ ribs on the grill

perfect for lunch. For those who wish to partake in some real BBQ but want to keep it on the healthier side, TnT's applewood-smoked turkey breast (VND157,000 for 200g, VND110,000 for the sandwich) is excellent. Tender and juicy, their turkey is a welcome addition to a town that seldom sees turkey outside the traditional holiday season (although TnT will have an all-you-can-eat turkey dinner on Thanksgiving!).

I'm of the opinion that a trip to a BBQ joint where you don't order the ribs is a waste of time. TnT serves up a rack of hickory smoked imported ribs (VND214,000 for 400g) that are fall-off-the-bone tender and beg to be doused in more of their signature sauce. As with all the meat on their menu, the serving sizes are suggestions. Those with more voracious appetites are encouraged to ask for larger slabs. Last, but not least, there is the beef brisket (VND175,000 for 200g, VND130,000 for the sandwich). The guys at TnT score a bullseye with this one. It's their signature menu item and you simply should not visit without trying it. Words won't convey how tender it is when it comes off the grill, you have to experience it for yourself. Though devoted to ribs, the brisket had my full attention.

If TnT served up only meat I doubt anyone would complain, but they have a full complement of sides to accompany all that smoky goodness. Sides come in

two sizes, regular (VND40,000) and jumbo (VND120,000). We had to narrow our selections to the french fries - the only one they don't make in-house - corn on the cob, cornbread, baked beans, coleslaw and garlic mashed potatoes. All of them are done traditionally and reflect tastes back in the US. The baked beans with bacon are mandatory, as is the cornbread served with honey butter. The coleslaw is very light and

simple, and the garlic mashed potatoes, while something I wouldn't normally associate with BBQ, are a side that needs to be taken seriously.

TnT does things their own way, and the menu reflects some different offerings that aren't found around town. There's another American BBQ joint in town, and this little gem nestled on a small street in D1 is sure to catch on. ■



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: BBQ Pulled pork; Sauce on BBQ Turkey; Corn on the cob, cornbread, baked beans, coleslaw and garlic mashed potatoes

A Tipple from Down Under

Australian wine and what's trending for your drinking pleasure



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



AUSTRALIA HAS A long tradition of making wine while at the same time being innovative with wine making techniques. In fact, wine was made in Australia as early as the 19th century. The country is currently the sixth biggest wine producer in the world, with most of its wines being exported worldwide, making it the fourth largest wine exporter in the world.

Australia is a rather hot country, and although wine is made in all of its

estates and territories, most of its wine production is located in the south, where the climate is more moderate. South Australia, New South Wales, Victoria and the island of Tasmania are the biggest producing areas within the country.

Shiraz (syrah) and chardonnay are the most popular grapes, with many other international varieties planted. Most wine drinkers when they think Australia they think shiraz because of its very particular characteristics: big, powerful,

high alcohol, bold and jammy. However, Australia produces many other styles of shiraz, and not all of them are so full bodied as the typical Barossa wines. In fact within Barossa, Eden Valley produces nice wines with more structure, less alcohol and more acidity. Another example is the shiraz from Clare Valley, north of Adelaide, delivering ripe fruit, liquorice, prune and hints of chocolate.

Yarra Valley, in the south of the country, is another well-known wine producing area, famous for its juicy pinot noirs, but also for delicious blends of shiraz and viognier. Within New South Wales, Hunter Valley produces shiraz more similar to what you can find in Europe, with less alcohol and softer tannins, but still rather different to the traditional French Syrah.

The Australian wine industry is much more than shiraz, and apart from popular grapes like cabernet sauvignon, merlot and shiraz, many wineries are experimenting with less common grapes like tempranillo, sangiovese, mataro, petit verdot and many more, delivering amazing blends and gorgeous wines. As for white wines, oaked and unoaked chardonnays are widely spread, however sauvignon blanc, semillon and especially riesling are growing in popularity.

Overall, Australia produces an ample range of gorgeous wines to suit most palates. Great variety of grapes and styles, as well as all price ranges, are widely available in Vietnam. Some of the wineries recommended are Yalumba, Negociants, Penfolds and Wolfblass.

My secret favorite is Vasse Felix Chardonnay, an absolutely amazing wine, but keep it quiet because I don't want the price to go up!

What I Am Drinking This Month:

The Guardian 2010, Shiraz-Viognier from Yalumba, Eden Valley, Australia. A nice, easy to drink wine, and a great pleasant surprise considering the price. The nose is aromatic with ripe red fruits, leather and a hint of cinnamon, but perhaps a bit too alcoholic. On the palate it is full of fruit, mostly red fruits, with some blue flowers and medium length. Good paired with charcuterie, steaks and medium matured cheeses. ■

It's Smokin'

Make this smoked salmon appetizer at your next shindig and get raves



Vietnamese chef **Jack Lee** (www.chefjacklee.com) has served a host of Hollywood A-listers from Angelina Jolie to Barbra Streisand, and recently returned to chef for Acacia Veranda Dining (149-151 Nguyen Du, D1). His biography *You Don't Know Jack* by Oi writer NPD Khanh will be released later this year.

FOR OVER EIGHT years in the US, I worked as a caterer at events ranging from small intimate soirées to the Oscars after-parties. While the tastes and styles were vastly different from one event to the other, some items were always welcome – whether at Oprah's wedding of the century, the Grammy awards party or celebrity house parties for a new album release, a firm favorite was always the smoked salmon with caviar and crème fraîche on potato pancake served as hors d'oeuvres – a crowd pleaser every time, all around the world.

Fresh salmon is easy to find here, but not many people are very familiar with the preparation process. It's typically a fillet that has been cured and hot- or cold-smoked. Due to its moderately high price, smoked salmon is considered a delicacy in most places. In the US and throughout North America, smoked salmon is most likely to be served sliced very thinly and on bread with cream cheese or with sliced red onion, lemon and capers – and it's usually served as a breakfast or Sunday brunch. In Europe, slices of smoked salmon are a popular appetizer, usually served with some kind of bread. In the United Kingdom they're typically eaten with brown bread and a squeeze of lemon, although lemon is usually used to mask the poor quality of the very oily salmon available there. In Germany, smoked salmon is eaten on toast or black bread.

Here in Vietnam, I've seen and tasted smoked salmon in many types of cuisine, such as canapés, pizza, sushi roll and freshly-wrapped spring rolls – which I have found very interesting. But my favorite course in smoked salmon is still the hors d'oeuvres.

Here's my recipe for smoked salmon with caviar and crème fraîche on potato pancake that's suitable for all occasions and party events – don't forget to invite Oprah! ■



SMOKED SALMON WITH OSETRA CAVIAR & CRÈME FRAICHE ON SWEET POTATO PANCAKE

Makes 8 pieces

- 2 Yukon Gold Potatoes (peeled and grated)
- 1 Large Egg
- ½ cup All-Purpose Flour
- ½ cup Crème Fraiche
- 4 oz Smoked Atlantic Salmon, thinly sliced
- 1 oz Osetra Caviar
- 6 Sprigs Baby Dill
- Salt & Pepper
- 2 oz Olive Oil for frying

To prepare the potato pancake:

Squeeze out the juice from the grated potato to avoid having too much liquid. Mix with egg and the all-purpose flour. Add ½ tsp of salt and a pinch of black pepper.

Heat a nonstick pan over a medium high heat and add 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Divide the potato evenly and shape these into small pancakes, frying them for 1-2 minutes until each pancake turns golden brown, then turn them over to cook the other side.

Remove the pancakes from the pan and cook them in the oven at 375°F for 8-10 minutes.

To assemble:

Roll the sliced smoked salmon to ¾ inch in diameter and cut into portions of 2 inches in length. Remove the pancakes from the oven and place the rolled smoked salmon on each one. Spoon a small dollop of crème fraîche on top of the salmon and garnish with Osetra caviar and baby dill. *Bon Appetit!*

>>The List

Wine & Dine

BARS



Blanchy's Tash

Known for its cool house music, live DJs at weekends and innovative range of cocktails. Downstairs is a trendy bar where the glitterati like to be seen; rooftop an open bar with more chilled style music. In between a new Vietnamese dining concept.

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



Chu Bar

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

158 Dong Khoi, D1



Harry Casual

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

R1/49 Hung Gia 3, PMH, D7



Last Call

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

59 Dong Du, D1
3823 3122



O'Brien's

Two-storey Irish-themed bar and restaurant that offers a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere. Known for its excellent food menu, this is a fun place to socialize while shooting pool or playing darts. They occasionally have live music.

74/A3 Hai Ba Trung, D1



The Fan Club

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

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

Also Try...

Broma Saigon Bar

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

41 Nguyen Hue, D1

Chill Skybar

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

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

Donkey Bar

An 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.

119 Bui Vien, D1

Game On

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

onTop Bar

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

167 Hai Ba Trung, D3
3822 4866

Purple Jade

Lively and cosmopolitan, Purple Jade is a must on any nightlife agenda.

The lounge offers an innovative menu of tasty snacks and signature cocktails in a sleek and chic aesthetic to complement the chilled-out vibe.

1st Floor - InterContinental Asiana Saigon
6pm until late
dine@icasianasaiigon.com

Saigon Saigon Bar

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

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

Xu Bar

A cocktail hot spot with Coconut Martinis, Cranelo Sparkles and Passion Fruit Caprioka on offer along with a variety of tapas with DJs and drink specials throughout the week.

71-75 Hai Ba Trung, D1
www.xusaigon.com



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

CAFÉS



Bach Dang

An institute that's been around for over 30 years, Kem Bach Dang is a short walking distance from The Opera House and is a favorite dessert and cafe spot among locals and tourists. They have two locations directly across from each other serving juices, smoothies, shakes, beer and ice cream, with air conditioning on the upper levels.
26-28 Le Loi, D1



Cafe RuNam

No disappointments from this earnest local cafe consistently serving exceptional international standard coffee. Beautifully-styled and focussed on an attention to quality, Cafe RuNam is now embarking on the road to becoming a successful franchise. The venue's first floor is particularly enchanting in the late evening.
96 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
www.cafe-runam.com



Chat

A quaint cafe with a red brick wall on one side and a mural of everyday life in Saigon on the opposite. A friendly staff serves smoothies, juices, and a good array of Italian-style coffee such as cappuccinos and lattes for cheap, prices start from VND15,000.
85 Nguyen Truong To, D4



MOF Japanese Dessert Cafe

Christmas Yokoso New Menu! Welcome to Christmas brings to you the joy, fun and spirit of the festive season. Using all natural and pure ingredients source from Japan, MOF continues to captivate with unique desserts to warm the heart.
Somerset Chancellor Court, GF, Nguyen Thi Minh Khai & Mac Dinh Chi Corner, District 1, HCMC
(08) 3823 9812 / www.mof.com.vn



The Library

The Library recaptures the romance of a bygone era while offering an all-day snack menu as well as the finest tea, coffee, wine and spirits in an elegant setting.
Ground Floor, InterContinental Asiana Saigon, Corner Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan, D1
3520 9099
dine@icasianasaigon.com



The Workshop

The cafe is located on the top floor and resembles an inner city warehouse. The best seats are by the windows where you can watch the traffic zoom by. If you prefer your coffee brewed a particular way, there are a number of brewing techniques to ask for, from Siphon to Aeropress and Chemex. Sorry, no Vietnamese *ca phe sua da* served here.
27 Ngo Duc Ke, D1


O'i's new website is here.



Our completely redesigned website has new features, responsive design and a user-friendly interface created to make your online experience more convenient and engaging.

www.oivietnam.com








Call / SMS
0166 666 7858

Order online:
f **tnbbqvietnam**

est. 2013

New Dine-in Location: 3 Dang Tran Con, D1

BBQ Delivery 

Delivery for Districts:
1 to 5, 7, 10, Phu My Hung, An Phu and Binh Thanh

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.saigon.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



Ming Dynasty

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

23 Nguyen Khac Vien, D7

Also Try...

Hung Ky Mi Gia

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

20 Le Anh Xuan, D1
3822 2673

Ocean Palace

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

2 Le Duan Street, D1
3911 8822

Seven Wonders (Bay Ky Quan)

The brainchild of an overseas Chinese/Vietnamese architect who wanted to build something extraordinary in his home town, this venue combines the architectural features of seven world heritage structures blended into one. The

cuisine is just as eclectic with representative dishes from several major Chinese traditions.

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

Shang Palace

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

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

Yu Chu

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

1st Floor, InterContinental Asiana Saigon, Corner of Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan, D1
3520 9099
www.intercontinental.com/saigon



SPANISH



La Habana

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

6 Cao Ba Quat, D1

www.lahabana-saigon.com



Olé

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

129B Le Thanh Ton, D1

012 6529 1711



Pacharan

Ho Chi Minh City's original Spanish restaurant, Pacharan occupies a high profile corner spot on Hai Ba Trung. 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, D1



Tapas Saigon

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

53/26B Tran Khanh Du, D1

090 930 0803



VIVA! Tapas Bar & Grill

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

90 Cao Trieu Phat, D7



American Chinese Food

Full Menu

www.woknroll.vn

We wok hard for you!

SUPER FAST DELIVERY!

0122-690-8881

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

Scan for the full menu

Baba's Kitchen

164 Bui Vien, District 1

49D Xa Lo Hanoi, District 2

Phone: 083-838-6661 & 083-838-6662

Open 11am to 11pm

North & South Indian food

Halal & vegetarian dishes

Of course we can cater!

order online at vietnammm.com & eat.vn

"Baba brings India to Vietnam"

FRENCH



Augustin

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

10D Nguyen Thiep, D1
www.augustinrestaurant.com



La Creperie

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

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



L'essentiel

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

98 Ho Tung Mau, D1
0948 415 646



Le Bacoulos

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

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



Le Terroir

Le Terroir serves dishes such as Bouchée à la Reine duo, Pan seared salmon along with pastas, risotto and decadent desserts. The wine list here is an oenophile's dream with over 200 labels in stock from Australia, California and Chile to Italy. The restaurant is on two levels with a small terrace in the ground floor.

30 Thai Van Lung, D1



Ty Coz

This unassuming restaurant is located down an alley and up three flights of stairs. The charming French owner/chef will happily run through the entire menu in details and offer his recommendations. An accompanying wine list includes a wide range of choices.

178/4 Pasteur, D1
www.tycozsaigon.com

Also Try...

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 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

La Nicoise

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

56 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
3821 3056

La Villa

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

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

Le Bouchon de Saigon

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

40 Thai Van Lung, D1
www.lebouchondesaignon.com

Trois Gourmands

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

18 Tong Huu Dinh, D2
3744 4585



INDIAN



Ashoka

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

Ashoka I

17/10 Le Thanh Ton, D1
33 Tong Huu Dinh, Thao Dien, D2



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 Thali and set menus. Free delivery in Phu My Hung. Complete menu on Facebook.

SA 26-2 Sky Garden 2, Phu My Hung, D7
Hotline: 0906357442 (English)
0866795267-66863168



Ganesh

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

38 Hai Ba Trung, D1
www.ganeshindianrestaurant.com



Saigon Indian

Saigon's original Indian eatery is still going strong, located in a bright, roomy upstairs venue in the heart of District 1.

1st Floor,
73 Mac Thi Buoi, D1



Tandoor

Tandoor has recently moved to a new location. The restaurant serves authentic South and North Indian cuisine, with set lunches available, in a spacious dining area. Offers free home delivery and outside catering. Halal food.

39A - 39B Ngo Duc Ke, D1
39304839 / tandoor@tandoorvietnam.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



DELUXE GROUP TOURS

VIETNAM

- Innovative tours
- Small group size
- Guarantee departures
- Deluxe services
- No hidden cost



09 3838 6678

www.DeluxeGroupTours.vn

Valid only for Cu Chi Tunnels & Classic Mekong Tours till 30 Sept 2016



Saigon Office: 2nd Floor, OIIC Building,
248-250 Nguyen Dinh Chieu St., Dist.3, HCMC
Email: reservation@atravelmate.com

Special Offers

-30%

Code: 30ATM666

ITALIAN



Ciao Bella

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

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

Ciao Bella



Inter Nos

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

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



La Bettola

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

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



La Cucina

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

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



La Hostaria

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

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



LovEat

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

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

Also Try...

Casa Italia

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

86 Le Loi, D1
3824 4286

Opera

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

2 Lam Son Square, D1

Pendolasco

One of the original Italian eateries in Ho Chi Minh City, Pendolasco recently reinvented itself with a new chef and menu, and 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



Achaya Café

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

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



Ebisu

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

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



Gyumaru

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

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



Ichiba Sushi

Ichiba 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.ichibasushi.vn



Monde

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

7 bis Han Thuyen, D1



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

Also Try...



Blanchy Street

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

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

Chiisana Washi

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

River Garden, 170 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
6683 5308

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

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

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.sushidiningaioi.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



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



Corso Steakhouse & Bar

The steakhouse boasts an open kitchen with private dining areas. With an extensive wine menu, contemporary Western and Asian cuisines and a wide range of sizzling steaks cooked to your liking, this is the ideal choice for a special celebration or formal business dinner.

Ground Floor, Norfolk Hotel, 117 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3829 5368 / www.norfolkhotel.com.vn



New York Steakhouse

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

25-27 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D1



Nossas Steakhouse

A stylish restaurant featuring Italian cuisine and Western steaks with a wide selection of imported steaks from Australian and the US. Nossas brings food and decor together to create a cozy ambiance. With an attention to bringing authentic flavors, we provide good food, good prices and good taste.

36 Pham Hong Thai, D1
www.nossa.vn



Pho 99

Not a traditional steakhouse per se, but Pho 99 is known for its excellent filet mignon steaks made out of Cu Chi beef. Also serves great pho.

139 Nguyen Trai, D1
536-1 Bui Bang Doan, D7



Wild Horse Steakhouse

The restaurant offers grilled pork, barbecued chicken and steak dishes along with a wide selection of cocktails as well as a number of smaller dishes.

8a/1d1 Thai Van Lung, D1
www.wildhorsesteakhouse.com







foodpanda
Order food online

DOWNLOAD APP

To get

-30%

Voucher Code: **OIMAGAZINE30**



Min Order Value: VND 175,000 | Max. Discount: VND 60,000
Only on your first order via App & online payment

VIETNAMESE



Five Oysters

Five Oysters serves authentic and excellent Seafood & Vietnamese food with draught beer at VND10,000 as well as a promo of VND10,000 per fresh oyster daily. There's also a rooftop, a great place to start or end the night! Recipient of Certificate of Excellence 2014 from TripAdvisor and Top Choice 2015 by Lianorg.com. Recommended by VNexpress.net, Lonely Planet, Utopia and Saigoneers.
234 Bui Vien, D1



Frangipani Hoa Su

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



Papaya

Brightly-styled and perfectly lovely, this is a minimalist local venue with international appeal that features a menu designed by the former head chef of Hanoi's Sofitel Metropole. Refined and distinguished without a hint of being stuck-up about it and very affordable.
68 Pham Viet Khanh, Binh Thanh
6258 1508
papaya@chi-nghia.com
www.chi-nghia.com



Quan Bui

Leafy green roof garden, upmarket restaurant with reasonable prices and a wide menu of choices. Open style kitchen advertises its cleanliness. Designer interior with spotlighted artwork and beautiful cushions give an oriental luxurious feeling – augmented by dishes served on earthenware crockery.
17a Ngo Van Nam, D1
3829 1515



Quan Na - Vegishouse

A Vietnamese vegetarian and vegan restaurant that uses the freshest ingredients to create dishes such as fresh spring rolls, sticky rice, curry specialties and coconut-based desserts. Decor is swathed in dark mahogany wood and red curtains.
796/7 Truong Sa, Ward 14, D3
Opening time: 10:30am-2pm; 5pm-9pm
9526 2958
Facebook: quanna.vegishouse



Red Door

Red Door offers traditional Vietnamese food with a contemporary twist. The restaurant is also a platform for art talk, science talk, and social talk; where ideas and passions are shared.
400/8 Le Van Sy, D3
012 0880 5905
Facebook: "Reddoorrestaurant"

Also Try...

3T Quan Nuong

Tasty BBQ venue situated above Temple Bar. The venue has a traditional, rustic theme with old-style furniture and a quaint Vietnamese decor, making this a nicely atmospheric restaurant and a great place to dine with international friends new to the cuisine. The menu features a number of local favorites.
Top Floor, 29 Ton That Hiep, D1
3821 1631

Banh Xeo 46A

Fun Vietnamese-style creperie popular with locals and expats alike for its tasty, healthy prawn pancakes, along with a number of other traditional dishes.
46A Dinh Cong Trang, D1

Cha Ca La Vong

If you do only one thing, you'd better do it well – and this venue does precisely that, serving only traditional Hanoian Cha Ca salads stir-fried with fish and spring onion. Delicious.
36 Ton That Thiep, D1

Com Nieu

Famous for its inclusion in the Anthony Bourdain *No Reservations* program, the

venue is best known for its theatrics. Every bowl of rice is served in a terracotta bowl that is unceremoniously shattered upon serving. Unforgettable local food in a very pleasant traditionally-styled venue.

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

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

Nha Hang Ngon

Possibly the best-known Vietnamese restaurant in Ho Chi Minh City, Nha Hang Ngon serves up hundreds of traditional local dishes in a classy French-style mansion.
160 Pasteur, D1
3827 7131
www.quananngon.com.vn
8am - 10pm

Temple Club

Named after the old-style Chinese temple in which the venue is located, the ancient stylings of this impressive restaurant make for an unforgettable evening spent somewhere in Saigon's colonial past. Beautiful oriental art that will please all diners and great local cuisine.
29-31 Ton That Thiep, D1
3829 9244
templeclub.com.vn

Thanh Nien

A favorite with tourists and locals for many years, Thanh Nien behind the Diamond Plaza is a buffet in a home setting, with a-la-carte dining available in the leafy garden outdoors. Relaxing, beautiful place to eat.
11 Nguyen Van Chiem, D1
3822 5909

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

INTERNATIONAL



Bamboo Chic

Bamboo Chic serves an inventive menu of Japanese and Chinese dishes and creative cocktails. Open for dinner, the contemporary space features modern velvet chairs with purple and plum pillows and dramatic beaded chandeliers inspired by the Saigon River along with live music from the house DJ.

Level 9, Le Méridien Saigon Hotel

3C Ton Duc Thang, D1

6263 6688

www.lemeridien.com/saigon

BAMBOO



Brotzeit German Bier Bar & Restaurant

Brotzeit serves authentic Bavarian cuisine such as Schweinshaxe or Pork Knuckles, Nürnberger sausages, Weisswurt - Bavarian white sausages and more in a chic and contemporary setting. Brotzeit also has the widest selection of premium German beers, made according to time-honored German beer-brewing traditions. The restaurant is ideal for chilling-out, business meetings or get-togethers with friends.

Kumho Links, 1st Floor, 39 Le Duan St.,

Ben Nghe Ward, D1

(08) 3822 4206

www.brotzeit.co

brotzeit
German Bier Bar & Restaurant



Cali Burrito

Owned by an American, Cali Burrito serves delicious Californian-style (specifically San Diego) burritos, tacos and quesadillas. Popular favorites are carne asada, grilled chicken, sausage and eggs, and steak and eggs. Located in Phu My Hung, D7, stop by or order for speedy hot delivery.

Duong So 6, Hung Vuong Building 1 (E006),

Phu My Hung, D7

Delivery: 090 255 0533

Facebook: Cali Burrito



Dutch Restaurant

Dutch Restaurant "The Bourgondier" is a unique place where traditional, authentic cuisine and service is brought back in the modern city of Saigon. Our Chef and Staff invite you for an experience with attentive service and great food like our Signature Dishes: Chateaubriand, Bisques, Canard and Seafood

No.62, Duong So 65, Tan Phong, D7

3775 1219

www.dutchrestaurant.vn

info@dutchrestaurant.vn

The Bourgondier
Authentic Dutch Cuisine
No. 62, Duong So 65, Tan Phong, D7
3775 1219



Eleven Café

Eleven Café is located in the center of town, a 5-minute walk from Ben Thanh Market. The restaurant has a stylish vintage design with a friendly and cozy atmosphere. The Asian fusion menu combines Asian & European vegetables and spices, providing a unique and unforgettable experience.

29 Le Anh Xuan, D1

08 3822 2605

info@elevencafe.com.vn

Facebook: ElevenCafeVN



Latest Recipe

Latest Recipe invites diners to an international culinary experience set against views of the Saigon River. An open kitchen is the focal point of this contemporary space, with chefs preparing an array of dishes to order. Every Sunday Latest Recipe serves an elaborate brunch buffet filled with tantalizing dishes from around the world.

Level M, Le Méridien Saigon Hotel

3C Ton Duc Thang, D1

6263 6688

www.lemeridien.com/saigon

Latest Recipe



Noir. Dining in the Dark

Diners choose from a selection of set menus served up by visually impaired waiters completely in the dark. Choose from one of three set menus (East, West and Vegetarian) with four or five tasting portions per course (starter, main, dessert). Purposely, not much more information is provided.

178/180D Hai Ba Trung, D1



Saffron

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

51 Hai Ba Trung, D1

382 48358



Villa Royale Treasures

Villa Royale specializes in antiques from Europe and Asia. Enjoy lunch or high tea while surrounded by treasures from around the world. Specializing in over 40 flavors of luxurious TWG tea.

3 Tran Ngoc Dien, Thao Dien, D2

www.villaroyaletreasures.com

Travel & Leisure





Savage Island

Niue is a Pacific Island paradise, one of the smallest countries and the largest raised coral atoll in the world

TEXT AND IMAGES BY **MICHAEL ARNOLD**



THERE ARE DESTINATIONS in this world where everyone wants to go (Paris, Tahiti, hopefully Saigon) and those only good for the bragging value of having been somewhere hard to find but worth the effort. Niue falls firmly into the latter category, and it's almost unfair – some solid tourism dollars would do the island a lot of good, but with the only way to get there being an uncomfortable flight out of Auckland (unless you own a yacht and can be bothered making the long journey to the world's second remotest outcrop after Easter Island) you'd need a fairly good reason to go. The sad truth is that Niue (those who live there call it "The Rock") doesn't have many of those: of all the Pacific Islands, it's about the only one devoid of sandy palm-lined beaches. It

has one tired motel serving as the island's sole resort, and in most years it's hit by devastating hurricanes that occasionally sweep away important buildings in the capital city of Alofi – which is quite literally just a row of shops. It doesn't help either that, being so far away from the region's principal shipping lanes, costs on imports are so high that while waiting for your flight out (in bad years there's only one per week) you'll be spending as much as you would on an average day in any major city. Suffice it to say that this is one corner of the globe that could really use a piece of good luck.

But there's a reason why we're here, and that is to see something extraordinary. There is actually one white sandy beach on Niue, but it has to count as one of the

world's least accessible, and it doesn't exactly line the edge of the sea. While the eastern side of the island is mostly limestone cliffs towering meters above the waves, the west coast is a nightmare of jagged, razor-toothed columns of black rock, chiselled sharp by the vagaries of the local tide. At Togo Chasm, however, there is a gaping split in the stone, and within that enclave stretches an incongruous tropical oasis of coconut palms and soft, warm sand. The weirdest beach on Earth, this is a checkbox worth marking off any unorthodox traveler's bucket list.

You'll probably be surprised to know that you have actually have heard of Niue, albeit only in legend. Its first name in English was "Savage Island," and it earned that unfortunate moniker when James



The moment you break out of the canopy and find yourself in the jungle of jutting limestone blades framed against the deepest blue ocean beyond is one you won't forget easily.

Cook passed it by accident while exploring the Pacific. He didn't stop off – as he approached the coastline, he spotted a band of angry-looking natives waving angrily at his ship, their teeth dripping with blood. It was this that prompted him to give the island its rather dramatic name.

What Cook failed to understand, however, was that the inhabitants of Savage Island were more or less vegetarians – there were no large land animals there, and fishing from the coastline was frustratingly difficult – and their teeth were simply stained red by a local variety of crimson banana.

Such misunderstandings have typified Niue's history. The first British missionaries had a shot at converting the 'savages' to Christianity in the late 1800s, and for once

found it miraculously easy – one of the tribal leaders scored an invite on board the priests' ship and was rather impressed that the British seemed to have a lot nicer things in their rooms than they did, Jesus be praised. They then sent several entreaties to Queen Victoria begging to cede their sovereignty to the British – but oddly enough, the crown wasn't very interested in a blunt rock leagues from nowhere.

When emissaries from New Zealand arrived in the early 1900s, they were greeted by the flamboyant and unpopular King Togia (the island was a natural democracy, and nobody else wanted to be king), who laid lavish royal welcomes on his guests, on one occasion wearing a fabulous European dress. He gleefully signed Niue over to any flag that seemed to have a Union Jack on

it, and unwittingly became part of New Zealand's little-known and short-lived Pacific Empire – a weird colonial project that was abandoned a few years after it was conceived on the grounds of being frankly too silly an idea to be worth pursuing, given that New Zealand was itself a colony of Mother England.

No Regrets

New Zealand was stuck with its distant protectorate, however, and went on to mismanage the island for decades. The only political assassination in New Zealand's history occurred when three Niuean boys hacked the Kiwi High Commissioner to death with machetes for using the entire island's population as slave labor, largely to collect his golf balls from the massive

course he'd had them construct for him – which remains one of the island's sole tourist attractions to this day. After a certain relaxation in New Zealand's policy, the government arranged for the construction of dozens of durable houses to offer the natives protection from the region's frequent hurricanes. They also relaxed restrictions on their qualifying for New Zealand passports – most of them promptly applied for one and left the country, leaving the majority of the 'hurricane houses' empty. The current population is estimated to be around 1,000 people, if you believe the government figures. They're unlikely to be accurate, however, as the level of financial aid that the island receives from international donors is dependent on its population, and most people on the island actually work for the government anyway.

We stay almost by default at the Matavai, the closest thing Niue has to luxury accommodation. There are no regrets there – the facilities are a little simple, but its broad terrace offers an unparalleled view of the ocean. It's possible to spot dolphins and whales leaping from the sea over breakfast – this is the remotest part of the Pacific, and within Niue's 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone, this is an expansive, largely undisturbed playground for them. The area is almost completely unfished, as Niue doesn't exactly have any fishing boats to speak of. A dive shop next to the resort arranges tours out to swim with the whales on request, or to explore the island's limestone caves with their mostly unclassified tropical fish. Tourists can swim quite comfortably with some of the world's most venomous sea snakes – their mouths are far too small to take a bite of human flesh, but if they could, well, that would be it.

While the Matavai's restaurant is exceptional, they'll also be happy to cook up anything you happen to catch or pluck from the trees. There are plenty of chickens about; the islanders don't touch them, preferring instead to import high-quality roast chooks from overseas. The considerable amount of aid the country receives means they're actually quite well off; the huge polystyrene cases you'll have noticed being unloaded from your flight's cargo bay are almost always full of KFC.

Arrive in the right season, and you're also likely to enjoy Niue's most famous culinary item, the meaty coconut crab, their thick-muscled claws engineered by nature to crop great holes in solid coconuts and drink from the sweet juice inside. Take a drive around the island's circumference (it'll only take you a few hours) and you're sure to spot one crossing the path in front of you like a gigantic blue spider. They're exquisite, but eat more than one and you'll be sick at the sight of seafood for the rest of the week.

The island is heavily forested for the most part, and most settlements are found at clock points around the coast. Driving around the island is a disturbing experience with its preponderance of decades-since abandoned homes grown over in vines and



old streetside headstones. At various points in the tropical jungle, barely-maintained 'sea tracks' lead down to the shoreline; we follow a couple to find ourselves at some of Niue's lesser-known attractions. These are actually fairly decent – the caverns are enormous shelters filled with freshwater rockpools, perfect for a private swim. Keep your swimming clothes on – the islanders are deeply offended by nudity – but to be completely honest, the chances of bumping into other people at many of the lesser-visited pools are slender at best. The only person we spotted while we were there was the Minister of Agriculture sleeping on his tractor.

Another spectacular spot is Matapa Chasm, another deep trench in the rock that juts out from the sea, creating a natural enclave protected from the worst of the tides by a mighty rock at its entrance. It's deep – part of the reason why Niue is

so unique is that it's actually the flattened crest of an enormous sea mountain that's so tall it breaks well above water level. Ten meters out from the coast, and it's straight down to the Pacific sea bed.

But of course, we've come a long way to see Togo, and when we get to the sea track that leads there, it's still a long walk through the forest to the finish line. The moment you break out of the canopy and find yourself in the jungle of jutting limestone blades framed against the deepest blue ocean beyond is one you won't forget easily. Some care has been taken to forge a concrete path through the death trap; a cautious wander along the narrow walkway and you're at the top of a tall wooden ladder descending deep into the chasm where, as promised, you can finally relax on the only white sands of Niue. You'll be one of the few souls who've made it all the way there. ■

Two Charming Lions

A visit to Phat Tich Pagoda in Bac Ninh Province



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

THERE IS A current debate concerning the guardian lions of Vietnam that stand in pairs at the entrances of religious and government buildings.

A pair of guardian lions comprise of one male (yin) and one female (yang). The male has one foot on an embroidered cloth ball that represents power and the world. The female has one paw on a reclining cub, as if stroking its stomach; this represents nurture and care. They are there to repel invaders and to protect the people within.

In Vietnam there is a movement to remove all the fierce-looking Chinese lions (often called *foo* dogs by Westerners) and replace them with the more traditional, happier-looking Vietnamese variety. Experts have been referring to the oldest surviving guardian lions in Vietnam to uphold their claims for change - the two lions flanking the steps to the Phat Tich pagoda in Bac Ninh Province in the shade of old *hoa dai* blossom trees, passed by many who likely hardly notice them. But these lions are amongst the rarest in Southeast

Asia and may be Vietnam's oldest examples of the original style of guardian lions.

I was taken to see Phat Tich pagoda one misty autumn afternoon about two years ago. I was visiting the home of a recently deceased artist and was invited by his lovely widow to get on the back of her scooter and visit her local pagoda. I could not possibly have imagined the treat in store as we bumped along country lanes and through a small town to the imposing entrance of a large religious mountain site.

Ahead of me was a steep climb of steps to a low, wide altar building. This structure is only 30 years old but it replaced a temple founded in 1057 by the Ly Dynasty that was, unfortunately, bombed to ashes by colonial forces in the 1950s.

I was led by hand into the richly decorated interior furnished with large painted statues of all the usual suspects. Somehow they seemed more real, more awe-inspiring than others I have spent some time with. This was a special place

- there was no doubt.

Deeper into the temple I found something wondrous - a large marble Buddha statue that had been carefully stitched and pinned back together with iron staples and pins, after being shattered in that bygone disaster. At nearly two meters high, this Buddha was once the nation's most important, and is now considered to be a great treasure of Buddhism in Vietnam. It certainly has an unforgettable presence.

The two ancient lions mentioned in the debate sit in line with kneeling pairs of four other sacred animals on a terrace. There are a pair of elephants, two horses, a couple of rhinoceros and two buffalos. These dark, sandstone creatures are beautifully carved, especially the fine details of the teeth, claws and imperial motifs - and the two charming lions are amazingly well-preserved.

I would definitely support the movement to replace the forbidding Chinese-style lions with the more affable Vietnamese breed. I find they reflect this country's unique culture and character better. ■



Life's a Beach

Escape to sunny skies, delicious fresh seafood and total indulgence in Da Nang

TEXT BY JULIAN AJELLO IMAGES PROVIDED BY PULLMAN DANANG BEACH RESORT

DA NANG HAS a long history as a vital point of entry to Vietnam, from the time of the Champa Kingdom, to the arrival of the Portuguese, then its use by the French to establish French Indochina, and finally by the Americans who used it during the American War and established what was the busiest airport in the world at the height of that conflict. Long removed from its role as a staging area for conflict, Da Nang now reigns as Vietnam's premier beach destination and draws tourists from around the region and the world. It's bustling economy and rapid growth supports a city of over one million people. With no signs of slowing, a bevy of new players eye the gem of Vietnam's long, snaking coastline.

The **Pullman Danang Beach Resort** (www.pullman-danang.com) is one of the newest options for those seeking to soak up the sun on the central coast. In its second incarnation, the resort is in the midst of a remodel to bring it in line with Pullman's high standards for luxury.

A friendly and attentive staff greeted me warmly before checking me in and escorting me to my room so I could get settled and change for dinner. My queen deluxe room featured an abundance of rich, dark wood finishes and neutral carpeting and accents, which convey warmth and comfort without trying too hard. The bed is a thick mattress with a plethora of pillows of varying size for even the most finicky sleeper. A sofa and coffee table afford a relaxing spot to kick back and get some work done, and there is ample desk space if you prefer something more upright. The

balcony provides a soothing view of the gardens and reflection pools that leads all the way to the shoreline. The bathroom is wonderfully laid out for couples with the toilet, sink and counter, and tub and shower all partitioned by glass. The shower offers the choice of a wand or rainfall. The room also provides a stocked mini-bar with reasonable prices and an in-room combination safe for valuables. For those downtimes when you just need to relax, or when it's raining out and preventing you from playing, you can lounge in your room and take advantage of the amenities.

The relaxation experience starts with their Infinity Bar in the lobby, named for the infinity view that stretches from

the bar, over the reflection pools, to the swimming pool and down to the crashing surf. It's a lovely spot to have a cocktail, meet up with travel companions, or strike up a conversation before, or after, eating at one of their restaurants.

The Epice is their central, all-day-dining restaurant serving breakfast, lunch and dinner. It's a large venue that seats nearly 300 including a large outdoor terrace. Their open kitchen is a showpiece where their chefs conjure up everything from omelets to ribeye steaks, and my personal recommendation is their asparagus soup with crispy pancetta and deep-fried soft shell crab. I have to put it in the conversation of best soups I've ever had.





For a change of pace, saunter down to Azure, their beachside lounge which features more fare from the sea as well as a dizzying array of cocktails made with liquid nitrogen. After having some prawns cooked tableside on hot rocks, make it a point to indulge in some ice cream, which is also made tableside using more of that liquid nitrogen!

When the necessities are sorted, it's time to hit the beach. Da Nang's beach is enormous, there won't be any need to get up early to get a spot as the resort has many loungers and umbrellas assembled for guests to use if you prefer, but there's lots of room to lay a towel down and feel

the sand crunching beneath you. When you feel like taking a break from that novel and moving around a bit, there's Song Watersports hut that provides windsurfers, surfboards and kayaks free of charge, and rentals for jet skis. Da Nang is one of the few places in Vietnam with waves suitable for surfing. They're big enough to have fun, yet accommodating for beginners as well. Nothing beats riding a wave, so inquire about renting a board and getting a lesson and paddle out there. Landlubbers can opt for beach volleyball or a pitch for some beach soccer, as well as badminton and tennis courts. There's also a fitness center so there's no reason to miss out on a

light workout.

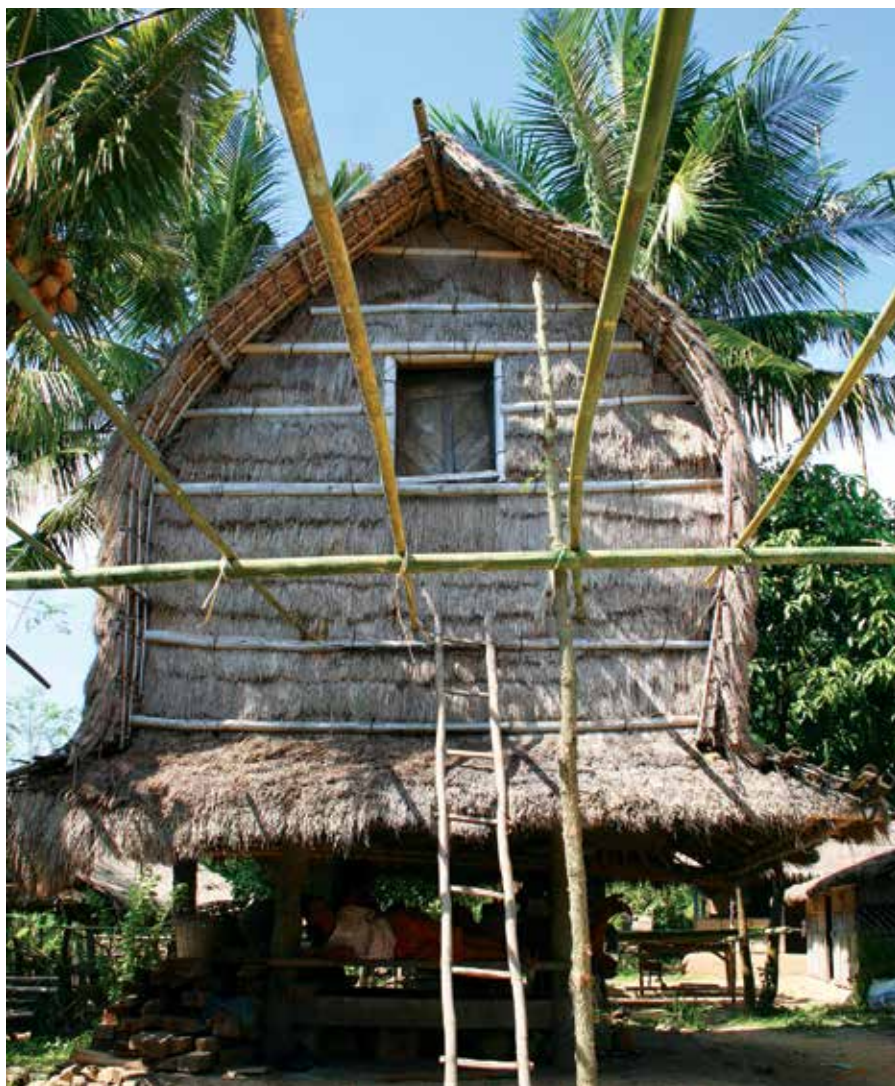
When you need to take it down a notch, stroll by the beach bar for a cold one before planting yourself poolside. The infinity pool is large and unheated; you'll have no issues getting refreshed when you take a dip, and there's a kid's pool attached for those traveling with children.

Whether you prefer being active or lazy, there's no reason not to pamper yourself a bit. With a full-service spa right on the premises, one can arrange a massage to iron out the kinks, or just take a steam or sauna. With so much to do you, take your time, slow down and enjoy Da Nang from the comfort of the resort. ■

Laidback Lombok

Long overshadowed by Bali, the equally idyllic island of Lombok is quickly becoming the preferred destination for discerning travelers

TEXT BY CARMEN ALLAN-PETALE



WANTING TO ESCAPE the polluted and congested streets of Kuta - Bali's main tourist hub - our taxi driver takes us to the Denpasar airport. There, we pushed and elbowed our way through the flip-flop wearing crowds to get to our gate, and soon we were flying over the sparkling blue ocean with islands spreading below us as flashes of tropical green amongst the water. In a blink of 30 minutes, we had arrived at Bali's lesser-known neighbor - Lombok.

As we exited the terminal the bright sky blinds us for a few seconds. The lack of touts is a welcome relief after the relentless "Hellos!" from the locals in Bali hawking souvenirs and taxi drivers grabbing for your patronage. We chose a taxi at our leisure and the driver eased out of the airport, lumbering onto a very modern looking highway lined with trees. An hour later, after crossing landscapes of rice paddy fields and lush mountains, we arrived at our hotel in Senggigi. The town is the main tourist area of the island lined with shops and restaurants, yet the vibe is slow and walking around is easy and peaceful.

That night we feasted on freshly caught fish on the sandy shores of the bay, with lanterns swinging in the trees above us. The setting sun cast brilliant hues of orange across the water and nearby a local fisherman returned from his evening catch with buckets full of fish. As the sky darkened, the lights from the nearby Gili islands flickered in the distance.

Many travelers come to Lombok to hike Mount Rinjani, the large volcano in the center of the island, but as the next morning dawned, we chose relaxation over adventure. We skipped the gruelling three-day climb and instead chose to visit a temple and an indigenous village. We hire a guide and driver, a man named Ketut, who greeted us with a welcoming smile. He's originally from Bali, but moved to Lombok five years ago because he wanted to live on an island like the homeland he remembered from his youth.

"Lombok is much more peaceful than Bali. I like it. It's not stressful to live here," he told us en route to a Hindu temple with romantic '90s music playing softly from his car stereo. "Life is uncomplicated. It's relaxed."

Soon as we arrived and began to cross the large landscaped park that leads to the entrance of the temple, we were mobbed by school children. "What your name, what your name?" they demanded of us, pulling us in for hugs and asking us to take their photo. After our impromptu photo session, where we also pose for a snap with the children's teachers, we entered the peaceful grounds of the temple.

Unlike Bali, where the majority of residents are Hindus, Lombok's people are mostly Muslims although there is still a Hindu influence present on the island. Large mosques sit side-by-side with old Hindu temples. However, peacefulness didn't come to Lombok easily. Back in the 17th century, the Balinese took control

The temptation was too much to resist and before long we were racing towards the waves and diving under the clear blue sea.

of the western side of Lombok while the Makassarese people had control of the east and by 1750, the entire island was under Balinese control. The Sasaks, the main ethnic group on the island, lived in harmony with the Balinese in the west, but in the east conflict arose. When the Dutch came in the 19th century they received support from the Sasak aristocracy and the Balinese people, while the poorer Sasaks were ignored. Even after Indonesia became independent from Dutch rule, the elite Sasak and the Balinese continued to rule the island. This influence can still be felt today in the cultural traditions that are practiced around Lombok.

As we walked in to the temple grounds, Ketut explained how the Balinese living in Lombok come here to worship their gods, leaving small offerings of food and incense. The smoke from the incense floats upwards and is thought to connect those living on the earth with the gods in the sky. Elsewhere, temples built by former Balinese kings are still standing, and the Sasak people continue their Islamic traditions at their mosques.

Into the Blue

From the temple, we bundled back into the car and headed to Sakara Village where the Sasak people live. The villagers here speak their own language, which resembles Western Indonesian dialects but with its own unique sound. About 85 percent of the people remaining on Lombok are Sasak – the Balinese having long gone – and this is the only place in the world where their culture is still alive. To earn a living, the Sasaks have embraced tourism, turning old traditions into a viable source of income.

Ketut explained that unlike the general Muslim population, Sasaks in the north and west of Lombok follow a caste system. “This dates back to the elite Sasak days. The highest caste for men is *Datu* and for women it’s *Denek*. But this system changes depending on where you go on the island.”

Women are scattered throughout the village, sitting on bamboo mats on the floors of their modest wooden homes

hand weaving colorful rugs, sarongs and scarves, using the traditional method they call *songket*. One woman cradles her mobile phone between her shoulder and chin, speaking animatedly as she weaves with her hands. The contrast between the tradition and modernity is amusing. She was using gold and bronze threads within the detailing, making the cloth shine brightly in the sun. I was drawn to them like a magpie to a diamond. Seeing my interest, another woman who didn’t speak English beckoned me over with a smile cut deep into her heavily-wrinkled face. She pointed to the mat beside her and I sat as she showed me how to pull the wooden contraption up and down to make the threads weave together.

After five or so minutes, with her friends laughing and clapping their hands around me, another woman approached and pulled me softly towards the biggest building in the village – the store. Inside, bright sarongs lined the walls in every color of the rainbow. Joined by her friend, the woman gently wrapped me in a sarong from head to toe. To finish off the look, they balanced a woven basket atop my head and led me back outside to pose near a traditional

bungalow house built on stilts. I climbed the rickety ladder to the top and the women giggled as I posed with a lopsided smile. All the brightly colored fabrics in the store were available for purchase and I couldn’t resist purchasing two to decorate our home on our return.

To my husband’s relief, Ketut called us back to the car and we rode on to Selong Belanak beach. We got stuck in a traffic jam as a wedding ceremony made its way down a hill towards us. The bride, beautiful in her thick makeup under the sweltering sun, looked exhausted. The car snaked slowly up the hill, past the bridal procession, where we rested. Before lay a bay in between two hills, white sand fading into the blue ocean, stretching as far as the eye can see.

Eager to go for a refreshing dip, Ketut took us to the sandy shores. There were a few shacks dotted along the shore, serving fresh fish and rice dishes. We were thirsty, so we sipped on coconuts as we lounged under large umbrellas admiring the water before us, fringed with softly sloping lush green hills to either side. The temptation was too much to resist and before long we were racing towards the waves and diving under the clear blue sea. ■



WHERE TO STAY AND HOW TO GET THERE:

- There are regular flights from Bali’s Denpasar airport to Lombok, on carriers including Garuda and Lion Air. Prices start from USD35 one way. Alternatively, you can get a ferry from Padang Bai in East Bali to Lombok, which takes about five hours, expect to pay around USD10 per person.
- Hotel Tugu (www.tuguhotels.com/hotels/lombok) prides itself on displaying some of Indonesia’s cultural artefacts, decorating its accommodation with antiques and artworks. The romantic accommodation features numerous suites with four poster beds. Doubles start at USD280.
- A private boutique beach resort, Cocotinos Sekotong (www.cocotinos-sekotong.com) is home to villas, a spa and a diving center. Located amongst a coconut grove in Sekotong Bay at the southwest side of the island, the resort offers white sandy beaches, a library, a restaurant and a number of spa treatments. Doubles start at USD198.
- Located only a five-minute drive from the tourist hub of Senggigi, The Chandi Boutique Resort & Spa (www.the-chandi.com/the-chandi-boutique-resort-and-spa-lombok-indonesia) features a beachfront restaurant and bar, as well as 15 villas. Doubles start at USD150.

>>The List Travel



Ana Mandara Villas I Dalat

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



BEST WESTERN PREMIER Havana Nha Trang Hotel

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

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



Bhaya Cruises

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

093 344 6542
www.bhayacruises.com



Fusion Maia I Danang

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



InterContinental Nha Trang

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

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



Mia

With its own private white sand beach, cliff-top ocean views and jungle clad mountains as a backdrop, Mia resort has carved out its own little piece of tropical heaven in Nha Trang. Mia features a variety of accommodation options, each with fantastic ocean views, nestled among manicured gardens. There are great dining options, a relaxing spa and gym.

Bai Dong, Cam Hai Dong, Cam Lam, Khanh Hoa
0583 989 666
www.mianhatrang.com
info@mianhatrang.com



Pullman Danang Beach Resort

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

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



Sheraton Nha Trang Hotel & Spa

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

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



The Island Lodge

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

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

>>The List

Health & Beauty

DENTAL



Dr. Hung & Associates Dental Center

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

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



Also try ...

2000 Dental Clinic Trung Tam Implant

Established in 1999, 2000 Dental Clinic now has 65 dentists serving 3 locations offering the full range of dental care, including surgery, implants and extractions.
125 Le Thi Rieng, D1

Elite Dental Group

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

57A Tran Quoc Thao, D3

European Dental Clinic

Offering state of the art technology, competitive pricing, and supreme quality, this dentistry is truly dedicated to their patients.

17 - 17A Le Van Mien, D2
www.europeandentalclinic-asia.com

German International Dentistry

German International Dentistry offers excellent consultation services from experienced, international dentists so that you can make informed decisions about your dental care.

1489 Nguyen Van Linh, D7

Saigon Smile

With a group of experienced doctors and professional staff trained to do teeth cleaning, dental work and other teeth enhancing procedures.

96 Tran Nao, D2
6674 4255

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.

2Bis Cong Truong Quoc Te, D3

Westcoast International Dental Clinic

Large, international team of dentists and support staff from Canada, Australia, Japan, France, Italy, Thailand, and Vietnam.

The clinic regularly hosts visiting dentists from many other countries.

27 Nguyen Trung Truc, D1
3825 748

SPA



Cham Nail Spa

Located in the heart of Ho Chi Minh City, five minutes from Ben Thanh Market, they offer top notch services that include acrylic, gel shellac, mani/pedi using only luxurious brands such as O.P.I., Morgan Taylor, Le Chat and more - all at an affordable price. With a modern facility, Cham Nail Spa is the latest in trendy nail treatments and therapy with a private and personalized touch.

60M Le Thi Rieng, D1
093 762 0965

www.chamnails.com / Facebook: "chamnails"



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 Ton Dat Tien, D7
5412 4773



Moc Huong Spa

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

9C Ton Duc Thang, D1
3911 7118

Also try ...

Orient Skincare & Laser Center

The center offers non-surgery aesthetic treatments by certified dermatologists as well as pampering services for any type of problem skin. A variety of treatments includes: wrinkle removal, acne & scar treatment, rejuvenation & pigment augmenting treatment, slimming treatments, permanent hair removal and massage therapy.

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

Saigon Dep Clinic and Spa

Saigon Dep offers cosmetic, acne and pigmentation treatments, as well as scar and rejuvenation services, alongside a full reflexology suite.

90 Le Lai, D1
www.saigondep.net

Sweet Spa

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

204B / 12 Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien, D2
www.sweetspa.vn

Temple Leaf Spa

Temple Leaf is located in the heart of District 1, and is staffed by a multinational team of skilled masseurs. In addition to foot and full body massages, Temple Leaf also offers cleansing green tea facial care and moisturizing masks.

74, Hai Ba Trung, D1
www.templeleafspa.com

Villa Aesthetica Cosmedi Spa & Laser Center

One of HCMC's finest newly-established spa and beauty centers, Villa Aesthetica is the only venue in Vietnam to offer premium-class LPG Endermologie treatments, erasing localized fat and imperfections. Also known for their unique Turkish Hammam massage.

54 Ngo Quang Huy, Thao Dien, D2
6264 3388
www.villaaesthetica.com

YCK Beauty Spa and Hair Studio

The spa offers full relaxation massages, as well as cosmetic care such as firming and collagen treatments. YCK Beauty also offers hair coloring and styling in a relaxing ambience.

178B Hai Ba Trung, D1
www.ykcsa.com

>>The List

Business

INSURANCE



Blue Cross

Blue Cross Vietnam is a Medical Insurance Administrator specializing in Health and Travel insurance in Asia. Our competitive advantage is in our design and administration of modern travel and medical insurance plans; plans built for people living and working in Vietnam.
4th Floor, Continental Tower, 81 - 83 - 85 Ham Nghi, D1 3821 9908



Also try ...

ACE Life Insurance

One of the world's largest multiline property and casualty insurers, insurance products include universal life insurance, term life, whole life, riders, and global personal accident.
21st Floor, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1

Baoviet Insurance Corporation

BaoViet is now the leading financial insurance group in Vietnam with more than 145 branches across 63 provinces.
23-25 Thai Van Lung, D1

IF Consulting

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

Liberty Mutual Insurance

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

McLarens Young International

McLarens Young International is a global claims service provider that helps our clients achieve timely and equitable claims resolution.
**9th Floor, Yoco Building
 41 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
 3821 3316**

Prudential Vietnam

Prudential Vietnam is one of the leading life insurers nationwide, also providing a variety of financial solutions, with over 200 customer service centers, branch offices and general agency and business partner offices.
**Unit 25F, Saigon Trade Centre
 37 Ton Duc Thang, D1**

RELOCATION



Allied Pickfords

For almost 400 years our name has been synonymous with high quality home moving. From the packhorses of the early seventeenth century, to the most advanced shipping and transportation methods of today, with over 600 locations in more than 40 countries Allied Pickfords has grown to become one of the largest providers of moving services.
**8th Floor, Miss Ao Dai Bldg, 21 Nguyen Trung Ngan, D1 (+84) 8 3910 1220
 www.alliedpickfords.com.vn**



Also try ...

AGS Four Winds (Vietnam)

Global leader in international removals & relocations, with 128 offices in 78 countries, they can move you to/or from any location worldwide.
**5th Floor, Lafayette De Saigon,
 8A Phung Khac Khoan, D1
 3521 0071
 ags-vietnam@agsfourwinds.com
 www.agsfourwinds.com**

Asian Tigers

Pan-Asian moving firm with a perhaps unrivalled level of experience and expertise in packing, storing and moving a family's treasured belongings throughout this region and beyond.
**9th Floor, Unit 9.3,
 9 Doan Van Bo, D4
 3826 7799**

CBRE

CBRE Group, Inc. is the world's largest commercial real estate services and investment firm. The group has been operating in Vietnam since 2003.
**12th Floor, Me Linh Point Tower
 2 Ngo Duc Ke, D1**

Crown Line

Crown Line is a well-known Japanese moving firm now operating out of Ho Chi Minh City.
**7th Floor, HPL Bldg
 60 Nguyen Van Thu, D1**

Logical Moves

They offer your belongings the best protection available with the latest technology, experienced staff and equipment. With door to door services, Logical Moves is all

about quality service, best prices and well-arranged time. They have moved offices and household goods for many well-known international companies in Vietnam.
**3941 5322
 www.logicalmoves.net**

Santa Fe Relocation Service

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

VISA & TRAVEL SERVICES



Vietnam Visa-on-Arrival / Private Visa Approval Letter

Planning to visit Vietnam? Tourists and travelers are now able to get a visa on arrival through our online service. Avoid long queues and high expenses, no need to send-off your passport. Receive an approval letter prior to your departure, issued by the Vietnam Immigration Department, pick-up your visa upon arrival.
**0169 9161 166
 www.vietnamsvisa.com
 support@vietnamsvisa.com**



Also try ...

eVisa

A convenient online visa application service with money back guarantee. eVisa is approved by Lonely Planet.
**64 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D1
 www.evisa.com.vn**

The Sinh Tourist

The Sinh Tourist was the first travel agency in Saigon, founded with an aim to introduce travelers to Vietnam in a friendly and welcoming manner. Sinh Tourist also has local offices in Da Lat, Mui Ne, Nha Trang, Hoi An, Da Nang, Hue, Hanoi and international offices in Phnom Penh and Siem Riep.
**246 - 248 De Tham, D1
 www.thesinhtravel.com**

TNK Travel

Established in 2001, TNK has grown exponentially and has

served more than 1.3 million travelers. They offer tours to all major tourist destinations in tailor-made packages.
**220 De Tham, D1
 www.tnktravel.com**

Trails of Indochina

Trails of Indochina is one of the leaders in destination management and bespoke luxury travel throughout Southeast Asia. They offer a number of themed tours ranging from gastronomic to architectural.
**33 Le Trung Nghia, Tan Binh
 www.trailsofindochina.com**

Tuan Linh

Tuan Linh travel agency is a fully-licensed tour operator that supports sustainable, responsible tourism as well as offering full visa services for travelers.
**Thai An 2, Nguyen Van Qua, D12
 www.tuanlinhtravel.com**

Phu Ngoc Viet

They offer assistance for visa application, extension and renewal.
**217/2A1 Xo Viet Nghe, Binh Thanh
 www.giahanvisa.net.vn**

Visa4Vietnam

Visa4Vietnam offers a quick and easy online visa application service, facilitating visa application, extension and renewal, as well as offering an urgent service for those that require their visa within a few hours.
**Suite 602A, 57-59 Ho Tung Mau, D1
 www.visa4vietnam.com**

SinhBalo Adventure Travel

SinhBalo Adventure Travel has operated for more than 20 years, specializing in Mekong Delta tours designed by a delta resident. They offer cycling tours and river cruises, in addition to destinations further afield such as Angkor Wat.
**283/20 Pham Ngu Lao, D1
 www.sinhbalo.com**

Kids & Education





Wunderkids

The secrets to unfolding
the super-intelligence in children

TEXT BY MICHAEL ARNOLD

I ONCE SAT in on a psychology class taught by a visiting lecturer who made an extraordinary parenting claim that I've never forgotten.

I can't say whether or not her story was true, but it still fascinates me to this day: what she said was that she'd successfully revived an ancient esoteric Maori teaching technique and used it to instruct her own son in advanced mathematics. Applying the traditional method to modern numerical theory, she had accelerated his learning to the point where he could successfully sit university-level calculus papers at the age of 11. Given the number of 11-year-olds I've met who can barely count to 20, that's a remarkable achievement.

A little poking around on the web suggests that there may actually be

something to her claim. The teaching method she was most likely referring to is one that used to be known as *whare wānanga*. In my home country, that term is still commonly used as a word for 'school,' but long before the arrival of the European colonists, those words had an older, occult usage dating back to an age when Maori learning was passed on orally, using a blend of mnemonics and music – and *conducted in total darkness*.

The old practice had largely died out by the 1860s, but in its heyday it was considered a very powerful technique. Without any visual distractions, students could focus on pure knowledge acquisition, entering trance-like states to deeply absorb the old teachings – with the same kind of unshakable mental concentration you'll see

nowadays in kids peering at Youtube videos on their iPads.

In the case of this particular lecturer, she claimed to have taken things to a logical extreme. She would prepare detailed representations of complex numerical problems in abstract terms, hoping her son would intuitively experience the relationships between pure numbers without the need to represent the formulae on paper. If she's telling the truth, then in drawing from a wisdom far removed from Europe's Age of Enlightenment, she'd created in her own son that rare talent commonly known as *prodigy* – something we usually presume is born, not made.

Prodigies, who manifest a level of giftedness far in advance of other children of the same age, are extremely rare. They



occasionally pop up here and there, their talents most often lying in areas of knowledge that can be codified – such as music, mathematics, athletic sports, and chess. Mozart is the best-known example; a superb composer by the age of three, Mozart was driven by a powerful urge to create the perfect piece of music in terms of balance, form, beauty, and mathematical precision – something he accomplished about four or five hundred times in the course of his short life span.

Gray Matter

The idea that there's some magic formula out there to actually drop giftedness on regular children has to be compelling to any parent watching their six-year-old joyfully holding their coloring book

upside down. Even Mozart had a little help from his dad – Leopold would play gentle melodies to wake up his sleeping son, stepping up from the harpsichord before completing the final phrase, forcing the frustrated young *wunderkind* to pull himself out of bed to finish the piece himself. Despite his father's legendary strictness, there's a humorous warmth hinted at in the story of the Mozart family, which may well have a lot to do with what Wolfgang Amadeus eventually became.

If you take a look at the academic literature, there are plenty of scientific theories going that guess at which neurological factors predispose a child to prodigiousness. The leading theory nowadays runs that such children are able to use their long-term memory faculties

in a similar way that most people use their working memory. Most folks can only juggle about six or seven variables at a time, which is why it's maddeningly more difficult to remember people's mobile numbers than it is to recall their land lines. Prodigies – whether it's by virtue of birth or training – can work with larger chunks of information swapped back and forth out of long-term brain storage. If that seems like a magic trick, then that's exactly what it is – it's a sleight-of-hand technique performed by the gray matter itself.

This all suggests that some parenting techniques are more effective than others in encouraging young minds to process information at lightning speeds. Ken Adams' 1995 book *Your Child Can be a Genius* argues that parents, being those with the most intimate understanding of their children, are key to the unfolding of childhood super-intelligence. Adams himself was a child prodigy who derived a methodology from his own childhood experiences with his parents, and successfully used these to advance his own son's education. If you were asked to guess what kinds of techniques he recommends, you wouldn't have to be a genius yourself to presume that whatever he did, it was a blend of encouragement, methodical preparation, and the use of activities that are entertaining enough to hold a child's interest for the duration of the lesson. This, as it turns out, is exactly what the book recommends.

Predictably, too, it's all about attitude – overbearing parents, overzealous parents, and overindulgent parents rarely turn out kids with the real stuff: what tends to come out the other end are miserable young adults with some fairly majestic rote-learned talents who go on to live unimpressive lives of relative underachievement. It's like anything – if you want your children to really benefit from early educational stimulation, you just can't push that too far. Yes, you have to be persistent and you have to put some thought into what you want to achieve with your child and how (in well-thought-out detail) you're going to get there, together. But if your precious just isn't feeling it, you may as well open a bank account for the future psychoanalyst bills so that someone with a bit more wisdom can undo your weird parenting damage later down the track.

This is why I remain fascinated by that mysterious old Maori technique, and I'd love to believe that it works. It has that X-factor: in the gloom of a darkened classroom when all is quiet outdoors, the musical intonation of the instructor's voice perhaps achieves a heightened awareness in the child you won't see in the more academic teaching techniques. It would seem that if you want to achieve a magic trick, sometimes you really have to use magic. The next time you're helping your kids with their homework, try turning out the lights first. ■

Flying with Fido

Traveling with pets, part two



With a family that includes six cats, two dogs and a couple of dozen fish, **Wayne Capriotti** is a zoo curator and, along with his wife, publishes Vietnam's first pet magazine **Me Thu Cung** (www.petmagazine.vn).

Inbound Travel to Vietnam

VIETNAM IS A fairly easy country to enter with pets. Regulations state that your cat or dog must have a recent rabies vaccination and an authorized health certificate - no import permit is required. The real difficulties begin when you take your pet out of Vietnam, summed up by one word: rabies. The World Organization for Animal Health classifies countries as rabies-free, rabies-controlled or high-risk, and Vietnam is considered "very high-risk."

As most people enter Vietnam by air there are two ways to bring along your pets: as onboard accompanied baggage or shipped as cargo (live animal shipment). First, it's advisable to purchase an IATA-approved carrier early on before departure to allow your pet to become familiar with its temporary home. Also, reduce your pet's intake of food and water just before departure - depending on the length of the flight - because your pet might urinate frequently in the carrier. The carrier should also include identification indicating ownership, and you should carry a copy with you at all times during travel.

As Onboard Baggage

Permission for pets to travel as onboard baggage is determined by size, weight and breed. Most small dog and cat carriers can fit under a seat, however it really depends on the airline you are using as they have their own policy for animal transportation. Check if the airline you are using offers an 'excess baggage' service to allow pets to be carried onboard. Another deciding factor is the length of travel and route of transit; you might not be allowed to bring your pet onboard the same flight as you. Work with your travel agent for the shortest possible route to Vietnam.

As Cargo

Medium to large-sized dogs should be shipped as "live animal cargo." If this is your first international flight with a pet, and depending on your country of

origin and choice of airline, it is strongly recommended to find a pet relocation agency as this process can become complicated. For help on finding airlines and pet relocation services, see IPATA's list of international airlines for moving pets by cargo: www.ipata.org/suppliers#airlines.

Pet Passport

Begin your pet's relocation process one to 12 months prior to arriving to Vietnam. Recent rabies vaccination must be done within 30 days before departure, past vaccinations no older than 12 months. Below is a checklist to keep in mind:

Between one to 12 months before departure:

- Implant a microchip. Vietnam does not require a pet microchip however, this will address safety issues.
- Rabies vaccination and certificate (certificate documents microchip number, date and validity of the vaccination).
- Make sure common vaccinations are up-to-date, as Vietnam has a high level of infectious diseases for dogs and cats.

Within seven days before departure obtain a health certificate. An accredited veterinarian must complete a Vietnam International Health Certificate endorsed by the USDA or CFIA if traveling from the US or Canada, respectively. For other countries, find the governing authority responsible for the import and export of animals for endorsement. If all these regulations are met, there is no need to quarantine healthy pets coming into Vietnam.

Outbound Travels from Vietnam

For authorization of your pet to leave Vietnam they need to take and pass a Rabies Serology Test. Begin the process six months before departure since authorities expect the test to take four months to complete. You will have to pay for the blood sample to be sent abroad for testing and the lab will send the results to your address in Vietnam.

You are also required to complete an official health certificate issued by the country of your destination to be approved by authorities (Tan Son Nhat Airport Animal Quarantine) within 10 days before departure. If you need assistance and advice, contact a pet relocation service provider in Saigon.

Finally, each country has its own regulations on relocating pets from Vietnam and it is your responsibility to become aware of the most recent regulations of your destination country. Furthermore, rabies-free countries like Australia, Singapore, and the UK have severe restrictions on cats and dogs coming from Vietnam. If you are traveling directly to a rabies-free country you need to send your pet via a rabies-controlled country first and this will require your pet to be quarantined there so prepare to stay with or arrange someone to be with your pet. ■

ADDITIONAL INFO

The best online source for accurate and current information for pet relocation is the IPATA - The Pet Shipping Experts (International Pet and Animal Association):
www.ipata.org/about-ipata

Recommended Pet Relocation Service Providers in Saigon
- Saigon Pet Clinic (33 Street 41, Thao Dien, D2)
- Saigon Express Agency Limited (SEAL) - IPATA Member

List of approved international laboratories for rabies tests:
www.ec.europa.eu/food/animal/liveanimals/pets/approval_en.htm

Parent-Teacher Partnerships

Develop a good working relationship with your child's school



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

IT'S TRUE THAT children whose parents take a strong interest in their child's education tend to outperform those whose parents don't. There are myriad reasons why this is, but what's particularly noticeable is that these same children tend to be more motivated to do well compared to their peers which is, essentially, what makes the difference between good learning and great learning.

When parents take a strong interest in their child's education, children notice. When parents don't, children notice that too. The importance of developing a good relationship between parents and school should therefore not be overlooked.

Below are 11 simple but effective tips to develop a good relationship with your child's school:

1. Get to know your child's class teacher: Know their face, their name and make sure they know yours too. It makes communication much easier; there is nothing more awkward for teachers (and parents) than not meeting the parents of a child you have taught all year until the summer term.

2. Be in constant communication with your child's teacher: Ask for your child's teacher's email address. Email is such a quick and easy way to let teachers know about anything you may want to communicate. Whether it is that your child didn't sleep very well the night before or perhaps they had great success during their homework project, your child's teacher wants to know.

3. Attend parent-teacher meetings: These meetings play a crucial role in understanding how your child is

performing at school and what their next steps are. Written reports are useful but so much more can be communicated face-to-face. It is also your chance to ask questions and to share information that you think may be valuable to your child's teacher.

4. Know what your child is learning: Teachers don't always want to bother parents and parents don't always want to bother teachers, but we all have the same common interest – your child's education. Trust me when I say that teachers like it when parents take a keen interest in their child's education because not every parent does, so don't be afraid to ask teachers what your child is learning, what your child's personal targets are and how you can help at home.

5. Continue learning at home: Learning is not something that only happens in school. Children learn so much from parents before they even come to school. Moreover, learning is not just about reading, writing and maths, it is also about attitudes and ways of thinking. Children only spend 10,000 hours at school during their lifetime. While that may seem a lot, it is also said that it takes 10,000 hours to master just one skill. So if your child shows interest in a particular topic, embrace it! Challenge them further and share your child's learning with the rest of the class.

6. Understand how children learn: What we know about how children learn is changing all the time. Education too is changing to keep up-to-date with this new information. Fortunately, there is an abundance of information online about these topics.

7. Share the same expectations: A very common occurrence is that parents and teachers often describe very different children. How children behave at school and at home are often very different. Why? Because the expectations of children differ and children react/adapt to that. If parents are able to model the same expectations as school, in terms of attitude, behavior and responsibilities, it will ensure a more consistent approach to learning.

8. Attend school events: Every school organizes events throughout the year: open days, sports fixtures, Christmas and summer shows, and other family events. By attending these, not only does it show your child that you take a keen interest in their education, it allows you to develop your relationship with your child's teachers further, and could make any 'tricky' conversations that little bit easier.

9. Volunteer: Whether it is volunteering to listen to children read one morning a week, supporting teachers on educational outings or lending resources that may support children's learning, every little bit helps.

10. Become a member of the school's Parent Teacher Group (PTG): Have your voice heard and make a difference to the things that happen in your child's school, for the benefit of your child and every other child in the school.

11. Support teachers by ensuring children are well prepared for lessons: Children who have eaten well, slept well, exercised and have all the correct materials with them at school will perform at the optimum level during the school day. ■

>>The List Education

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS



ABC International School (ABCIS)

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

Foundation & Early Primary Campus:

4, 1E Street, KDC Trung Son, Binh Hung, Binh Chanh, HCMC

Primary & Secondary Campus:

2, 1E Street, KDC Trung Son, Binh Hung, Binh Chanh, HCMC

5431 1833/34/35/36

office@theabcis.com

www.theabcis.com



EtonHouse International Pre-School @ An Phu

EtonHouse
International Pre-School @ An Phu

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

1st and 2nd floor, Somerset Vista, Hanoi Highway, An Phu, D2

08 6287 0804

www.etonhouse.vn/schools/hcmc

info@etonhouse.vn



EUROPEAN International School Ho Chi Minh City

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

730 Le Van Mien, Thao Dien, District 2, HCMC

www.eishcmc.com



EUROPEAN
International School
HO CHI MINH CITY



International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP)

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

92 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh

2222 7788 / 99

www.issp.edu.vn



International School



Saigon Star International School

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

Residential Area No.5, Thanh My Loi Ward, D2

3742 STAR / 3742 7827

www.saigonstarschool.edu.vn



The American School

The American School (TAS) is an international school that has been accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), representing 20 nationalities. TAS provides an American-based curriculum with rigorous performance standards and a variety of academic offerings including Advanced Placement courses, university credit courses through our partnership with Missouri State University, and an Intensive ESL Program for English Language Learners.

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

08 3519 2223 / 0903 952 223

admissions@tas.edu.vn

www.tas.edu.vn





The International School Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC)

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

28 Vo Truong Toan, D2
(08) 3898 9100
admissions@ishcmc.edu.vn
www.ishcmc.com



Also...

American International School

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

www.ais.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)

www.aisvietnam.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.

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.

www.igs-hcmc.de

Renaissance International School Saigon

Renaissance is an International British School offering the National Curriculum for England complemented by the International Primary Curriculum (IPC), Cambridge IGCSE and the International Baccalaureate. The school has made a conscious decision to limit numbers and keep class sizes small to ensure each pupil is offered an education tailored to meet their individual learning needs. It's a family school providing first-class facilities including a 350- seats theater, swimming pools, mini-pool, drama rooms, gymnasium, IT labs, music and drama rooms, science labs and an all-weather pitch.

www.renaissance.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.

www.ssis.edu.vn

The French International School Saint Ange

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


www.sa-saigon.com

The Montessori International School of Vietnam


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

www.montessori.edu.vn



You can 

Save Vietnam's endangered wildlife with WAR

-  Observe and feed rescued wildlife at Cu Chi Wildlife Rescue Station and other WAR rescue facilities.
-  Name a wildlife.
-  Support food for wildlife.
-  Volunteer.
-  Shop and save.



Wildlife At Risk (WAR) is a non-profit organisation based in Ho Chi Minh City
Tel: +84 3899 7314 Fax: +84 3899 7316 Email: info@wildlifeatrisk.org
www.wildlifeatrisk.org



Faces & Places



Happy Anniversary

The Racha Room celebrated its first birthday with an exclusive party full of food, drinks and live music.

IMAGES PROVIDED BY **THE RACHA ROOM**

Luxe Living

The M Residence brought together a range of lifestyle, luxury and style brands and activities over ten days.

IMAGES PROVIDED BY **M RESIDENCE**



EXCLUSIVE MEMBER DEAL - SIGN UP TODAY!

GET THE 3rd NIGHT FREE

when you stay 2 consecutive nights

For more information contact us via website: www.havanahotel.vn | email: info@havanahotel.vn | tel: 04 3555 3735

Located perfectly in the heart of Nha Trang Bay, Best Western Premier Havana Nha Trang is the ideal destination for your luxury getaway. Inspired by the beautiful harmony of Western and Asian styles, the hotel features a uniquely modern charming design concept, leaving you a warm welcome from the moment you enter the Hotel Lobby through to different rooms and suites.

- ✧ 41-storey building with 1.260 ocean-view guest rooms.
- ✧ Ideal location in Nha Trang center, only 40 minutes from Cam Ranh Airport.
- ✧ Private underground tunnel leading from the hotel to the beach.
- ✧ Infinity swimming pool with panoramic ocean view.
- ✧ Impressive dining experience with wide selection of cuisines.
- ✧ 360-degree Sky Deck offering entire view of the Bay on the top roof.



38 Tran Phu, Loc Tho, Nha Trang, Viet Nam
Tel: NHA TRANG 058 388 9999 | HA NOI 043 555 3735 | HCMC 083 914 1561
Fax: (058) 388 9900 | Email: info@havanahotel.vn
Website www.havanahotel.vn





THE AMERICAN SCHOOL

Developing Academic Excellence and Strength of Character

50% OFF

REGISTRATION FEE FOR SEMESTER 2 ENROLLMENT

SAVE UP TO 23 MILLION VND

Applicable for all application deposits before January 11, 2016.

RSVP now for a school tour
at The American School
From Early Childhood to High School

www.tas.edu.vn

172 Nguyen Van Hung Street, Thao Dien Ward, District 2, HCMC

+84-8 3519 2223

090 395 2223



Accredited by
**Western Association of
Schools and Colleges**

