



VIETNAM

MAY 2016

# BREAKING BEAUTY

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Redefines Beauty

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## This Month's Cover

Photo **Ngoc Tran**

Model **Jessica An**, founder and transwoman behind J'S Band, Saigon's only club and support network for transpeople

Makeup & Hair **Bé Bông**

Venue **Francis Xavier Vuong's Studio**

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**ticketbox.vn/imagine**



# Datebook

What's on this month...

MAY  
6-14



**What:** Livinwondr

**Where:** Galerie Quynh (Level 2, 151/3 Dong Khoi, D1)

**About:** Galerie Quynh will launch Hung Viet Tran's community-art project *Livinwondr*. The gallery will host a nine-day fundraising exhibition from May 6-14. Comprising a sculptural structure made up of stainless-steel tubes that can be arranged in various permutations, *Livinwondr* is an interactive project, taking on configurational transformations in direct response to public surroundings. The shape-shifting nature of *Livinwondr*

is not unlike how the name itself—and thus its meaning—can be deliberated upon along multiple avenues: the states of being immersed in wonder and beauty; of living with curiosity and an open mind; of recognizing living wonders—miracles or spectacles that are alive.

Hung Viet Tran is a transmedia artist and filmmaker who works through multiple channels: web-based media, video, installation, performance, architecture, sculpture, photography, and drawing to create interactive, transformative art that lives in public spaces.

Most often, Tran's work engages the general public as participants and collaborators who contribute to the creation of artworks. Through this open creative process, Tran hopes to transform the public's relationship with art into one based on spontaneous experiences, wherein responses to the artworks can highlight personal choices in embracing or rejecting historical, political, and social issues in their communities.

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

MAY 12-24

**What:** The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)

**Where:** Vista Walk (3rd Floor, 628C Xa Lo Hanoi, D2); VND300,000

**About:** 3 actors. 37 plays. 1,223 characters. 90 minutes. Come watch as three actors attempt to perform all of Shakespeare's plays in 90 minutes. You will laugh, you will cry, you may even learn a thing or two and there is the possibility of vomit, as is in all major journeys.

Join The Saigon Players in this comedic take on The Bard's greatest work. If you have ever thought *Romeo & Juliet* has too many characters or *Macbeth* is lacking in Scottish pride or *Titus Andronicus* is just downright disgusting, this show is for you. Come watch as they strip Shakespeare's work and the actors down to their most basic being. Suggested audience age is 14+.

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

**About:** Forbes Vietnam "30 under 30" 2016 is a list of 30 faces featured in different fields under the age of 30 in Vietnam. This is the second time Forbes Vietnam announced the list.

The people on the list are under the age of 30 who are making positive influences in their respective industries. The Under 30 Summit will be an international event with the participation of the brightest rising stars both locally and internationally.

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

MAY 12-14

**What:** Vietnam International Café Show

**Where:** SECC (799 Nguyen Van Linh, D7)

**About:** The very first coffee and cafe focused exhibition in Vietnam to introduce Vietnam to the world coffee industry as the newest and biggest emerging market in Southeast Asia. The show will help the activation of local coffee market by bringing most advanced technology and up-to-date products into Vietnam's coffee community. Special events at the show include: Vietnam National Barista Championship, Coffee Training Station, WBC All-Stars Vietnam 2016 and Cherry's Choice - New & Hot Products Showcase.

**Contact:** Visit [cafeshow.com.vn](http://cafeshow.com.vn) for more info

MAY 12

**What:** Under 30 Summit

**Where:** GEM Center (8 Nguyen Binh Khiem, D1); Starts at VND660,000

## MAY 12

**What:** ARC Business Networking & Fundraiser

**Where:** Thao Dien Coffee (38 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2); 7pm

**About:** Relocation Vietnam is hosting a business networking and fundraising evening for ARC Pet Rescue, a charity dedicated to rescuing abandoned cats and dogs. The event will have a special guest coming down from Hanoi especially to emcee the evening. An auction will also be taken place for donated items such as a new sofa valued at USD1,000, a bicycle, an iMac, pet grooming services and more.

ARC Pets is one of Vietnam's leading non-profit animal rescue groups. They rescue, treat, rehabilitate and then find homes for abused and abandoned cats and dogs. Over the last four years they have re-homed nearly 800 cats and dogs.

**Contact:** Visit Facebook: A.R.C. Vietnam (Animal Rescue & Care) for more info

## MAY 14

**What:** Avalon Emerson

**Where:** The Observatory (5 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4); 9pm; Free before 10pm, VND150,000 after

**About:** Avalon currently lives in Berlin; the music she produces comes from the dreamlike expanse and abstract textures of the Sonoran landscapes of Arizona. Her journey has taken her from that sun baked state to the contemporary dance music mecca via a long stint in San Francisco, where she cut her teeth as a DJ in the city's storied warehouse party scene. In her DJ sets and productions now, she offers a timeless narrative that reflects a passion for the sound design of new wave, the futurism of techno, the soul of American house and the exuberance of rave. Though she's built up steam in 2015 from multiple sets at Panorama Bar, and globetrotting all around Europe and North America, she's just getting started, and continues to outdo herself with original productions released on Whities, Shtum, Spring Theory, and Icee Hot, and her own DJ tool edit pool, the Cybernedit series.

**Contact:** Visit Facebook: *The Observatory* for more info



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[www.bluecross.com.vn](http://www.bluecross.com.vn)



## MAY 14

**What:** The Box

**Where:** Around Saigon; 8pm-12:30am; prices start at VND1.3 million per team of two

**About:** A box is hidden somewhere in the city and players, by bicycle, must scout a maze of narrow streets, find QR codes and gather clues to locate the box. The first team to find it wins its valuable content.

**Contact:** Visit [www.ubi-quest.com/the-box-2016](http://www.ubi-quest.com/the-box-2016) for more info

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MAY  
19



**What:** The Legend Lives On

**Where:** Saigon Opera House (7 Lam Son Square, D1); VND80,000; 8pm

**About:** The ballet *The Legend Lives On* is among the most invested works of the genre in recent years. The music, composed by composer/conductor Mer. A. Tran Vuong Thach, uses a symphony orchestra and choir to bring to life materials that are deeply rooted in Vietnamese traditional music. The choreography was done by four of the top Vietnamese choreographers: People Artist Vu Viet Cuong, People Artist Kim Quy, Nguyen Phuc Hai and Nguyen Phuc Hung. The ballet is based on a historic story about the great values that paved the way on the fight to free and unify the nation. The work will be performed by the HBSO Ballet Company, featuring Tran Hoang Yen, Dam Duc Nhuan, Ho Phi Diep and Nguyen Thu Trang.

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

MAY 20

**What:** Land of Dreams

**Where:** SECC (799 Nguyen Van Linh, D7); VND650,000

**About:** Land of Dreams is an EDM music festival that's expected to draw 15,000 ravers with a huge light & sound setup and activities such as face painting and water fighting. DJs from Holland, Canada and Germany are expected to perform.

**Contact:** Visit [ticketbox.vn/land-of-dreams/en](http://ticketbox.vn/land-of-dreams/en) for more info



## MAY 21

**What:** Fest in Breizh 2016

**Where:** Cargo Bar (7 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4); 4:30pm; VND100,000 early bird, VND150,000 at the door

**About:** KBBV-Bretons Society in Vietnam brings a new edition of Fest in Breizh after the success of their previous ones. Celebrated in Vietnam since 2004 the "Gouel Breizh" or Breton Day is organized by K.B.B.V., Kervridigezh Bretoned Bro Vietnam, the Breton Society in Vietnam. Their program this year includes different Celtic music from Brittany and other Celtic countries. More than 30 artists will perform live, including a Breton folk band, a Celtic Fest-Noz rock band and a fusion band. Restaurants and food stalls will be on site selling crepes, cider, beer, ice cream and more. During the event a lucky draw will take place with an Air France return ticket from HCMC to Paris.

**Contact:** Visit [www.ticketbox.vn/event/fest-in-breizh-60575/34621](http://www.ticketbox.vn/event/fest-in-breizh-60575/34621) to purchase tickets



## MAY 26

**What:** Network Girls

**Where:** Merci Nails (17/A6 Le Thanh Ton, D1); 6:30pm-9pm; VND500,000 includes free flow wine and canapés

**About:** Network Girls is a monthly networking event at venues in Ho Chi Minh City that gives expat and local female working professionals in Saigon a channel to meet each other and exchange ideas on life in HCMC, employment and business. Members of Network Girls usually meet on the last Thursday of every month for breakfast (7:30am-9am) or cocktails & canapés (6:30pm-9pm).

**Contact:** To attend, RSVP to Van Ly at [networkgirlshcmc@gmail.com](mailto:networkgirlshcmc@gmail.com) or find them on Facebook: *NetworkGirlsHCMC*

## MAY 27

**What:** Sierra Sam & Pascal Hetzel

**Where:** The Observatory (5 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4); 9pm; Free before 10pm, VND150,000 after

**About:** Sammy Goossens aka Sierra Sam has been active in the electronic music world for more than 15 years. Starting as a party promoter in his home town Liege (Belgium), he shortly hit the studio to produce music for labels like Reload, R&S, Rotation, Pure Plastic, Muller and Teknotika. From the south of Germany, Pascal moved to Berlin in spring 2013 and it didn't take long for him to become one of the city's most promising upcoming talents with regular gigs at Panorama Bar, Watergate and Sisypheos.

**Contact:** Visit Facebook: *The Observatory* for more info

## MAY 28

**What:** Bourbon Street Jazz & Blues Festival

**Where:** Cargo Bar (4 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4); 6pm; VND500,000

**About:** The fourth annual festival is organized by Kids First Enterprise to raise money to give the "Gift of Mobility" to deserving kids in Vietnam. [www.kidsfirstenterprise.org](http://www.kidsfirstenterprise.org)

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

## MAY 28 & 29, JUNE 4&5

**What:** George's Marvellous Medicine

**Where:** Saigon Outcast (188 Nguyen Van Huong, D2), 4pm; VND300,000 if purchased before May 15, VND350,000 after

**About:** Dragonfly Theatre's next production is the Roald Dahl classic *George's Marvellous Medicine*. George's nasty old grandma needs teaching a lesson, and he decides the best remedy is a special homemade medicine. What happens to Grandma next is a surprise to everyone. The afternoon will include an interactive theatre show, a climbing wall, a barbecue and a Make your own Magic Medicine drink workshop.

**Contact:** Visit [dragonflytheatrevietnam.weebly.com](http://dragonflytheatrevietnam.weebly.com) for more info

## JUNE 4 & 5

**What:** Imagine

**Where:** Nha Van Hoa Thanh Nien (4 Pham Ngoc Thach, D1); June 4 at 7:30pm, June 5 at 3pm

**About:** This year, Dancenter's annual show unites more than 200 dancers sharing their love for the art of dance. The show is dedicated to their wonderful audience, who has given them incredible support over the years. At this ninth edition of the show, they want to see you all up on your feet cheering, dancing and filling the theater with your happiness and energy. As always, Dancenter will bring you a truly theatrical experience with passionate performers who excel in dance styles from ballet to hip-hop, belly dance to contemporary, the best of music, costume and lighting design.

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

## JUNE 8-10

**What:** Coffee & Dessert Fair 2016

**Where:** SECC (799 Nguyen Van Linh, D7)

**About:** The Dutch Bakery Co will participate in the Coffee & Dessert show and organize three free workshops: 1) how to make cappuccino muffins, 2) how to make tiramisu cake and steamed brownie, and 3) topping ideas for coffee and iced beverages.

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

## JUNE 11

**What:** Phu Quoc International Marathon

**Where:** Phu Quoc

**About:** The Phu Quoc International Marathon has been tagged the "Run in Paradise," a course between beautiful national parks and views of the ocean. Participants will enjoy a scenic race down the southern half of the island with one of the most scenic stretches of beaches in Southeast Asia. Many events are scheduled: the main race of 42km (Full Marathon), plus the shorter 21km (Half Marathon), 10km, 5km and a 1km kids race, finishing inside the grounds of Long Beach Resort Phu Quoc, where athletes are welcome to run straight into the refreshing ocean. Athletes will be given access to the resort's facilities to encourage athletes to relax and enjoy the beauty of Phu Quoc.

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

# The Bulletin

Promotions and news in HCMC and beyond...



## PIU PIU OPENS

PIU PIU (97 Hai Ba Trung, D1) is made of three floors with different vibes: The Club (an intimate club with music), The Craft (an open-air space serving craft beers and filled with fun games) and The Smokey Jungle (a rooftop with the specificity of being the first Molecular Cocktail bar in Saigon).

## JIBES BEACH CLUB PROMOTION

Jibes Beach Club ([www.fullmoon-village.com](http://www.fullmoon-village.com)) in Suoi Nuoc is offering 15 percent off on all watersport rentals during May and September. Watersport equipments available are: catamaran sailing, wind surfing, stand up paddleboarding, kayaking, and boogie boarding. Suoi Nuoc beach is a 10-minute drive from the center of Muine.



## HOI AN HISTORIC HOTEL SUMMER PACKAGE

Hoi An Historic Hotels introduces reduced rates from VND2,850,000++ per room, includes a two-night stay in a superior room, breakfast buffet at The Oak Terrace and tour packages to Cham Island. Other discounts include 20 percent off for dining services in Hoi An Historic restaurant, and 30 percent off on spa services. When staying at the Hoi An Historic Hotel guests also can use the free shuttle bus to Cua Dai Beach. There are also free tai chi classes and Vietnamese classes held periodically to provide a unique travel experience for visitors. For more info, contact [sm@hoianhotel.com.vn](mailto:sm@hoianhotel.com.vn) or 3920 4625.



## RENAISSANCE RIVERSIDE SAIGON PROMOTIONS

**Atrium:** Afternoon Tea—Choose from either the Rose Tea Set (VND200,000++) or the High Tea Set (VND220,000++). Valid till June 30.

**Liquid Sky Bar:** Are you seeking a place to chill out with cocktails as the sun goes down and enjoy the iconic city vistas? Live DJ performance every Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Order any two bottles of Liquid Gold Vodka or Prosecco from the list, and get another bottle free. Valid till June 30.



## CENTRAL VIETNAM PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP

A three-day photography workshop focusing on people, landscape and night photography will run once a month until August. Starting in Hoi An, the workshop will take participants to remote villages and to the amazing Tam Giang lagoon. There is a 20 percent discount for expats living in Vietnam. Visit [www.picsofasia.com](http://www.picsofasia.com) for more info.

## THE ANAM IN NHA TRANG OPENS

Combining colonial era charm and service with 21st century design and luxuries, The Anam ([www.theanam.com](http://www.theanam.com)) welcomes you to a yet-to-be-discovered stretch of Vietnam's glorious sun-drenched coastline. Set on a private beach and staffed with Vietnam's finest butlers, valets and concierges, The Anam reaches new levels of sophistication with supreme service, comfort and charm. With a range of stunningly appointed suites and villas, including beachside accommodation and private pools, The Anam presents old world elegance in a new world setting. Surrounded by tranquil landscaped gardens and serene pool areas, we invite you to relax in space and in a stillness only broken by the ocean breeze.



## MADE IN NEW ZEALAND

More than 50 new products from New Zealand were offered to Vietnam's top buyers at a private event held by the New Zealand Trade & Enterprise (NZTE) last month. Frozen desserts, fresh seafood and sheep milk gelato are some of the latest products expected to reach Vietnam in 2016.

"Food hygiene and safety are serious concerns in Vietnam, making New Zealand's fresh, safe and traceable food an ideal fit, especially seafood and fruit," says Tony Martin, Trade Commissioner and Consul General, Vietnam.

Among the most exciting newly-launched Kiwi products and brands were Spring Sheep Milk Co., which creates luxurious, creamy and healthy New Zealand sheep milk products, including gelato and milk powder suitable for lactose-intolerant individuals; Talley's, who has brought New Zealand's amazing seafood harvest to the plates of diners across the region, in particular signature Greenshell Mussels found only in New Zealand; and The New Zealand Dessert Company creators of Dollop Kitchens frozen desserts, the perfect on-the-go fresh, creamy and delicious cheesecakes and dessert pots.



## BABA'S KITCHEN OPENS IN HOI AN

Baba's Kitchen (115 Phan Chu Trinh), one of the city's most popular Indian restaurants, has shed the shackles of Saigon, opening a restaurant in Hoi An. For travelers and expats who need their fix of mutton *korma*, onion *pakora* or chicken *tandoori* and garlic *naan* bread. One of the best things about Baba's Kitchen is that its food has no predetermined levels of spiciness. If you crave a tear-fuelling mouth-burning experience, just ask. But if your taste buds are overly sensitive to hot spice, then say the word and you, too, can enjoy the delicately blended spices of India without downing spoonfuls of yogurt after every bite to cool the pain.



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# TROI OI!

## The country in numbers



**150,000** **NEW CANCER CASES** were reported in 2015, a significant increase

from 69,000 in 2000. Cancer experts said the reason for the leap is because of unsafe food, pollution and prolonged life-span. The Tumor Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City announced that the country has around 1,000 new cases of breast cancer monthly.

**450** **DRUG ADDICTS** escaped from a rehabilitation center, where most were held for compulsory treatment, last month. The detainees attacked guards, climbed walls and broke down the main gate at a center in Ba Ria-Vung Tau.

"We have found 150 patients while search efforts are underway for the other 300," said Le Thi Trang Dai, Director of the provincial labor department. Local authorities are urging families to bring back runaway patients so they can complete their treatment. The escapees have been begging for clothes from local residents and trying to hitchhike out of the area.

The government enforces a compulsory two-year treatment program for the country's estimated 140,000 drug addicts; they can also voluntarily enroll.

**USD 35,000**

is how much a man who was wrongly diagnosed with HIV 10 years ago is suing a health center for. While Suu, 43, was serving a prison term in 2003, his blood was taken for an HIV test as part of a national surveillance program. The Nghe An Preventive Medicine Center reported him as HIV+ and he was monitored under code number 1068. In 2007, Suu's medical files were transferred from the center to the Nghe An Center for HIV/AIDS Prevention. According to him, the test result was not disclosed to him at the time, and

**17,600 sqm** **CUBA-BACKED HOSPITAL** opened in Quang Bing Province last month. The Vietnam-

Cuba Dong Hoi Friendship Hospital features six surgery rooms and 160 beds in departments including emergency, medical image analysis, diagnosis, blood transfusion-hematology and microbiology. The building is part of an upgrade project worth over VND450 billion, and is expected to serve 700-800 people per day. The facility has a PhoenixTM automated microbiology system for identification and antimicrobial susceptibility, as well as other medical devices imported from the US, Japan, Germany and the Netherlands.



**BEGGARS** on the street is the goal in order to promote a tourism-friendly city in Nha Trang by 2020, according to a recent proposal. A new force will be formed to clear Nha Trang of panhandlers under the VND7.7 billion campaign. The specialized force will run frequent patrols, particularly at local historical sites, attractions, bus stations and harbors. Panhandlers will either

be sent to social protection centers, vocational training schools or asked to return to their hometowns. The plan also seeks to have zero Nha Trang registered residents earning their livelihood through begging by 2020.

he was not made aware of it until after his release in 2013.

"In 2013, after I had returned home from my time in prison, I was put under the supervision of the Nghi Thu Ward Medical Center as an HIV+ patient," Suu recalled. "However, after several health checks, the chief doctor at the center found it strange that all my readings were fine after ten years of supposedly being HIV+, and encouraged me to take the test again." Test results at the Nghe An Center for HIV/AIDS Prevention in 2014 and at the Friendship General Hospital of Nghe An both indicated that he does not have HIV. On August 2015, the Nghe An health department agreed to compensate Suu a little over VND2 million, which is the cost of re-taking the HIV test and transportation expenses, deeming all his other requests "unfounded." His still-pending lawsuit is asking for USD35,000 for legal fees, material and mental damage.



50%

**OF WARTIME BOMBS** have been cleared to date in north-central Vietnam. Officials in Ha Tinh Province said they have neutralized many kinds left from the American War, mostly in Can Loc and Huong Son District, as part of a bomb deactivating campaign launched in early 2015. They deactivated 11 bombs

weighing 250-750 pounds each, 100 submunitions and other explosives. Ky Anh District is the next place scheduled for clearance. Military chief Nguyen Ba Phuc said critical areas like industrial parks, manufacturing zones and farmlands had been given priority. With current resources, it may take about 320 years to clear all landmines and bombs in the country, according to an official.

**1st FAMILY AND JUVENILE COURT** opened last month. A courthouse specializing in handling cases concerning marriage, family and juveniles officially opened

in Ho Chi Minh City at 26 Le Thanh Ton in District 1. The court will specialize in processing familial and marital disputes (divorce cases account for 40 percent of all cases filed in Ho Chi Minh City) and cases where the offender or the victim is under 18 years old. This is the first model of a so-called 'friendly court' in Vietnam aimed at catalyzing country-wide judicial reform. The court

will also have a board of 20 expert counselors available for consultation with the judge before ruling a case. Former Deputy Chief Justice of the Supreme People's Court of Vietnam Tran Van Do, who supported the establishment of a family and juvenile court from its inception, expressed his delight to see the court come to life. "I think the establishment of a friendly court where children can play and receive psychological consultations without constantly hearing sirens and seeing criminals in handcuffs is a great start."



1st & 2nd

**HCMC METRO LINES** may not be able to operate upon completion because of problems surrounding internal radio frequencies. Maintaining a smooth and unobstructed communication system requires a unique radio band frequency, which, as the Ho Chi Minh City Management Authority of Urban

Railways (MAUR) found, has proven to be much more complicated than first thought. According to MAUR, there are currently 11 metro projects in Ho Chi Minh City, two of which have launched and will use their own radio frequency to communicate, control and monitor their operation. However, there might not be enough suitable frequencies available by the time the construction of the metro lines is completed, owing to the rapid rate of development in the southern metropolis.



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VOTED AS ONE OF THE TOP 50  
"GLOBAL BEAUTIES," MODEL AND  
ACTRESS TRUC DIEM OPENS  
UP ABOUT BULLYING, HER  
NON-VIETNAMESE FEATURES  
AND THE VALUE OF BEAUTY

# *Fey Miss*

TEXT BY MICHAEL ARNOLD

## NOBODY LIKES TO ADMIT

that they're particularly beautiful—to say it out loud as if it's something objectively true. Especially in a morally conservative country like Vietnam, it flies in the face of proper modest behavior, suggesting vanity, insecurity, shallowness and blatant fanfaronade.

There comes a point, however, when such modesty becomes ridiculous. In 2007, when a panel of international judges named Vietnamese model and actress Truong Tri Truc Diem among the top 50 most beautiful women *in the world* (to put that in perspective, the global population in that year was estimated at 6,646,000,000 people), surely that was the point where she could no longer say “*maybe I'm kind of attractive*” and keep a straight face. There must be a time when it becomes acceptable to look someone in the eye and say it openly—yes, *I'm very beautiful*—when the evidence is overwhelming?

Culture, it seems, wins out over pride. When Truc Diem is asked directly, “What makes you a beautiful woman?” Her answer is disappointingly traditional—she flashes that million dollar smile, and says humbly, “I think my personality.”

The fact is that Truc Diem still has trouble believing it. No matter how many people have insisted on praising her for her fine features, all this attention to her looks is not something she was ever prepared for—in fact, her life before modeling suggested quite the opposite.

“I was shy, because every day that I went from home to school, the minute I entered there would be people picking on me,” she says. “‘Wow you're so tall, hey there's that skinny girl.’ The nicknames that they thought of for me. My class was on the top floor, so I had to walk past the entire school every day. Sometimes I felt a little bullied.”

“I grew up in a way that... I don't look like anybody else,” she explains. “They told me I didn't look Vietnamese, I have a high nose, I have the features of a non-Vietnamese person. I was considered very tall in school, so they could always spot me because I was too tall, too skinny, white-skinned. They always made jokes about me. So I didn't feel confident. People were always teasing me. The way that Asian people raise and teach their children is very strict, too. Not a lot of compliments; we're not really open to each other. So basically I had no idea if I looked pretty, nobody ever told me that.”

Initially, the only person who recognized Truc Diem's beauty was her own mother, and it was on her insistence that Diem auditioned for a beauty pageant in order to stand in for her mother in realizing a long-held ambition.

“My mother told me that she always had a dream,” she says, “that there were a lot of things that she would have done in her lifetime, but back then she didn't have the strength to do it. It was wartime and everything. I'm her first child, and she told me that I'm a lot like her. She wanted me to go far in life, and she wanted me to try a beauty pageant. Back then, if Grandma had let her, she'd

I went home and studied, I posed in front of the mirror, my sister and brother came back and looked at me like I was crazy. But the next time I went back, I got a picture on their cover. My first-ever picture, when I was 18 on the cover of this big magazine, *The Gioi Phu Nu*. It was a shock.”

Placing as runner-up in the pageant ensured immediate recognition for her unique look. “It was like this,” she says, snapping her fingers. “I started to get titles *bam bam bam*, just like that. I didn't ever expect it or dream about it, I just did it. It was just like a tornado had sucked me in, and then *boom*—I'm in another world. Lots of things that I didn't expect turned out to actually happen. Life is really about the unexpected.”

Truc Diem's explanation for her international appeal has its roots in her initial lack of confidence from being bullied for her look. “I never thought I could become a Miss-something, or one of the most beautiful women in the world... that's too far, it was kind of amazing. Honestly, I felt that the people outside of Vietnam could understand my beauty. Most of the Vietnamese beautiful girls, we're all unique and different, but I'm usually told that my smile is so big, and they like small, small lips.”

That, it seems, is what it comes down to—if anything, Diem's smile is one of the broadest and most easily recognizable in the industry. Even when no other part of her face is visible, it's hard to mistake that grin: inherited from her tall and handsome father, it's her smile that, more than anything else, has distinguished her as an unmistakable beauty.

Diem is now 29, happily married, and currently

focusing her energies on the watch business she manages with her husband, which sells from the ground floor of Bitexco Tower. Even so, she recognizes the importance of maintaining her appearance for the time being—at this point in her career, she does admit that, all modesty aside, being beautiful does have its value.

“It gives people confidence,” she agrees. “When people meet you, and you have a decent look, they feel you're more approachable. They feel closer to you. That's why there are pageants. Miss World, Miss Universe, the beauty that inspires people. It gives people a peaceful feeling when they look at it, because beauty really does bring people together.” ■



have done it herself. She thought that I could do it, because she was already too old. I'm a dream-reacher for her.”

Unexpectedly, Diem's first shots were enthusiastically picked up by the contest organizers. Within a day, she was told to report to their office to take official pictures with a professional photographer. The results were not good, but a sympathetic editor decided to give her a helping hand.

“She gave me all these kinds of international magazines that she had in the house,” says Diem. “She said, ‘I know there's no professional school here that shows you how to pose. But here's a source, you can learn.’ I said, OK, I'll try.



# Rejuvenating Body, Mind & Soul

An Introduction to Ayurveda and Aveda Herbal Spa & Wellness

TEXT AND IMAGES PROVIDED BY AVEDA

NATIVE TO INDIA, Ayurveda is an ancient medicinal system developed during the Vedic Indian period roughly 5,000 years ago. The word “ayur” means life and “veda” means science, therefore “Ayurveda” is the science of life. It involves a holistic approach to ensure physical, as well as spiritual health. It is governed by the law of nature, which suggests that life is a combination of the senses, mind, body and soul.

According to Ayurveda, an individual's constitution is made up of three bio-energies (*doshas*): *vata*, *khapa* and *pitta doshas*. Perfect balance between all three *doshas*, with the predominance of any one of the *dosha*, determines a person's constitution and attributes along with their physical health and mental set up. Panchkarma is Ayurveda's primary purification and detoxification wing which aims at keeping a healthy body, mind & soul by balancing the three *doshas*.

In today's age where life is stressful and hectic, Ayurveda provides a completely natural, rejuvenating and detoxifying approach towards keeping an individual fit & fine. It is a preventive, chemical-free approach that can be customized to different body types.

Here right in Saigon, Aveda Herbal Spa & wellness is providing some of the commonly used therapies based on Ayurveda and Panchkarma, under the guidance of Mrs. Poonam Barthwal, a certified Panchkarma practitioner. The products used here are all herbal, carefully picked and blended based on Ayurvedic recipes. The therapists are trained in providing massages and relaxation techniques based on Ayurveda and Panchkarma, so that you can re-discover the benefits of Spas and get something more out of your spa visits.

Aveda Herbal Spa & wellness believes that nature has an inherent power of healing which works unceasingly to create bodily health. Everything in nature tends to re-establish that perfect harmony that constitutes normal life. Every force in the individual tends to preserve a perfect equilibrium and, if it has been disturbed, to re-establish order and harmony.

So before taking these therapies, a questionnaire is provided to find the *prakriti* (body constitution) of the

individual, which can help to find out the predominant *doshas* and imbalances in the body. Since no two individuals can have the same imbalance, these therapies are specially customized according to each person's need, body constitution, imbalance of *doshas*.

Aveda Herbal Spa & wellness provides the following therapies to Rejuvenate your body mind and soul.

**Shirodhara:** This is a unique Ayurvedic therapy which involves pouring of a stream of warm, herbal oil over the THIRD EYE on forehead while gently massaging your head.

It takes you to the deeper stage of relaxation to eliminate headache, memory loss, lack of sleep and concentration.

**Abhyangam:** Its an Ayurvedic body massage, where in herbal oils are massaged onto in a specific manner and strokes in different positions. In this therapy, the specific movements activate the *marma* points (vital energy points) which increases the body's defense mechanism, immunity and blood circulation to relieves the tiredness, joint pains and muscular cramps.

**Champi** (Indian oil head massage): *Champi* is the original Ayurvedic art of HEAD MASSAGE which helps to strengthen and improve the fullness of hair. This luxuriant hair invigorating treatment uses a combination of various herbal oils soaked in seven types of herbs for 2 weeks which not only nourish your hair but also releases muscular tension from the head, neck and shoulders.

**Herbal hair packs:** These packs are made with all natural, nourishing and

hair strengthening ingredients, which are carefully blended to give just the right balance for hair. This balanced blend works for all hair types as an ultimate conditioner and strengthens hair. It gives a cooling effect, promotes hair growth and stops dandruff & other hair problems due to coloring, perming or straightening with chemicals.

**Henna treatments:** Henna is a 100 percent natural hair dye and conditioner, with a mixture of herbs and other natural ingredients, used to provide gray hair coverage as well as rejuvenate hair internally. Henna Treatment works without any side effects unlike the other chemical hair color/preparations. It has the ability of coating each hair shaft thus adding strength, thickness and body to the hair. It leaves the hair healthy, clean, shiny and easy to manage.

Other than the above Aveda also provides Facial care services, that are tailor made to each individual skin type to give that glowing and confident look and other Relaxing massages to relieve your body tensions.

Aveda Herbal Spa & wellness is a boutique spa, which is unique in providing therapies which not only focuses on beautification but also on revitalizing & rejuvenating body, mind and soul in a very clean, professional and truly relaxing ambience. After a few sessions at Aveda you come out glowing and rejuvenated both internally and externally.

Aveda Herbal Spa & Wellness ([www.avedaherbal.com](http://www.avedaherbal.com)) is located at Villa 1, Alley 21, 21 Xuan Thuy, Thao Dien, D2. ■





# Continuing Education

TEXT AND IMAGES BY CHARLES BARNES

**THIS IS TAI.** He's currently in fifth grade. His mother proudly shows us all the certificates and achievements Tai and his sister have won in school over the years. Tai is proud of his most recent academic awards, however, next year, like all the other kids in his village, he will stop school and start working full-time in his family's fishing business. To move beyond the fifth grade, Tai will have to travel 70 kilometers every day to the next town in addition to paying a higher school fee. The daily commute on the school truck costs VND24,000 per child for the hour-long trip from the river to the school, plus another VND20,000 for lunch. Tai begs his parents to allow him to continue

studying, but their combined income is insufficient, despite both working full-time. His future is limited to fishing with his father or working on nearby farms as a manual laborer. For his parents, and most parents who live by and on Ma Da River, the financial burden of a higher education is simply too much to shoulder.

Tai's older sister, who's also a high achiever, is 16 and hasn't been to school in several years. She was given the option in 2013 to move to Saigon and live with an adoptive family, but didn't want to leave her mother, who suffers from a health condition that leaves her incapacitated for days. Now Tai's sister spends her days mending

nets and taking care of her mother.

Every year, approximately 40 kids are forced to stop studying in Ma Da. Giving the children in this community an opportunity to study beyond fifth grade can help elevate them from poverty. If funds can be raised to build a third building to add five more rooms to the existing school complex, there would be sufficient space to teach sixth through ninth grade, plus a planning room for the teachers. While this may seem small, it would make an immeasurable difference to the children.

For more info, visit [www.facebook.com/Hidgegroup](http://www.facebook.com/Hidgegroup) or call Group Leader Nga Tong at 098 789 6242. ■







# MAN OF IRON

MEET 63-YEAR-OLD PHU SI HUE,  
SAIGON'S ORIGINAL  
CHAMPION BODYBUILDER

TEXT AND INTERVIEW BY PATRICK CARPENTER

**I AM SITTING** on a bench press in a gym that looks more like a motorcycle repair shop. It's all free weights and no-nonsense, bare to the bone and it never was anything else nor did it ever try to be. It's a little larger than a shipping container, dressed with weak lighting and yellowed, curled, torn posters no one has really looked at in years. Rickety fans push air to and fro without any noticeable relief. The bench I am on feels like a hand-made replacement, with about a thumbnail's worth of padding packed into a solid surface after decades of deflation. The weights are well worn and spread on the matted floor like the spare change of Colossus. You don't

come here to ogle. You don't come here in spandex or lycra or high-performance, moisture-wicking microfiber. You come here to use Mr. Phu's tools to build up your own machine without distraction. You come here with the same loyalty of the pre-Vatican II churchgoer: give me that old-time religion, where I build my temple brick by brick. No shortcuts, no false prophets, no easy virtues.

I am waiting to speak to Saigon's original champion bodybuilder and owner of this gym, Mr. Phu Si Hue. He's 63, solid as the citadel, and supplementing his income by giving order to the sea of motorbikes that come in every morning. I have arrived during the rush, so I only

have time to give myself a two-minute tour of the facility. I recognize him in the faded photos, flexing with a group of friends around some local pool. They've all got Bruce Lee hair, biceps like frozen pheasants, pectorals like a Christmas ham. They're all smiling for the camera with smiles that show that bodybuilding is not yet the money-making profession of movie stars; they're smiling because it's fun for them to be like this.

Mr. Phu is the clear champion in the group; he sticks out like a swollen thumb among fingers. From the photos, and from the notoriety of now famous bodybuilders, I expect Mr. Phu to have a personality as

outgoing as his pecs. But he is a very shy, reserved man, with an easy smile, a gentle handshake, and a manner that hints of slight embarrassment from being the center of attention. His voice is quiet and he wears his frame with something between the nonchalance of a lifelong athlete and the humble manner of a modest tradesman. His answers are honest, even if they read prouder later on the page. Throughout the course of the conversation, I keep trying to determine if his building up of his body was a way to shield his shyness or to otherwise compensate for some insecurity. But by the end of the afternoon, I come away only with the conclusion that he is a man who found something that he liked early on, the way another finds music or aviation, and did not ask more of the world than to be able to do what he enjoys (not always an easy thing—especially in a country recovering from war). And it is clear he still enjoys it; he accepts without hesitation the request to pose like he had at the height of his success, and breaks out his competition costume and begins to flex without further ado. In short, Mr. Phu has lived with a simple formula for enjoying life from which it seems he has not thought to deviate, and has been rewarded with good health and quiet strength at an age when others are breaking down. Hats off to him and to others who serve as quiet examples of success on their own terms.

**So what was your prize for being the champion in 1989?**

A bowl of *pho*.

**And for being champion in 1990?**

A t-shirt and a pair of shorts.

**What kind of dedication did it take to win of a bowl of *pho*, a t-shirt, and a pair of shorts?**

From 1975 to 1980, I worked out eight hours every day. I'd wake up at 3:30am to be at the gym by 4am so I could get an hour and a half workout before breakfast, doing regular repetitions of 130 kilos. In 1980, I got married, so I cut my time at the gym down to between five and six hours a day.

**And what kind of a diet did it take to work out between five and eight hours a day?**

Well, growing up, my family sold *pho*, so we ate well. But during the hard times after the war, it was a very simple diet—rice and sweet potatoes. Now I eat four meals a day: rice, fruit, meat and water. Maybe I drink a little Coke after dinner. But back then, competition or not, it was every day just cheap rice and sweet potatoes or cassava. I built up a strong stomach this way.

**So your family used to sell *pho*, which is what you won when you were first crowned champion. Oh, the irony! But how did you manage to become champion on such a diet?**

My advantage was that I had already built up muscle early. I had been in karate, played football, and run distance before high school. I had already been lifting weights for these sports, so I did not have to start at the beginning when I decided at twenty that I wanted to become a bodybuilder.

**Why bodybuilding?**

I just liked the people who were doing it. I liked to be around them and their crowd. It was a different time back then; we were all training together. I had talent, it was recognized, and so a teacher came from Cambodia and taught me special poses for the lats [latissimus dorsi; the broadest muscle up the trunk of the back] and the chest. But I then taught the bodybuilders I would compete against. I opened a gym in 1978 and taught whoever wanted to work out. I even taught the women that were interested in lifting weights and bodybuilding. Now, obviously, bodybuilding is a profession, so everyone trains separately and is far more competitive. But back then we all just came together because we all had the same interest; we all just enjoyed the sport. And we stayed friends even during the competitions. We are a smaller group now but we're still friends.

**How many competitions were there back then, and how many did you win?**

Competitions were three times a year. I won from 1987 through 1990, so a twelve-time champion. I blew out my knee trying to lift 170 kilos and that

was the end of my competing.

**When and why did it change?**

After 1990. There was more information, more photos coming in - even videos of bodybuilding competitions from all over. It was exciting to see all this, to get our hands on these materials. It was also the first time that bodybuilders were becoming stars; the first time we saw how famous Arnold Schwarzenegger was. So everything got more popular and in fact our gym got more popular; we began to attract a crowd. We were even asked to perform during national holidays and at government ceremonies. We'd wear long white pants and white t-shirts, not what we would wear at the competitions. In 1978, when I opened my gym, there were only three other gyms in Saigon, four total and one each in Districts 1, 5, 10 and 11. Membership cost VND800,000. But by 1990, it was becoming a different sport; it was becoming a global lifestyle, and gyms were a business."

**What about steroids?**

Nothing until around 2000. Steroids only come when the money comes into bodybuilding. Some tried steroids made in China because they were much cheaper but this was risky; there were allergies, bad reactions.

**And now? How has life as twelve-time champion treated you?**

I have 70-80 members now at my gym, which I had to move five times since 1978. I've been on Nguyen Thi Minh Khai for six years now. I still work out as much as I can, but now I only work with 50 kilos instead of 130-170 when I was competing. I have three sons and four granddaughters and I go to my sister's for lunch nearly every day. On weekends I go to church service with my wife. And I still have my health. ■

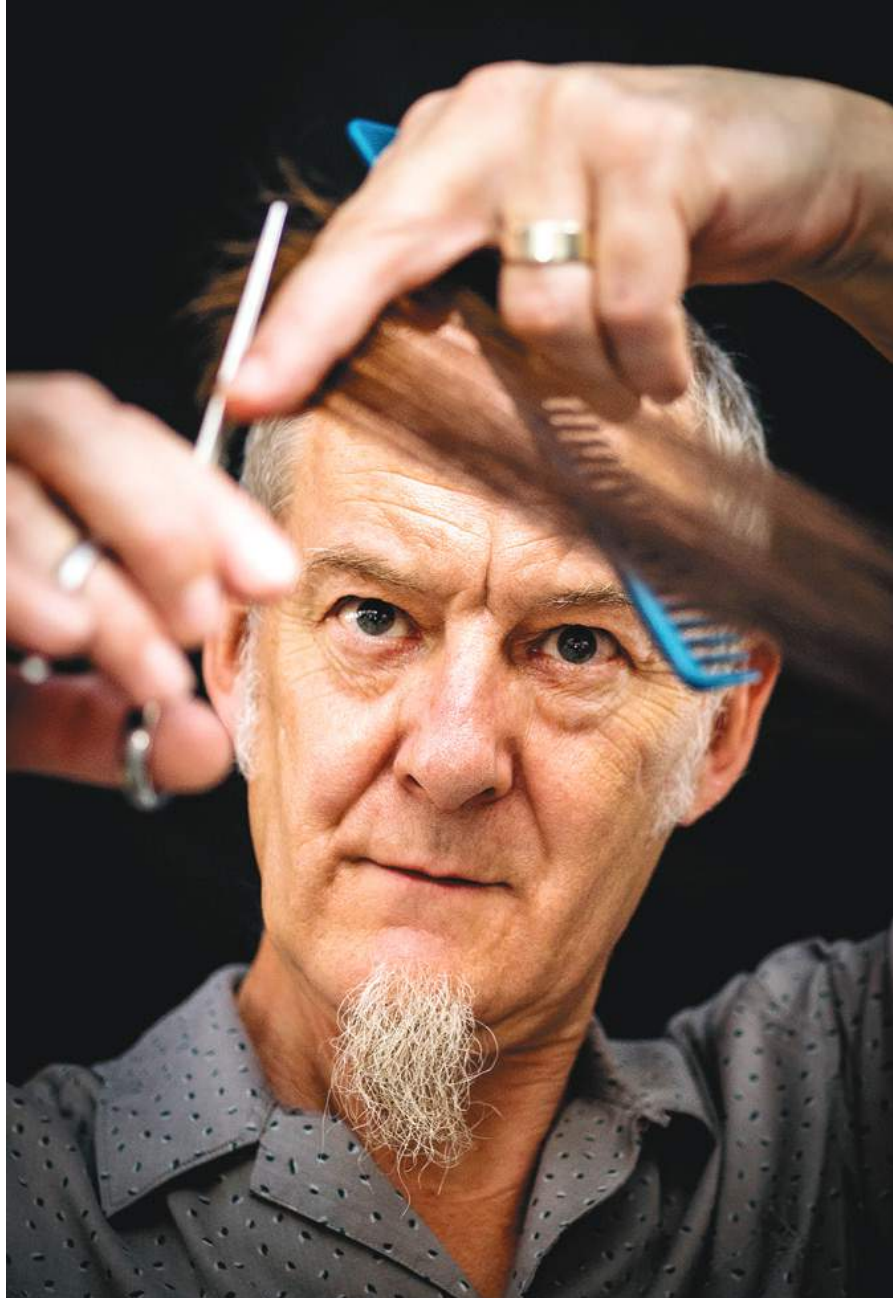


# BANG ON



MICHAEL BARNES ON HIS JOURNEY  
FROM WASHING CELEBRITY HAIR  
IN LONDON TO DOING HAIR AND  
FASHION SHOWS IN VIETNAM

TEXT BY **MICHAEL ARNOLD**  
PORTRAIT BY NGOC TRAN  
HAIR IMAGES PROVIDED BY MICHAEL BARNES



the big celebrities of the day. Washing hair for the likes of Peter O'Toole, Robert Wagner and Natalie Wood, he quickly began to develop skills in British precision cutting—his proficiency in the style becoming well-known by the time he was in his late teens as he began traveling the world to showcase his technique at international hair shows.

"I did my first show in 1976," he says. "Then I did my first trip in 1977, I went to Italy, Switzerland and Japan to do hair shows. The difference between hair shows and fashion shows is obviously that the hair is the focal point, whereas in a fashion show, the hair just complements the clothes. But in a hair show, the audience are hairdressers, and it's designed more to inspire them. If the hair show has a technical element you're demonstrating, then it's designed to educate them. So you're there to educate, motivate and inspire."

## COVERED IN HAIR

Barnes' precision cutting style is essentially a form of hair engineering, largely concerned with angles and elevation. "The other way of cutting is called the visual technique," he explains, "because you look at the head shape and you're just cutting hair off to make the shape look OK, and you're not necessarily cutting straight lines or using a guideline to blend everything in. That's how cutting was before the '60s; it's how the French still cut hair. A lot of hairdressers aren't really trained here, so they use a visual technique, whereas in precision cutting, you cut a guideline, and everything connects to that guideline—depending on how you overdirect the hair is how you build up weight. It's normally planned from the beginning. Visual cutting, which I use as well, gives you more freedom. It's fine, as long as you know the precision way first. But a lot of people skip the precision side and go straight to the other one. It's better to have a basic understanding of precision cutting. Even if I do a haircut that looks like a visual technique, I do a precise haircut first, and then chop it up. Then the balance is right, and the weight is right."

By the late '80s, Barnes began to gravitate towards avant-garde techniques, teaching himself by trial and error. "Basically I have to think of an idea and how it's going to look," he says, "and then find a way of doing it. For

### SOME CREATIVE TALENTS

are made in an instant, in a single epiphanic moment that changes one's fate forever. For Michael Barnes—one of Britain's most accomplished hair artists, now resident in Saigon—his calling to the profession occurred the very instant he first walked into a professional salon, entering into a chamber of the kind of beauty and glamour that, as a thoroughly working-class drifter of 13 years old, he'd simply never seen before.

"It was by chance really," he remembers. "Me and a friend used to bunk off school. There's a road in London called King's Road, which in the '60s and '70s was really trendy. We used to hang around there looking for odd jobs. One guy asked us to clean his cellar and then we painted it. His name was Manolo Blahnik—he's one of the top shoe designers in the world now, he got really big when he kept getting mentioned on *Sex and the City*. He had a shop called Zapatos off King's Road, and the girl who worked for him asked if one of us wanted a Saturday job. I took it. From the day that I walked in, I just knew that that's what I wanted to

do. It was so different. I grew up on a council estate; most people that I knew either grew up to go to prison or become builders. So to walk into an environment with attractive women and gay men and all that kind of stuff that you don't know about, coming from my environment, I just saw it and I knew I wanted to do it."

Quitting school the following year, Barnes went on to train at a salon owned by Ricci Burns, one of the leading hair stylists in London during the early '70s, whose business catered to both the wives of Jewish millionaires and

“A LOT OF HAIRDRESSERS AREN'T REALLY TRAINED HERE, SO THEY USE A VISUAL TECHNIQUE, WHEREAS IN PRECISION CUTTING, YOU CUT A GUIDELINE, AND EVERYTHING CONNECTS TO THAT GUIDELINE.”

most of my pieces now, I use two-part polyurethane foam, like expanding foam. I have a polystyrene head that I cover in tin foil, because if the foam touches the polystyrene, it'll melt. I then make a really rough mold out of cardboard, put the foam in so it expands, and when it's set, I sculpt it—and it's got the head shape, so it fits on the head—and then I cover it in hair. It fits to the model's head and I use the model's own hair to blend it, so it looks like the model's hair. That's the tricky part, that's the part that makes it look real."

Moving to Vietnam was a simple decision—after a short assignment here, the thought of returning to London was simply too depressing. Even in hairdressing, however, living in Saigon still has its share of frustrations. Unable to buy two-part

expanding foam in Vietnam, he resorts to an industrial gap filler to make his sculpted headpieces—and despite a population of 90 million people, he struggles to find a source of human hair. "It's actually illegal to bring it into the country," says Barnes. "If they search your bag, they take it. But although Vietnam is a supplier of human hair, when I first came here, I went to a place to pick it up, and I was shocked. A piece of hair sewn onto a weft, enough to make a ponytail, is VND3.5 million—which is a lot. You can get the same amount of hair in London for about 15 pounds."

His high-profile salon in London is now officially closed, and these days, in between styling jobs for high-profile fashion events, Barnes is focusing on a new salon—Ace London Hair—soon to

open above Gosto at 98 Nguyen Trai, with local staff trained to deliver international styles to the Vietnamese public.

Michael Barnes himself is offering boutique cuts out of his private apartment in District 2, albeit at premium rates. In a country often celebrated for its inexpensive cost of living, clients have often asked why he charges international prices for a haircut in Vietnam.

"Because I'm very good!" he laughs candidly. "If you think about it, in Vietnam, how many foreign hairdressers here are there? There are a handful. How many foreigners here are there who can do fashion shows and hair shows? It's almost unique, so that's my selling point. That's what I do. I'm not good at anything else, but I'm good at hairdressing." ■





I COME  
FROM  
OCEAN









Model **Thi Thi Pham, Minh Phong**  
Photographer **Patrick Carpenter**  
Designer **Dieu Anh**  
Hair & Makeup **Trung Lac**  
Location **The Grand Ho Tram Strip**

Designer Dieu Anh celebrates the summer season with a collection inspired by the color, beauty and mystery of our oceans. I COME FROM OCEAN patterns blend Patrick Carpenter's photos of the sun's reflections off the water's surface with the life of the coral reef at depths far below. See the entire Spring/Summer 2016 line at dieuANH 77-79 Ly Tu Trong, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, D1.

# IT'S PERMANENT

## Investing in a foreign country in exchange for citizenship

Dear Sven,

I am a 40-year-old South African who's been working in Vietnam for the last three years. I have been an expat for the last 10 years and have around 40 percent of my wealth sitting in South Africa and the rest is held offshore. My contract with my current company will come to an end in 22 months. I am not interested in moving back to South Africa after my contract expires and am interested in permanently immigrating to another country. I have a high net worth and have been told that certain countries would offer me permanent residence in exchange for investment into specific projects. Is this true and, if so, could you explain?

### YES, IT'S POSSIBLE

to obtain residency in certain countries through investment into their designated projects. Many governments, in the quest to attract foreign investment, have instituted programs where foreigners, in exchange for citizenship, can invest into projects designated by a state with the express purpose that those funds will be used to create jobs (usually 10 or more) and contribute to the economic well-being of the region. Popular programs are: the US EB-5 program, Portugal's Golden Visa, Australia's provisional investor and investor retirement visas, and I believe that Canada has a similar program. Additionally, many European nations offer residency in exchange for purchasing a certain amount of government bonds. You will also be happy to know that as a South African there is a service run by a company called Cashkows who will assist you with full financial emigration from South Africa, as well as your tax returns, while you are living abroad.

Since you are an English speaker, and for the sake of simplicity, I will provide brief details of the US EB-5

program as well as the Australian provisional investor and retirement visas. The US EB-5 program allows an immigrant investor to qualify through a USD1 million investment into a commercial enterprise in the US. If the investment is made into a targeted employment area (an area suffering from considerable unemployment), the minimum investment will drop to USD500,000. Basically, you will have to invest into a property development or, in some cases, a business center. Because it's the US, the process can be quite stringent and you will be given a "conditional" green card upon initial investment, which will be upgraded to an "unconditional" green card, which gives you permanent residency (i.e. the rights belonging to all US citizens except for the right to vote) approximately two years after the initial investment. You will be able to apply for citizenship five years after the issue of the unconditional green card.

A great project set aside for this specific program is the Brooks City Base in San Antonio, Texas. The project is an old air force base that is being converted into a community with apartment complexes and hotels. A



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company facilitating these investments is Hong Kong-based Ironwood Advisors who make trips to see investors in Vietnam on a regular basis.

Australia has two similar programs, one designed for retirees (aged 55 or older) and one for individuals 45 years old or younger. Australia's provisional investor visa offers a gateway to permanent residency, and after a minimum of two years after initial investment you will be eligible to apply for a permanent business skills visa. You will have to prove that you are able to invest AUD1.5 million within a reasonable amount of time into a designated investment. The big bonus is that your family will be able to accompany you and will have access to work and study rights.

Australia's investor retirement visa requires you to be 55 years or older, have no dependents, and you will need AUD750,000 which will need to be transferred to Australia within two years. You will also need to prove you have access to net income of at least AUD65,000 annually. I couldn't find any information relating to how this will provide a path to permanent residency, but you will be able to extend the visa after the initial four-year term upon proving that a designated investment of AUD200,000 can be maintained.

The most important fact about the programs discussed above is that these are not investments in a traditional sense. What I mean is that when you invest the required capital you cannot expect a return of say 10 percent per year with the option of selling and realizing profits whenever you please. The liquidity of many of these projects is often ambiguous. You are trading a certain amount of capital with a state in exchange for residency and a path to citizenship, so you will have to think about residency first and returns on investment is secondary. ■

# OWN IT

## Reading the fine print on foreign ownership of real estate in Vietnam

Dear Marijn,

I hope you can shed some light on this. A few months ago, I found the apartment of my dreams in Nha Trang. I paid for it, moved in and went to the local notary office to get the paperwork sorted. Everything was ready for my name to go on the “pink paper” to make the apartment legally mine—at least that’s what I thought. After being pushed from pillar to post for some time, my agent finally told me that the only way for a foreigner like me to acquire ownership of the apartment would be to accept it as a “donation.” I’m not sure what to do now. I already live in the apartment and I hold the signed version of the purchase contract but I don’t know if the apartment is legally mine? How important is it to have the official “pink paper” under my name?

**I UNDERSTAND THAT** you must find this situation confusing. It’s important to realize that even though Vietnam’s real estate market is slowly opening up to foreign investment, foreigners are still only allowed to buy a residential house or apartment under limited situations, and at limited locations. The fairly-new Vietnamese Law on Residential Housing (effective July 1, 2015) is a good starting point to learn more about these limitations.

For example, the law states that foreigners are only permitted to own residential houses (meaning apartments in apartment buildings and individual residential houses) belonging to “investment projects for the construction of residential housing” which are not located in areas affecting national defense and security. So it would be a good idea to check with the Department of Construction first to see which apartments are “suitable” for you to buy.

Furthermore, foreigners are not permitted to own more than 30 percent of the total number of apartments

in an apartment building. Under the law, the Department of Construction is responsible for publishing the relevant information on its website. Also important to know, foreigners can only purchase or hire-purchase an apartment from a developer, or purchase it (in certain cases) from another foreigner or organization. I don’t know what you have exactly discussed with your agent, but the fact that he mentioned that you can only acquire the ownership of the apartment via a donation could be an indication that one or more of the aforementioned conditions cannot be satisfied.

I understand that you already live in the apartment and that you are in possession of the signed purchase contract. In order to determine the exact moment the ownership of the apartment changed we will need to look at the Law on Residential Housing once again. The law states that in a sale and purchase transaction of a residential house, the ownership is transferred from the time the purchaser has fully paid the purchase



Marijn Sprokkereef is an associate of Audier & Partners, an international law firm with offices in Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi), Myanmar and Mongolia. Audier & Partners provides advice to foreign investors on a broad range of legal issues.

price and has been handed over the residential house, except when otherwise agreed between the parties. In case of a donation, on the other hand, the ownership is transferred with the handing over and the receipt of the residential house. In both cases, the transaction must satisfy all the conditions for residential housing transactions, and the documents (the sale and purchase contract) must be in accordance with the Law on Residential Housing.

While the “pink book” (the certificate of ownership and land use right) is not a legal requirement to become the owner of a residential house in Vietnam, the book is probably the best document to have to *prove* your ownership rights. It puts you in a relatively strong position if someone else claims to be the owner of the apartment. Also, without it, selling the apartment will be very difficult.

As mentioned before, any transaction involving a residential house or apartment in Vietnam should be in strict compliance with the Law on Residential Housing. Additional conditions and restrictions apply to foreigners and it is advisable to have a careful look at those before buying.

If you decide to go forward with the purchase, keep in mind there is a risk that your apartment was in fact not “suitable” to be sold to a foreigner. In such case, the seller could argue at a later stage that the sale and purchase contract that you signed is invalid and that ownership has not been transferred to you at all. I would recommend sitting down together with the seller and your agent to find a solution that is acceptable to all parties.

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

# BREAKING BEAUTY

*Beauty is pleasure, pure*



*and simple.*

**BUT RARE IS** the beauty that is pure, and rarer still the beauty that is simple. Fact is, beauty fades. Cherry blossoms and rosebuds are celebrated not just for their bloom, but also for the fact that they bloom so briefly. "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may" because Shakespeare never compared thee to a winter's day. But it's the twenty-first century, and even though we know well enough that rest, diet, and exercise are the three mainstays to looking best, we're doing all we can to conjure miracles from modern science that will prolong the springtime of our years straight through to late autumn. We're extending the human bloom through research and development that produces vats of creams and care products and services that promise you and your insecurity that you're just a purchase away from the anti-gravity.

When you take a look at the sales statistics, it's glaringly clear that beauty is a clear priority. For starters, the beauty industry is immune to economic downturns: worldwide cosmetics sales have not declined in the past 18 years; annual growth rates average around five percent, with 2016 global estimates for the skin care market alone around USD121 billion. The takeaway from this is that we feel that beauty is a necessity, not a luxury. The other takeaway is that there still seems to be room on the shelves for another miracle in a tube or spray or treatment – because all the others APPARENTLY haven't quite delivered on their promises.

The other takeaway? Beauty - the kind you find on the first floor of a department store – is overrated. Agree with me: it's eye-candy and mirrors and hollow, fading feathers. It's a swan dive into a shallow pool. Choose health instead. It's vegetables and fish oil and early morning exercise discipline. It's maintenance, it's practice, it's fine-tuning. Health's a lifelong swim against a tide of quick fixes. The goal should not be to have the most expensive face in the room at 60 years of age; the goal should be to have the least expensive bill of health in the room at 60 years of age. And as for the face, I've long heard that you get the face you deserve at 50. In my understanding, that means you should spend the first four decades living a life that keeps the fire glowing in your eyes. Keep the fires glowing, and keep the sunscreen flowing, and leave the rest to the dandies.

In this issue, we look at human beauty from both sides. From what used to be in vogue to what is currently cutting edge. We show you those who are seen as so very this second and those that have played the long game in obscurity. And we pull examples of what's the latest word or procedure from all corners of the earth, with the warning that this year's corners may be next year's curves. Enjoy!



# BLACK *is beautiful*



REMEMBERING A BYGONE TIME  
WHEN BLACK LACQUERED TEETH WERE IN VOGUE

TEXT AND IMAGES BY **PATRICK CARPENTER**

**IT WAS 1932** and Nguyen Thi Phu was not going to wait any longer. She and her cousins had all discussed it, and they were all going to do it together. They were old enough—the youngest was 10, the oldest 13—and the three of them were ready and willing. They left their homes in the silk-making village of Duong Lieu that sits 24 kilometers west of Hanoi and went to the man who had what they needed. A small, dull orange seed, unexceptional to look at—similar to a cabbage seed—but containing all the natural magic they longed for. They came home from the medicine shop, ground the seed into a powder, added a bit of water, and placed the powder on strips of banana leaf. Everything was ready; all they needed now was for evening to come so they could begin. For the three girls, it was just hurry up and wait. They couldn't start any earlier; the magic had to happen while they were sleeping.

1932 was bleak. The Nazi Party had just won the majority vote in the Reichstag, the US was thick in an economic depression that had 25 percent of the workforce unemployed, Britain, sensing the waning of its empire, had just jailed Mahatma Gandhi, and Russia was suffering severe famine. Vietnam was still Indochina, but the embers of revolution were beginning to glow despite harsh repressive measures. It was not easy anywhere in the world, and it was going to get worse, but even in the heaviest of times there should always be time enough to put a shiny new smile on a 10-year-old's face.

Nguyen Thi Phu is 94 now. Sharp as anything. A little hard of hearing and a touch slow in climbing the stairs, but if you spend most of your day sitting in an open storefront on a busy Saigon street, a touch of deafness could be a blessing. And how many of us expect to be climbing three flights of stairs every evening when we're six years shy of a century? She sits back in a regal carved chair and takes us to a distant memory.

"I remember my mother showing me how to put the strip of banana leaf with the powder and water in my mouth and on my teeth so that it would not come off during the night. If it came off, I would have to do it over again. The water first had to be boiled and then allowed to cool to room temperature. Cold water would not work. My sister also helped press the leaf and the resin onto my teeth." With that, she takes a broad leaf from a bouquet at her home and tears a strip about the width of a thumbnail and presses it on her lip to demonstrate. She will do this repeatedly during our conversation. "It takes three nights to work. After the first, your teeth are

yellow. After the second, they are reddish-brown. And after the third, if you have done it correctly each night, your teeth should be black and shining beautifully!"

Nguyen takes off her prayer bead bracelet. The beads vary in color from amber to ebony, and she shows me with each bead what your teeth would look like if your leaf came out at different stages while you were sleeping. She also explains that if you wanted pitch-black teeth, you had to do it for five nights, but more than the desire of a color, she speaks of the allure of the shine. She comes back to the shine again and again as the *sine qua non* of the black teeth tradition. "I was so happy because when I peeled the leaf off my teeth that first morning and rinsed my mouth, I saw they were already shiny."

But a 10-year-old may not have all her permanent teeth. "At 10, I just did the front teeth. I had to go back later and do the back when they were all in. Also, I started to chew betel at 15—some start at five(!)—and the betel slowly takes away the lacquer, so I had to do it all over again anyway."



## A Fading Tradition

To the untrained eye, a betel chewer's grin may look the same as a black lacquered. But betel stains the teeth and lips a dark red, whereas the lacquer does not affect the gums after the process is completed. Even better, the lacquer forms a bond over the enamel which helps protect the teeth from decay. Studies have confirmed that those with blackened teeth maintained their full set longer than those who abstained from the practice. But you don't

need to consult the studies when you are talking with Nguyen. She sums it up succinctly: "Black teeth are strong. White teeth rot!" Which is not to say that better hygiene was ever the sole motivation for the blackening. Various sources offer various reasons, all of which revolve around the idea that black was beautiful, and most revolve around the practice as a rite of passage to adulthood and hence being ready for marriage—this despite the preference for lacquering the permanent teeth as early as possible and before the enamel has fully hardened. Superstition is also cited, with the popular notions of evil spirits identified by their long white teeth and thus to be visually avoided.

"My whole village had black teeth. Men and women, but women were the leaders; men would blacken their teeth later—some men waited until they were 20 or so. But everyone did it. The only ones who had white teeth were the ones whose teeth were crooked because it was impossible to properly lacquer crooked teeth."

"When I was 13 my father found work in Hanoi and so he moved the family there. At the time, maybe 70 percent of the Vietnamese in Hanoi had black teeth." Nguyen may not have been immediately aware, but even as she arrived in the capital of colonial Tonkin, the practice of lacquering one's teeth was beginning to wane. It is not purely coincidental that the availability of the magic seed grew scarcer as the foreign populations arriving on Indochina's soil grew larger. Advancements in infrastructure and transportation opened the floodgates: in 1936, a railway linking Saigon to Hanoi opened; three years later, travel between France and Saigon took only 30 days. This meant more and more foreigners disembarking in their white flannels flashing their white (or yellowed) teeth and their disdain for the locals' mysterious black grins. "I remember seeing foreigners when I was 13 years old. They would ride their bicycles around Hanoi, looking very pompous. I also remember that by the time I was 17, it was very difficult in Hanoi to find the medicine to lacquer the teeth. I had my first child when I was 19, and by the time she was 10 years old, like I was when I first put the banana leaf on my teeth, the custom was all but finished."

So it all goes, eventually. Nguyen takes her beaded bracelet back off the table, points to one of the darker (but not the darkest) beads, and says again how beautiful it was to have one's teeth shining with that deep, rich luster. She puts the strip of torn leaf back near the bouquet, and after a while and a polite request, looks up at her granddaughter standing beside her and smiles. ■



# TRANSFORMER

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS, JESSICA AN FINDS SUCCESS AS A TRANSGENDER MODEL

TEXT BY **NPD KHANH**

IMAGE BY **NGOC TRAN**

**“I DIDN’T PLAN ON** creating a club or anything like that for trans-people. Nothing about what we do is formal or even official. At first, it was just a name, a banner we gather under to sing and perform. Then folks heard about it and came to me for help. Of course I couldn’t turn them away, and that’s how it started,” says Jessica An, the transwoman behind J’S Band, Saigon’s only club and

support network for transgender people.

Founded in 2012, J’S Band (or J’S B), short for Jessica’s Band, hints at the group’s original purpose of a performing crew composed entirely of transgender singers and dancers. Founder Jessica Nguyen Huynh To An is a singer, dancer, model and businesswoman with shares in three different boutiques and makeup studios in Saigon. She is also a celebrity in

the local LGBT community both for her success and for championing transgender rights. With her vast network of contacts and ability to link trans-people with open-minded businesses willing to give them a chance, it didn’t take long for J’S B to become the go-to source for help.

“In recent years, and with the recent change in the law, it has become a little easier for transgender folks. Make no



mistake; it is still a very rough world out there for us. Many young trans, after they have been rejected by their own families and peers, come to me with literally nothing on them. No money, little education, and no way to earn a living for themselves," she says. "I have been where they are. I know how rough it is. Of course I can't turn them away. Trans right and activism are necessary for the long term, but that's not enough. A lot of the time, trans-people can't speak for themselves or have no power to change society's bias against them because they are open to exploitation and can easily fall into poverty and crime. This problem needs concrete and immediate solutions. That means sheltering young trans women and men, educating them about their needs and health issues, and providing them with means to support themselves."

Though it was once housed in Hung Nguyen's Bridal Studio, J'S B mostly operates out of Ca Boutique (7 Xom Chi, D5), one of Jessica's businesses which mainly deals with creating, renting, and selling performance costumes and stage makeup. It is in this tiny shop that she takes in young trans-people, teaches them a vocational skill, introduces them to business owners and connects them with ICS (the biggest NGO organization for the LGBT in Vietnam, [www.ics.org.vn/en](http://www.ics.org.vn/en)). The club currently has 20 members, ten of whom live at the shop because they have either split with their families or are unable to

afford their own accommodation in Saigon.

"I don't really keep a tally," she says. "A lot of people want to help. A lot of people want to offer chances to young trans men and women. I spread the words or the job opportunities. Whether they can really get the job and keep it, that requires hard work, effort and commitment from their part."

In the near future, Jessica hopes to keep her operation stable and gradually increase its scope. In the far future, however, she hopes to open a retirement home for trans-people. "A lot of trans rights activism in Vietnam right now is still very abstract. People fight for rights and for laws to change, but few has thought about practical things to do to aid trans folks," she claims. "As ironic as it is, transgender people suffer a lot of stereotyping from people inside of the LGBT community itself. People tend to think of us in the same mold, but we are just as diverse as any other group. There are old trans, young trans. Trans who are rich and poor. Trans who are lesbian or gay. Some have multiple houses to their names. Some are homeless. We face many problems that people haven't even thought of. When I talk about these problems in LGBT conventions and campaigns, I sometimes get laughed at by people in the community itself. But the truth is, there is a huge gap from laws being changed to actual words and deeds to support and change the lives of transgender men and women, and it's up to us to bridge that gap." ■



# DRESS

# TO

# IMPRESS



CELEBRATED AO DAI DESIGNER-ARTIST SI HOANG SPEAKS ABOUT OPENING VIETNAM'S ONLY MUSEUM DEDICATED TO THIS TRADITIONAL LONG DRESS

TEXT BY **MICHAEL ARNOLD**  
IMAGES PROVIDED BY SI HOANG

**ONE OF VIETNAM'S** most iconic *ao dai* designers, Si Hoang is as much a philosopher as he is an artist. That is the one factor that has earned him a prestige for his traditional fashions on a scale above many others who have mastered the fine tailoring skills required to understand Vietnam's national costume—a creative world he initially entered as an outsider, and then went on to redefine. A pioneer in reconceptualizing

the *ao dai* as a living canvas for fine art, Si Hoang sees in the garment a microcosm of the Vietnamese culture of beauty, and his own oeuvre as being part of the natural evolution of Vietnam's aesthetic, something he can trace back to the earliest days of the Viet people.

He sits in a fine pavilion built on the vast grounds of his own museum, dressed in a fabulous scholar's gown that itself harkens back to the conventions

of centuries past. The museum is a realization of his dream to chronicle and preserve the development of the *ao dai*—it's a symbol of his accomplishments in the field, and also a treasure chest of examples of the form. One prized exhibit is a '30s-era Le Mur *ao dai* that was buried for decades—almost every other piece like it was burned in a purge to protest against French colonists. As he speaks, his eyes trace the lines of one of his most

recent accomplishments—a fusion of the Indian sari and the *ao dai*—and explains how the art of Vietnam and the culture of Vietnamese women can be discerned in any variation on the garment's design.

"When I studied the *ao dai*'s history," he says, "particularly from the 17th century until now, I realized why even now in the 21st century, it is still worn by a lot of people as everyday clothing. It's because the *ao dai* is not conservative; in every period of history, it changes. For example, before the 17th century, you had the *ao dai thu than*. Then when the French came to Vietnam and we fought a war, they also brought the culture of Europe with them—so we developed the *ao dai* Le Mur. After that, they had the *ao dai* Tran Le Xuan, which looked like a Champa dress without a collar. Then, during the American hippy era, we had the *ao dai* hippy. Every time, there's a change of form."

"We've had thousands of years of war, throughout history, war with big countries," he notes. "To survive, we had to learn from other cultures, because we didn't have the time to study and to fight at the same time. We had to learn very quickly, how to read Vietnamese with a Latin alphabet, to make new foods without too much oil like the Chinese, neither raw like Japanese food nor spicy like Indian food. The character we adopt is always a mixture—in architecture, and many art forms in Vietnam. So I think that the practice of adaptation is the reason why Vietnam until now is still Vietnam."

"About beauty in particular," he says, "there are many kinds of beauty, so you can't really define its essence. Every ethnic group will have its own anchor. We integrate these without melting them all together. We preserve a sign of the significant culture of every ethnicity. In terms of beauty, Vietnam can be proud, because we are not one, but 54 different ethnicities."

According to Si Hoang, the essential beauty of the Vietnamese *ao dai* lies in its balance. "It's always a harmony between tradition and modernity," he explains. "Tradition is something of certainty. Modernity is a gathering of the world's essences to combine with our traditional values. Over the centuries, Vietnamese women have changed along with the social development of the times. One discovery I'm proud of is that, compared to other Asian countries such as Japan, Korea, or China, Vietnamese women's role in modern times has been constantly improving in respect to human rights, equal rights. You can see it in the TV dramas, it seems other Asian women are not very respected; despite being well-educated, they are mistreated. In Vietnam, the position of women is higher, and the beauty of a modern woman, as reflected in the *ao dai*, is proven by her healthy body, fit and without fat. The point is that a woman who wants to look beautiful in an *ao dai* must be healthy. We say, 'the longer the waistline, the shorter the life cycle,' so in the *ao dai*'s structure, the waist forces its wearer to pay attention

to her nutrition, her health. Good health generates a beautiful waistline for wearing an *ao dai*. When the waistline is tighter, the breasts look bigger and more beautiful—that's a consideration of beauty you find not only in Vietnam, but all over the world. But here, we still preserve a delicate nature in the garment, concealing the woman's sex at the front and back."

"The *ao dai*'s beauty is in the mixture of the traditional and the modern," he emphasizes. "In modern times, we take the best things from different cultures and make them our own. For example, on the *ao dai*, the neck, the sides, are open. You can look, you can see the woman's beauty easily. But from the front flaps below the waist, you cannot guess. This lower part is traditional, this part at the top is modern. But the slits at the side reach above the waist a little; it's sexy, but just a little bit."



## Wearable Art

Si Hoang's approach to the *ao dai* is perhaps unique, given that he comes to the form from a fine arts rather than a tailoring background. A master of painting and drawing, Si Hoang was a humble art teacher at an architectural university when he unintentionally stumbled upon the form for which he would become famous.

"A couple of years after I became an art teacher," he remembers, "there was a Miss Ao Dai contest in Ho Chi Minh City. At that time, a girl came to my house with a white *ao dai*, the kind that girls wear to school every day. She asked me to draw something on her *ao dai*, because the following night would be very important, the last night of the contest. I thought it was very simple, so I said OK. Very suddenly, she won. She told me that she gave somebody my address, and afterwards, many shops selling *ao dais* contacted me. At that time they only sold plain-colored garments—and they thought that painting on *ao dai* could become popular very quickly. So I thought, OK, now I have another job! I could make a little extra money because, you know,

an art teacher's income is very low."

It was a case of the right idea at the right time. As demand skyrocketed, Si Hoang contracted many of his students— young artists looking for part-time work—to implement his designs. Before long, he was making a month's salary as an art teacher every day as an *ao dai* artist.

"I thought it was very simple," he says. "As an artist, if I paint on a canvas for sale, that's a very cold world. People may only come to an exhibition to see it. At that time, the economic conditions here were very low. People only rarely came to an exhibition. But painting on an *ao dai* gives it a beating heart, a life. Art in life, not art in a room."

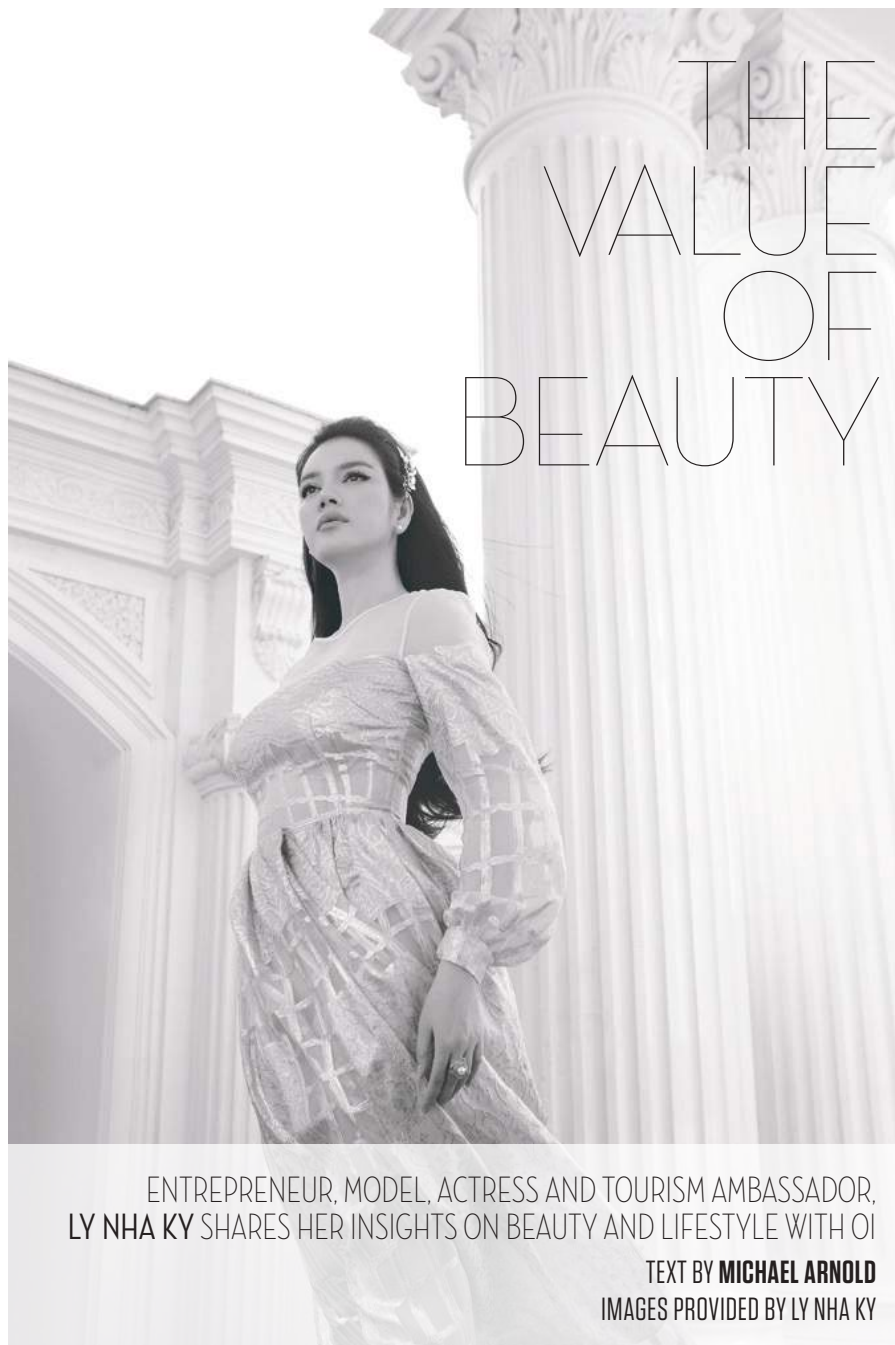
Si Hoang's transition from decorating *ao dais* to redesigning its essential form was a gradual process that only came to fruition after several years of his growing profile as an *ao dai* artist, often exhibiting overseas. The creative leap occurred in 1997, when he chanced upon a cultural minorities museum during an art festival in Hanoi.

"At that time, I felt very ignorant," he says, "because I thought that in Vietnam we only have Vietnamese and Champa, Khmer... then at that time I saw that Vietnam has 54 minority peoples living together; that means there are 54 different cultures. I felt like Ali Baba saying 'open sesame' and discovering a great treasure. I spoke with the director of the museum, asking him to let me stay for one week to study every object very carefully. Then I went back, and two months later I held a fashion show during a performance of traditional music and dance. By that time I had realized how to do an *ao dai* collection—before, it was just decoration. But in the show, for every design, I used ideas from ethnic minority cultures. Art from minorities."

The fashion show sealed his reputation as a visionary of the *ao dai* form. "I had reporters interviewing me for 40 magazines and newspapers. Suddenly, many people knew my name. Most importantly, I then knew how to do fashion. How to be creative with the *ao dai* form, using art."

Si Hoang's *ao dai* museum has become the pinnacle of his international success as a traditional fashions artist. An hour away from central Saigon in one of the city's most rural municipal areas, the location is chosen for its remoteness, despite the impact on visitor numbers. As a Buddhist, Si Hoang sees no issue with this: "Distance is no problem," he quips, "but if the heart is far, that's a problem. If I want to go to Japan to find a kimono museum to study, I'll go! But if I don't like something, even if it's beside me, I won't go. The heart decides everything."

*Si Hoang's ao dai museum (Bao Tang Ao Dai, 206/19/30 Long Thuan, Phuoc Long Phuoc, D9) will close for renovations between May and September, and will feature new luxury dining and accommodation facilities when it reopens. Ao dai theater exhibitions will continue to be held at 77 Nguyen Hue, D1 during this period. ■*



ENTREPRENEUR, MODEL, ACTRESS AND TOURISM AMBASSADOR,  
LY NHA KY SHARES HER INSIGHTS ON BEAUTY AND LIFESTYLE WITH OI

TEXT BY MICHAEL ARNOLD  
IMAGES PROVIDED BY LY NHA KY

**AS SOMEONE SKILLED in business as well as acting and modeling, what do you think is the value of beauty?**

While many people claim that beauty is not important, in many situations, its value can be precisely measured. Beauty is really a gift, something given freely by one's parents and by fate; so in fact it's very precious. I've never thought that beauty is unimportant—if that were true, why is it that all women seek to achieve and preserve their beauty? It is the same for men. However, I do believe that beauty is not something outside of us, but something of an “inner-shining light.”

**How has beauty helped you to develop your career? And how has your career changed your concept of beauty?**

I don't believe my beauty has helped me to develop my career, because I'm not a

“Miss Beauty” who stepped out and built my vocation based on a beauty contest. I started out with empty hands, with only my brain and my sense of diligence. My beauty has only helped me in gaining some good feeling from my business partners during our conversations. Despite how I might look, if I work badly, any beauty I have is quite useless. It's important to understand that, in work, if you're beautiful without being wise, the effect of your beauty will work against you in the eyes of your partners. There are no words that hurt more than hearing someone say: “she's beautiful but empty.” Wisdom, the beauty of the mind, is the light that illuminates physical beauty. I'm an actress, so beauty is important for me to be noticed; but if I didn't know how to act, I would never have been chosen and couldn't be successful. Today, I have a career that people regard

as being successful, which helps me to understand this more thoroughly. For a businesswoman, beauty is like a blank sheet of paper, if you want that paper to have content and value, it depends on wisdom and talent, the inner beauties.

**You are often associated with diamonds—the symbol of wealth, perfection, and flawless beauty. What is the reason that people associate you with diamonds, and do you feel it is a suitable representation of yourself and your heart?**

First of all, I admit that I am a woman who loves beauty; I love the perfect beauty of a diamond as much as any other woman in this world. As I understand it, people associate me with diamonds because of my diamond business; I do trade in world-leading brands of diamonds. About the significance of the diamond as a symbol, I'm not so sure—that answer should be provided by the public. If it is really an identification of the perfect beauty, I'm so very grateful, as this means I am highly valued. That in turn puts pressure on me to live and devote myself better.

**I understand that you grew up in Vung Tau. Do you feel that you grew up in a beautiful environment? How did your experiences in your childhood shape the woman you became?**

To me, the place where I was born and grew up is extremely beautiful, and I'm very proud of my hometown. I love the long romantic seashores, the beautiful and peaceful streets of my whole childhood, every corner, every line of shady trees, the merciful and friendly souls of the people in my hometown... I believe that everyone who has been to Vung Tau must sense those wonderful things. I think I'm lucky to have had the chance to grow up and to be embraced and soul-nurtured by that land. There I have my family, with my parents and siblings who always love and care for each other after years of difficulties. There are childhood friends, who love us with all their hearts, and who always stayed close to my family during the hard years. There I had my first business “lessons”, asking for permission to go to pick cashew fruits, so that after their nuts were removed, I could arrange for them to be taken to market to sell, to help my mother to earn money... I think all of the difficulties, hardships, happiness and love that I had in my childhood have helped me to be stable and strong, to be flexible in business today. Being raised by the love and peacefulness of Vung Tau, the land and the people, no matter how “hard” I am in business, I'm still a dreamer, emotional, and an artist.

**Can you tell me about your parents, and what kind of person they raised you to be? How did your parents inspire you, and did they give you a happy childhood?**

My father was a soldier who undertook a special mission in Sac Forest, he fought

wholeheartedly for the peace of our country, as did many other courageous comrades. He was seriously ill when he returned, and confined to bed. My mother is a brave woman; she worked plenty of jobs to support our family, took care of my sick father and raised her children. After that, when her health deteriorated, we sisters took turns to help her take care of our family. During those tough days, my parents always tried to direct us to live steadily, strongly, and to always overcome certain situations to love and embrace each other and live as good people. Although life was hard, the other family members and I were always happy, because we lived in a warm, loving atmosphere.

During the years of my father's illness, although he had to stay in bed, he was still our family's "mental breadwinner." His will is extremely strong and courageous; he never wanted his wife and kids to worry for him, he never complained about his pain, but I could feel it. Our father raised us with his lessons on how to behave in life, relying on our willpower. Until today, strength and tenacity is my greatest inheritance from my beloved father, which helped me to overcome the difficulties in my life, and to always know how to stand up after failure.

**Were you considered beautiful as a child? How did that affect your concept of yourself as you grew up?**

I was considered the beautiful princess, the "cupcake" of my family since I was a little girl. I was embraced and cared for by them all. However beautiful those memories are, I grew up in difficulty searching for success in my career, in order to help my family to be free from those difficulties of my childhood. Sometimes I forgot how pampered I was when I was a child because of my beauty. When I got a call from the film industry, beauty was an advantage for me to become better noticed, but I didn't use it as a "weapon" as some have said; I believe that success comes from talent.

**How do you maintain your look and figure now? Are your beauty and health difficult to maintain? Do you rely on any products, diet, or exercise? Is this a big priority for you, or not so much as before?**

In my life, something that always bothers me is how I can mistreat myself like this. I have very little time for myself, because my workload is too heavy, every day is the same, from dawn to dusk. So I have no time to take care of myself, as well as no time for working out, for my diet I used to dine with some international stars, and their diets are very strict with detailed calorie regulations, while I myself eat a lot. They thought that given my eating habits, my figure is a miracle. My workload is great,

so if I went on diet, I wouldn't be lucid enough to work. So I do believe that my appearance really is a "gift" from above.

**What has been the most difficult part of your career so far, and are you successful in overcoming these difficulties, or do they still trouble you?**

I'm someone who is always looking ahead, so it's easy for me to forget the difficulties of the past and I can't identify which was the greatest difficulty in my career. Maybe the biggest difficulty is still in the future and I haven't faced it yet.



**Why were you chosen to represent Vietnam as the first tourism ambassador? How did you work to promote the image of Vietnam, and what difficulties did you face in showcasing Halong Bay and Vietnam to a world unfamiliar with its beauty?**

I have had the chance to travel overseas a lot, attending many big international events. The more I travel, the better I understand that the beauty of Vietnam is not well-known in the eyes of international friends, and impressions about the country are often inadequate. So my desire is to make our country's image more widely known. I've traveled to many places and seen that our country is very beautiful, from landscapes to natural resources that can easily infatuate visitors. There are some wild places that are the world's intangible treasures; and I believe that Vietnamese people are honest and friendly, these are basic elements to attract travelers to Vietnam. When I was entrusted and assigned as Tourism Ambassador by the Department of Culture, I decided to

take this role because I want to carry out my desire of promoting our beautiful country to the world. This desire, until now, has never faded although I'm no longer holding the position of Tourism Ambassador. During my tenure, I worked enthusiastically, especially to encourage the selection of Halong Bay as one of the new natural wonders of the world. That difficult task required me to know how to link to the public and to other countries in order to encourage them to support Vietnam, and I worked nonstop to take that connection everywhere, to take advantage of every international relationship that I have to seek support. I trusted that, if Halong Bay won, this would be the best chance for Vietnam to be seen by other countries. Vietnam would become more well-known thanks to that. And I was right.

**What attracts you to charity work, and what has made you such a dedicated charity worker?**

As I mentioned, I was born and grew up in the midst of family difficulties, and my family and I received help from our relatives, friends, and national social organizations. Since I was a child, I had a wish that when I grew up, I would be able to bring happiness to unlucky people, just as my family was offered help. I have done so since before achieving any success in life. I do always work devotedly. I bring happiness to others, but in return, it brings me happiness. Every time I approach someone who has had a tough life, I share with them; every time I see children with callused feet caused by walking a long way to school for years, I see they are so happy to be given a new bike to ride to school; every time I witness the breathtaking emotion of a certain family when they enter a good house of charity; when sick elders hold my hand tightly to thank me for their receiving check-ups, being given free medicine; the kids who say the first person they ever want to see is me after their blind eyes are operated on, I'm filled with emotion. That happiness is a source of energy for me to work better, live happier and be more successful.

**What are your plans for the immediate future and the next steps for LYNK Group?**

I plan to keep developing and maintaining LYNK Group as a leading brand in the field, and enhance its position and reputation in the Asian market, which is our intention in the near future. In the long term, we are making efforts to more deeply penetrate the international market through investment projects and in the fashion and jewelry businesses. I'm continuing with my plan of turning Vietnam into a destination for classy world-lead fashion brands, just as we've been doing so far. ■

# KEEPING UP APPEARANCES

WORLD-RENOWNED BEVERLY HILLS-BASED AESTHETIC DERMATOLOGIST  
DEFINES BEAUTY AND WHAT IS TRENDING IN THE INDUSTRY

INTERVIEW BY **PATRICK CARPENTER**

**LOOK AT US.** No, really: look at us, please! We do all we can to have you look, and when you look, we want you to be pleased with what you see. It's a mutual feel good, with parting being the sweet sorrow.

In the US, the beauty industry raised USD56.2 billion in 2015; surprisingly, the bulk of this revenue comes from hair care, begging the question of how much more revenue could be raised if around 20 percent of the population weren't bald. America's second largest beauty segment is skin care, forecast to reach 11 billion in sales in 2018. Asia is the market coming on strongest; the growth of wealth, particularly in China, has led to the growth in the pursuit of aesthetics, particularly personal aesthetics. In China, cosmetics are forecast for double-digit growth, after a peak decade of 17 percent for cosmetics, and 24 percent for premium skin and cosmetic care from 2001 to 2011. Vietnam's beauty industry also shows consistent growth, albeit at a more sensitive pace given the impact of the global economic downturn. Greatest growth projections for Vietnam are in men's grooming products, organic/natural products, and premium skin care treatments.

To gain a better understanding of these trends, and a better appreciation of what exactly it is that people are seeking when they search for ways to improve their appearance, *Oi* spoke with Dr. Derek Jones, MD, world-renowned leader in non-surgical facial rejuvenation. Dr. Jones is the Founder and Medical Director of SCLP Beverly Hills ([www.skincareandlaser.com](http://www.skincareandlaser.com)) and Associate Professor of Dermatology at the University of California at Los Angeles. Loosely translated, Dr. Jones is the leader of making you look better without surgery, and his years of practice at global ground zero of the looking good, feeling good industry are tantamount to testifying to his wealth of skill and knowledge.

**Dr. Jones, could we just start with a quick introduction as to your work, and what your most common or most popular procedures are?**

I perform a lot of research, teaching, writing and consulting on cosmetic injectables, like Botox and hyaluronic acid fillers, so this is what I do mostly. We focus on facial contouring, sculpting and rejuvenation of facial wrinkles and folds. We also have some ten different aesthetic lasers in the office, so those are popular

as well, to treat age spots, blood vessels, wrinkles, scars and uneven skin tone and texture. Some lasers are contraindicated in the darker skin of Asians, as they may create pigment abnormalities.

**Do you see any regional influence in what is popular? In other words, if you were working in New York, would you be doing different work than in Beverly Hills? And if so, is this a reflection of regional ideas/trends of beauty or finances or climate influenced? Does this question make more sense if we expand the comparison to a regional or global scale?**

I teach quite a bit worldwide. There are definitely cultural differences from country to country. Asians, in particular, are fans of using Botox in the jaw muscles called the masseters to change a square jaw to a slimmer curved jaw. There are also differences within the US. Manufacturers of breast implants will tell you that the average size of implants on the West Coast (Los Angeles) are much larger than the ones on the East Coast (New York City)

**Which way do you see your industry going in the medium to long term? Are there any miracle cures or products in the pipeline, and is the pipeline consumer-driven or medicine-driven?**

The market is consumer driven. In aesthetic dermatology, patients want minimally invasive procedures with minimal downtime. Industry and cosmetic dermatologists are responding to this. For instance, I was Lead Investigator on a new drug, KYBELLA, which received FDA approval last year. Kybella is an injectable solution that, when injected to the fat under the chin, destroys fat on contact and helps to tighten the skin. Future approval in Asian countries is anticipated.

**What do you enjoy most about your work? Research? Therapeutic contact with your patients? Other? Why do you do it? Why did you start doing it?**

I am lucky that over the past 15 years, I have been involved in a tremendous wave of research that has contributed to the breathtaking array of our current portfolio of minimally invasive procedures that was never available before. As a "self esteem" physician, I enjoy making patients happy when they look in the mirror. I am grateful to be involved in both innovative research and patient treatment.

**What should everyone know before they enter the office of an aesthetic dermatologist?**

They should know the safety of the procedure and the origin of the product being injected or applied. There are many black market, fraudulent products, especially in Asia. In the US, we look for the seal of "FDA-approved." Moreover, patients should know the qualifications of their physician, who should have tremendous experience with the procedure and be certified in an aesthetic specialty such as dermatology or plastic surgery.

**Are most of your patients afraid of looking old? Other fears?**

We have good market research on this. They are most afraid of looking unnatural. My motto is "everyone should notice but no one should know."

**What about skin whitening products? They are extremely popular in Asia, and revenues of such products in Vietnam are growing.**

This is big in Asia. There is a lot of sun in Vietnam, like Southern California. Sunblock is the most important component—the higher the SPF the better. Hats, parasols and sun-protective clothing should all be used to allow as little ultraviolet light as possible on the skin. From a medical standpoint, the most effective lighteners are hydroquinone combined with tretinoin creams, used at night followed by a high SPF sunscreen in the morning.

**What is your idea of a beautiful face?**

This is a complex question. For females, a general rule is that the mid-face should be triangular in shape, with the maximum apex of volume in the lateral cheek (high cheek bones), with the rest of the face tapering down from the cheeks to the point of a triangle at the chin. You can google the "triangle of youth" for more information. Furthermore, the subunits of the face are often mathematically related to each other in proportion and size, with the "golden proportions of Phi" (1 to 1.6) applying. The golden proportion of Phi is also seen repetitively in art, architecture and nature in formations that are usually considered visually pleasant to the human eye. I use these fundamentals in my Dr. Jones Facial Harmonics technique, which I teach to other physicians. ■

# THE SNOW WHITE SYNDROME

WHILE THE TERM WAS COINED IN INDIA, THE OBSESSION WITH WHITE SKIN IS VERY POPULAR IN VIETNAM AS WELL

TEXT BY NPD KHANH



**“I HAVE HAD** patients, expat patients, who came to me to ask why they were seeing active ingredients for skin lightening in simple, everyday-use moisturizers. That’s how widespread it is in Vietnam,” says Dr. Mark Sieftring, an internationally-certified skin cancer expert at Stamford Skin Center, regarding the widespread popularity of skin lightening products in Vietnam.

Though there are no official statistics, skin lightening has always been seen as the number one skincare concern for many men and women in Vietnam. Fair skin is the standard of beauty in Asia in general and Vietnam specifically. A flawless, porcelain-colored complexion is the Holy Grail that many Vietnamese are willing to go to lengths to obtain. A search for “*trắng da*” (“white skin”) on Google yields 1.2 million results, not the most searched for word but still respectable (the most searched phrase in Vietnam in 2015 topped out at 1.7 million results). Skin tone changing products are so widespread and in demand that they are often given their own category along with other universal concerns such as aging or acne.

“This obsession over fair skin is a product of centuries of culture and social stratification,” claims Dr. Tom Cuong, one of the four leading dermatologists at Stamford Skin Center. “Vietnam is an agricultural country. Historically, laborers and farmers who work under the sun have dark skin whereas the richer classes who can afford to stay indoors have fairer skin. As a result, fair skin is seen as a sign of class and wealth. This cultural perception is carried over to our time where it is reinforced by female pop stars, with especially fair skin, setting the standards of beauty.”

On the whole, both Dr. Cuong and Dr. Sieftring agree that this desire for lighter, uniformed colored skin is

harmless and fairly ordinary in and of itself. However, chronic overuse of skin lightening cosmetics coupled with ignorance of their possible side effects can lead to disastrous results.

“There are four types of skin lightening or brightening products: doctor prescription, over the counter medicines, registered and lawfully regulated cosmetics and, lastly, everything else that doesn’t fall in the first three categories,” explains Dr. Cuong. “One to three is fairly benign. It’s the fourth category that is the problem one.”

This fourth category, explains Dr. Sieftring, contains everything from homemade DIY skin lightening cream to bottled witches’ brew sold without registration or regulation with relevant public health authorities. Because no safety standards apply for this fourth category, unwanted results may range from being merely ineffective to being truly dangerous for the users.

“It’s impossible for us to know what exactly people put into these fourth category products. However, there are two active ingredients that are very popular in skin whitening creams because of their potency and proven effectiveness: hydroquinone and corticosteroid,” says Dr. Sieftring. Both have impressive track records in skin lightening, and both come with hefty side effects. According to Dr. Sieftring, hydroquinone is a chemical compound that can inhibit the production of melanin in human skin, thus stopping the darkening effect created by sun exposure. Because of its toxicity in higher concentrations, hydroquinone is a heavily regulated substance in America and outright banned in Europe. The second active ingredient, corticosteroids, has ill-understood mechanics when it comes to its skin lightening effects. However, its side effect, when overused, is fairly well-

documented. In mild cases of overuse, corticosteroids may cause vitiligo—a condition in which pigment is purged from the skin, creating large patches of uneven skin tone—and exogenous ochronosis—a rare disease manifesting in uneven skin tone and even lesions. “In extreme cases, overuse of corticosteroids may also cause the thyroid gland to shut down, potentially leading to fatal results,” claims Dr. Sieftring.

Explaining why many consumers choose the fourth skin lightening product type when there are three safe alternatives, Dr. Cuong explains: “Improving the tone and quality of one’s skin requires time, patience and knowledge. It takes months for any appreciable results to show up. The best prescriptions that are both safe and effective also tend to be fairly pricy. Consumers, on the other hand, want immediate results on a budget.”

Dr. Sieftring adds that the lack of laws regulating false advertising and lax control over drugs and chemicals serves to exacerbate this problem. “There’s no penalty for false advertising in Vietnam. People can put anything in a bottle; promise the heavens, and not actually have to take responsibility for their claims. To add to that, consumers are overwhelmed with information from dubious sources in this day and age.”

“If you truly want to improve the tone and quality of your skin and have the budget for it, we advise you seek the help of a certified dermatologist,” says Dr. Sieftring. “The most effective and safe skin lightening pharmaceuticals, such as the Tri-Luma cream, all require the supervision of a professional.”

“Failing that,” say both doctors, “then the easiest, most accessible and cheapest method to fair skin is to eat right, exercise, drink plenty of water and stay away from the sun.” ■

# ABSURD AESTHETICS



THINK MOST PEOPLE WHO GO UNDER THE KNIFE FOR COSMETIC PROCEDURES ONLY ASK FOR BIGGER BREASTS AND SMALLER STOMACHS? THINK AGAIN

## Six Pack Creation

In the past, liposuction was only used to flatten areas that stuck out. Now, a handful of plastic surgeons are performing Hi Def Liposculpture, an advanced liposuction technique that creates the six-pack many men desire. To achieve this washboard look, the procedure combines liposuction and shrinking of the skin. The procedure is much more involved than traditional liposuction, but the results are obvious.

## Grin Lift

The corners of our mouths droop as we age. But for an unlucky minority, this permanent scowl can make them look perpetually grumpy. For the procedure, a surgeon removes small skin triangles from

above each corner of the mouth to cause it to lift. But there is a downside—this creates permanent scars that can make you look like The Joker.

## Bra Line Back Lift

The dreaded "bread back" is unsightly rolls of back fat which make bras fit uncomfortably. The back rolls are surgically removed, leaving behind a flatter back with a scar that's hidden in the bra line. The scar is permanent, but results usually are as well.

## Belly Button Surgery

Is it possible to turn an outie into an innie? Sure is - most outie belly buttons are actually small umbilical hernias. Surgeons

make a small incision on the upper surface of the belly button that turns it into a more aesthetically pleasing innie.

## Gummy Smile Repair

A smile is considered 'gummy' when it reveals an excessive amount of gums. Many dentists treat this condition by altering the gumline, but plastic surgeons have devised techniques to improve a gummy smile by cutting some of the muscles that elevate the lip and inserting a spacer implant to prevent these muscles from reconnecting.

## Dimple Creation

Dimple creation involves a tiny incision on the inside of the mouth and placement



of a small suture between the buccinator muscle and the skin of the cheek. This small, manmade indentation is typically indistinguishable from a real dimple and only appears when smiling.

### Nipple Lightening and Areola Reduction

Some women—and even men—develop excessively long nipples or wide areolas. Doctors reduce the nipples by literally cutting off the tip or removing some skin at the base of the nipple. Excessively wide areolas are reduced by removing a donut-shaped ring of skin from the periphery of the areola and suturing it smaller. This leaves a permanent circular scar around

the areola, however. Apparently, lighter-colored nipples are more desirable in places like Japan, where women can bleach them with a cream.

### Ear Pointing and Cropping

A small wedge of the ear is removed and the remaining ear is stitched together. The result is an ear that is pointed, much like that of an elf. Ear cropping, a surgery more common in dogs, is when you remove chunks of ear cartilage.

### The Toe Tuck

Women often opt for what's known as the Cinderella surgery in order to fit into shoes they desire. The procedure involves snipping off pieces of the patient's feet until the shoes fit. You can get your toes shortened or lengthened, your bunions removed, and even get fat injected into the bottoms of your feet so you have a permanent Dr. Scholls made of flesh.

### Knee Lift

It's a simple tuck procedure where sagging skin is removed and the remaining skin is stitched back together tight to create a more 'youthful' appearing knee.

### Thigh Gap

A procedure known as "thigh gap therapy" uses cold lasers to give you space between your legs. This cold laser therapy, called Zerona, claims to contour your shape and shrink fat cells. The laser goes in and it basically emulsifies that outside layer of the fat, and allows it to exit out of your lymphatic system.

### Eye Implants

Artificial iris implants made of silicone can be folded and inserted into the eye to cover up any iris-related abnormalities. And never mind the use of contacts, these eye implants can also be used to change the color of your eyes, if you so wish.

### Hand Lifts

Word on the street is the latest trend among brides-to-be is hand lifts. Doctors inject Juvéderm into the hands to smooth out wrinkles and plump the skin with instant results. The procedure takes 10 minutes and lasts roughly nine months.

### Internal Bra

Want perky breasts but hate wearing a bra? Plastic surgeons have solved this problem with a procedure known as internal bra.. Doctors use hardened silicone cups and place them under the breast tissue that are then lifted with silk straps and screwed into your rib cage.

### Voice Lift

Through a voice lift, the neck is sliced open and the vocal chords messed with via implants and injections to produce a voice that isn't wavering or weak.

### Palm Line Alterations

Palm line alterations have become extremely popular in places such as Japan. Through this cosmetic procedure, people acquire new lines in their palms in order to

alter their futures.

### Double Eyelid Surgery

In South Korea the most commonly requested surgery is Asian Blepharoplasty, or double eyelid surgery, which creates a crease in the eyelid to achieve a more 'open' look.

### Leg Extension Surgery

This trend has been sweeping China since early 2000. Both legs must be broken and then stretched on a rack, then giant steel pins are connected by screws that are punched horizontally through the ankle and calf to a steel cage surrounding each leg. Each day over the period of a few months, the screws must be turned to stretch the limbs. And you're not finished there either, once that is over you are confined to a wheelchair for six months and must undergo painful physical therapy.

### Puffy Eye Surgery

You know that little puffy area under your eye, not the dark eye bag but the slight puffiness of the lower eye-socket that matches the color tone of the skin? Yes, the one we try every day to disguise. Some Koreans don't have this and, well, they want it. Some Korean women find these little pockets of fat under the eyes cute and believe they give them a more youthful look by brightening the eyes. The look is achieved by inserting a strip of Alloderm or Gortex (type of tissue) under the skin surface through two small incisions.

### Moustache Implant

Turkey's economy is getting hairier, as a booming medical sector profits from a growth spurt of mustache transplants. Now, hair transplants for the face are growing in popularity, with men from the Middle East, Europe and Asia going to Istanbul seeking a virile addition for the upper lip. The procedure uses a technique called follicle-hair extraction, in which doctors remove clusters of hair from the more hirsute areas of the body and implant them along the lip or cheeks to magnify a mustache or beef-up a beard.

### Necklace Lines

Along with ropey hands and wrinkly earlobes, necklace lines—those horizontal lines across your neck—can be a telltale sign of aging. Many have them smoothed out with a few well-placed injections of Botox or Dysport. And well-placed is the operative term. If the technique or the dosage is not done right, you can weaken the neck muscles or have dry mouth or difficulty swallowing.

### Brazilian Bum Sculpting

Brazilian bums have been a major cause of bum-envy, and this has resulted in a new bum-surgery craze. More and more women all over the world are opting for cosmetic procedures to make their bums big. Bum sculpting can be achieved by a new machine called Lipofirm Plus, which permanently removes fat cells as well as tightening and firming the skin around your bum. ■

# Wine & Dine

■ IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN





LAVASTONE BBQ AND COCKTAIL HOUSE

# RETREAT INTO FOOD

VIETNAMESE COUNTRYSIDE DINING WITH A VIEW

TEXT BY YOORI KOO

IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

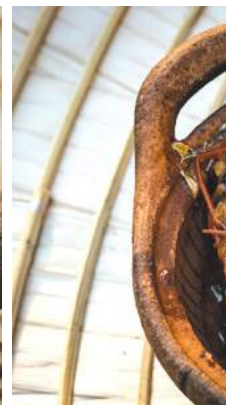


**WHO WOULD'VE THOUGHT** that in the middle of downtown Saigon, amongst the high-rises, noise and cars is a little countryside oasis. Located on Le Loi, **Mountain Retreat** (Rooftop, 36 Le Loi, D1) offers what it says on the tin, “a retreat in the mountains”—the “mountains” being the city in this case, and probably the location as well because you have to climb five flights of stairs to get to the “retreat”—consider it a workout to earn your dinner. Red lanterns along the stairways lead the way so no sherpas are needed.

The space is divided into several areas: the main floor with a half indoor half outdoor dining area, a back patio and the kitchen. Everything is open plan and unless you sit right in front of the air-conditioning unit you'll have to rely on the occasional breeze that comes by to cool you down.

## FLAVORFUL, FRESH and DELICIOUS

*From left: braised pork with lemongrass, pot-braised mackerel fish with tomato sauce, chicken salad with banana flower, and braised mushroom and tofu*





*Fried back ribs with lemongrass and chili, and steamed rice roll with grilled pork*

The restaurant has a cozy countryside atmosphere. Clay covered walls, vines and ivies crawling everywhere, ceiling covered in bamboo and antique chairs and tables complete the Vietnamese hut feel. Everything is kept in simple muted earthy tones, even down to the staff uniforms. This is definitely what I imagined the idyllic side of Vietnam to look like—Buddha statues, claypots holding stalks of lemongrass, old books, beautiful pottery and sculptures complemented by relaxing instrumental music in the background. With its come hither pull, it's easy to plop down here and miss the rooftop dining area one floor above. Persevere up one more flight and you'll be rewarded with a view of the Bitexco Tower, Chill Sky Lounge and the rest of the city's skyline. This is not your glitzy rooftop bar; it's a garden oasis with great views that serves Vietnamese food in an atmosphere where it's easy to have a good conversation. It's a place you'd want to bring visiting friends to.

The menu is traditional Vietnamese

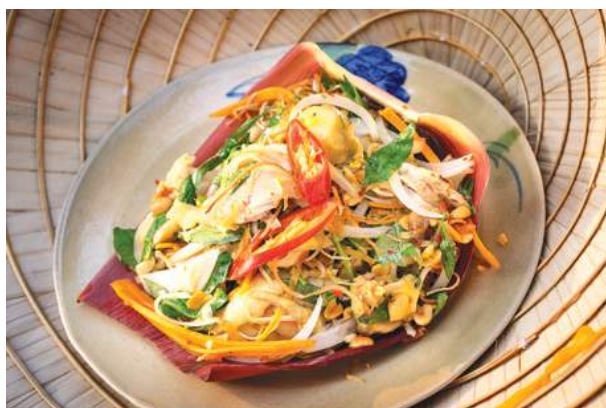
with claypot dishes, salads, barbecued meats and seafood along with vegetarian options. With such a broad selection to choose from, you can either go with the staples or get a bit more adventurous. The restaurant recommends two to three dishes per person depending on your appetite. As we felt pretty hungry when going for dinner we ordered seven dishes between two of us and came out stuffed.

The chicken salad with banana flower (VND75,000) was very fresh and the herbs used gave it a cool, summery taste, however, it also had a spicy kick to it so make sure to order a side of rice to put out the fire. We chose the Fried rice with garlic (VND75,000), which had a hint of garlic so as not to overpower the rice (or the entire meal). My favorite was the steamed rice roll with grilled pork (VND75,000), a light, flavorful dish that had extra crunch with its generous peanut and roasted garlic toppings. It was a nice balance to the meat dishes we ordered. The braised pork with lemongrass (VND65,000), for

example, had a nice subtle ginger taste. The pot-braised mackerel fish with tomato sauce (VND65,000) came as a whole chunk of fish while the braised mushroom and tofu (VND65,000) had plenty of delicious sauce that we ended up pouring onto our rice. Our waiter also recommended we try the fried back ribs with lemongrass and chili (VND85,000), popular among diners, and we weren't disappointed.

On the drink menu you'll find pineapple and watermelon juices, of course, and some more unusual choices like amberella and gourd (each at VND45,000). Throughout the evening the staff were friendly and while they were there to give recommendations and help with the menu they left us to enjoy the atmosphere, which added to the relaxed evening.

Mountain Retreat definitely comes to shine in the evening and I recommend visiting for dinner and make sure you're seated on the rooftop for the great views. You'll come out refreshed and ready to climb any mountain. ■





## ALL-AMERICAN MEXICAN

MEXICAN FOOD VIA SAN DIEGO RIGHT HERE IN SAIGON

TEXT BY JOEL ZORILLA  
IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

**NO PLACE MATCHES** the breadth and depth of Mexican restaurants than Southern California, except Mexico City itself—and maybe not even there. **Diego's Taco Shop** (41/9 Co Giang, D1) was inspired by its namesake city—San Diego—in California where the owner was fortunate to grow up on Mexican food. Diego's does a great job of mixing tradition with experimentation as well as altering recipes just enough to keep foreigners happy and to draw in Vietnamese clients. The tacos, and the rest of the menu, are reason enough to seek out the restaurant.

The lime green and yellow interior of this *taqueria* is striking and vibrant, loudly welcoming diners in. The service is California chill and ordering is uncomplicated. We start with some Soft shell fish tacos (VND35,000 each), which are exactly what you expect fish tacos to be: battered fried and served in a homemade taco then dipped in Diego's special mustard-based house sauce—the result is a fiesta in your mouth. Naturally, we cannot resist eating on the wild side and order a Hard shell ostrich taco (VND45,000); it is perfectly crunchy and

exotic with a slight gamey taste that was delicious. From there we move on to the Sunset ceviche (VND55,000), a Latin American staple that varies from country to country. The Mexican version takes raw fish, cures it for about an hour in lemon juice then served with chips, onions and peppers. Diego's artfully mixed the fish with cured squid and serves it on a large

*From left: shredded pork quesadilla, soft shell fish taco, and Carne asada beef burrito*





### *Shredded pork nachos and hard shell ostrich taco*

deep fried tortilla. Off all the ceviches I'd had outside the US (and there have been many), this one is the best. Of course, I can't go to a Mexican restaurant without ordering my all-time favorite Carne asada burrito (VND99,000); served with lettuce, sour cream, guacamole and homemade tortilla wrap, it was spectacular. With the flavors of Mexico on our taste buds we continue to order more to keep the fiesta going. The Shredded marinated pork nachos (VND119,000), served with cheddar

cheese, guacamole and homemade chips did not disappoint. We refresh with one of my all-time favorite drinks, Horchata (VND35,000), a traditional Mexican drink made of blended rice, almonds and cinnamon. Diego's in-house version was creamy with a note of cinnamon that is pure bliss in a glass. We round off the savory part of our meal with semi-fiery Pedro's poppers (VND59,000). A plate of deep-fried whole green peppers stuffed with sour cream with just the right

amount of heat that we cannot resist asking the waiter for another order.

And now for the quintessential Mexican sweet-fried churros with ice cream (VND37,000) for dessert. Diego's puts an unforgettably decadent twist on this long golden brown dough pastry: diamond shaped churros deep fried and sprinkled with cinnamon, sugar and accompanied with a scoop of vanilla ice cream. It's an absolutely delicious ending to our evening out. ■



# SEAR-IOUSLY GOOD

LAVASTONE PUTS A SOPHISTICATED SPIN ON GIY



TEXT BY JAMES PHAM  
IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

**IF YOU THINK** you've done tableside BBQ before, think again. Ever since **Lavastone BBQ and Cocktail House** (96B Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D1) opened its doors late last year, it's been on a mission to elevate the GIY (Grill It Yourself) genre so popular in Saigon from what's normally either a chain-restaurant or a slightly low-brow dining experience to the next level.

Taking its cue from two of Japan's best loved culinary traditions: *izakaya*, the casual afterwork gastropub, and *yakiniku*,

any type of bite-sized grilled meats, Lavastone ups the sophistication quotient by pairing its carnivore-heavy offerings with the most innovative of cocktails.

As with any *izakaya*, you'll find sakes and sochus, beers and spirits, but it's really in the mixed drinks area where the restaurant shines. Helmed by Trang Thanh Tung, second place winner at the recent La Maison Cointreau 2016 competition, the bar at Lavastone turns out daringly head-scratching yet delicious concoctions. We take advantage of the

2-for-1 Happy Hour (2pm-7pm daily) and try the strangely named *Escargot*, one of the Tung's winning drinks. Thankfully, no mollusks were involved in its preparation other than the conch shell it's served in, a dessert cocktail that tastes like autumn,

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*From left: Escargot, sashimi combo, shrimp and avocado salad, A4-grade Wagyu, and grilled saba and samma*





rich with homemade butter syrup, passion fruit juice and all spice berries with a buzz from Cointreau and rum. We also enjoy the Vietnamese-inspired *Non La*, an homage to the hard-working fruit sellers of the city, with its hints of dried apricot, salty plum, tamarind and Ketel One vodka. Other signature cocktails push the envelope even further, like the *Golden Experience*, a play on Saigon's coffee culture, with smoky whisky, sweet vermouth infused with coffee beans and a splash of bitters to recall an after-coffee cigarette, or the sweet and salty Maracuya Shrimp Salt cocktail, a deliciously tart, citrusy drink with a shrimp salt rim. There's even a *canh chua*-inspired drink that I've made a mental note to try on my next visit.

"We saw a gap in the market for Lavastone," says co-owner Milan Doan. "We didn't see any real Asian BBQ restaurants with a bar; they mainly focus on the food, not on drinks. And the few that do exist were too fancy. Most Korean or Japanese places only had beer or spirits on the menu. We wanted to create a place where you could eat *and* drink and hang out with friends while still being affordable."

While we soak up the cocktails, I notice the surrounds — "factory chic" with warm brick walls, polished concrete floors, exposed ceilings and lots of natural wood — trendy without being exclusive. Not surprisingly, the design was awarded a Silver Award 2016 by

the Association of Retail Environments. "It's fancy-friendly," gushes Milan. "Lavastone is not really Asian, it's not really Western. It's a place where everyone can be comfortable, whoever you are."

Our meal starts off with a Vietnamese drinking food favorite, Crispy fried chicken cartilage (VND69,000). Squeamish eaters have nothing to fear; this dish is more akin to popcorn chicken, bursting with intense flavor with a side of extra crunch, and with a much more palatable mouthfeel than its chicken feet cousin. The Sashimi Combo was next (VND357,000 for 2 persons), a beautifully presented array of fresh buttery salmon, soft but firm *akagai* (ark clams) and *hokkigai* (surf clams), decadently salty, spongy *komochi* (herring spawn) and more, served over crushed ice with daikon and sea grapes.

Appetizers aside, we tuck into the grilled meats, starting with the A4-grade Wagyu (VND549,000), easily some of the best beef available in Vietnam, beautifully marbled to melt in your mouth. The beef is served simply with Himalayan salt to bring out rather than obscure the flavor. US Beef is also on the menu, and we select the Boneless short ribs (VND179,000) paired with homemade *tare*, a wonderfully flavorful sauce made in-house from Japanese *mirin*, apples and pears that adds a sweet tanginess. Other condiments include scallions, chili, garlic, and a homemade green chili sauce.

There's something to be said about

grilling your own meat to your exact liking (with the smoke conveniently wafted away by individual, adjustable exhaust fans) that makes *yakiniku* dining so appealing. For those in a rush, the kitchen grills fish to order, including Norwegian *saba* (mackerel) with salt (VND99,000), preferred over Japanese *saba* for its almost double fat content marbled into the meat making it firm yet succulent, and Grilled *sanma* (Pacific Saury) in teriyaki sauce (VND89,000), a slightly more oily, fishy meat that went well with the mildly sweet teriyaki.

For those looking for a less meaty option, Lavastone also offers hot dishes and salads. Thanks to one of the well-traveled owners who spent time in Texas, Cajun shrimp (VND209,000) is on the menu, a hearty pot of river shrimp, corn and potatoes, smothered in a rich and very garlicky Cajun sauce so good you'll wish you had something to scoop it with (the secret is in the orange juice). To atone for all the meat we devoured, we also ordered the Shrimp and avocado salad, a refreshing detour with red and green lettuce in a tasty sesame seed dressing, a steal at VND75,000.

For those not content to prioritize either food *or* drink, Lavastone does an excellent job at making sure you don't need to compromise with some of the most innovative cocktails in the city paired with beautifully presented, high-quality meats that will leave you wanting more of everything. ■





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

# Tango & Wine

*This month we're heading to South America to one of the New World's fastest growing exporter of wines*



**ARGENTINA IS ONE** of those few countries that can produce amazing wines at fantastic prices but, because of poor export policies and lack of knowledge from the public, its wines are not as widely available or known as they should be. Although it is the eighth largest producer of wine in the world, most of the country's wine production is destined for local consumption.

Separated from Chile by the Andes Mountains, the combination of unlimited sun, lots of water for irrigation from the melted snow and high elevations gives Argentina exceptional conditions for wine growing.

Although Argentina historically focused on growing Criolla and Cereza grapes, mostly used for cheap table wines, it has gained a reputation for its Malbec-based wines

and fresh Torrontes. Argentinian Malbec is characterized by its deep color and blackberry and dark plum flavors. Produced in different styles, the full-body high alcohol ones have gained international reputation, especially when paired with a good Argentinian steak.

Nevertheless an array of traditional grapes are planted in Argentina and, more often than not, you can find great Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon based wines, which also deliver the particular aromas and flavors of the Argentinian terroir.

Of the wine producing areas in Argentina, Mendoza definitely wins for reputation for producing high quality wines. In fact Mendoza produces around 70 percent of all Argentinian wine with most of its vines planted between 700 and 1300 meters of altitude.

Although Argentina produces some easy drinking red wines, most are crafted to be drunk with food; a good balance of acidity, fruit and tannin make them ideal for roasts and beef, and can also be enjoyed on their own by brave drinkers who love full-body wines.

One of the mostly unknown jewels of Argentina is the Torrontes grape, which is used to make fantastic fresh, aromatic, full of fruit white wines. It's a very particular grape that delivers very particular wines. They are likely to become very popular as soon as people risk trying something new.

There are not many Argentinian wines available in Vietnam, however there are three worth trying: Alta Vista (available at the Warehouse), Diamandes (available at Finewines) and Kaiken, produced by iconic Montes (available at Bluebird). ■

# 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 Méridien Saigon, 3C Ton Duc Thang, D1; 12pm – 1am daily) may just be getting warmed up, but it has arrived in Ho Chi Minh City at the right time. From the décor to the dishes, Bamboo Chic hits classy, wellpitched 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 flavorsome 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.

Hand rolls are a relatively fashionable member of the sushi pantheon these days – Bamboo Chic'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.

With new Executive Chef Frederic Meynard in the kitchen, Bamboo Chic recently opened for lunch with 3 Business Set menus to choose from starting at VND200,000++, along with a Build Your Own Menu section with dishes starting at VND90,000++. With big ticks for class, comfort, healthy cuisine and that stellar view, this venue simply cannot fail to impress colleagues or clients. ■



# Wine & Dine

## BARS



### Elixir

A fashionable lounge situated just next to Starbucks in Rex, Elixir is a high-class location for drinks, tapas, and dining focusing on specialty cocktails and grills. DJ nights are Wednesday to Saturday, and the venue features a smooth cigar lounge.

148 Pasteur, Ben Nghe, D1

Hotline: 2239 3399

Facebook: Elixirgastro



### 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.

RI/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. Funlry (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 Deck Bar

The Deck Group is proud to announce the opening of The Deck Bar, right next to its famous pan-Asian sister restaurant The Deck Saigon in Thao Dien, District 2.

38 Nguyen U Di, Thao Dien, An Phu, D2

info@thedecksaigon.com

3744 6632



### 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  
dine@icasianasaigon.com

6pm until late

### 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

www.caravellehotel.com

11am till late

### Xu Bar

A cocktail hot spot with Coconut Martinis, Cranelo Sparkles and Passion Fruit Caprioska 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

# 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



## Catina Cafe

Catina Café mirrors the past and present of former rue Catinat (now called Dong Khoi). "Welcome in, make yourself at home" is the vibe. Catina has something for everyone — Western and Vietnamese options as well as healthy and sweet indulgences.  
151/6 Dong Khoi, D1 / 3827 5555  
Facebook: Cafecatina



## En Tea House & Restaurant

En replicates the feeling of the old Saigon by modern Saigonese, complimented by authentic Vietnamese cuisine and deluxe teas, for anyone who wants to look for Saigon's sense of nostalgia and friendliness.

308 - 308C Dien Bien Phu, Ward 4, D3  
3832 9797  
Facebook: Enteahouse



## MOF Japanese Dessert Cafe

Tet Yokoso New Menu (12/28 - 3/13). Ring in the Japanese & Lunar New Year with vibrant & wonderful flavors at MOF. Using traditional and all-natural New Year ingredients like rice, yuzu, and matcha. MOF is proud to present Tet Yokoso. Rush into MOF to try these auspicious & authentic desserts to help you start 2016 with a lucky charm!  
Somerset Chancellor Court, GF, Nguyen Thi Minh Khai & Mac Dinh Chi Corner, District 1, HCMC  
(08)38239812  
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@icasianasaiagon.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

## Also Try...

### Cafe Terrace

A local interpretation of a European cafe concept, Cafe Terrace has become a popular destination for the local middle class taking a respite from shopping in the chic Saigon Centre. The main cafe street-side facing onto Pasteur is always busy with a mix of locals and expats sipping coffee or enjoying a light lunch or early dinner. Upstairs is a smaller cafe amidst fashion stores, dimly lit and cool. The menu includes savoury and sweet crepes, cakes, juices, shakes and some Vietnamese favourites.  
Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, D1  
3914 4958

### Caffe Bene

A brand new cafe in the heart of District 1, marking the debut of a Korean coffee and dessert concept in Vietnam. When it opened queues stretched out the door with locals and expats alike eager to try the unique offer of European style coffee, blended drinks and sweet, creamy dessert and cakes. Modern, industrial designed interior spanning two floors, and with a corner site street frontage which cannot be missed!  
58 Dong Khoi, D1  
3822 4012  
caffebenevietnam.com

### Ciao Café

There's rarely a tourist who's been through inner-city Saigon and hasn't stopped in on the super-friendly-looking Ciao Café. It stands up well as an expat mainstay too, with its fashionable décor that varies from floor to floor and its classic selection of Western cafe and bistro favorites.  
74-76 Nguyen Hue, D1  
3823 1130

### Du Mien Garden Coffee

A 30 minute taxi ride from downtown, but worth the effort, this unique cafe is renowned for its 'treehouse' feel. Set in lush gardens, it's a world away from the chaos of Ho Chi Minh City. A destination in itself, it offers much more than coffee; open from 7am until 11pm, it attracts workers, travellers and romancers alike. The locals love it (20,000 likes on Facebook!) for the coffee, the meals and most of all the gardens.  
7 Phan Van Tri Phuong 10, Go Vap.  
3894 5555

### LightBox Cafe

This stunningly designed cafe also doubles as an event and photography studio, so make sure you dress to impress at this location because you never know who might snap your picture. They also serve vegetarian cuisine with prices ranging between VND300,000 - VND500,000  
179 Hoa Lan, Phu Nhuan  
3517 6668  
www.lightbox.vn

### Masstige

Another newcomer to the Vietnam cafe scene, Korean-based chain Masstige offers European style coffee at competitive prices (40,000 VND for a mug of hot Cafe Latte) and accompanying light snacks. For something truly original, try the Avocado coffee or their alcohol-free chilled mojito cocktails. The name Masstige is a blend of mass and prestige, meaning 'premium but obtainable'.  
125 Ho Tung Mau, D1 (behind Sunwah Tower).  
www.facebook.com/masstigecoffee

### Mojo Cafe

This modern, chic café, restaurant and bar offers freshly baked homemade cakes, pastries, wood fired pizzas, light fare and superb coffee and smoothies for dine in or take away.  
88 Dong Khoi, D1  
08 3827 2828  
www.mojosaigon.com

### Vecchio Cafe

A self-styled Little Italy that does a good job of looking the part, this venue's interior features ornate Italian décor, dim lighting, and antique furniture enhanced by Italian music. Offerings include fine meals, delicious gelato and beverages.  
39/3 Pham Ngoc Thach, D3  
6683 8618

### The Workshop

A great find, this New York loft-style venue is hidden away up a couple of flights of stairs and well worth seeking out. Spacious and airy with lots of natural light, the central coffee bar offers an exquisite gourmet selection. Superb for setting up your laptop and getting some work done over great coffee.  
27 Ngo Duc Ke, D1  
3824 6801 / 3824 6802  
7am-8pm

# CHINESE



## Dragon Court

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

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



## Dynasty

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

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



## Kabin

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

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



## Li Bai

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

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



## Ming Court

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

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



## Ming Dynasty

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

**23 Nguyen Khac Vien, D7**

## Also Try...

### Hung Ky Mi Gia

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

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

### Ocean Palace

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

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

### Seven Wonders (Bay Ky Quan)

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

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

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

### Shang Palace

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](http://www.intercontinental.com/saigon)



# 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 <sup>R</sup>

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

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



## 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  
094 841 5646



## Le Bacoulos <sup>R</sup>

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



# INDIAN



## Ashoka

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

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



## Bollywood <sup>R</sup>

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 D1, 2, 3, 4, and 7. Complete menu on Facebook.

\* 41 Bui Thi Xuan, D1  
6679 5267 - 6686 3168  
\* SA 26-2 Sky Garden 2, Phu My Hung, D7  
2245 0096 - 2213 1481  
www.bollywoodvietnam.com  
Facebook: Bollywoodvietnamindiancuisine



## Ganesh

Ganesh serves authentic northern Indian tandooris and rotis along with the hottest curries, dandas 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**

## 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.ciaobellavietnam.com**

*Ciao Bella*



### La Bettola

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

**84 Ho Tung Mau, D1**

**3914 4402**

**www.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**



### Papa's

Owned by a French-Italian expat, Papa's serves Italian and French cuisine in a two-storey location in the center of Phu My Hung. The menu includes pizza, steak, grill and pasta dishes.

**557-1 Sky Garden 2, Phu My Hung, D7**



### VIII Re

VIII Re Eight King Italian restaurant is an open space setting serving grilled dishes, pastas and wood oven pizzas. Internationally known chef Roberto Mancini brings his vast experience at five-star hotels to his restaurant.

**R432 Le Van Thiem, Phu My Hung, D7**

# JAPANESE



## Achaya Café

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

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



## 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 takes.

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



## Lavastone BBQ

Modern Japanese Yakiniiku restaurant combined with a classic cocktail bar located right in the heart of buzzing Ho Chi Minh City. Juicy BBQ in the restaurant's home-made sauce to mind-blowing signature cocktails, you can find them all at Lavastone.

96B Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D1  
6271 3786  
Facebook: Lavastone BBQ



## 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 Hashi

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  
3824 5355  
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.

**RI-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**

## 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 1412**

## 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**

# 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](http://www.lahabana-saigon.com)



## Olé

With all the warmth you'd expect from a decent venue in this category, Olé serves authentic and tasty Spanish favorites with great tapas and highly-recommended paella. Family-run venue with a passion for great food and good service without undue fuss. Feel at home.  
**129B Le Thanh Ton, D1**  
**012 6529 1711**



## Tapas Saigon

Tasty tapas at Vietnamese prices not far from the center of District 1. Fresh ingredients, broad menu with food prepared by a Spanish chef. Best washed down with authentic house sangria.  
**53/26B Tran Khanh Du, D1**  
**090 930 0803**



## VIVA! Tapas Bar & Grill

VIVA! Tapas Bar & Grill only uses the freshest ingredients, many imported from Spain, for the most authentic tapas experience in Saigon, starting from under VND50,000/plate. Cool décor, indoors and outdoors eating areas, a well stocked bar, and great wines from VND60,000/glass (sangria just VND130,000 per HALF liter). Delivery available.  
**90 Cao Trieu Phat, D7**



# WINE



## RubyRed Italian Wine Store

The only one Italian wine store in Ho Chi Minh City, with over 200 labels of wine from all regions in Italy, Nardini grappas, Sambuca Molinari and Marsala, Passiti and Bellavista Franciacorta (official sponsor of Armani, Zegna, Gucci and La Scala Theatre of Milan). Cozy design with friendly staff and professional expert of Italian wines managers (Mr. Mirko and Mr. Christian Boarin).  
**206 Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien, D2**



## Wine Embassy Boutique

Established in the heart of Thao Dien since October 2014, Wine Embassy aims to offer wines for all budgets and from all over the world carefully selected by our Resident Sommelier.  
**41 Quoc Huong Street, Thao Dien, D2**

## Also Try...

### An Phu Supermarket

Large supermarket stocking a wide range well-known international brands of dry goods along with fresh groceries, frozen meat and fish, fresh fruit and vegetables, cheese, wine, toiletries and more.  
**43 Thao Dien, D2**

### Annam Gourmet

An upscale deli and grocery chain offering gourmet groceries, cheese, organic products, gluten-free products, fruit and vegetables, gourmet deli, wine and other beverages. All locations have a coffee

lounge that serves breakfast, lunch, drinks and early dinner.

**41A Thao Dien, D2**  
**16-18 Hai Ba Trung, D1**

### The Warehouse

A premium wine importer, distributor, and retailer supplying wines from all over the world, the Warehouse also offers spirits, wine accessories, glassware and refrigeration to complement their customers' choices.

**15/5 Le Thanh Ton, D1**

### Veggy's

A specialized grocery store carrying imported products, Veggy's offers wine, a wide range of international food imported from abroad and fresh produce grown in Vietnam.

**554-1 Sky Garden 2, D7**

### Vinifera

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

**7 Thai Van Lung, D1**



 For full review, please visit: [www.oivietnam.com](http://www.oivietnam.com)

# STEAKHOUSE



## Canada Steakhouse

We are proud to be the first restaurant to serve imported Alberta beef in Vietnam, world renowned for its tenderness, flavor, and texture. You will be amazed!

219C Pham Viet Khanh, D1  
6294 8787  
[www.canadasteakhouse.com](http://www.canadasteakhouse.com)



## Corso Steakhouse & Bar

The steakhouse boasts an open kitchen with private dining areas. This is the ideal choice for a celebration or formal business dinner.

Ground Floor, Norfolk Hotel, 117 Le Thanh Ton, D1  
3829 5368  
[www.norfolkhotel.com.vn](http://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



## Nossa Steakhouse

A stylish restaurant featuring Italian cuisine and Western steaks with a wide selection of imported steaks. With an attention to bringing authentic flavors, we provide good food, good prices and good taste.

36 Pham Hong Thai, D1 / [www.nossa.vn](http://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](http://www.wildhorsesteakhouse.com)

# VIETNAMESE



## Five Oysters

We serve authentic Seafood with draught beer at VND10,000 as well as a promo of VND10,000 per fresh oyster daily. There's a rooftop, a great place to start or end the night!

234 Bui Vien, D1



## Frangipani Hoa Su

Vietnamese breakfast, lunch and dinner, with dishes ranging from pho, bun bo Hue to mi quang. It has an open space and a VIP room, holding a maximum of 500 people, ideal for events and functions.

26 Le Van Mien, D2  
[frangipani.restobar@gmail.com](mailto:frangipani.restobar@gmail.com)



## Mountain Retreat

Home style cooking from the north in a quiet alley off Le Loi, Mountain Retreat brings a rural vibe to busy D1. The breezy décor nicely contrasts the intense northern flavors ideally suited for the international palate.

Top floor of 36 Le Loi, D1  
+84 90 719 45 57



## 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



## 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



## Time Bistro

Timebistro – a tiny little restaurant will bring you back to Saigon 1960s. Visitors will be impressed by romantic atmosphere with elegant and simple style which is close to your heart.

44 Nguyen Hue, Ben Nghe, D1  
09 8910 4633  
[www.en.timebistro.vn](http://www.en.timebistro.vn)

Time Bistro

# 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](http://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**

**3822 4206**

[www.brotzeit.co](http://www.brotzeit.co)

**brotzeit**  
German Bier Bar & Restaurant



## Cuba la Casa del Mojito

Bienvenido a Cuba, The first Cuban Bar, Restaurant & Lounge! Come enjoy some fine Cuban Cuisine, Authentic Mojitos and flavorful Cigars! Music and Ambience will transport you to the Old Havana where Salsa never ends.

**91 Pasteur, D1**

**3822 7099**

**CUBA**



## 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](mailto: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](http://www.lemeridien.com/saigon)

*Latest Recipe*



## Ngon Asia House

Contemporary bistro that welcomes you with style and leads you into a house of sumptuous colorful food cultures, rich in both flavors and inspirations. More than 350 savory street dishes from Korea, Japan, China, Thailand and Vietnam come together in one space.

**99 Nguyen Hue, D1**

**08 3821 3821**

[sales@ngon-asia.com](mailto:sales@ngon-asia.com)



## Saffron

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

**51 Hai Ba Trung, D1**

**382 48358**



## TnT BBQ

TnT BBQ is a traditional American BBQ restaurant that specializes in authentic BBQ classics like smoked ribs, chicken, beef brisket, pulled pork and more. Dine in and experience a taste of home or call in for delivery.

**0166 666 7858**

**3 Dang Tran Con**

Facebook.com/tnbbqvietnam

**TnT**  
BBQ



## 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](http://www.villaroyaletreasures.com)

# Travel & Leisure

MADE BY PATRICK CARPENTER









# *The* PacificNeverland

*Oregon's thousands of acres of vast evergreen forest remain refreshingly untamed*

TEXT BY CHELSEA VAN  
IMAGES BY ROB MCNAMEE



**OREGON IS ON FIRE.** When we cross into the state from the southwest border beneath Steens Mountain, technically, we are the first vehicle to respond. We pass by the iconic American character, Smokey the Bear, pointing at us and holding an “EXTREME” danger sign. I remember him from my childhood but thought he had retired long ago — turns out in the wake of climate change he was just needed more in Western America. We are 200 meters away but try to drive closer to the fire so we can get a better photograph — anything for that perfect shot — until we realize we are being followed. Drifting with trepidation, we make steady eye contact with our pursuer who is seemingly stalking us as oncoming fire trucks catch up, then he breaks the silence, “So, how close to this thing do you think we can get before we get into trouble?” Later that evening we all parked under a lone radio tower and watched firefighters burn the peak of Steens Mountain.





The next morning our new friend leads us into Fields, the local town, and its all-in-one market, gas station and diner. I immediately notice the Kombucha on tap, a healthy fermented tea drink that is sweeping the state's alternative culture by storm, juxtaposed to the preservative-laden "elk" summer sausages. I always come back to this imagery whenever I am asked to describe the identity of Oregon: progressive woods people. As we sit to eat, my partner Rob asks the server, a husky teenage lad with a handicapped left arm, if he could have a refill of coffee and the kid is quick to reply, "Sure you can, but you gotta take the pot and fill up everyone else's cup!" Rob blushes in compliance while I enjoy the Oregonian quirks.

Oregon is a drug and its city of Bend is known as the gateway for recreational outdoor addicts. Within the city-limits is a sweeping panorama of numerous white tops, ranging from the Three Sisters to Mt. Jefferson. I have heard of elite powder chasers rushing to train at Mt. Bachelor, of kids spooking themselves in the confines of lava tubes, of runners and cyclists racing each other up filthy trails, and have been personally dared by the boulders at Smith Rock to put my sweaty palms on them. Twitching about what to do, Rob and I attempt to gather ourselves over coffee at Palate Café, but instead find ourselves in a spatial lapse among the owner and

a newly-engaged couple we knew from across the country who are also wandering. Full from a day of socializing, we drive 15 minutes out of Bend and into the Deschutes National Forest for a secluded night's sleep.

Morning comes and we decide to shoot down to Crater Lake National Park, one of the "Seven Wonders of Oregon," and the most beautiful place in the Pacific Northwest. At its sight I delay, like Stendhal syndrome I feel myself getting anxious and disoriented by this lake too beautiful to be near. About 8,000 years ago, Mount Mazama erupted and formed a cauldron around itself, which it now feeds with rain and snow to become one of the deepest and cleanest bodies of water in the world. However, to look into the pristine blue of Crater Lake is to "risk death and lasting sorrow," according to the Klamath Native Americans. It is fabled that pilots have forgotten themselves over Crater Lake and will fall from the sky only to have their bones found years later. Then, there is the mystery of the photographer who traveled 20 kilometers in two meters of snow without equipment and disappeared with his clothes laid undisturbed on a log with only his tibia and below found in his boots. Knowing this does not deter me from daydreaming about swimming across the lake to Wizard Island, which still haunts me today.

The park ranger at Crater Lake gives

us directions to a lucrative natural hot springs in the Umpqua forest, a rare one that has yet to be privatized. After weaving through forest service roads we roll into a crowd of drugs shared by kids and elderly alike. A peppy, long-haired shirtless boy walks up to our car and welcomes us to join their van crew to smoke weed with them, but he is bewildered by our decline. He doesn't understand, "But, it's okay because you're in Oregon?" I have also wondered where those from the hippie era and their offspring have gone and it appears to me now that they moved here with Smokey. Already doing a terrible job at fitting in, we note that everybody is either nude or getting there, so I glance over to Rob and pull my shirt off and shrug, "Well, I haven't worn a bra in months so it's only one step further."

On a steep rock there are several pools of steaming mineral water flowing one after the other and leading into the freezing rapids of North Umpqua River. We share a pool with a timid young man and he tells us that his family has been camping at the hot springs for a couple of weeks since they lost their home. There are a lot of small homeless communities, tent cities or hobo camps that band together for whatever reason, but survive because of the moderate weather and shelter that the wilderness harbors. He points out that the older woman running to and from the pools has lived here for almost a year proclaiming that the water maintains her health and youth. I analyze the skin around her breasts to seek for any truth behind that statement.

We ride to the coast through the

*Oregon is a drug and its city of Bend is known as the gateway for recreational outdoor addicts.*



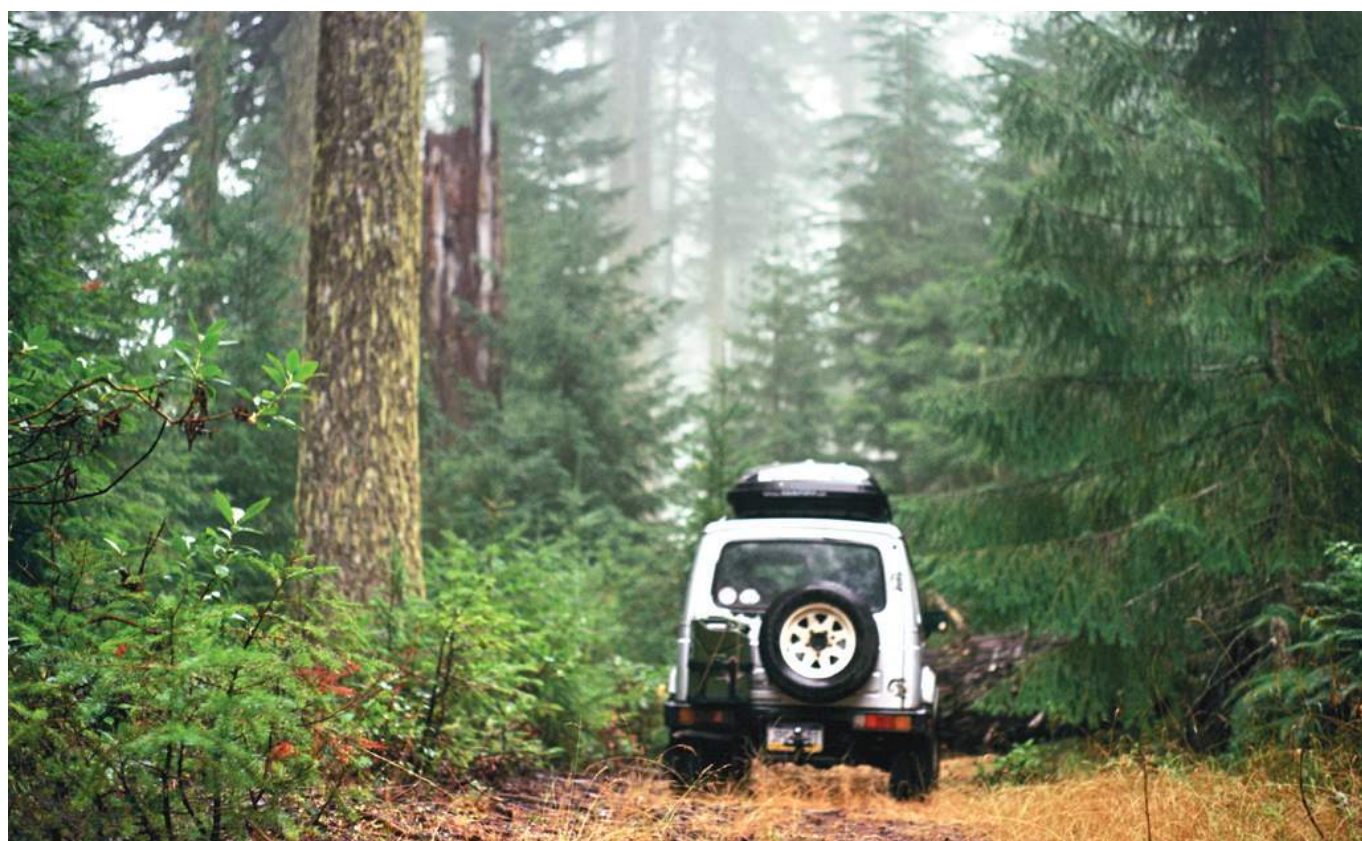
Rogue-Umpqua wilderness which passes us off to the Siskiyou forest, creating a nearly uninterrupted path of verdant Douglas firs and Jurassic ferns. The antithesis of its cardinal East side, Western Oregon is a lush temperate rain forest where pastel moss drapes every tree. The increasing moisture hinted in the air tells us we are getting closer until we reach Port Orford, the westernmost settlement on the



Lower 48. Edging the coastline of Cape Blanco, I tug my jacket tighter to protect against the looming gray and harsh wind. When I am finally standing on the ledge I begin to cry. The feral waves crashing into the large jagged rocks make me sad for all the times that I have never been here. The twisted driftwood and tangled kelp remind me of my own unkempt hair. Rob holds me and suggests that we

can camp on the beach for awhile and I agree to it knowing that in Oregon we all live with but can not keep our wild.

*Bio: To read more about Chelsea and Rob's off-road adventures on the Trans America Trail, visit [www.arrowswest.com](http://www.arrowswest.com). They currently live in Eugene, Oregon and welcomes any traveler to stay over for coffee. ■*





# VERY IMPORTANT KID

GIVE YOUR CHILD THAT “VERY IMPORTANT KID” EXPERIENCE **INCLUSIVE IN OUR ROOM**  
**RATES STARTING FROM 145++ FOR DELUXE GARDEN VIEW FROM APR 28 TO OCT 31**

TEXT AND IMAGES PROVIDED BY LA VERANDA RESORT

**TO BE SEEN** and not heard — in the past, that was the motto of parents when it came to the role of their children. But these days, when it comes to the travel and leisure industry, kids are being viewed as important as adults. Kids both like and need to express themselves, to develop personality. Roles, we might say, have shifted.

No wonder then that luxury MGallery Resort, La Veranda, are taking the needs of the younger generation seriously. Based in Phu Quoc, the most southeasterly island in Vietnam, this Accor Group 70 room-and-villa, beachside property was established in 2006 and provides an Indochinese experience evocative of a French colonial seaside mansion. Through its new program entitled VIK (or Very Important Kids), the multiple, award-winning resort has created a luxury set of holiday experiences designed for the under-12s.

Ever heard of teddy bear turndown services? Well now you have. Ever wondered what it would be like to have well thought-out kids’ club programs and activities in a beachside resort? Well, look no further.

## From Start to Finish

With the aim of changing the way a Vietnamese family travels, the experience starts when kids arrive at the resort where they are offered a welcome drink, and a jar of cookies and chocolate. This is rounded off with a Hollywood-style photo

moment corner where a backdrop will be set up for the VIKs and their family to capture the moment of their arrival.

Naturally, La Veranda not only want their pint-sized guests to make the best possible use of their VIK program, but they also want to encourage family



bonding, to strengthen the ties between parents and their kids. So, a number of lavish treatments have been put together that include anything from spa activities such as the The Queen & I Treatment, perfect for a mom and her kid, to family yoga sessions, beach activities to bring the family even closer, cupcake making and even cooking classes for kids. And naturally, every child needs a games room — La Veranda's is perfect, with games and activities available for kids of all ages.

So, want your kids to get a bit of holiday-style pampering? Need them to get the very important person treatment they deserve? Want to aid bonding between all members of the family? La Veranda's VIK program, the first package of its kind in Vietnam, might just be the answer. And it will certainly be the solution for any family in search of the perfect holiday.

Call MGallery La Veranda Resorts Phu Quoc by Sofitel on +84 (0)77 3982 988 or email [contact@laverandaresorts.com](mailto:contact@laverandaresorts.com) for more details. ■





**In Hong Kong,  
that most cosmopolitan of cities, contrasts and energy abound**

TEXT AND IMAGES BY PATRICK CARPENTER



## HONG KONG.

It's neither here nor there. Sure, you can find it on the map, tucked under the chin of China, islands dangling like so many stray hairs or crumbs. But though this geographical proximity might give you a sense of place, it doesn't really give you a sense of belonging. In other words, Hong Kong's proximity is only an approximation of its identity.

No longer the gleam in England's eye, too small and too attractive to be allowed to venture out unsupervised, Hong Kong is the daughter fated to never live freely under her own roof. Instead, she is yoked to the most uninspired of terms, the "Special Administrative Region." Tell me: when

you reach The Peak and look out and down on all that spectacular scenery—Kowloon and all the skyscrapers, the lights, the laser shows, the islets and coves that used to hide pirates, islands, hiking trails, helicopter aerial expressways, and elaborate art deco villas—do you take it all in and say: 'Reminds me of an administrative region I used to frequent'? Not since the word "Reservation" appeared across the American West has there been such a soulless term spread over such dynamic territory. But time is ticking on such nomenclature; in 2047 the 50-year guarantee of Hong Kong's territorial autonomy, capitalist economy, and citizen's rights and freedoms comes up for review in Beijing. Good luck with that, dear daughter.



If I'm going to sum up Hong Kong better, I'm going to sum it up briefer.

In fact, I can do it in one word: Transit. The noun, the verb, the adjective: they all apply perfectly to this place. And I'll do it in a phrase: "*Sic Transit Gloria Mundi*."

Whether you are pessimistic that the best days of Hong Kong have passed, or just impressed at the sheer global energy of the place, this is the better phrase to utter when you're up on The Peak, soaking up the scenery: "Thus passes the glory of the world." Because the glory of the world transits through Hong Kong. By boat, by plane, by international wire transfer, by rail from the mainland, by the turn of a blind eye, by the grace of god – it all floats in and out of a space no more than 1,100 square kilometers (75 percent of which is actually undeveloped land, which should give you an idea of the size of many of Hong Kong's 234 islands).

Hong Kong's harbors take in and spit out around 450,000 container ships each year and handle around 21 million 20-foot long (around six meters) containers worth of commercial trade. Its 12 ferries push 70,000 people back and forth across Victoria Harbour each day; when you add rail, tram, bus and taxi to ferry traffic, Hong Kong transport transits 12.5 million passenger journeys daily – not bad for a population of 7 million. Its airport moves around 63 million passengers annually and 70 flights per hour in peak traffic times (that's 1.16 planes per minute by my good math). Its stock exchange, ranked tenth

in the world on shares traded, moved a daily average of USD113, 423 million over the first four months of 2015. Its endlessly evolving nightlife closes at 2am or much later – meaning there's always a place to go instead of home. If lunch is for wimps in New York, then sleep is for wimps in Hong Kong; better to go without REM cycles than dim sum and Asian-fusion entrees that are the envy of stomachs throughout the Pacific Rim. The world has yet to invent a perpetual motion machine, but why not consider this 'Special Administrative Region' (a more mechanical, procedural title you will not find) a living, breathing

(when the air is breathable), example of such perpetuity? For my money, this transit territory itself in transition from one way of life to another is the closest the world has come to creating constant, tireless movement. To me, Hong Kong is the watch that requires no winding. In fact, it seems to increase its energy as it winds through time, rising and rising to reach just short of a helter skelter, frantic chaos. There is method here in the way it all runs – a method that pays respect to previous city fathers and founders and innate talent for making business and making things happen. And I would



be happy to drop the Perpetual Motion Machine award off the next time I pass through Central, on my way to that great Bloody Mary at the Blue Bar at One ifc.

I'm fond of the Blue Bar because it has the right amount of sophistication, pretension, physical and liquid design and presentation. It's a small place I found while in transit from Vietnam to California, and it put the perfect point on a day of office meetings in the Admiralty area, bird watching in Hong Kong Park, and gallery gazing on Pedder Street. I cannot really sell the Blue Bar to you because I recognize that Hong Kong's cup runneth over with cool, chic, grubby, glitzy, and casual watering holes, and proximity to whatever you just finished doing is a great decider. But I return to the Blue Bar whenever I have the chance because of the multi-colored glass conversation piece that takes pride of place. It reminds me of the glass blowers in Venice, the post-Soviet, industrial glass factories I visited in Poland, and the views of cities you get from the window seat of your plane when descending at night. It's something between a bird's-eye view of flower fields in France and a color-coded reading of some city transportation grid, and it's worth staring at it rather than your cell phone. It's also a welcome burst of reds, greens, and blues in a neighborhood where people tend to dress in accordance with their hair color.

In other words, the people of Hong Kong wear black. All shades of it. Maybe some dark denim to lighten the mood. They



are generally pale, and generally smokers. For all the designer sneakers and hiking trails, for all the high-end summer fashion in all the designer stores on Hong Kong and Kowloon and all the beach destinations in a territory with too many islands to choose from, it's not a place that bowls you over with images of robust good health.

I usually fly out of Hong Kong to Los Angeles, and therefore get to witness two worlds colliding in the arrivals hall at LAX. The Hongkongers rush stylishly out of customs in their black on black slim sartorial uniforms to light up cigarettes before the chilled Southern California air can sneak into their lungs. They are slim and serious and nearly silent while mainlining their nicotine fixes. On the other side of the barrier, their cousins come rushing up to greet them. They are loud, dressed in shapeless, oversized, brightly colored t-shirts and baggy denim jeans shorts bought on sale at any outlet shop on almost any street in America. White statement sneakers. They are usually overweight and laughing unguardedly. When the moment comes

for the family members to actually meet, both groups share the exact same thought – so obviously does it hover above their heads: 'Is this some kind of a joke?'

Such scenes are to be savored when it seems that the way of the world is to all end up looking, walking, and talking the same. When all great discrepancies in culture and color and ways to govern are evolving into so many shades of grey and special economic or administrative zones and regions. When you get the feeling it's all headed to a great sameness that's slowly readjusting the world into regions that seem neither 'here nor there,' it's worth recalling the iridescent feathers of the tropical birds in Hong Kong's park, the colored glass grid of the Blue Bar, the painted faces and costumes of the Hong Kong opera performers, all the greens on the hiking trails and the visual splendor of The Peak after dark. Hopefully, these natural and man-made achievements, like the perpetual motion machine, will override a tendency towards so many shades of grey. If not, well... *Sic Transit Gloria Mundi.* ■



# ALL ABOARD!

Why your next vacation should be a river cruise



THE ANAWRAHTA, HERITAGE LINE

**I NEVER THOUGHT** I'd be a cruiser. Stuck on a ship with people I didn't know with nothing to do between ports sounded like a recipe for a miserable vacation. That is, until I took the leap with my first ocean cruise and ended up having an amazing time. Since then, I've cruised the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, done an ocean crossing, and seriously loved each one.

For those of us in Vietnam, there aren't many opportunities for ocean cruising unless you're willing to fly to Singapore or Australia, but with all the waterways of the Mekong Delta, river cruising is definitely a possibility. While representing only five percent or so of the cruising market, river cruising has consistently been one of the fastest growing segments in all of travel over the last few years, and it's not hard to see why.

## A New Destination Every Day

Spend your days on shore excursions, relax on the boat in the afternoons, enjoy a gourmet dinner in the evening, have a relaxing sleep and wake up refreshed to do it all over again the next day. Since towns and historical sites tend to be near the river, there's very little transit time, compared to ocean cruises where

ports large enough to accommodate megaships are often farther away (eg. an hour or more away for Athens and Rome and 1.5 hours for Saigon), cutting down the time you actually have in port. This was a major factor when I did a river cruise from Aswan to Luxor in Egypt as most of the monuments were minutes from the pier, reducing my fear of something happening to my transport (rail strike, unexpected traffic, breakdown, etc.) and literally missing the boat.

## Most Things Are Included

Compared to an ocean cruise where just the basics are included (alcohol, soft drinks, excursions are all extra, and can add up very quickly), river cruises tend to include everything – all your meals, activities and shore excursions (and often onboard extras like Wi-Fi, lectures, tai chi and other classes). So while the initial price may be higher, you're getting more value for money with no surprise fees to worry about at the end. Hop on board and put your wallet away.

## More Luxurious Accommodations

While airplane travel has definitely gotten worse in almost every way

since its Golden Age, river cruising has mainly gotten better. Due to its increased popularity, a third of all river cruise ships have been built in the past 10 years, and more than a quarter within the last five years. This means you'll likely be sailing on a ship that's more modern, better designed and more comfortable than on an ocean cruise. And with ships being smaller, each room will usually have a beautiful, ever-changing view, compared to windowless inside rooms on larger ships.

## Smaller Equals More Intimate

The last cruise I went on, I shared the ship with more than 3,000 other people, making it akin to a small city. But that's nothing compared to the largest cruise ships which have a maximum capacity of more than 6,000 people! River cruises are much smaller, often with just 50-100 passengers on board. This equates to a higher, more personalized level of service, where staff often know you on sight, and a higher staff-to-passenger ratio. It also means more flexibility. Instead of being assigned a table at mealtimes for the duration of your cruise, river cruises offer open seating, meaning you'll get to better know your cruise mates who are often well-traveled with lots of interesting stories to tell.



IMAGE PROVIDED BY HERITAGE LINE

## HERITAGE LINE

Established in 2009, Heritage Line is a consummate collector of ships and vessels offering guests luxury cruise experiences which are intimate, authentic and adventurous. Its fleet of six vessels combines old-fashioned elegance with modern comfort with a view to achieving the perfect mix of mix of adventure, comfort, luxury and tradition.

In the Mekong Delta, the Jayavarman and the Jahan are inspired by French colonial cruise liners, and travel the Mekong River between Saigon – Chau Doc – Phnom Penh – Siem Reap on itineraries of three to seven nights. In Halong Bay, Heritage Line operates three traditional wooden junks – the Violet, the Jasmine and the Ginger – on one- and two-night itineraries. The Anawrahta, built to resemble a British colonial paddle steamer and featuring three spacious decks and 23 all-balconied cabins and spacious suites, is the newest ship in the collection and sails the Ayeyarwady in Myanmar. See more at [www.heritage-line.com](http://www.heritage-line.com) and [www.facebook.com/HeritageLine](https://www.facebook.com/HeritageLine).



Having visited nearly 60 countries as a travel writer and award-winning photographer, **James Pham** blogs about his adventures at [FlylcarusFly.com](http://FlylcarusFly.com)



THE ANAWRAHTA, HERITAGE LINE

### Enjoy a Leisurely Pace

River cruises tend to attract more seasoned travelers who have already done the mass-market tourist packages and have graduated to more refined, personalized experiences. While the average river cruiser tends to be older and well-heeled, there's a trend towards making river cruising more attractive to

younger travelers, as evidenced by Disney entering the river cruising business this year. While sailing days on ocean cruises offer beautiful but sometimes monotonous views of the big, blue sea, there's always something new to see from your balcony (or the Jacuzzi) on river cruises including smaller boats ferrying people and produce and life playing out on the riverbanks.

Another perk is unpacking just once at the beginning of the cruise and enjoying your floating hotel room for the rest of your holiday. River cruising also tends to be more casual than ocean cruising, so feel free to leave that tux or gown which you might only wear once at home.

While unexpected weather may sometimes foil river cruising (eg. too little rain making some passages too shallow to traverse, or too much rain, meaning ships can't get under low bridges), for the most part, you're enjoying very calm rivers (no seasickness to worry about), as opposed to storms on the high seas. I was once caught in a medicane (Mediterranean hurricane) and believe me, a rocking ship during mealtimes and when trying to get to sleep can be extremely unpleasant.

So if you're looking for a different, more refined vacation experience, definitely check out river cruising. Southeast Asia is seen as one of this year's hotspots for river cruising, including the Mekong River from Saigon to Siem Reap and the Ayeyarwady in Myanmar. You'll get past the big cities and have a chance to explore smaller towns and villages which provide better insights on how the locals truly live, all the while enjoying a premium, intimate cruising atmosphere! ■

# >>The List Travel



## Ana Mandara Villas | 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](http://www.anamandara-resort.com)



## 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](http://www.bhayacruises.com)



## Cham Villas - Boutique Luxury Resort

Located right by the beach in one hectare of lush tropical gardens, this 18 villa property is ideal to get away from the hustle and bustle, to chill out and be pampered. Each villa has a bath overlooking a private garden and a large private patio with comfortable club chairs and a day bed. Two restaurants provide culinary pleasures to round up a perfect holiday. **32 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, Phan Thiet** **+84 62 3741 234** [www.chamvillas.com](http://www.chamvillas.com)



## Fusion Maia | 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](http://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](http://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](http://www.mianhatrang.com) [info@mianhatrang.com](mailto: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](http://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 luxurious 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](http://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](http://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  
nhakhoadhung@gmail.com  
www.nhakhoadhung.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**

### Family Medical Practice

Family Medical Practice (FMP) is the largest and one of the oldest foreign, privately-owned, international health care provider in Vietnam. As the only health care provider that can offer a countrywide network of integrated clinics for foreign and local populations, FMP's main specialties include Family Medicine, Pediatrics, and Emergency Medicine as well as health checks and work permit health-tests.

**34 Le Duan, D1 / 95 Thao Dien, D2**  
3822 7848  
www.vietnammedicalpractice.com

### 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**

## SPA



### Maison Mikiu 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 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



**Pacific Cross Vietnam (formerly Blue Cross Vietnam)**  
Pacific 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**

### 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.

**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**

### SEAL Logistics

Saigon Express Agency Limited (SEAL) is an experienced and versatile relocations and logistics company. SEAL staff are experts in relocations and pet transportation and can deliver all your logistics requirements to your satisfaction at a competitive price!  
**3826 8850  
sgnexpress@seal.com.vn  
www.seal.com.vn**



## VETERINARY CLINICS



**Animal Doctors International**  
Offers the very highest levels of compassionate, competent and professional veterinary medicine and surgery to all pets in Ho Chi Minh City with international veterinary surgeons. Upholding international standards, the team works tirelessly to help clients with the support of a dedicated surgical suite, digital X-Ray and comprehensive diagnostic facilities.  
**1 Tran Ngoc Dien, Thao Dien, Q2  
6260 3980  
www.animaldoctors.vn**

### Also try ...

**K9**  
A Vietnamese clinic that offers basic care.  
**192 Hoang Dieu, D4  
www.phongkhamthuyk9.com  
091 382 0812**

### Modern Pet

Opened since 2012, the clinic staffs a team of specialized veterinarians who are committed to offering professional, caring and personalized services to their patients.  
**A12-A13 Nguyen Huu Tho,  
Kim Son Project, D7  
www.modernpethospital.net.vn  
6298 9203**

### New Pet Hospital & Spa

The clinic has two locations and offers boarding, 24-hour

emergency care and grooming services such as washing and nail trimming.  
**53 Dang Dung, D1  
www.newpethospital.com.vn  
6269 3939**

### Saigon Pet Clinic

Founded in 2008, Saigon Pet Clinic's goal is to open the best animal welfare veterinary clinic in Vietnam. They combine skill and technology to ensure your pet gets the best possible care.  
**33, 41 street, Thao Dien, D2  
www.saigonpethospital.com  
3519 4182**

### Sasaki Animal Hospital

The hospital is managed by a team of skilled doctors from Japan and Vietnam. Services include grooming and general care.  
**38-40-42 Nguyen Thi Thap,  
Him Lam, D7  
www.sasakihospital.com  
2253 1179**



# Kids & Education

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TEXT BY MONICA MAJORS  
IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN  
BONG AND HER PET CHICKEN

## Kid's Best Friend

Discover whether owning a pet can reduce your child's chances of developing allergies

**ADOPTING MY THREE** rescue cats is both the best and worst decision I've ever made. Having grown up around household pets it finally hit me that I was missing that extra bit of love when I came home from work. However, at the time I wasn't dating someone allergic to them—now I am. By contrast he did not grow up in a pet-friendly family, and one morning while he wanted to scratch his eyes out and my fur babies were trying to jump on his lap I asked Google what I could do to ease the reaction. As often happens when trying to self-diagnose, I went down a rabbit-hole and was introduced to the polarizing “hygiene hypothesis.” Essentially, Dr. David Strachan identified a correlation between the rise of asthma and hay fever in the late 20th century with “reduced microbial exposure” during infancy. Later studies expanded the theory to cover even more chronic inflammatory diseases, for example, growing up around animals is just one way to introduce the nubile immune system to a slew of microbes and enhance its potential. While the lightbulb over my head lit up, I have before been led astray with online diagnoses. So, I turned to a more authoritative source,

Dr. Jeremy Ostrander, family medicine practitioner at Columbia Asia.

“Eat dirty, live long...” is a paraphrased statement here in Vietnam, and a seemingly local-ism to the hygiene hypothesis. However, Dr. Ostrander isn't overwhelmingly satisfied by either of the two phrases. “While I appreciate the moniker of the ‘hygiene hypothesis,’ it kind of makes hygiene a bad word. In reality, the practice of good hygiene/sanitation has been one of the most important steps that medicine has introduced to public health,” he states.

There has been a compulsive move toward over sterilizing everything, from our hands to countertops and doorknobs with such verve that it's led to us leading an over-zealous lifestyle in terms of cleanliness (think *The Boy in the Plastic Bubble* movie). And, while we shouldn't ever abandon healthy and hygienic practices, we may have gone a little overboard as of late, verified by studies that have shown a dramatic increase in chronic inflammatory cases like asthma and allergies. We're constantly bombarded with scary words like “salmonella,” “legionella,” and “lurking bacteria,” that should be taken seriously,

but some of which we already come into baseline contact during our daily lives.

Dr. Ostrander confirmed that he understood and generally agreed with two noted studies, each that confirmed exposure to dogs in infancy—especially around the time of birth—can actually influence children's immune development and reduce the likelihood of certain allergic diseases. “There are generally lower cases of asthma in rural versus urban areas, and this can also be traced back to contact with animals, historically farm animals, as well as big families and even diversity in diets. Breast feeding also plays an important role in early immunity development,” continues Dr. Ostrander. Why? Simply put, because in order to build immunity you need to first be exposed to pathogens. However, it seems that owning pets is a small portion of this development. “It's kind of like looking at the spit in the bucket compared to the barrage of microbes they are exposed to throughout their lives. A child can still potentially be exposed to the same pathogens one will encounter on a cat or dog through other means, but I would not dismiss the health benefits of growing up with animals.”

## A Few Stray Hairs

"Honey, the cat puked again!" my boyfriend bellows from the bedroom, fulfilling the weekly quota. While there are plenty of daily gross-outs with our beloved furry friends, there is a toxic misperception in Vietnam—and most developing countries for that matter—that domesticated animals are dirty and unapproachable. And when I say "dirty," I don't mean the literal sense that those found on the streets generally are. Many people believe they carry disease or—and in some religious texts—are "unclean" at a more base level of their being; a much harder idea to dissuade than just giving a stray dog a bath.

"I hear that in Vietnam many people are put off pet ownership as they believe the hair makes their children sick—and also is the driving factor behind many animals being abandoned," says Dr. William Thomas, CEO of Animal Doctors International in D2. This thought isn't relegated to only locals, and often expats are unsure of what to do with the family pet when they become

## WHERE TO ADOPT OR FOSTER

Visit these sites for more info:

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

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

[www.yeudongvat.org](http://www.yeudongvat.org)

pregnant. "Unfortunately, abandonment of family pets is all too common, and we often hear people expressing their concern over allergies as a prominent reason," Dr. Thomas adds. It is never appropriate to abandon your pet, but I can understand there is a general ignorance around the topic. If only these families would first review the November 2015 study from Uppsala University in Sweden.

Funded by the Swedish Research Council, Stockholm County Council, the Strategic Research Program in Epidemiology at Karolinska Institutet, and the Swedish Heart Lung Foundation, the study found "exposure to dogs reduced the risk of both preschool (by 10 percent) and school-age children having asthma

by 13 percent. And living on a farm as a child—not just visiting one—also appeared to reduce asthma risk by an estimated 31 percent for preschool children and 52 percent for school-age children." When I reviewed this with Dr. Ostrander he was quick to remind that it's difficult to conduct these studies in controlled environments, but that he agreed the first "three to six months are the most beneficial to the body's immune system."

The human body can handle an amazing amount of influx. Much like when babies are given multiple immunizations at the same time, the developing immune system is capable of handling a barrage of every day microbes. It almost needs it in order to perform optimally. I'm not telling you to let your children give sloppy kisses to your family pet, but if they happen to do so everything should work out just fine. If you're happy to go one step further, then be part of the global movement to save animals from a harsh life on the streets. Adopt or foster today. ■



TAI AND SIMBA



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



## Paws for a Cause

GUARDIAN OF THE ABANDONED AND ABUSED

**OVER THE LAST** five years of his 11 years in Vietnam, Frenchman Vincent Leopold Marcel Pascal and his many rescued dogs and cats have been evicted from their home by intolerant neighbors and landlords in four districts in Saigon. Because of the striking appearance of the tattoos on his neck and arms, he has been verbally and physically threatened by strangers. Leo is the founder of Vietnam Animal Cruelty (VAC), an animal rescue shelter he struggles to maintain in a society that generally has misguided ideas of cats and dogs, which he is desperately trying to change. His current home-cum-shelter houses 13 dogs and 90 cats with little capacity left to hold more. Leo works 12 to 16 hours a day, seven days a week to care and protect them—the animals are under constant danger from thieves trying to steal them to sell to restaurants.

Through sponsorship, funds and

a generous donation of rented land from Mai Dung and the Canadian NGO Eyes of Compassion ([eyesofcompassion.org](http://eyesofcompassion.org)), Leo is currently building a permanent animal shelter in Binh Duong Province. The shelter will be built to accommodate 80 to 100 cats and 20 dogs, with room for more, built in an isolated area with high walls to keep thieves away. This joint venture will also provide commercial pet care services like boarding to help support daily operational costs. However, and this is critical, the shelter will need ongoing support for day-to-day costs, which includes essential food and medicine. Donations do not necessarily have to be cash only, if possible, volunteer your time, donate cat and dog food, medicine, accessories and toys (yes, dogs and cats get bored). The new shelter is scheduled to open May/June 2016.

There are a number of rescues like

VAC in Vietnam that manage shelters for abandoned and abused animals but all are understaffed and without long-term funding or government support. Unfortunately, these organizations are not licensed to operate in Vietnam but that's not by lack of trying—numerous application submissions have been denied—therefore most operate covertly because a visit from the authorities can result in the shelter's closure and the animals confiscated, awaiting horrible outcomes. Another reason their location is not public is because often owners dump their pets at the shelter after deciding they can't care or don't want their pet anymore for whatever reason.

For details on the progress of the new VAC animal shelter, visit [www.vietnamanimalscruelty.com](http://www.vietnamanimalscruelty.com). To make a donation, visit [www.generosity.com/animal-pet-fundraising/for-the-love-of-our-four-legged-friends-in-need](http://www.generosity.com/animal-pet-fundraising/for-the-love-of-our-four-legged-friends-in-need). ■

# WORLD MIND MATTERS

Be more than an international school,  
be an internationally-minded school



Natasha Fletcher joined Saigon Star International School as a Year 1 and Year 5/6 class teacher in September 2015.

## WHAT IS THE MEANING of an “international education”?

While it may simply be understood as learning alongside a number of other nationalities, it is something much deeper. It is having a deep understanding of oneself and of the similarities and differences between us and others around the world. For learners, it is not just acquiring knowledge about the world; it is learning to understand how the world relates to them. It is teaching children to recognize their place and responsibilities within the global community.

As a teacher at an international school, it is not our celebration of diversity that sets our curriculum apart, instead, it is the international-mindedness that we seek to foster in our pupils.

For children at international schools, the inclusion of international-mindedness in the curriculum means lots of opportunities to capture meaning from experiences within their ‘host’ country (the country they live in now) and their ‘home’ country (their nationality or country of birth). Finding similarities and differences between the two is often an easy way for children to understand.

Why is international-mindedness so important for children today? An increasing number of people are living and working abroad. Developments in technology and globalization have effectively made the world smaller. As a result, the likelihood of the current generation of school children living and working in their home country their entire lives is rapidly decreasing. In the same thread, not only are more people traveling around the world to live and work, the world is traveling to us. Even someone who never leaves their hometown will be faced with interacting with people from other cultures on some platform. As such, being able to respect, relate to and co-exist with people from other

cultures are now essential skills that weren’t prevalent in the past.

As an intrepid teacher who has lived and worked in four countries across three continents, I have worked alongside a myriad of people, each with their own, unique cultural backgrounds. Looking back at those experiences, making connections with these people was a key factor that enabled me to be successful. International-mindedness promotes just that, a mindset of cooperation and understanding others on a global scale.

What does international-mindedness look like in an international primary school classroom? At our school we teach the International Primary Curriculum (IPC). As you would expect, the IPC promotes opportunities for globally-minded learning within every unit of work. Children are given opportunities to link their personal experiences between home countries, previous host countries and their current country, Vietnam. For instance, when my Year 5/6 students were learning about a topic on rivers entitled “Go With the Flow,” the children proudly shared personal experiences, photographs and videos of geographical river patterns. Some of these were sourced from parents, others from family members living in other parts around the world. This actively engaged the whole family in the learning at school. Furthermore, the entire class had unique and personal materials to draw from, and each child felt empowered by the relevance of their contributions.

In another example, during a topic about inventions called “What Price Progress?” the children considered the positive and negative impact of developments in technology on Vietnam, as well as the wider world. In this instance, the focus on international-mindedness fostered critical thinking that allowed the children to consider their responsibility in making good choices and to consider

the potential impact of their decisions on the rest of the world. We want our learners to feel a sense of common humanity and shared guardianship of the world, to recognize that they are interdependently responsible for the environment, for global issues, and for the protection of the world.

Essentially, international-mindedness encourages children to move along a path that takes them away from the idea of only thinking about ‘self’ and towards the idea of relating to the ‘other.’ This theory, originally expressed by Developmental Psychologist, Dr. Howard Gardner, argues that this idea of ‘other’ is not something to be either feared or revered, but to be recognized as part of the interconnectivity of our new world.

How you can support and encourage international-mindedness at home?

- Create experiences to help your child learn about and value other cultures through films, food, music and visits to museums or cultural events. Ho Chi Minh City is a vibrant melting pot of cultures and there are so many organized events that you can enjoy as a family.
- Talk about current world events in a child-friendly language and use these as opportunities to discuss other countries and cultures.
- When choosing books to read with your child, choose those that feature storylines set in another culture. And while reading, ask questions and talk with your child about similarities and differences between the culture featured in the book and their own, as well as those of other countries you may have visited or lived in.

By using some of these simple tips, you will not only strengthen your child’s own cultural identity, but foster their curiosity about the world. ■



Ms. Emily Easterby is the TAS Early Childhood Department Head. She has been a dedicated early years teacher at The American School since 2013 with previous experience in Canada.

## The importance of letting children be children

**CHILDREN ARE FASCINATING** — the way they think, joke, create and even manipulate. The increased pressure for early childhood teachers to introduce academics earlier has become a great debate. Do we push what was once grade one material to kindergarten and what was once kindergarten material to pre-kindergarten? Most parents live in constant fear their child is not getting enough of what they need through the education system and always ask for more. Children have shown that they are capable of more, so why not give them more?

A child in early childhood education spends eight hours of their day trying to figure out how to get from 1 to 100, how many apples Sam has left after he ate 20 and what noise a giraffe makes. Not to mention they have to navigate their way through social situations they have never encountered before and make decisions about their behavior every second of the day. Life is hard when you are five. The push for academics earlier instead of play is making their lives even harder. Just let them play, play is learning.

If you think there is only one kind of play then think again. Let's see, there is creative play, active play, cooperative play, solitary play, manipulative play, dramatic play and, every teacher's favorite, quiet play. Most activities are a combination of different kinds of play. For instance, tag is both active play and cooperative play because they are moving around but also learning the rules of the game and how to play with each other. Play in schools is not just giving children a set of blocks and telling them to

build. It is child-initiated, free-choice activities supported by an environment created by the materials to encourage creativity and freethinking.

Play helps children gain a sense of worth by allowing them to demonstrate their own abilities. It gives them an opportunity to explore real life situations, manipulating the various outcomes. It increases their logical reasoning skills, imagination, creativity, emotional understanding and maturity, language development, gross and fine motor skills and social and emotional development. Most importantly, it is fun and when something is fun then children become engrossed in what they are doing, which helps to build their concentration.

**Five-year-olds are taking standardized tests! I don't know if you have had a conversation with a five-year-old lately, but if you have, you'd know that you cannot by any means standardize their thinking.**

At an international level play allows a child to be able to learn from others cultures. The way one child may act during dramatic play may be entirely different then when a child from another country. For second language learners the

social and verbal aspects are a huge component. Children want to be able to communicate with their friends. In a play environment they do not feel the pressure to have the correct answer and have the freedom to explore their interests while learning the language that is most important to them.

Acceleration of life through technology and the ease with which we can gather information has created this idea that we need to start academics earlier. Five-year-olds are taking standardized tests! I don't know if you have had a conversation with a five-year-old lately, but if you have, you'd know that you cannot by any means standardize their thinking. They are at an age when anything is possible, there are no limits, their world views are so small and yet reach further than you would have ever imagined. They are creative, imaginative and energetic and full of the most amazing ideas. Why would you want to standardize that?

We need to let children be children. We are often too quick to try and fix a situation without fully understanding what is wrong in the first place. Play was and should still be an integral part of early childhood education. In today's society we need a highly creative and innovative workforce. If we start children off by standardizing their learning or introducing concepts too early we run the risk of curbing the creativity needed later in life. We take away what childhood is about.

Even at its most basic level play allows the child to get out all that energy that adults are envious of and pray for. But hey, don't take my word for it. Go play with your kids! Watch them think, explore, problem solve and, most importantly, have fun. ■

# IBDP SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME FOR 2016-2017

TEXT AND IMAGES PROVIDED BY RENAISSANCE INTERNATIONAL SAIGON SCHOOL

**RENAISSANCE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL SAIGON**'s IBDP Scholarship Programme for 2016-2017: 50% and 100% scholarships are available for talented pupils currently studying in both IGCSE and non-IGCSE programmes.

Renaissance International Saigon School ([www.renaissance.edu.vn](http://www.renaissance.edu.vn)) is pleased to announce its IB Scholarship Awards for the forthcoming two school years commencing August 2016. With a total value of up to VND10 billion, the IB Scholarship Programme offers the opportunity to study at Renaissance and receive a 50% or 100% tuition fee bursary.

For Pupils studying IGCSE:

- 50% Scholarship to be awarded to pupils based on results of a minimum of 5 A or A\*, IGCSEs and a successful interview with Renaissance's Deputy Head of School and Head of School.
- 100% Scholarship to be awarded to pupils based on results of a minimum of 8 A or A\*, IGCSEs and a successful interview with Renaissance's Deputy Head of School and Head of School.

For Pupils studying in non-

IGCSE programmes:

Pupils who are not enrolled in the University of Cambridge's IGCSE program are eligible to apply for this IB Scholarship Programme. Pupils from any high school may be awarded the Renaissance's IBDP Scholarships subject to meet the following criteria:

- Excellent academic results of the past school year equivalent to Year 11 of British curriculum for international school pupils and Grade 10 for Vietnamese school pupils
- An outstanding short essay, in English, to introduce yourself and your desired profession.
- Entry examinations in Mathematics and English
- A successful interview with the Deputy Head of School and Head of School.

The Programme Calendar:

- Application Submission: now to June 15, 2016
- Application documentation should include: IGCSE examination results for IGCSE pupils or 2015-2016 School

year academic results and the self –introductory writing in English for non-IGCSE pupils

- An entry examination (by invitation): June 25, 2016
- Interview with the Renaissance's Deputy Head of School and Head of School (by invitation only): End of June.
- Scholarship awards announcement: July 11, 2016

All scholarships are for two school years and are conditional upon the individual achieving a minimum academic level in their end-of-year report in the first year (excluding TOK and the Extended Essay). If the pupil does not achieve this minimum, the school reserves the right to reduce or withdraw the IB Scholarship for the second year.

Renaissance International Saigon School is a private school delivering the National Curriculum for England complimented by EYFS, IPC, IGCSE and IBDP to pupils from Vietnam and around the world. For more info, email [admissions@renaissance.edu.vn](mailto:admissions@renaissance.edu.vn) or call 3773 3171 (ext 218/219/120). ■

# Tell Me a Story

No time to read to your kids? Hire someone else to do it for you

TEXT BY NPD KHANH



**“THE FIRST TIME** I worked as a storyteller, it was for my neighbor’s child. The parents had some errands to run until late and paid me VND100,000 to read three volumes of *Doraemon* to their six-year-old baby girl,” says Le Thi Quyen, a professional storyteller and co-founder of storytelling group *Doc Sach Thue*. “To my surprise, we both enjoyed the experience very much and I must have done a good job because the girl asked me to read stories to her again, and before I knew it I was working as a storyteller/ babysitter for a third of the parents in the neighborhood.”

Professional storytelling has been around for centuries in many countries around the world. In Vietnam, however, it has only just started to quietly spread in popularity. Originally a service for the elderly and those with disabilities who unable to read for themselves, reading services have emerged in Hanoi and Saigon several years ago in response to a demand amongst parents who find themselves too busy to read to their children at nap- or bedtime. *Doc Sach Thue* is the first group to establish itself in Ho Chi Minh City, with Quyen, her younger brother Duc Tan, teachers, librarians and a handful of students working to fund their college tuition, as the core staff. One-hour sessions cost VND50,000 during weekdays and double that on weekends. If the books are not in Vietnamese, depending on the language, the price per hour increases significantly.

The majority of Quyen’s clients are elder people who have problems with their visions or simply desire the companionship provided along with the reading session. They often prefer classical books and foreign literature translated into Vietnamese. In general, they like to hear stories about history, culture and families. Storytellers work in the early morning reading daily newspapers or in the evening reading other kinds of books. However, during weekends or holidays, her clientele list switches to children whose parents are either busy with work or want to provide a different experience for their kids. Naturally, children have different storytelling demands. They like to listen to comic books, fairy tales and funny stories.

“Our party package is very popular on Saturday nights and during the summer,” says Quyen. “For roughly VND500,000, we host a small slumber party for three to five children where we read them stories, play games and feed them healthy homemade snacks. The stories and books we use can be anything the children or parents request. The amount isn’t much if the parents pool their money, and the kids are always happy when they hear stories in a group.”

According to Quyen, storytelling is not as easy a job as it may sound. “Anybody can pick up a book and read from it but it takes more than that to truly breathe life to a story and retain the children’s attention. It’s an art similar to voice acting. Storytellers are often also great communicators or orators. You need to have a clear and evocative voice, you need to know how to engage your audience, and you need to be able to get the soul of the story across.” For stories to live, they need the hearts, minds and ears of listeners. Without the listener, there is no story.

In recent years, as the industry slowly grows in popularity, many groups have sprung up. A few offer more sophisticated services, merging storytelling with babysitting, nannying, tutoring and private nursing. The appearance of these new companies and services has in turn attracted more workers, business opportunities and prospective clients to their industry.

*While Doc Sach Thue is currently not taking on new clients, storytellers can be hired through [www.ibookstop.vn](http://www.ibookstop.vn), or a nursing group run by Ms. Mong Tu 090 444 7844. ■*

# >>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, IE Street, KDC Trung Son,

Binh Hung, Binh Chanh, HCMC

#### Primary & Secondary Campus:

2, IE Street, KDC Trung Son,

Binh Hung, Binh Chanh, HCMC

5431 1833-34-35-36

office@theabcis.com

www.theabcis.com



### 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, D2

www.eishcmc.com



EUROPEAN  
International School  
HO CHI MINH CITY



### International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP)

Vietnam's only international school offering a U.S. curriculum for children 18 months to 11 years old within a 100% English language environment. With a library containing over 13,500 English books and more than 60% of students achieving above grade level English, ISSP graduates are well prepared for secondary school at ISHCMC or ISHCMC - American Academy.

92 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh

+84 (8) 2222 7788/99

admissions@issp.edu.vn

www.issp.edu.vn



### 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

3519 2223 / 0903 952 223

admissions@tas.edu.vn

www.tas.edu.vn



THE AMERICAN SCHOOL  
Dedicated Academic Excellence and Strength of Character



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

ISHCMC is HCMC's most established international school and first IB World School authorized to teach all 3 International Baccalaureate programs for students 2 to 18 years old. ISHCMC is excited to launch a new secondary campus in 2017, featuring Vietnam's first Innovation Center, a 350-seat professional theater, NBA-sized basketball courts, 25m – 8 lane competitive swimming pool and sports field.

28 Vo Truong Toan, D2

+84 (8) 3898 9100

admissions@ishcmc.edu.vn

www.ishcmc.com





### The International School Ho Chi Minh City – American Academy

ISHCMC – American Academy is a U.S. curriculum secondary school, preparing students aged 11 to 18 years old for success at universities worldwide. Early university credits, through SUPA and AP courses, a 1:1 University Counseling Program, and an extensive EAL program sets our graduates on the road to success with 100% acceptance rate and U.S. \$1 million scholarship fund to overseas universities.

16 Vo Truong Toan, D2  
+84 (8) 3898 9100  
admissions@aavn.edu.vn  
www.aavn.edu.vn



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

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

Deutsche Schule (IGS) offers a German curriculum from Early Years to Grade 12 which is approved and supported by the German government. IGS is staffed by native German, Vietnamese and English speakers who have many years of teaching experience. We offer a link between Vietnamese and German culture, an international program with German standards and the immersion of German culture into everyday life.

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



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Tel: +84 3899 7314 Fax: +84 3899 7316 Email: [info@wildlifeatrisk.org](mailto:info@wildlifeatrisk.org)  
[www.wildlifeatrisk.org](http://www.wildlifeatrisk.org)

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