



VIETNAM  
06-2016

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# Pride



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Makeup **Xuan Phuoc**  
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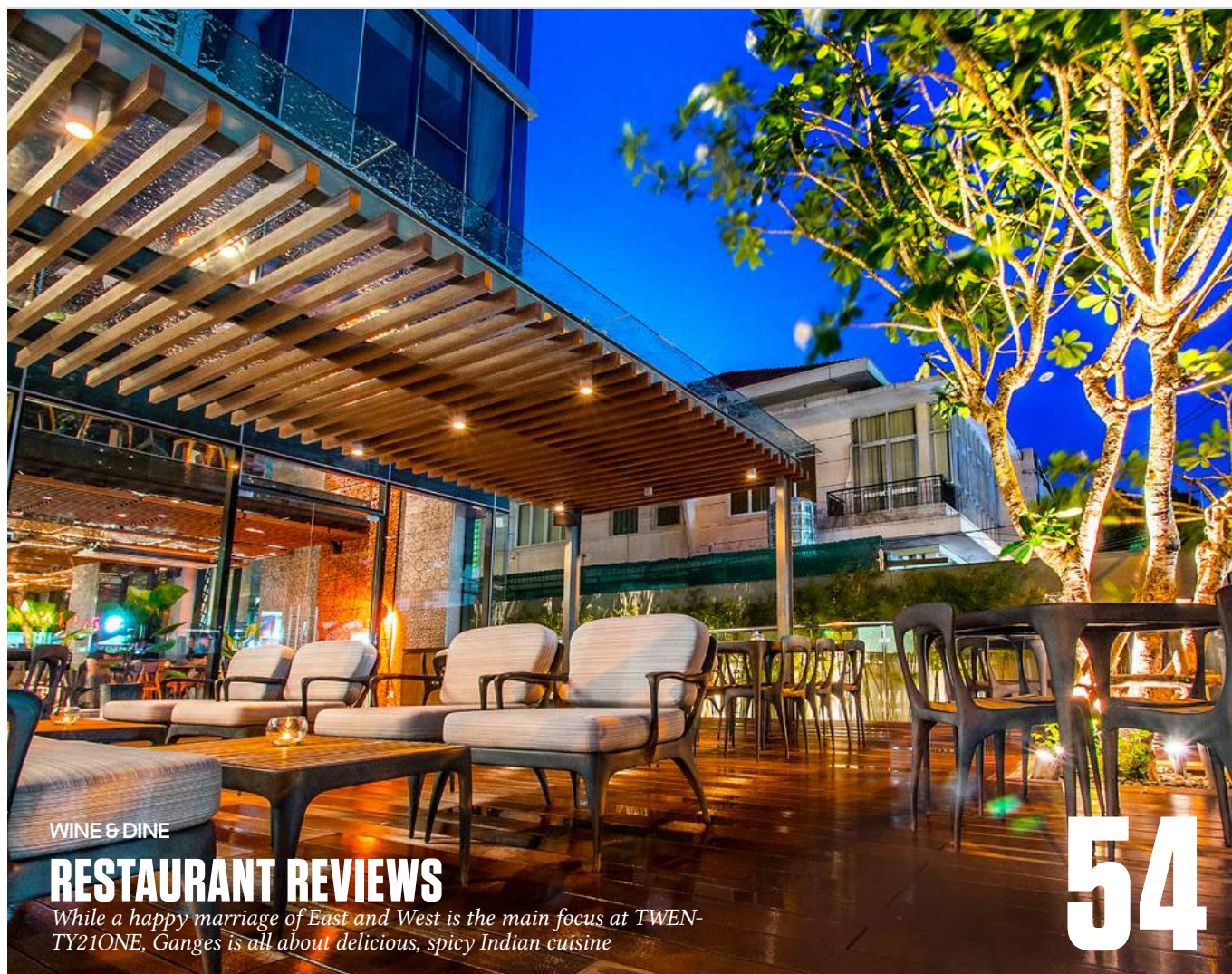
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## *Congratulations to the Class of 2016.*

"The IB programme has allowed me to develop the skills to overcome the challenges and obstacles ahead. There is no doubt that each of us photographed here will succeed and achieve our individual goals. Good luck to everyone in their chosen paths."

**Jamielle McKinnon, Graduating student, 2016.**



### **University destinations of AIS graduates:**

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Salle University; Pennsylvania; Academy of Arts University; Maryland Institute of Arts; SCAD: The University for Creative Careers; University of Kansas; Long Island University; State University of New York; Le Cordon Bleu

#### **United Kingdom**

University of Oxford; University of Durham, Durham; University of Essex, Colchester; University of Exeter, Exeter; King's College London, London; University of Leeds, Leeds; University of Nottingham, Nottingham; Queen Mary, University of London, London; University of Reading, Reading; University of Sheffield, Sheffield; University of Warwick, Coventry; University of York, Heslington; Bellerbys College, Brighton; University of Goldsmiths, London; De Montfort University, Leicester; University of Glasgow, Scotland; University of Gloucestershire, Cheltenham; University of Huddersfield; Kingston University; Anglia Ruskin University; Keele University; University of Sussex

#### **Australia**

Australian National University; Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School, Leura; Curtin

University, Perth; University of Melbourne, Victoria; Monash University, Melbourne, Victoria; University of Sydney, New South Wales; University of New South Wales, New South Wales; Deakin University, Geelong; Charles Sturt University, Bathurst; University of Technology, Sydney; Griffith University, Queensland; Eynesbury College, Adelaide; University of Wollongong; Macquarie University; Swinburne University; RMIT Australia; James Cook University; Queensland; Queensland University of Technology; Macquarie University; New South Wales; University of South Australia; University of Technology Sydney; University of Tasmania; University of Adelaide; University of Western Australia

#### **Canada**

University of British Columbia, Vancouver; University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta; University of Toronto, Ontario; University of Manitoba; Royal Roads University; University of Manitoba

#### **Hong Kong**

Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hung Hom; University of Hong Kong, Pok Fu Lam

#### **Singapore**

National University of Singapore

#### **New Zealand**

University of Auckland; Auckland University of Technology

#### **Korea**

Han Yang University, Seoul; Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul; Korea University in South Korea, Seoul

#### **Switzerland**

École Hôtelière de Lausanne, Lausanne; Hotel Institute Montreux, Montreux; Les Roches International School of Hotel Management, Bluche; Swiss School of Tourism and Hospitality; Culinary Arts Academy in Switzerland, Vitznau

#### **Japan**

Abk College, Tokyo; Waseda University, Tokyo

#### **Germany**

University of Magdeburg

#### **Hungary**

University of Pécs

#### **Vietnam**

RMIT Vietnam



# Datebook

What's on this month...



## 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.dancenter.vn](http://www.dancenter.vn) 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:** Danang Electronic Festival

**Where:** Bien Dong Park, Danang; VND269,000 and up

**About:** With the aim to promote domestic tourism, this is the first large scale electronic music festival in Danang. Expect performances from top international and Vietnamese DJs such as Minh Tri, Get Looze, Mike Hao, Florian Picasso, among others.

**Contact:** Visit [www.ticketbox.vn/dec/en](http://www.ticketbox.vn/dec/en) to book tickets

## JUNE 10-13

**What:** College Admissions Camp 2016

**Where:** Ho Chi Minh City

**About:** College Admissions Camp is a series of free workshops co-organized by Thap Sang Khat Vong Viet and Kevin Sim, from Raffles Institution (Singapore). Under the direction of Sim, a selected group of Vietnamese students will attend a series of practical workshops aimed at giving applicants all the knowledge and skills required for the upcoming application cycle. It is the aspiration of the camp that students will go away empowered to apply for US universities independently and effectively. Because of limited spaces available, they are looking for interested students who plan to apply to US Colleges in 2016-2017.

**Contact:** Visit Facebook: *Thap sang Khat Vong Viet* for more info



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**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

**JUNE 18-19**

**What:** Differentiate or Die

**Where:** Windsor Plaza Hotel (18 An Duong Vuong, D5); VND15.4 million and up

**About:** There is no such thing as a commodity. All goods and services can be differentiated, says Theodore Levitt, Harvard Business School professor and editor of the *Harvard Business Review*. “Choice” is a cruel master in the marketplace. In today's economy, everyone is after everyone's business. So you want to stand out and stand apart. The seminar spells out how to make differentiation your business weapon.

As Professor Levitt insists, all goods and services can be differentiated. Some proven ways to differentiate: Market leadership, market heritage, market specialization, customer service. Other techniques: Owning an attribute, being first, going against the grain. Numerous examples and mini-case histories will bring each point to life.

The seminar is based on books co-authored by Steve Rivkin (including *Differentiate or Die*, *The Power of Simplicity*, and *Repositioning*), and his 30+ years of helping clients differentiate their companies, brands, products and services.

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JUNE 18

**What:** Danang Startup Fair

**Where:** Song Han Hotel (14 Ly Tu Trong, Danang); 8am-10pm

**About:** The first startup conference and exhibition in Danang with an opportunity to discuss entrepreneurship support policies and programs as well as to explore investment potentials in the Danang. The fair marks an important milestone in the journey towards fulfilling the long-term goal of the city to become a Startup City.

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# The Bulletin

Promotions and news in HCMC and beyond...

## SUMMER SOIRÉE NIGHTS

Join Le Méridien Saigon (9th Floor, 3C Ton Duc Thang, D1) to celebrate summertime with a series of "Sparkling Friday" evenings. To get you in the mood, the opening night of Summer Soirees will showcase the hotel's signature cocktails and a performance by French band Nouvelle Vague. Summer Soirée Night will run every Friday night (6pm–8:30pm) in June. Visit [www.lemeridienhanoi.com](http://www.lemeridienhanoi.com) for more info.

## OI VIETNAM, MAY 2016 CORRECTION

An article titled *The Snow White Syndrome*, misquoted Dr. Mark Siefring. The correct version is online ([www.oivietnam.com](http://www.oivietnam.com)) and corrections include: "In extreme cases, overuse of extremely potent topical corticosteroids may also cause the adrenal gland to shut down, potentially leading to fatal results," claims Dr. Siefring. We apologize to Dr. Siefring and Stamford Skin Centre for any inconveniences caused.



## FUSION BRAND EXPANDS TO SAIGON

At Fusion Suites Saigon (3-5 Suong Nguyet Anh, D1), a range of 71 suites provide all the in-room facilities expected from a city hotel, with the added convenience of a fully-integrated kitchenette, perfect for couples, families or people on the move. All rooms feature large floor-to-ceiling windows offering plenty of natural light and views to the city or across the park. For every night stayed, guests will receive a tailor-made spa treatment. Spa therapy rooms are conveniently located on each guest room floor and are exclusively available to in-house guests along with complimentary yoga and tai chi classes. Dining options at Fusion Suites Saigon includes Fresh, the all-day café, offering eat in or take away options for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Zen rooftop provides a chic, casual atmosphere to while away the hours over lunch, sundown cocktails or BBQ tapas dishes, all complemented by extravagant views of the Saigon skyline.



## FUSION RESORT NHA TRANG PROMOTION

What sets Fusion Resort Nha Trang ([www.fusionresortnhatrang.com](http://www.fusionresortnhatrang.com)) apart is its unique spa and wellness concept, with all spa treatments included each day. The promotion is up to 55 percent off their best available rates, starting from VND4,389,000++ per room per night. Rate includes: luxurious suites or villas, breakfast any time any place, all spa treatments, return airport transfers and scheduled shuttle bus to Nha Trang city. The offer is valid until October.



## BOUTIQUE HOI AN RESORT EXPANDED

The Boutique Hoi An Resort ([www.boutiquehoianresort.com](http://www.boutiquehoianresort.com)) now has 112 rooms with seven room categories. There will be 48 Superior rooms, 20 Deluxe rooms, 32 Premier Deluxe rooms, 8 Boutique Deluxe, 2 Beach Villas, 1 Pool Villa and 1 Grand Beach Villa. The spa is also extended with five more treatment rooms and a spa pool. With efforts to further enrich what this property has to offer, the new beach bar opened last December to rave reviews.





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# TROI OI!

The country in numbers



USD 1 MILLION

**CATAMARANS**, ferrying passengers back and forth from Vung Tau to Ho Chi Minh City, officially

operated last month after weeks of testing. The catamarans are scheduled to depart three times a day on weekdays, with extra trips added on weekends to meet demands. The catamarans are made of light, durable material imported from the US and runs on two German engines that are fuel-efficient, enabling the boats to run at high velocity. The boats are equipped with Wi-Fi and air-conditioners. Passengers will be charged VND250,000 per trip, with people over 62 years old having to pay only VND180,000. Children from six to 11 pay VND120,000 while those under six years old ride for free.



USD 5 MILLION

**PERSONAL FAMILY TEMPLE**

was recently completed in Ha Tinh Province. Built

on an area of 5,000sqm with gold-inlaid details, the Tran family's temple is the largest of its kind in Ha Tinh. The entire construction cost was donated by a local entrepreneur living in Vinh City, according to Nguyen Ngoc Anh, Chairman of Xuan Pho commune. The temple is built to worship the ancestors of the Tran family.

25%

**OF VIETNAMESE CHILDREN** under five are anemic, according to data released by the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN). These children suffer from

the condition due to the lack of iron in their blood, affecting their physical development, NIN Vice-Director Nguyen Thi Lam said. She added that people living in mountainous and rural areas were most vulnerable. A program, targeting 10 northern and central provinces, educated 45,000 mothers to enhance their knowledge on the importance of iron micronutrient in children's daily meals.

115

**CENTIMETERS** is the overall height increase of Vietnamese men and women compared to a decade ago—resulting in Vietnamese men and women now averaging 1.644 meters and 1.534 meters, respectively.

Meanwhile, the average height globally is 176.8cm for men and 163.7cm for women. With this rate of average height growth, it will take the Vietnamese people 60-80 years to reach the current stature of the Japanese.

Vietnamese youths' stature is also shorter than the averages in regional countries such as Japan, Thailand and Singapore, according to Deputy Head of the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) Le Bach Mai. According to Mai, one of the reasons for the short stature is the low consumption of milk and milk products in the country. Surveys by NIN indicated that Vietnam's annual milk consumption per capita reaches only 11 liters, compared to 38 liters of alcohol and 53 liters of soft drink recorded last year.

5<sup>th</sup>

**IS VIETNAM'S RANK** in the MasterCard Women's Advancement Index for Asia-Pacific, with a score of 64.2/100. The index tracked the progress of women across 18 countries in the region towards gender parity based on

employment (workforce participation and regular employment), capability (secondary and tertiary education) and leadership (business owners, business leaders and political leaders). Vietnam gained 95.3 points in the capability category, 82.6 points in employment and 33.6 points in leadership.

For the 10th consecutive year, New Zealand, Australia and the Philippines topped the list with scores of 78.0, 76.0 and 71.4, respectively. Apart from Singapore (70), all remaining markets in the region scored below 70.





10,000

**BOOKS, NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES** have been collected so far by 35-year-old bibliophile Trinh Hung Cuong. They include works from Vietnam's famous writers, poets and historians. He is also proud to own *Gia*

*Dinh bao*, the country's first newspaper written in *quoc ngu* (national Romanized Vietnamese language), published in 1865 in Saigon. He also has two copies of the first French version of the *Tale of Kieu* (regarded as the most significant epic poem in Vietnamese literature), which was published in 1884.



80

**PIGS** infected with a banned chemical were destroyed. In a press brief at Vissan Co, Vietnam's leading foodstuff processor, inspectors from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development announced a decision to fine director Nguyen Van Toan, who sold pigs with

the banned chemical Salbutamol. Vets from the city's vet station paid a visit to Vissan's slaughterhouse to take samples and found Salbutamol to be five times above the legal allowance in 80 of the pigs there. Consequently, a fine of VND50 million was issued, in addition to VND100 million—the cost of destroying the infected animals.

VND 4 MILLION

**FINE** issued to a Vietnamese man for making a joke about a bomb

while going through check-in procedures for a flight from Hanoi to Thailand. Though the man immediately explained that it was a joke, he was fined by the airport authorities. The passenger was accused of violating the Vietnamese government's decree on administrative fines for violations in the field of civil aviation. Specifically, the violation of "spreading rumors or providing false information about bombs, mines, explosives, radioactive, biological or chemical weapons that not yet affect the normal operation of civil aviation." In January 2016, an intoxicated elementary school teacher in Thu Duc District was banned from flying for 12 months because he threatened security staff, saying that his suitcase contained a bomb.

33,600

**VIETNAMESE LABORERS** worked abroad in the first four months of this year, accounting for 33.69 percent of the target for 2016, according to the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs' Overseas Labor Management Department.

Taiwan still ranked the largest market for Vietnamese workers in the period with 4,991, followed by Japan (3,349), the Republic of Korea (1,510), Saudi Arabia (310) and Malaysia (122). This year's growth is seen in the export labor market, with opportunities for Vietnamese workers in new markets such as Thailand and Australia—a maximum of 200 Vietnamese workers are expected to get visas for visiting and working in Australia for 12 months. Thailand also allowed ten Vietnamese enterprises to send laborers to work in the country's fishing and construction sector in 2016.

280

**SAFETY FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS** have been developed in 35 provinces and cities in Vietnam, with main products including vegetables, fruits, tea, meat, eggs and seafood.

The figure was released by the National Agro-Forestry-Fisheries Quality Assurance Department (NAFIQAD) at a workshop last month. Pham The Cuong, head of NAFIQAD's sub-department in Son La Province, said his agency has closely monitored local farmers' agricultural practices so as to successfully create safe food supply chains.

It has overseen all steps, from choosing varieties, irrigation, fertilizing, and pesticide to preliminary processing. NAFIQAD pointed out challenges such as the lax connectivity in some supply chains, a lack of product diversity and the high cost of supervision and packaging. To expand food safety, the department's Director General Nguyen Nhu Tiep called on authorized agencies to fine-tune regulations to facilitate the certification of safe products and support the supply chains.





VIETNAM'S BIGGEST BOY BAND IS AT THE TOP OF THE CHARTS AGAIN—BUT NOT FOR THEIR MUSIC

TEXT BY MICHAEL ARNOLD

IMAGES PROVIDED BY VIETNAM ARTISTS AGENCY

**IT'S SOMETIMES JOKINGLY SAID** in publishing circles that there are never any guarantees in putting out a best-seller, unless of course you happen to be some kind of celebrity. For most authors, this is just one of the grim realities of a life devoted to the craft of writing—but for those who actually do happen to be in the public eye, it's a very useful piece of information to have. Most international publishers will jump at the chance to put out a film star's retrospective or a sports idol's biography, for the simple reason that sales to a pre-existing fan market are pretty much guaranteed. Not so in Vietnam—in an industry long-since dominated by political memoirs and carefully-checked manuscripts towing the Party line, the kind of celebrity publishing that rakes in millions from the reading public overseas is still very much in its infancy here.

The recent release of *Nhung Nguoi la Quen Thuoc* (Familiar Strangers), the story of popular Vietnamese boy band 365, is perhaps a sign that Vietnam's most prominent publisher—Phuong Nam books—has at last woken up to the potential of book marketing based on popularity in the entertainment business. Written by a member of the band, Jun Pham, and given a generous (for Vietnam) initial print run of 10,000 copies, the book—which traces the development and experiences of the group since their formation five years ago—is the first of its kind to land on the local market. Virtually a sell-out within its first





weeks on the shelves and already right at the top of the charts, it has already demonstrated that a publishing model long-since proven gold in Western markets is just as solid here in Vietnam.

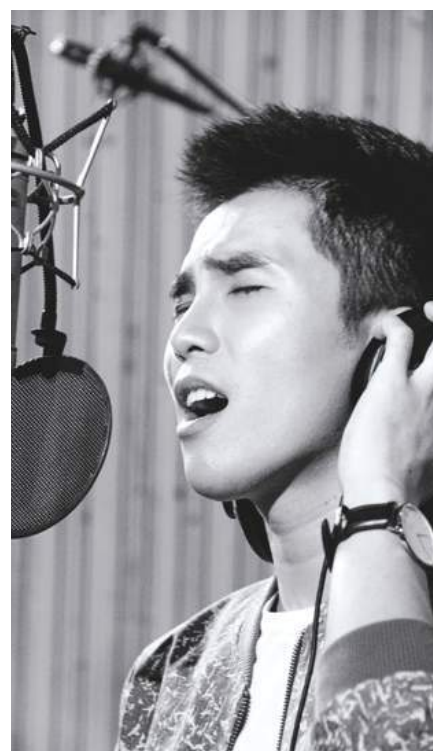
365's band leader Isaac, who is currently working with his co-performers to promote the book nationwide at a series of signing ceremonies organized in cities throughout Vietnam, is remarkably candid about how the book is proving a fitting swansong to a hard-working group of young entertainers who will this year be separating to pursue their own solo careers.

"I did see other books like this one, from One Direction, and some other artists," says Isaac, "But to be honest, I didn't think about it before. Five years is not a very long time, we haven't achieved anything so big as to be put in a book. But, if we don't do it now, we're not going to have another chance. So I had to forget all the stupid things in my mind about how small we are. We just wanted to do something as a souvenir. Something that, when you get

older and can't remember anything... I can read it and I may remember this beautiful time of my young life."

The book is a handsomely-published volume retailing for VND258,000—a tad on the expensive side for a book marketed at young pop fans, but evidently well-priced as a must-have for the group's devotees, who are more than willing to shell out the extra cash for all-new photos, behind-the-scenes information, and a glimpse of the inner workings of a song-and-dance troupe that have dominated their genre of Vietnamese Kpop-style boy band performances since the release of their first single *Awakening* in December 2010.

Writing it has also been an intensely personal journey for 365. "This is our youth," reflects Isaac, "we grew up together. Just five years, but it's a very long time for us... when I read this one, even though I'm the one telling the stories, the first time I held the book in my hands, and I opened each page, and read it, I felt something and even had tears in my eyes."



"The thing that we want to tell people in this book," he continues, "is that, whatever you want to do, just do it, but you have to be sure that you want it so bad, you really want it, because it's not easy. When I talked to my dad that I wanted to be a singer and go to Ho Chi Minh City to be in a boy band, I didn't know what was going to happen. But I told myself, there's no way back. Whatever happens in the future, I will live with that, and if I die, I have to die with that too. Many people want to be a famous singer or even be in a boy band. But they don't know how it's going to happen, and what difficulties they're going to have to face. When you want to step into this world, you have to see that you're going to live with that, and whatever happens, you cannot go back. That is the only way to be successful."

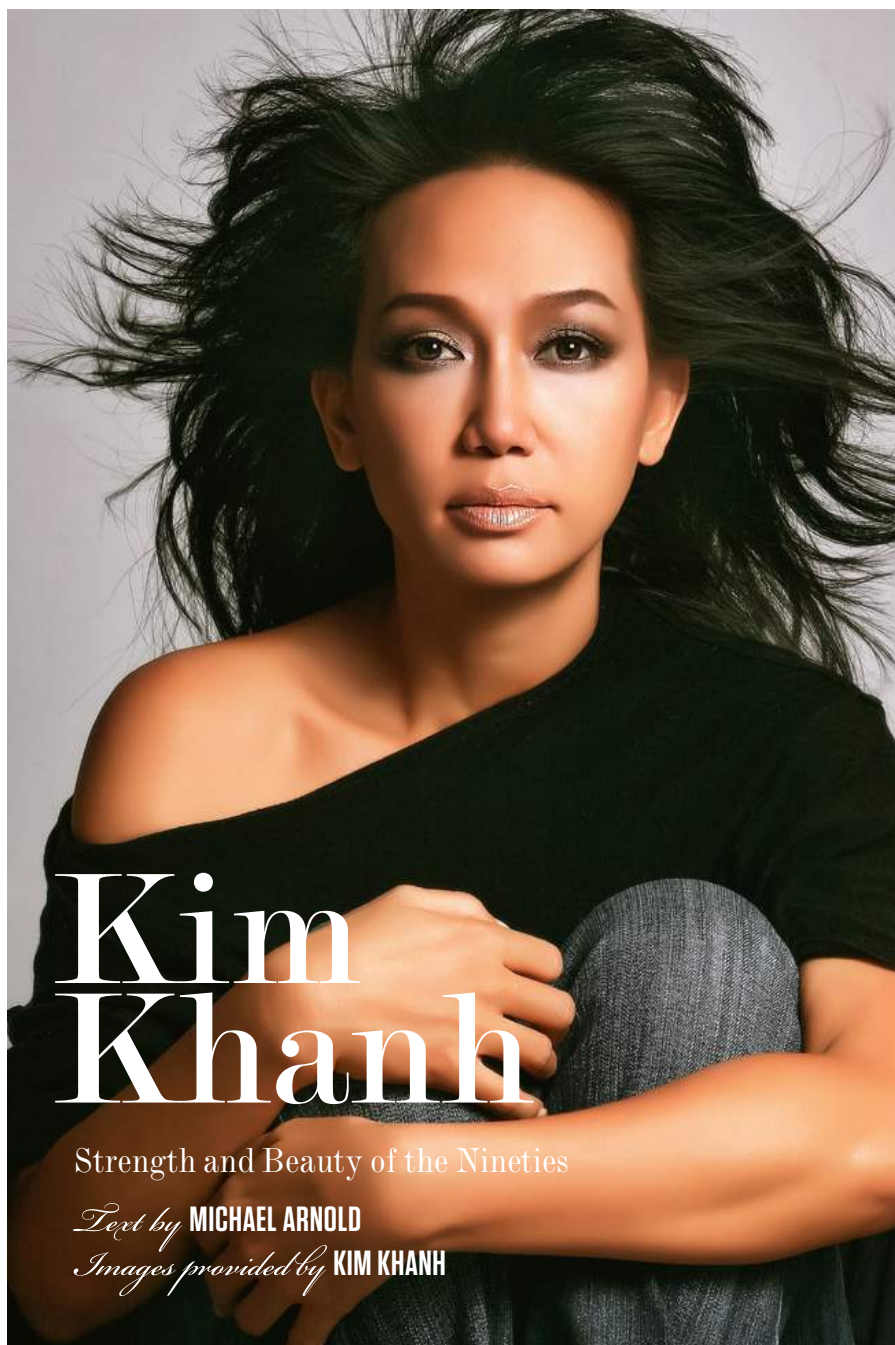
Despite the difficulties inherent in the industry, Isaac does hope that the book will inspire young Vietnamese people to give a career in entertainment a shot. "There are not many boy bands in Vietnam," he says. "You could say that we are the only one right now, the only one with enough popularity to be recognized. I think it's a bad thing, because you should have many tastes in

the music industry, like male singers, female singers, and boy bands is one of the tastes of the audiences. So it's kind of boring just to have the one of us. In the future, we hope to have many more boy bands, or girl bands, in Vietnam. We're going to disband this year, so we hope to have some kind of new generation for the audiences when we're not there anymore."

While the book is a bittersweet goodbye to boyband life for the now 27-year-old Isaac, as the most competent English speaker of the group, he remains the most likely performer of the four to have a chance at breaking out into the international music scene.

"I want to, and I have a dream," he admits. "But if you want to prove yourself in the international market, you not only have to have the talent, but you need to have a whole crew, a whole production house to support you. That's what we want to do. Me, Veronica (Ngo Thanh Van, who recruited and masterminded the group), the whole VAA company, we are dreaming about that. So we work together and we hope also someday we're going to put more talent internationally. But that's just the future... it's not easy." ■





# Kim Khanh

Strength and Beauty of the Nineties

Text by MICHAEL ARNOLD

Images provided by KIM KHANH

**I PROMISED MYSELF** I wasn't going to ask Kim Khanh about her being single in her 40s. I like to think that this publication has fairly high editorial standards, and there are far more interesting things to say about a woman than whether or not she's decided to get married. The local media tend to give her a hard time on the issue already, perhaps because Khanh cut something of a wild figure in the 90s as one of the country's first home-grown sex symbols—something that was an inspiration to Vietnam's emerging modern-minded women during a time of great cultural transition. I figured we could avoid the topic, and respectfully discuss some of the more salient aspects of Khanh's career instead.

Yet somehow the subject comes up. Kim Khanh is uncommonly frank, and she has a presence that oozes sexual charisma, something that sizzles even when she sits perfectly still. I ask her—rather too shyly—if she sees herself as a role model for women in a country that is still steeped in traditional Confucian values, where girls are encouraged to be meek and subservient, grow up understanding sex as having an inherently transactional nature, and yearn to belong to a man in marriage. Khanh, who experienced the same pressure to find a husband as most young women in this country still do, has somehow managed to shrug the whole issue off as unimportant.

"I think I just enjoy this," breathes

Khanh in her rich, handsome voice, as if the answer is patently obvious. "Maybe no one chooses to be alone, but I think it's better to be single than to be with someone and not be happy. I'm single; I'm not married yet, but I'm not alone, it's different, right? I am in love, I'm always in love, I keep my life in love, so I think it's interesting—there's no need to ruin it by getting married. I look around myself; I wonder what the value of marriage is, because a lot of guys who are married still chase me. I don't believe in marriage, I don't believe in a piece of paper, but I believe in love."

Khanh has always been this way—a free spirit who simply is who she is—and there's nothing that's pretended about her nature. She's never attempted to be sexy or faked her confidence: she just is.

When she first came into the public eye, it was as a contestant in a beauty pageant. She came 0.01 points behind the winner—but even that wasn't something she'd intentionally entered out of some desire to have her looks validated by a panel of judges: her overenthusiastic boyfriend at the time enlisted her in the competition at the last minute, perhaps looking for some validation of his own. That wasn't her first time on stage, however—by the time she came second in the "Miss Health, Beautiful and Fashion 1991" pageant, she'd already made her first movie, although it wasn't shown until two months after the win.

"My first role was as an antagonist," she laughs. "At around that time, usually the directors picked the characters for me, but later when I got to pick the parts myself, I preferred those with a deep mind, good heart, and so on. But they thought I was a sexy girl, so they started me off with a sexy, strong character. So, I was the bad girl. When they asked me to do roles like that later, I refused. I like acting, but not those stupid, boring parts. I don't mind if it's a bad character, but I like to explore the transition from good to bad or bad to good, and why and how."

## Let's Get Physical

Before acting, Khanh had actually started out as an aerobics instructor—this was in the 80s when neon spandex pants and bright-colored headbands were in their heyday, and Vietnam was just getting on the bandwagon. "At that time, I was still in high school," remembers Khanh, "then I would go to the gym and learn aerobics just for fun—until I was selected to lead the District 1 Aerobics Team. I became a trainer; Miss Vietnam Ly Thu Thao was also in my training team. Sometimes we had to train over 100 people in the class,



so we were standing on a high platform and dancing with the music, with three of us taking turns every 20 minutes.”

Aerobics opened the door to modeling and working as a backup dancer for popular singers, until the pageant placing brought her national fame.

Vietnam was still very fresh on the international scene at that time, providing an exciting backdrop to the young actress’s career. “After the contest more people knew about me,” she says, “and I appeared on calendars a lot. I sang too, and did a bit of acting at some theaters, television, and direct-to-video movies. At that time, Vietnam still hadn’t quite opened up to the world, so there was nothing to entertain people beyond watching videotaped movies at home, or perhaps watching traditional opera performances, *cai luong*, at open-air venues outside.

While never exactly notorious, Khanh was certainly known and admired for her open strength of character—and desired for her penchant for unembarrassed costume. “I was different from the other girls modeling at the time,” she remembers. “They liked to be very sweet, very girly, but I was strong and sporty. The way I wore clothes was so different—the other girls preferred the princess look with their loose, conservative party dresses, but I liked sporty clothes and tight, sexy, curvy outfits.” Even in traditional Vietnam, something about her candid nature meant that she was rarely criticized: “Actually, they liked it,” she laughs, “but I do remember once when I was on the *Duyen Dang Viet Nam* show—I wore a very sexy dress, made with a see-through material, it was black and had two red embroidered flowers on the front, another one down a bit, and one at the back too; it was like, ‘wear but not wear’! It was just too sexy at that time; people were shocked to see it. I even won the *trai coc xanh* prize for the worst dress. But I was so young, you know, I didn’t do that on purpose, I just thought it was a very nice, beautiful and sexy dress.”

Nowadays, Khanh has toned things down a little. She’s currently focusing on directing, and working on scripts for her own productions, intending primarily to develop documentaries about societal issues she feels strongly about—such as child cancer, HIV, LGBT equality, and the sexual abuse of children. “I’m really attracted to these subjects,” she says. “I’m working on the kids with cancer project at the moment. I’m still finding the sponsors, it’s a big project. I want to run it on TV once a week to tell the stories of kids under 15 who have cancer. Vietnam has the second highest rate of child cancer in Asia, and 90 percent of



kids with cancer will soon die. So my project is that I want to make a short documentary about each of them. I’m trying to connect with some US charity organizations; still waiting for their responses. The documentary will be more about keeping up the kids’ dreams, giving them a normal, happy life, classes to study even while they’re in treatment. I’ll focus on *living* with cancer over *dying* from cancer, how to give them hope, how to fight the sickness, which treatments work well, how to discover cancer early, and so on. Through the shows and the stories, I want to bring hope, an eagerness to live, and a reason to feel optimistic to the kids.”

The child abuse project will be more personal, based on the experiences of her 60-year-old neighbor who as a child had been forced to perform

sexual acts on an uncle since the age of six. “It’s not an easy subject to do in Vietnam,” she sighs, “because people are still scared to accuse and condemn.”

For now, with less of a constant public presence, Khanh remains happy with her situation regardless of marital status and the trappings of the entertainment industry. “I think I’m quite shy,” she says to anyone gullible enough to believe her. “I’m not open-minded,” she insists. “I’m very traditional, I’m very hard, I’m old-minded—that’s why I’m not married yet. I’m very hard on my boyfriend. In love, I’m different, although it also depends on who, but with my friends, I’m very easy. They say I’m very open, like a party girl, but while it may look like that, it’s not like that really. I still keep up the old traditions, and I still like *cai luong*.” ■





# THE DELTA DILEMMA

IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN



**THE DELTA OF** the Mekong River is one of the most threatened delta areas in the world. As a result of climate change, the country is plagued by more rain, more floods and salinization of the lower reaches of the river.

In 2009 architect Joep Janssen lived and worked in Ho Chi Minh City for four years and in his book, *Living with the Mekong. Climate change and urban development in Ho Chi Minh City and the Mekong Delta*, he gives a personal account of how Vietnam and the Vietnamese

people cope with the consequences of climate change and urbanization.

He traveled through the Mekong Delta and Ho Chi Minh City and met farmers and urban inhabitants. Janssen analyses the influence of the rapid economic developments on water management. He interviewed Dutch engineers who were involved in plans for improved coastal defense and compares the Mekong Delta to other deltas.

In a historical analysis he shows how the developments of the city and its architecture have been

influenced by French colonials as well as the canal ring of Amsterdam.

The book illustrates the dangers that delta areas in the world are facing. However, portraits of inhabitants of the Mekong Delta also show how people in their own environment take initiatives to survive and benefit from the rising waters.

The following—*Due South* and *Life Along the Canals*—are edited excerpts from *Living with the Mekong. Climate change and urban development in Ho Chi Minh City and the Mekong Delta*.







**I'M HEADING TO** Saigon South, the most modern neighbourhood of Ho Chi Minh City. First, I have to cross the Phu My Bridge. From the bridge, about 50 metres above the Saigon River, the harbour looks like a long line of docks, cranes and warehouses.

To my right is the city—incredibly tiny—and to my left the Saigon River meanders towards the sea. Next to me, a truck slowly drives up the road—its gust of wind nearly blows me off my motorbike. Once I get to Nguyen Van Linh boulevard, I notice cars and motorbikes are separated. There are less mobile stalls alongside the road than in other places in the city. After a few minutes I park my motorbike in front of The Crescent, a large and luxurious shopping mall in the centre of the new district.

I am meeting up with Tien (28), whom I had recently met in a Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf. I had told her I was interested in how people experience water in the city. One of the places I want to visit is Saigon South, situated on a small branch of the Saigon River. “I go there often,” Tien had said. She

had suggested going together.

Tien lives with her parents and younger brother in a white apartment building by the murky water. “There are a couple of these buildings in the city,” she says. “The owner made his fortune in the wood industry, but nowadays he also builds these modern service apartments.” The three-bedroom-flat has three luxurious toilets. “In Vietnam, it is normal for every bedroom to have its own toilet.” Tien is dressed fashionably. She has an iPod, iPad and iPhone. About the tattoos in her neck and behind her ears she says: “Every tattoo tells a piece of my life story.” She speaks fluent English. She learnt that from her father. Nowadays she also speaks English with her Vietnamese best friends. A few months ago she resigned as marketing manager. “I write poetry,” Tien says, “and since recently I have been studying French as I’m preparing myself for my trip to Europe.” She also teaches music to blind children. She does this together with a friend, the first winner of the Vietnamese edition of *Idols*. “One of my poems is called *Victim of Time* and is about disadvantaged people who

cannot make their dreams come true.”

I walk through the shopping mall with Tien. It isn’t busy. According to the billboards, The Crescent is meant to become the social heart of the new city centre. The service apartments, offices and shops are situated around an artificial lake. Many inhabitants of the inner city come here on the weekends. “Particularly at night you will see loved-up couples enjoying the sunset and, of course, each other,” smiles Tien. When the dusk falls, the first couples appear on the docks and the pedestrian bridge to The Crescent. From their motorbikes they enjoy the view of the water. And there are always several fishermen. They don’t catch a lot of fish, but they don’t seem to mind.

“To be honest, I prefer the old town,” Tien says. “That still feels like the dreamy Saigon.” The centre is lively—a jumble of pedestrians, cyclists, motorbikes and taxis. There are construction sites on almost every corner of the street. Ho Chi Minh City is rejuvenating. “The old buildings are replaced by new ones and only the melancholy is left,” she ponders.





## HOW WATER BROUGHT WEALTH AND THEN DISAPPEARED FROM THE CITY

TEXT BY JOEP JANSSEN

and facilities. His company collaborated with a Vietnamese government enterprise, a type of collaboration that was becoming increasingly common since the privatisation of many government enterprises in 1986.

Why would anyone want to build a large, new neighbourhood in low marshlands? The answer is simple: it is the cheapest land, interesting for those who want to make money fast—long term is for later. The project had to make sure that Ho Chi Minh City could expand in a controlled way. In 1993, the public-private consortium asked three international architectural firms to develop a plan together for a new district where people would work, live and relax. The architects drew an organised plan of roads and buildings. The marshes were drained and raised with clean sand from the Mekong Delta. Existing paths, ditches and rivers were straightened or filled up and replaced by a grid of streets. An avenue would connect all important facilities, such as schools, a water park and a golf course. Nowadays you'll find small enclosed residential areas on both sides of the avenue, alternated with towers and parks.

The developers saw Saigon South as an 'island city,' a chain of compact neighbourhoods within walking distance from each other, each surrounded by water. This plan was never realised. During the construction process, the water that had been on the drawings was mostly replaced by concrete. And since concrete does not absorb water, there is less water storage and streets frequently flood during spring tide in the rainy season.

With the construction of Saigon South, Ho Chi Minh City entered modern times. And that meant building with a tabula rasa view instead of taking the existing lands into consideration. The urban plan was built on a smoothed and raised terrain. The plan appealed to wealthy Vietnamese, expats and *Viet Kieus*.

Yet she realises Ho Chi Minh City needs to look forward. "I am glad to see my city is becoming one of the most modern cities in the area."

### HOW SAIGON SOUTH HAPPENED

The idea for Saigon South comes from Taiwan. In the early 1990s, Taiwanese tycoon Lawrence Ting came to Ho Chi Minh City. In his own country he was already known as "King Vietnam" because he had made the happiness and welfare of the Vietnamese people his mission.

"It was his second home," his website states. "He used to come here when he was a child. The landscape, the people and their traditions reminded him of Taiwan." Ting wanted to help shape the economic growth—obviously a lucrative business. Ting came at the right time. The local authorities thought the inner city was becoming too crowded and unsafe. Rich citizens asked for space, peace and quiet.

Not surprising, considering the inhabitants of the inner city lived on about six square kilometres in 1999—

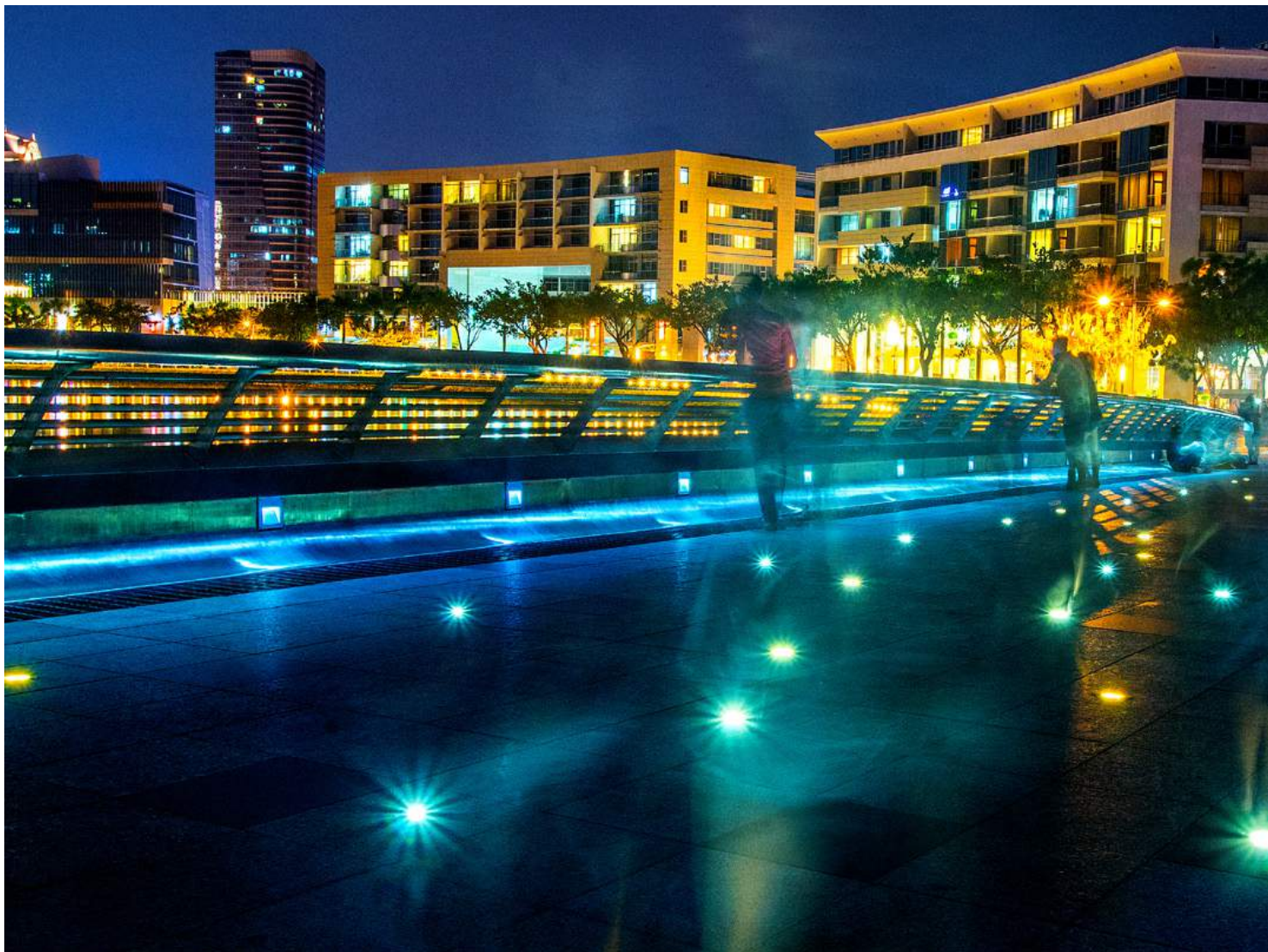
compared to 40 square kilometres in the Netherlands. Because of this lack of space, the streets turned into an extension of people's homes. This had to change. Ting wanted to build a modern district in the marshes south of the city, with modern infrastructure



IMAGE BY TRUNG HUU

DRAWING BY CHRISTOPHER GRUBBS





The urban elite leaves the crowded inner city to live here in luxury. With its own shopping mall, police, rich citizens and administration, Saigon South functions as an autonomous state within the city. There was so much enthusiasm about the project that they declared the district a model city for Vietnam. The ads of developers stated: "Saigon South is an urban vision for Vietnam in the new millennium." This makes Saigon South an excellent example of a new type of settlement, in which the centre turns away from the water and instead is based on a grid of streets. This spatial process of change spreads across Ho Chi Minh City's countryside like oil.

## THE MASTER PLAN

We walk through a park where people are fishing in ponds. Little boys are playing football on the streets. They speak English. A large notice near the playground displays the rules for inhabitants and visitors of the neighbourhood: "Gambling, cock fights and fortune-telling are not allowed in the park."

While Tien and I walk past the residential towers and flats on our way to our motorbikes, I remember my conversation with Vietnamese urban planner Ngo Viet Nam Son who designed the plan I am currently walking through.

"Saigon South is the best that could ever happen to Ho Chi Minh City," Nam Son said when I visited him in his old villa in the inner city. He was proud of it, and told me he had strived to make Ho Chi Minh City a little nicer, to develop a sense

of place. "That will make the city economically stronger, and more appealing to work and live in."

Nam Son summarised the success factors of Saigon South. It was based on a cohesive master plan, strong public-private cooperation, sophisticated construction with open spaces and easy access. But the plan does not yet meet all the requirements: "We still need to work on public transport, a network of waterways and weekly public activities for the local people and visitors."

Nam Son was involved in Saigon South as a designer for the American architectural firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. On the walls of his office were photos of his late mother and father. "My father was an architect, but he was one of the first Vietnamese people to pursue a career in urban planning." His father was the famous architect Ngo Viet Thu, winner of the prestigious architecture award Prix de Rome in 1955, and responsible for the construction of the Reunification Palace and the design of new villages in the Mekong Delta. "Urban planning is not popular among students, as they would rather be a *starchitect* than an official drawing city plans," Nam Son laughed.

Nam Son saw many advantages in the urbanisation of Vietnam. "It is good for economic growth and urban expansion leads to more freedom of people's lifestyles and activities, and more work." Additionally, it also creates an opportunities for knowledge intensive and creative industries, which will strengthen the position of Ho Chi Min City in the network of global metropolises."



IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN





IMAGE BY NGOC THANH



IMAGE BY WYTSME VAN KEULEN

We readily agreed on the disadvantages of the ever growing city, with its traffic jams, pollution, flooding and the loss of ancient heritage, which threatens the quality of life in the city. “This is why Ho Chi Minh City should not be considered as one big city with more than ten million inhabitants, or one central city with a mixed program and several dormitory towns surrounding it, but rather as a metropolis region with larger and smaller cities, varying from a hundred thousand to three million inhabitants, each with their own urban identity for a particular community, and well connected to each other. This way, the city will develop a stronger sense of place, its economy will become stronger and it will be a more appealing place to live and work,” said Nam Son.

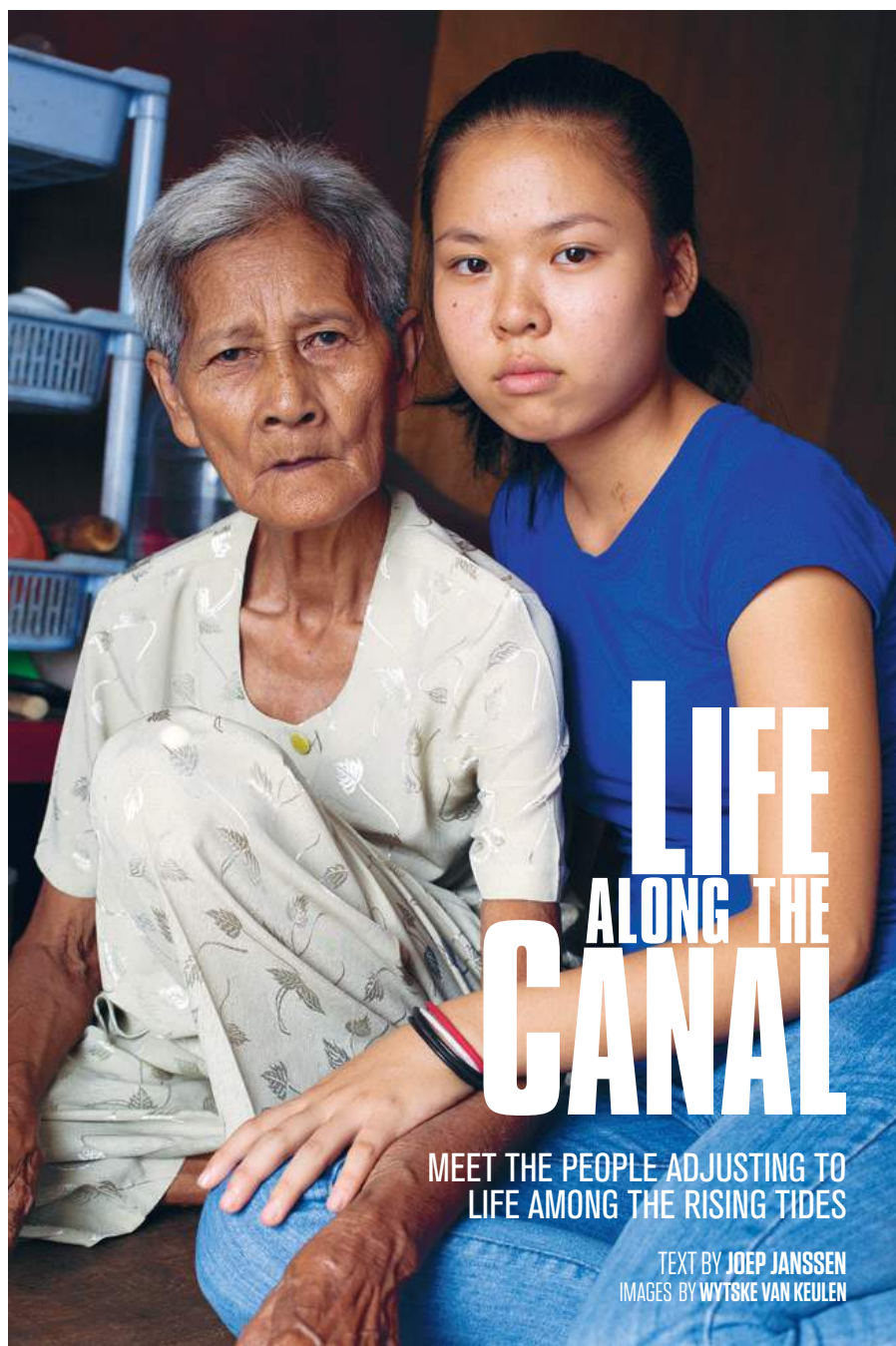
That sounded easier than it is. For example, government departments for traffic, water management and housing each have their own master plan for the

city that strongly overlap each other. “The department of Infrastructure is working on a transport plan without consulting the department of Planning, which means there is no city plan, and without involving the department of taxes, so the taxes do not take into account the increase of real estate prices, which means that the chances of the transport plan receiving funding have become very slim,” he added.

Nam Son wanted a higher density of homes, offices and facilities close to large infrastructure projects, such as tram stations that are being built, to make the city more compact and to reduce the energy consumption . His advice: “Make sure there is a good connection between the city and the farmlands, keep the key characteristics of Ho Chi Minh City, like the canals, the street life with the rows of trees and shops. But most importantly, make sure there is plenty of water and green, so the city keeps its feet dry.” ■







# LIFE ALONG THE CANAL

MEET THE PEOPLE ADJUSTING TO  
LIFE AMONG THE RISING TIDES

TEXT BY JOEP JANSSEN  
IMAGES BY WYTSKE VAN KEULEN

**TINI (17) LIVES** in one of the many huts by the Te Canal in Ho Chi Minh City, and as I look at her from the steps in front of the door she sits on the floor, kneeling. Long, black hair. Dimples in her cheeks. And jeans with a t-shirt. Both blue. A double mattress is on the floor of the room. A computer sits on a low table. On the walls are pictures of relatives, Uncle Ho and the Holy Mary. At the foot end of the bed is a lounge. An old woman mashes up herbs with a mortar. The smell mixes with the stench from the river. Next to her, a fan is blowing on full blast.

I met Tini during a meeting of Smile Group, an organisation that supports disadvantaged children from families hit by HIV and AIDS. I explained to the head of the organisation that I

wanted to do some interviews for my book, and that I was looking for people living by the water. She introduced me to Tini, a girl that immediately stood out because of her cheerfulness. She invited me over to show me her home. It is the fifth place I am visiting today. A morning breeze blows between the cracks of the corrugated iron roof as Tini pours us a cup of tea. “My parents died of AIDS, so now I live with my 80-year-old grandmother,” she says. We talk animatedly, also about their home that is easily accessible via the water. Just like the other huts it is built on stilts. And for a good reason, Tini says. “Every three years, they raise the houses a little bit. I’m glad they do, because the water keeps on rising. The water used to come up to my ankles.

But nowadays, during the monsoon, it comes up to the threshold of our house.”

Poor people are usually the first victims of climate change. But the flooding of Tini’s house is not solely caused by an increase of rain. Groundwater abstraction lowers the ground. Also, many waterways have been filled up over the years and replaced by asphalt roads.

The illegal building of huts on the riverbanks has also made the waterways a lot smaller. The water has nowhere to go—it can only rise. In the corner of the hut is a toilet, no more than a hole in the floor that drains directly into the Te Canal. Opposite the toilet is a makeshift kitchen, looking out on the water. Tini: “As the number of inhabitants increases, the quality of the water in the city decreases. The people living by the river dump their waste in the canal. Rubbish is floating everywhere. The black water smells and is swarming with mosquitoes.” For Tini and her grandmother, plans to improve the quality of the water are vital.

We shake hands in the small yard in front of her door. Through an alleyway I walk back to my motorbike, which I had parked on the main road. I cross two bridges that take me to the Tau Hu Canal, the former Chinese river, which was also known as the ‘rice street’ of Saigon as it was the most important trade route between the Chinese river harbour in Cholon and the French sea harbour in Saigon. As I am driving past it, I see small houses with shops on the streets on both sides. On the left sides they are two stories high, old and derelict; on the right side, they are five stories high, new, and so colourful they form a nice contrast with the black canal. They remind me of the *grachtenpanden*—canal houses—of Dutch water cities. I drive past the Chinese district, Cholon, and when the Hau Tu Canal changes into a winding river—a sign I am approaching the Mekong Delta—I turn right and follow the Lo Gom Canal. I can see the water tower in the distance. That is where I need to be.

## LO GOM

Via a small bridge I reach a public courtyard. Mrs. Mai (70) is sitting on a chair, peeling onions for her shop she runs from home. We have met before and she greets me warmly.

It is lunchtime. She pours me a cup of cold tea and I eat *xoi bap*, sticky rice with beans and coconut. She tells me her husband peels onions as well. They earn 60 Euros per month. “My home is light and there is enough wind on the courtyard where my grandchildren can play,” she says. But there are problems, too: “At night, the government switches off the lights and it becomes unsafe. People come and steal and use drugs.”





According to Mai, rich people in this neighbourhood live on the main roads, the poor live in the centre, in shacks by and sometimes in huts on the canal. Mai used to live in such a shack.

But she was lucky enough to get help from a Belgian organisation for development cooperation that executed a plan for the construction of quays and a sewer system, the widening of the canal, and the development of a market and an apartment building to house poor people in the neighbourhood. In the meantime, the security officer of the building has approached us. He asks me what I am doing here. I explain that I am interested in the building. Proudly, he shows me his office: "Here, we have our resident meetings and parties." A dusty model of the building sits on the

cabinet. Nhi: "The tenants had a hard time getting used to the staircases."

I walk around the apartments with Nhi. We meet Mr. Van (65). He is a retired builder, and lives with his wife, four children and two grandchildren in an apartment on the second floor. Van is very impressed by the quality of the construction. "Look," he says and points to the wall. "You can't see any electricity cables." Outside, on the gallery, rice is drying on a cloth. It will be sold to a fish farmer.

His neighbour Bich (29) lives with five adults and five children in her apartment. Her husband is a labourer and works nine hours a day, six days per week. They own a computer and Bich has a mobile phone. When everyone is at work, Bich looks after the children. To earn some extra money, she ties incense together with string. "My children want to learn, but I cannot afford the tuition fees," she says with tears in her eyes. Together with Nhi I walk down the stairs leading to the canal in front of the building. It looks like an open sewer. The jetty looks rickety.

When I ask Nhi if boats are still sailing here, he tells me goods for the market are now delivered by vans instead of boats. "The canal used to be full of boats from the Mekong Delta, nowadays hardly anyone sails here."

I take several old post cards from my bag. "Look," I say to Nhi as I point to the ditch on the other side that lies perpendicular to the Lo Gom Canal. "You used to be able to cross to the market in Cholon from here." I show him four old postcards from Le Canal Bonard, showing the rise and fall of the canal. "The canal used to be surrounded by trees and a soft embankment; next, stalls started to appear on a quayside made out of

bamboo, then we see the canal in all its glory, the quayside full of bags of rice, and so many boats are moored that we can't even see the canal itself anymore, and finally the stalls are replaced by huts, that have been expanded later. Nowadays, there are so many huts the canal has turned into a smelly ditch."

When I say goodbye, I notice I am impressed by the program, as it has given the people more confidence. They have decent facilities in their homes, such as running water to have showers, and they have access to a market where they can meet other locals. Unfortunately, this example has not been followed by other planners, investors and officials. All they have to offer is a lot of loose plans.

It seems to me that long term planning for the whole neighbourhood is vital. The sizes of existing plots should be amended to improve the flow of water, and to increase green space. Also, the urban development of the area needs a booster, such as the renovation of historical sites, to incite new investments. However, the tenants of this building will not be too bothered about this. After all, unlike the shacks they used to live in before, their houses no longer flood.

My journey does not continue past the Lo Gom Canal, as it turns into a ditch and leads to a dead end. ■

*Living with the Mekong. Climate change and urban development in Ho Chi Minh City and the Mekong Delta* is also available in Dutch and can be ordered at: [www.uitgeverijblauwdruk.nl](http://www.uitgeverijblauwdruk.nl), [www.blauwdrukpublishers.com](http://www.blauwdrukpublishers.com) and <http://www.amazon.com/Living-Mekong-Climate-Change-Development/dp/9075271948>.







# THE FRUIT SELLER

Offering daily vitamin doses fresh off the street

*Text by* **JOE NICKOLS** *Image by* **NGOC TRAN**

**AT 3AM WHEN** most of the city is in deep slumber, 25-year-old Tri heads for the sidewalk on Hai Ba Trung in District 3 where he rests his sack full of guava. It's a 10-minute walk from his rented room. The earlier he gets there the better because space located near the traffic lights, amongst the shady trees, is most sought after and hard to come by. Just before daybreak he starts to arrange his guavas in neat stacks to attract customers, he cuts one in half to display the pink flesh inside.

Tri, who's originally from Ha Giang, has been selling various fruits (mangosteen, strawberries or papayas, depending on the season) for the last two years. "Seasonal fruits I sell are the best in the market," he boasts. "I can assure you that I do not sell a single rotten or damaged product. Customers will not buy my products if I compromise on quality."

After making a phone call to consult market prices, he writes "d20.000/kg" for the smaller sized guavas and "d30.000/kg" for the bigger ones. It's 6am now and he

sells a kilo within a matter of a few minutes to a motorbike driver on her way to work. "A juice shop has already ordered 2kgs and I am sure the rest will be sold within a few hours," says Tri confidently.

Unlike other fruit sellers who bring and sell their produce directly from their fields, Tri risks incurring losses since his expenses include the cost of buying wholesale from local farmers and any loss through poor quality, inedible stock. He has to make sure that he sells everything he buys because fruits are highly perishable and cannot be kept fresh for long. "After I sell everything I return to the market to pay the farmers. Therefore, it is necessary that they do not sell me fruits that cannot be sold. I have strictly instructed them to supply me only fresh fruits."

According to Tri, he has been earning a profit of VND50,000 per day for the last few months. "To be honest, I have been fortunate that I have never had to return anything that I've bought." All seasonal fruits that end up on his sidewalk space come

from a wholesale market in District 6 via Dalat or the Mekong Delta. "Selling fruits depends on how well we are able to convince the customers about the quality of our products. Definitely, we cannot bear heavy loss while selling the products but sometimes we have to lower profit margins as taking fruit back to our homes is of no use."

During festive seasons, like the Mid-Autumn Festival, Tri earns extra income by also selling mooncakes. "Mooncakes are in high demand in September and lasts longer than fruits. Customers tend not bargain when buying mooncakes," he says, adding that it could be because of their festive spirit.

Interrupting our conversation, a woman in her mid-30s approaches Tri and inquires about the price after squeezing and checking a guava's firmness. After a few minutes, the woman agrees to buy 3kgs of the bigger size for VND25,000/kg.

"Although I lowered the profit margin, I do not mind because it's hot today and the guavas will not stay fresh for too long in this heat." ■





**MR. QUANG SPENDS** most of his working life in the gutter. Another part involves delving into plastic bags and buckets left along sidewalks or leaned against trees, looking for recyclables to separate and sell at a later time. The rest of the time he's pounding the pavements, pausing occasionally to shovel up the unsavory deposits left by stray dogs, the homeless and people who carelessly throw garbage anywhere they like.

He is a foot soldier among the small army employed by the government to clean up after 9 million citizens who call Ho Chi Minh City home. Under an orange hardhat, his weather-beaten, 45-year-old features are regularly animated by an expression not unlike the smiling expression often associated with Vietnamese people.

Every day he pushes around a giant square bin on four wheels with several large plastic bags hanging on all four sides. One bag he has filled already, that'll be deposited at strategic points to be picked up and driven to the depot. Another bag is what might be called work in progress. A glance inside reveals a predictable mix of used plastic cups, bags, straws and bottles. The bag nearest to him harbors bags yet to be filled and something called "the sharps bag." Another unsavory deposit, symptomatic of the society we live in, is the used needle. Unluckily, there are many along

his way. Mr. Quang's route is within the Pham Ngu Lao ward, a lively and busy part of the city that is never 100 percent clean. Its late-night bars, cafes, hotels and crowdedness make it a desirable area for backpackers, young locals, delinquents, hawkers and drug addicts.

"If I find one, I have to pick it up with that," he says, pointing to his meter-long picker, a device with metallic tweezers at one end and hand controls at the other that must be difficult to manipulate while wearing protective gloves. The picker is one of several implements attached to the barrow, including at least two brooms, a shovel and rubber boots for the rainy season.

His uncharacteristic lapse into curmudgeonly—if understandable—complaint soon lifts and he's beaming happily as he pushes his barrow down Bui Vien's bustling street, waving right and left. Everybody seems to know him, from police officers, *xe oms* to shopkeepers bringing out their daily trash bags as he comes by. Only visiting strangers occasionally treat him with disrespect. "One of them threw something at me, shouting 'Here, scum; eat that,'" he recalls. "It turned out to be a half-eaten fruit. He shot off before I could get him."

That must have been quite upsetting. "I just picked it up and moved on," he shrugs and says. "What does upset me is dogs being allowed to foul the pavement.

Last week I had a call from a local school to ask if I'd clean up before the kids came out. Don't know what kind of dog it was, but it must have been a big one."

Mr. Quang is usually allowed a 10-minute break around this time, 9am, having started work two hours ago. "For all that, I really like this job. It keeps you fit and healthy." Healthy? It seems an unlikely word to use when you're uncomfortably close to the contents of dogs' bowels and human stomachs. What he means is that he likes being out in the open air. Always has done, ever since school days. He has no qualification and lives with his mom in a modest one-storey house in District 9. It's a good miles away, but he takes the bus to work.

His break is up and sets to work with the broad broom, sweeping up all the way along the double yellow lines as far as an illegally parked car. Into the bin goes a handful of cigarette butt and plastic wraps, along with a number of fallen leaves and flowers. "If I didn't do what I do, this place would look a mess," he mumbles. As if to prove his point, a kid throws an empty Styrofoam container onto the street from his motorbike. "And it's not as though there aren't any bins." He knows his value to this community and many of them know it too. The street cleaner can walk with his head held high, even when bent over a barrow with his feet in the gutter. ■





LONG BIEN BRIDGE

# *Hometown*

FAMOUS FOR DEPICTING FEMALE FIGURES IN AO DAIS,  
ARTIST **NGUYEN THANH BINH**'S LATEST WORK COMES AS A SURPRISE

*Text by* **CRAIG THOMAS**     *Images provided by* **NGUYEN THANH BINH**



## NGUYEN THANH BINH

is a world-renowned artist whose iconic work has received international acclaim and frequently been exhibited in Europe, Asia and the US. In preparation for the opening of *Hometown*, he takes some time off to speak about his latest collection.

**The paintings of your new collection are different in theme from what you are most famous for (ballerinas, nudes, girls in *ao dai*). What inspired you to go a different direction?**

Like all artists, I feel the need to change things up sometimes. If you maintain one style continually its just silly self-satisfaction or laziness.

I'm not trying to follow any trends, I'm just searching for beauty as I see it; a beauty for everyone. The structure in my paintings tells the viewer many things beyond the surface. The aim in my work is to condense the narrative. I like a minimal subject and a maximum idea just like in a Japanese haiku.

**Can you tell us about your process for creating the new collection? Did you plan things out or is it a more intuitive process that evolves as you work on each piece?** Normally, some whims appear—for example, the desire to draw something different—but do not come to fruition until an occasion like the offer of a solo exhibition. Then the idea becomes a specific intention, including a primary subject matter, materials,



WATER FRONT

sizes and major colors, among other aspects. The next painting usually comes from an earlier finished painting, which means it evolved from an existing one.

**Some people who have seen the paintings have called them sad or melancholy. How do you see them?**

Actually, I do not see them as sad or melancholy. They are more an expression of my personality: quiet, calm and peaceful. That is the most important factor of creativity: personality!

**I find your painting of Long Bien Bridge to be both very simple but also beautiful and moving. Can you tell us about that piece and why you chose to paint it like you did?** Long Bien Bridge, or Waterfront, and Confluence show not only my creative personality, but also benefit from a style of composition that is both simple and unique.

**Are there certain artists that have influenced you both in Vietnam and/or abroad?** On an artist's path, they are always influenced by former masters. The famous artist Nguyen Sang, and my friend—female artist Hoang Minh Hang— have influenced me greatly. Certainly, during my student days, I liked Juan Gris, Fernand Leger, and other famous cubist painters. Then, I realized they aren't my true 'language.' However, they still have a very light influence on the structure of space in my paintings.

**What do you think the artist's role in society is?** The role of artist in society is like the role of musicians, writers, or those working in theatre and movies. Since all their creative activities—though in different schools or forms of expression—all come from social life. Even when they are talking about the Moon, or Mars, they are really just reflections of life taking place around them. Their role is similar to flowers that bloom in nature; they make life not only more beautiful, but also bear fruit." ■

*Hometown is on display at Craig Thomas Gallery (165 Calmette, D1) until June 22.*



BOAT 2



# Hawaii Shidler Executive MBA

**The world-class AACSB-accredited program in Vietnam**

## Applying To Vietnam Executive MBA (VEMBA)

SINCE 2001, this AACSB-accredited Executive MBA has been offered in Hanoi and extended to Ho Chi Minh City in 2007. VEMBA has literally moved its graduates to the next level. Many of its alumni steadily move up to C-level positions or assume bigger responsibilities in successful companies at all levels—large and small, domestic and international. More graduates now hold senior management positions in top Asian cities, from Hong Kong to Singapore, from Jakarta to Kuala Lumpur. The number of new start-ups created or enabled by our VEMBA entrepreneurs has continued to rise.

The VEMBA business education goal is to promote the concept of wealth creation through leadership training and teamwork. With a flexible schedule that allows full-time executives to complete one of the most rigorous MBA programs in the country, the 48-credit-rich program is carefully designed to provide you with relevant knowledge and critical decision-making tools for changing times. Another VEMBA feature is the capstone consultancy practicum. Students are required

to create a consulting company and practice scientific management under the coaching of a team of faculty and experienced entrepreneurs.

The VEMBA professors are seasoned instructors, all educated from top doctoral programs in their respective academic disciplines and active in research. As such, they bring the latest knowledge to the classroom. Also,

thanks to the reputation as the leading Executive MBA program in Vietnam, the University of Hawaii has been able to attract award-winning professors from UC Berkeley, Cambridge, Colorado, Denver, Columbia, Illinois, Chicago, San Francisco, UCLA and Wisconsin Madison, and other prestigious institutions to supplement its core faculty.





## Hawaii Shidler Vietnam Executive MBA Advantages

### HIGHLY RANKED

The University of Hawaii Shidler College of Business is renowned for its expertise in international management and ranked among the top 25 graduate schools in the US for international business by U.S. News & World Report.



### AACSB-ACCREDITED

This is the only AACSB-accredited MBA program in Vietnam, which assures a high-quality, relevant, and internationally-recognized MBA.

### TOP FACULTY

All classes are taught by world-class faculty with hands-on experience from the University of Hawaii and selected universities in the US. Our faculty use a variety of interactive teaching formats and methods designed to engage and challenge experienced business leaders.

### HIGH-CALIBER EXECUTIVE PARTICIPANTS

Our students are from different countries with diverse professional backgrounds and solid work experience.

### ASIA-PACIFIC FOCUS

A pioneer among US business schools in international business, the University of Hawaii distinguishes itself with its focus on the Asia-Pacific Region.

### RIGOROUS CURRICULUM

Students are challenged to solve complex business problems in a global environment, apply strong analytical and strategic thinking to multifaceted business issues, and to develop sophisticated management skills.

### EXTENSIVE ALUMNI NETWORK

There are nearly 30,000 University of Hawaii Shidler College of Business Alumni living in 40 countries around the world, including a senior alumni network across Vietnam.

### FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE

Executive MBA classes are conveniently scheduled in the evening and on weekends to allow busy professionals to attend class and continue working full-time.

### TUITION SUBSIDY

Thanks to the school donor, Mr. Jay Shidler, the tuition fees of the Shidler Executive MBA program in Vietnam are substantially subsidized, USD23,040 compared to USD49,500 for the same program in Hawaii.

### SUMMER STUDY IN HAWAII

Students may like to take up to two elective courses during the Summer terms in Hawaii.

## Teaching Faculty

All classes are taught in Vietnam by University of Hawaii's faculty who travel to Vietnam to deliver their instruction and course material face-to-face. Most have spent years researching, teaching and consulting in the Asia-Pacific region. Their training and real-world focus assures students of a high quality educational experience that graduates will use right away to enhance their job performance and career. In addition to bringing their own professional business expertise and distinguished academic credentials to the classes that they teach, our faculty use a variety of teaching techniques including case analyses, simulations, notable guest speakers, and integrated technology to supplement their students' understanding.

## Alumni Testimonials

### Ha Thi Thu Thanh

CEO, Deloitte Vietnam

Class of 2003

"Education and learning business has always been of prime importance in my life. Being the CEO of Deloitte Vietnam, the largest auditing firm in Vietnam, it has indeed been a rewarding challenge for me to balance my work, my family and the Executive MBA program with University of Hawaii. As I view this, I have improved on my skills and knowledge to work in a global environment. The knowledge of professors combined with the experiences of my classmates, who happen to be not only Vietnamese but also many expatriates, has helped me manage my business more effectively & efficiently. The pursuit of an MBA requires lots of time and patience. If you have these, then don't miss the chance to get a world-class, well-acclaimed, AACSB-accredited MBA program right at your doorstep with the University of Hawaii at Manoa."

### Huynh Buu Quang

CEO, Maritime Bank

Class of 2011

"My 2-year experience with the University of Hawaii's Executive MBA program was undoubtedly one of the best periods in my life. It gave me chances to meet with wonderful people, both local and global, gain up-to-date and world class international best practices and know-how in various aspects of management techniques / philosophies and explore new things which I had never had the opportunity to do prior to joining this program. I could apply concepts and experiences acquired from the program into my daily job and life, almost instantly. The best part of all is the friendships I developed during the 2-year journey, which has extended well beyond completion of the program. It has more than paid off!"

### Jonathan Moreno

General Director, Medovations Vietnam

Class of 2013

"Like many of my classmates, we entered the program with a desire to gain knowledge, skills, and ultimately the degree. I entered the program with expectations based on more than 10 years of exploring MBA programs in the US and around the world. The bottom-line: my experience exceeded my expectations. First, we were not only taught by professors from an excellent University, we had the best professors from the University of Hawaii. Second, the skills we learned will enable us to compete and win in the global economy. Third, the relationships/connections forged with my classmates have definitely been a highlight."

For more info, visit [www.shidler.hawaii.edu/vietnam](http://www.shidler.hawaii.edu/vietnam) ■

Accredited by:





# Woman Behind The Scenes

Meet **Dieu Han**,  
a countryside girl turned  
beauty queen and fashion designer

*Text by* **MICHAEL ARNOLD**

*Images by* **NGOC TRAN**

*Số Đại by* **VO VIET CHUNG**





**DIEU HAN IS** a golden-eyed lioness of a woman. She has a firm, intent gaze; a commanding frame and a character that rings of authority. It can probably be said that she was born to do business and lead others—and there's really only one thing that has interrupted what would otherwise have been a very straight career path: a dalliance in catwalk modeling that saw her emerge as a beauty queen and successful model before ever having the chance to get her hands on some real management experience. While for many girls that would have been a dream come true, Dieu Han is only now emerging from the beauty trap and rediscovering her true purpose as a business owner.

"I had zero passion for fashion as a child," says Han, speaking from her recently-opened new store location in Phu Nhuan, taking a break from her busy preparations to open a second outlet in District 1 by the end of the year. "As a young student in Dong Nai, I was very tall, and at that time people thought I was a bit different, so I wasn't very confident. After I started modeling, I became more polished, and then I finally felt that I was at least good looking—but when I was in the countryside, I really didn't see myself as even slightly attractive. Sometimes I would walk hunched over to look shorter."



As her figure matured and her broad smile started to catch the attention of others, Han realized that modeling was something she had the opportunity to do, and so she participated in catwalk activities while at university. Despite her interest in modeling then being little more than a hobby, friends and family encouraged her to take it more seriously, and she decided to enter a few small competitions. It was at one of these that she was ‘discovered’ by the renowned traditional fashions designer Vo Viet Chung, who approached her and asked for her number. “After the competition,” she recalls, “he contacted me and said that Bangkok was hosting Miss Southeast Asia, and he thought I should take pictures and send in my portfolio. He said that if the organizers selected me, then he would take me to the contest. At that time, there were around a dozen contestants, and after the selection, another girl and I were chosen to take part in the pageant. That year was 2012, and I ended up winning the crown.”

Victory in the world of fashion and beauty for many women is a mixed bag. The celebrity and modeling contracts that come out of a pageant win can open many doors; at the same time, beauty queens often find themselves forever chained to a dressing room mirror—afraid that a minor flaw in their makeup or a fashion mistake will become fodder for the tabloids. For business-minded Dieu Han, this was fortunately never a major issue.

“In fact, when I first started modeling, I felt that pressure,” she admits. “At that time, when I’d just come out of Dong Nai, I really didn’t know how to care about beauty. I can call myself a country girl; when I was traveling to do shows with friends, sometimes I saw them wearing their shoes, and I wondered where on earth they’d bought them. I had never worn heels that high. I didn’t know about makeup, so there was this pressure that I was backward compared to others. Those things need time, step by step, it’s important to be able to observe, to learn and absorb, then later you can do it yourself. Normally I wear just light makeup only; I just want to look decent, neat and clean, that’s all. As for big events, we certainly have to look more glamorous, so I don’t think of it as pressure, but rather just doing something I enjoy. Looking good is a woman’s prerogative, like the Vietnamese saying goes: ‘if it’s good, show it off; if it’s bad, cover it up!’”

“Every time I go out,” she laughs, “my girlfriends take such a long time to get ready, but for me, just 10 minutes is enough, I don’t polish myself up too much. I prefer a gentle, natural look, not like others who even take their makeup artists along with them. For a casual party, I can put on light makeup myself. I think it’s important to keep the skin

smooth, to use a light toner, with light makeup only and clothes that are bright.”

Beauty queens traditionally go on to seek careers in acting, modeling or singing. While Han has followed that path to some extent—she recently took on a key role in director Ho Ngoc Xum’s TV drama *Hai Khoi Tinh*—Han has now turned most of her attention back to the kind of work she believes is far more in line with her character as a woman in control.

“I do not deny that I’ve been very lucky to become a model,” she says, “as it has really become a stepping stone for my later career. Modeling gave me the chance to meet and interact with so many people, to travel a lot, to experience and learn many things. Modeling is my background now, but I want in the future to be the woman behind the scenes rather than on stage. When I was a model, I always hoped that my future would be to design clothes for my own models or to be a sponsor of a show, or even the producer of a show. I like leading others more than being led, so I really hope that in the near future I will be able to cooperate with someone to open a show, and I myself would be the sponsor. As a model, actress or singer, I admit I haven’t gone into those areas very deeply, and the reason is simply that I want to do something bigger, something broader, such as being

a film producer, a sponsor, and so on.”

In the short term, at least, Dieu Han’s way ahead is back on track. Her store, D.H. Fashions—which specializes in modern and high-fashion consumer wearables—is the central feature of her plans for the future.

“Currently, I just want to make this business stable first,” she says, “to consolidate this fashion brand—and then later, I hope that this alone will create many other opportunities. Actually, before I opened a fashion store, I also invested with some friends to open a restaurant, but the problem was that I wasn’t managing it, and I wanted to be in control. Later on, I intend to do more business in another sector, but my first step is to develop the brand, which is still new. But even though we’ve only been going for a year, it’s already being distributed to one of the provinces, which means I have a wholesaler who sells for me, so I feel I need to boost brand development for D.H. first. That’s because the longer a fashion brand persists, the stronger it will be.”

Business may be her true passion, but that doesn’t mean it’s easy: “I think everything is difficult really, any field is a difficult profession,” she sighs. “The important thing is whether or not you have a passion for it. But even though this is tough, I like this very much, so it never bores me.” ■





# SOUTHEAST ASIAN INTEGRATION

## What to expect from ASEAN and the AEC?



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.

Dear Marijn,  
I'm a music teacher from Sweden and have been living in Vietnam for five years now. Lately I've been hearing a lot about the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC)—is this something like the EU of Asia? And does it mean that I can soon work in all ASEAN Member States and travel within Southeast Asia without a visa?

### I HAVE ALSO HEARD

ASEAN mentioned quite a lot in the news recently. One of the reasons for this increased attention from the media was the establishment of the AEC at the end of last year. The European Union (EU) is also getting its fair share of media attention, but for completely different reasons. Let's see whether there are any other similarities to be found.

The European integration project started after World War II with the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951 by six European countries. One of the ideas behind the project was that European integration could help prevent another war on the continent. Via the European Economic Community (EEC) and Euratom (European Atomic Energy Community), in 1992 the EU was formally established with the Maastricht Treaty. Today, the EU has 28 Member States and is arguably the largest economy in the world, and the project has reached relatively high levels of economic and, to some extent, political integration. Obvious examples of such integration include the establishment of a single market, the common currency and the Schengen visa Area.

ASEAN, on the other hand, was created in 1967 by five Southeast Asian countries at a time of growing political unrest in the region. These countries were looking for more economic development, and were hoping to be in a stronger position when united. Currently, ASEAN has

10 Member States (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam), and is estimated to be the seventh largest economy in the world. ASEAN is well-known for doing things the "ASEAN way." This approach, which is also the name of its official anthem, is characterized by consensus-based decision making, non-interference in the internal affairs of other Member States, quiet diplomacy, and the lack of institutions such as a parliament, a central bank or a single currency.

The establishment of the AEC in 2015 was an important step in the direction of creating a single market, and it showed that the process of economic integration in ASEAN is still very much alive. And foreign investors are more and more interested in exploring the opportunities that the AEC could offer, for example in the fields of manufacturing and trading. However, economic integration in ASEAN will probably never reach the same level as in the EU. One of the facts that could explain ASEAN's modest ambitions in this regard is that there are big differences between the Member States in terms of development. To give you a better idea, the estimated GDP per person in ASEAN's richest Member State—Singapore—is more than 50 times higher than that of its poorest Member State—Cambodia.

Now, let's go back to your question about the freedom to work in other ASEAN Member States. One of the

most important goals of the AEC is to create a single market, among other things, through the free movement of business persons, skilled labor and talents. The ASEAN Agreement on the Movement of Natural Persons (2012) and the so-called "mutual recognition arrangements" have been put in place to achieve this goal. However, ASEAN wouldn't be ASEAN if this project was not implemented the "ASEAN way." In practice, it means that different Member States apply different rules—that the free movement of skilled labor only applies to a limited number of professions, and that foreign workers often have to meet very strict requirements (e.g. language, experience, residency, qualifications) in order to work in another Member State. In this regard, ASEAN could learn something from its big brother in Europe, who is still miles ahead on this topic. Similar to the EU, and probably more relevant to your question, the free movement of skilled labor in ASEAN, unfortunately, only applies to ASEAN nationals.

You also inquired about traveling without a visa with the ASEAN countries—for ASEAN nationals there is already a visa-free policy. Depending on the domestic policies of the Member States and on their bilateral agreements, the duration of the visa-free period ranges from 14-30 days but only applies to ASEAN nationals. But here is the good news: earlier this year ASEAN launched a tourism plan for the 2016–2025 period. And guess what: one of the main goals is to create a single visa for ASEAN, comparable to the Schengen visa in Europe. The single visa is intended to be launched sometime in 2020... so you have approximately four years to plan your trip!

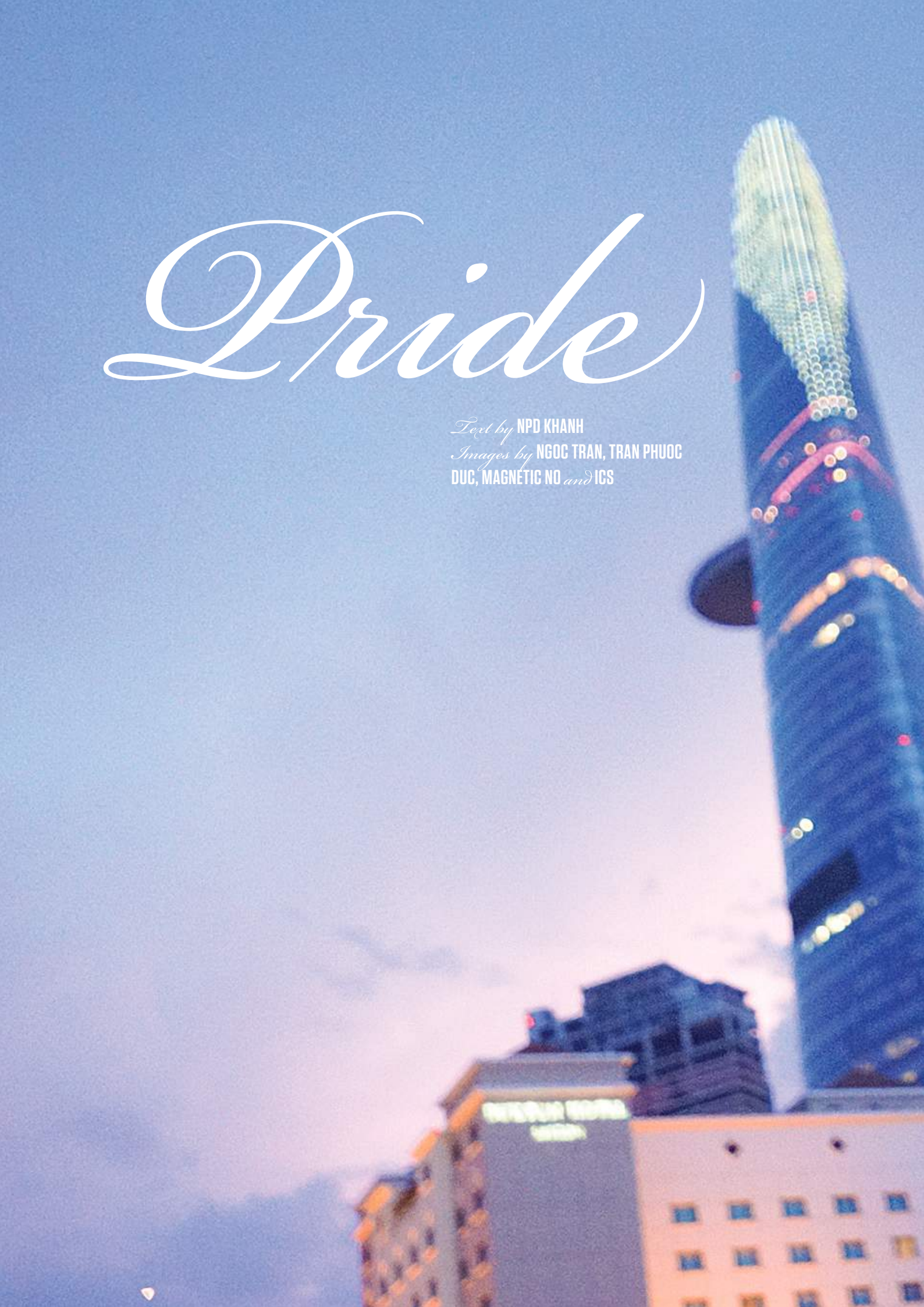
*Every month, Marijn Sprokkereef answers legal questions from Oi readers. If you have any legal questions you want answered, send them to [legal@oivietnam.com](mailto:legal@oivietnam.com). ■*



# Pride

*Text by* NPD KHANH

*Images by* NGOC TRAN, TRAN PHUOC  
DUC, MAGNETIC NO *and* ICS





A hand holding a rainbow flag against a city skyline at dusk. The flag is held high, and the hand is visible at the bottom. The background shows a city skyline with buildings and a large, illuminated tower on the left. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, suggesting sunset or sunrise. The flag has horizontal stripes of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and pink. The hand is holding the flagpole, which is made of wood. The person holding the flag is wearing a green and white striped wristband.

UNTIL RECENTLY the LGBT community in Vietnam was marginalized, but changes in attitude in the legal and public spheres are coming. From Vietnam's first gay parade in Hanoi in 2012 to an openly transgender contestant on *Vietnam Idol*, the country is becoming more tolerant. Also, it doesn't hurt that the population is young—more than half are under 30—and so less likely than older generations to consider transgenders and gays socially deviant. Vietnam is certainly evolving when it comes to gays issues, and this month we look at the past, present and the hopes for the future of the LGBT community.



# *Historic Progress*





**From a brief mention of a flamboyant king to now recognizing transgenders, Vietnam has taken long strides in LGBT rights**



**DESPITE INTENTIONAL OMISSION** in recorded history, instances of homosexuality, although rare, did exist in Vietnam's history. There is ample amount of carefully kept court documents of Vietnamese kings from the 16th, 17th and 19th centuries who maintained male concubines in their harems or favored male company. The most well-known of these was Khai Dinh (1885-1993) who, despite having 12 wives, had only one son who was said to be adopted. It was recorded that he liked to dress flamboyantly and made a hobby of designing clothes for himself and his entourages. Most notably, whenever Khai Dinh went to the theatre, he would order all female roles to be performed by cross-dressing male actors.

At the end of the 1960s, the *Saigon Daily* reported the existence of a female prostitution ring catering exclusively to female clientele. Shortly thereafter during the American War era, *The International Encyclopaedia of Sexuality: Vietnam* recorded that there were 18 gay bars and three lesbian bars in Saigon.





The first modern homosexual wedding in Ho Chi Minh City was on April 7, 1997 between two men (as reported by *Reuters*) in a small ceremony in defiance of local protests. The couple's marriage documents were rejected and in response, homosexual marriage was officially outlawed in 1998. The Marriage and Family Law (2000) also expressly listed homosexual marriages (not relationships) as a forbidden union.

One recent legal case involving homosexual people involved a wedding between two men on February 8, 2012 in Ca Mau. The wedding was witnessed by both grooms' parents and thousands of protesting locals. The wedding was stopped by police, and the two couple were charged a fine and sent for re-education. Citing the Marriage and Family Law of 2000, councilman of the National Lawyers' Association, Truong Xuan Tam declared that the police had no cause to arrest and fine the grooms, since they had never submitted a marriage form to the government and their wedding held only cultural significance.

After months of extensive legal lobbying and campaigning by ICS, iSEE and six other LGBT groups in 2013, the newest version of the Marriage and Family Law, updated in 2014, has made international news by abolishing the clause that outlawed homosexual marriages in the 2000 version.

"But that's only half the fight," claims

Thao, a manager at ICS. Claiming that homosexual marriages, if fully acknowledged by the law, may cause irreparable social instabilities, various groups both within and outside the government have prevented further legislature fully acknowledging and setting legal framework for homosexual marriages from being drafted and approved. What resulted was an awkward legal situation in which the 2014 Marriage and Family Law, according to national assembly

representative Dao Van Binh and many lawyers, read more like an incomplete legal article than a full-fledged law.

"According to our own law, anything the government does not expressly forbid is legal and can be done by any of our citizens. This law does not ban homosexual marriages but it also says that it does not actually acknowledge it either. What does that even mean? The law contradicts itself," Binh has been quoted saying in *Tuoi Tre* and *Nguoi Lao Dong*.





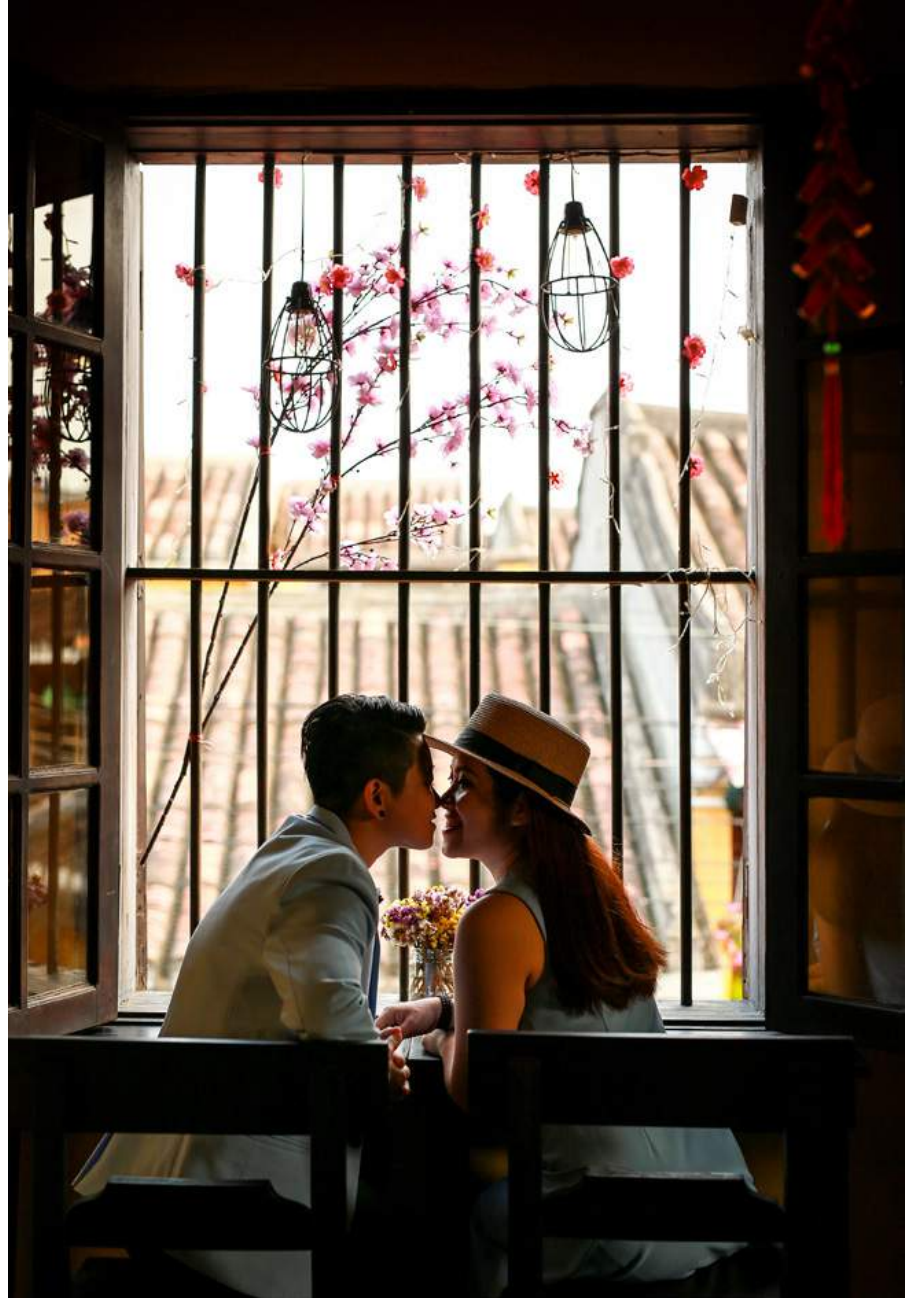
## The Fake Homosexual

Vietnamese public view on homosexuals is said to have been influenced by Dr. Tran Bong Son's theory of "*The Fake Homosexual*." A popular gender expert in Vietnam, Dr. Son's theory states that there are two types of homosexual people: true homosexuals and fake homosexuals. True homosexuals are those who are born with a genetic defect that conditions them to be attracted to people of the same sex. Fake homosexuals are normal people who are seduced into homosexual lifestyles by friends or other external forces.

Dr. Son's theory was disputed by many doctors and researchers, such as Donn Colby (University of California, San Francisco), Cao Huu Nghia (Pasteur Institute, Vietnam) and Serge Doussantousse (Médécins Sans Frontières, Laos), for lacking statistics and facts, and constituting only personal opinion. However, since Dr. Son is influential in Vietnam, his theory gained widespread credibility amongst the Vietnamese public and has resulted in numerous attempts to 'cure' or 're-educate' LGBT people.

As Vietnamese culture is heavily influenced by Confucian teachings, LGBT lifestyles are still largely regarded as a social evil. Particular sectors in Vietnamese society view homosexual lifestyles as an unwanted by-product of cultural exchanges with Western countries. In rural areas, openly homosexual people and couples are ostracized, often by their own families. In urban areas, living openly as an LGBT person involves living with a string of perpetual problems of various kinds. Workplace discrimination, unlawful

charges, harassment, and hate crimes are all real possibilities, and since only segments of LGBT people are newly recognized by Vietnamese law since the end of 2015, very little protection can be found from law enforcers.



"We fight the long fight," Thao says. "A major percentage of our society is made up of the young and our surveys have shown that the younger generations of Vietnamese have far greater tolerance as well as acceptance of the LGBT community. Eventually, with time, acceptance will replace the bigotry. In terms of the law being ambivalent, the acknowledgement of our marriages is not the only thing we fight for. We are a diverse community and have many issues we intend to fight for. In the meantime, we have progressed onto other legal battlefields such as the acknowledgement of trans folks."

In November 2015, in an unprecedented move, the Vietnamese national assembly has approved a new law legally recognizing and protecting the right of transgender people. This is seen as the greatest step forward for LGBT advocacy in Vietnam. "It has taken a lot of work to bring about this progress," claims Thao. "This June, we are starting campaigns in other province to educate young gays, lesbians, and transgenders on the new law and how to invoke their rights as lawful and recognized citizens of Vietnam." ■









# *Right On!*

**A mission to protect and serve  
the LGBT community**





**IN RECENT YEARS**, Vietnam is slowly developing a reputation for being an unlikely haven for gays, lesbians and transgenders in Asia. While gays are persecuted and even jailed in many Asian countries even to this day, Vietnam has quietly become a trailblazer, with laws to decriminalize gay marriage and cohabitation, and recognize sex changes on identity documents. A bustling industry comprising of services and products catering to gays has also quietly developed in the last five years. Among the local LGBT community, the forces behind these changes for the better are known as the big three: the Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Environment (iSEE), Information Connecting and Sharing (ICS), and Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG).

“It started with a series of forums, ‘gay anonymous online’ basically,” says Minh Thao, a manager at ICS ([www.ics.org.vn](http://www.ics.org.vn)), one of the three largest LGBT activist groups in Vietnam, on the birth of organizations helping to promote equal rights for the LGBT community. “At first, we just wanted a place where we could discuss freely about ourselves and our personal problems. A safe place filled with people who understand, who go through the same things, who don’t judge us for things outside our control. Then, as our numbers grew and we became more and more aware of the systematic intolerance of queer folks in

Vietnam, the rampant misinformation regarding homosexuality—what it is and how to handle it—and the plight of many young gays and lesbians, some of us decided that things must change. So, we arranged to meet offline to discuss and argue. We talked about what was wrong and what needed to be changed. We talked about how it could be done... if it could be done. In between all that were born the three big groups.”

Headquartered in Hanoi, **iSEE** ([www.isee.org.vn](http://www.isee.org.vn)) is the only gay rights group backed by the government. A

non-profit organization whose mission is to protect and campaign for the rights of minority groups including LGBT people. iSEE is founded and led by Vietnam’s educated elites, with many of its top management personnel graduates of prestigious universities such as Harvard and Princeton. The majority of studies, surveys, as well as campaigns for LGBT in Vietnam are either produced by or can be traced back to iSEE.

Based in Saigon, **ICS** was founded out of iSEE’s cooperation with four major Vietnamese LGBT websites: *Tinh*





*Yeu Trai Viet, Tao Xanh, Vuon Tinh Nha* and *Ban Gai Vietnam*) in 2008. ICS is entirely dedicated to campaigning for gay rights and improving their quality of life. In contrast with its parent organization iSEE's more academic nature, ICS is more active of the two, having orchestrated and maintained various programs in health education, vocational training, job assistance and corporate social responsibilities.

Last but not least is **PFLAGVN** (Facebook: *pflagvn*), a project conceptualized by the brains behind iSEE and organized by ICS members since May 2011. It's a localized branch of the international PFLAG and an NGO created specifically for parents and friends of LGBTs. Aside from assisting iSEE and ICS in their various national campaigns, PFLAG support and educate parents with gay, lesbian or transgender children and provide a channel through which they can support their family and friends.

According to Thao, all three groups are connected and often act in concert as a result of the tight-knit nature of Vietnamese LGBT community. "You can trace the leaders and founders of all three organizations to a single group of thought leaders and vanguards of social progress," he says. "This closeness, of course, means that we have an easier time coordinating on a national level—iSEE covers the northern part of the country, ICS covers the southern part and PFLAG provides support for parents



and friends. Together, we can campaign across the nation." Unofficially, the big three are credited as the force behind the country's recent legal progress for gay rights such as the decriminalization of homosexual partnerships and marriage, and recognition of transgenders. Starting June this year, ICS is kickstarting a campaign to educate LGBTs in other provinces about the recent changes in the law.

iSEE, ICS, and PFLAG draw major support from the private sector and various consulates including the Swedish embassy. Over the year, they

have started many smaller advocate groups and localized support networks based out of other provinces. Among them are a hotline for women's health and several clubs focusing on sexual health issues unique to LGBTs.

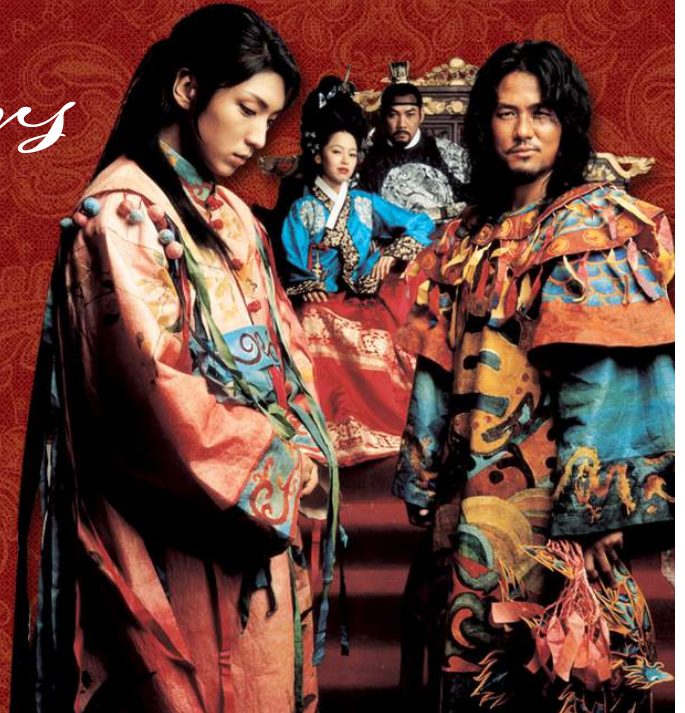
Discussing the short and long term agendas of all three organizations, Thao says that aside from advocating for legal and social changes, they are chiefly concerned with issues of sexual health, providing vocational training and career opportunities, and fostering an overall more tolerant and accepting social environment. ■





# The Influencers

How other cultures helped shape  
Vietnam's LGBT community



**THOUGH SOME PROGRESS** has been made towards accepting LGBT people in modern Vietnamese society, there is still a wide divide between the two. Despite many campaigns to battle misinformation and promote awareness to the local populace by various gay rights organizations, homosexuality still bears a lingering stigma. A majority of young gays and lesbians typically do not discuss issues specific to their orientation and lifestyle unless they're in the exclusive company of similarly oriented people. On the other end of the spectrum, others tend not to go out of their way to inquire about the personal lives and problems of their LGBT acquaintances. While some may see this 'don't ask, don't tell' policy as respecting personal privacy, many gay rights activists have started to view this as a potential problem.

"Distance creates lack of understanding, and lack of understanding births apathy and alienation. From that point on, it's all too easy to foster unfairness and bigotry," says Hai Au, content manager at book company Nha Nam who supports gay rights. "To bridge this gap between queer and straight folks, shared grounds where people can come together and hold conversations on complex issue are required."

According to Hai Au, these shared grounds are happening in unexpected places: in alternative entertainments featuring gay stars whose target audience, surprisingly, includes an overwhelming percentage of straight readers and viewers. The oldest of these

are select Korean dramas serials and movies. And the newest are several sub-genres of Chinese imported romance novels, which, incidentally, are Hai Au and her team's publishing specialty.

Since 1997, Korean films, being much cheaper and far more culturally relatable to Vietnamese broadcasters and viewers, quickly made headway into the local market. The very first Korean series broadcast in Vietnam was *Nguoi Mau* (Model), and since then there has only been an upward trend for Korean movie exporters. Now, Korean films, dramas and soap operas dominate

Vietnamese television screen time.

It is inevitable then that, since popular Korean culture is far more prominent in its acceptance of LGBT issues than Vietnam, homoerotic Korean films have trickled in one by one via both legal and illegal means. The homosexuality described in these Korean dramas is wrapped in pretty packages featuring young actors and actresses and masterful cinematography. Homosexual people in the films appear not as the depraved "*pede*" of Vietnamese culture, but as beautiful, compelling, and often







of alternative entertainments share many similarities. They are a subculture unto themselves. They have a cult following across the globe, with millions of readers and viewers. And finally, they are written mostly by straight authors for a mostly straight audience.

“Society has rigid rules on sexuality and gender roles. In traditional societies such as Vietnam, Japan, Korea and China, it is doubly so. Of course, wherever you have repressive rules, you always have people feeling stifled about things. Homoerotic literature and movies offer straight viewers the chance to play with different identities, genders and sexualities in the safety of their home and without being judged by the public,” Hai Au explains. “That’s why it’s the girls who read gay erotica and the boys who read the lesbian version. But that does not mean that queer folks can’t enjoy these homoerotic entertainments. What happens over the years is that as the genres become more and more popular and the quality of writing improves, more and more queer audience have been flocking to Korean dramas, Japanese comics and Chinese gay-literature.”

Inadvertently, this creates a shared playground where gay and straight people can mingle and discuss complex issues through the frameworks of the stories told in the dramas, comics or novels. Deeply personal things that people normally don’t bring up can be brought out and discussed by both sides.

“Discussion brings understanding,” says Hai Au. “And understanding eventually leads to empathy and acceptance. I know this all sounds very strange if you aren’t already in those specific subcultures or communities. But I don’t think we should disregard the power of good entertainment with universal appeal. When people are passionate about the same thing, they are more likely to want to be open up to each other and to hear each other. It was *Brokeback Mountain* that brought an international spotlight on gay issues back in 2005. Something similar is happening here, albeit in a much less flashy manner but reaching just as wide an audience.” ■

tragic people. But more than that, their lives are told as riveting and believable love stories. To the urban Korean film fans in Vietnam, Korea’s version of homosexuality has suddenly become a lot easier to handle.

“There actually aren’t that many queer Korean films in Vietnam. A handful I think. But the ones that make it here tend to have lasting impressions,” says Hai Au referring to popular titles such as *The King and the Clown* (a love story between a king and a male court jester) and *Frozen Flower* (a homoerotic love triangle between a king, his queen and an imperial guard captain). These may be seen as frivolous entertainment by the older and more traditional Vietnamese generation, but it is these Korean gay movies, many of which have been introduced to Vietnamese viewers as early as the 1990s, that sparked the first generation of LGBT rights supporters as well as increasing public acceptance of gays.

Korean dramas aren’t the only source of outside influence on the modern Vietnamese LGBT community. A second source of influence hails from Japan under the form of comic books featuring homoerotic relationships. “Boys and

girls love comics,” Hai Au explains. “We have names for the genres: *shounen ai* and *shoujo ai*. Those were the rage in the late 1990s and early 2000s. They still are today.” The third source, subgenres of imported Chinese romance novels called *Dam My* and *Bach Hop*, another Nha Nam specialty, is the newest edition to entertainment straddling the line between gay and straight audiences.

According to her, all three categories





# Wine & Dine

IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN











SLATED TO BECOME ANOTHER TONY FOX HIT, THE INNOVATIVE TAPAS AT TWENTY21ONE ARE DELICIOUS WAYS TO BRIDGE TENSIONS BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

TEXT BY MICHAEL ARNOLD  
IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

**IF YOU'VE BEEN** in this town long enough to remember the original Qing wine bar on Dong Du—back in 2004, it was the first of its kind in Saigon—you'll be pleased to note that some of its groundbreaking Asian tapas items have been resurrected at **twenty21one** (21 Ngo Thoi Thiem, D3), a new casual-contemporary dining venue that has opened within the Sila Urban Living hotel/apartment complex in District 3 last month. The

"fifth-and-a-half" restaurant under the management of Tony Fox—best-known here for his intimate Italian venues Ciao Bella and Portofino, and Mediterranean bistro Saffron—this new one is a marked departure from the others both visually and conceptually. Come to share—the menu is optimized for picking and grazing from a selection of small-plate meals in bite-sized portions.

In look, twenty21one has a spacious fine dining area that manages an edgy

modern energy. It's all decked out in handmade tiles and natural wooden furnishings with heavy designer steel fixtures—you won't get far if you try to steal the tables, they weigh a ton. There are two dining levels: an upstairs mezzanine is already being used as a networking/private dinner space; connecting through to the hotel, it will soon be a venue for choice buffet breakfasts as occupancy picks up. Downstairs are several distinct clusters

## INNOVATIVE, INTRIGUING *and* INTERNATIONAL

*From left: Korean spiced salmon, duck in a jar, bacon-wrapped dates, and warm molten red velvet cake*





of tables with both private and exposed positioning; open-air streetside; and a terrace by the pool out back.

Instead of the continental European staples you'll find at Tony's other bistros, the fare springs back and forth between fusion and non-fusion elements, with the menu roughly divided into two broad categories: Looking East, and Looking West. As a new venue, the cuisine lineup is still evolving, but you'll be reading it on a tablet—so you can be sure that whatever you're looking at is current and includes the daily specials.

Rather than serving heavy mains, most items come as a tapas set. You're pushed in two directions from the first complimentary nibbles—expect a plate of traditional crispy Vietnamese sesame crackers with a fresh tomato salsa at lunch time, or bread with a miso roast garlic butter in the evenings. We sampled two dishes from each compass point and discovered a serious overlapping of cuisines that constitute some of the most thorough fusion offerings you'll find in the city—most of which are Tony's own concepts.

Our Crispy shredded duck spring rolls (VND150,00) were an obvious game played with local *cha gio* and Peking Duck. Fans of the latter are in for a surprise—all the elements are there; the sweet hoisin sauce, the cucumber and spring onion—but these are employed to replace the fish sauce dip and side salads for deep-fried Vietnamese spring rolls, stuffed with duck rather than minced pork. A taster spanning both sides of the Friendship Pass, the dish is teasingly served in a line of shot glasses.

Equally intriguing is a number that's been a bestseller for Tony ever since Qing days—the Korean spiced salmon (VND195,000) served on “kimchee blinis” with wasabi cream cheese. Decide for yourself whether it's a take on an American smoked salmon bagel or a hunk of Japanese sushi—with the very-mildly-spicy



heap of diced sashimi lying on the almost mustardy blended cheese base and Russian-style pancake like a soft cream cracker, you have one of the most international dishes served anywhere. Don't share these, eat them all yourself.

Another firm favorite for pizza fans looking for a new angle are the Bacon-wrapped dates (VND170,000), stuffed with a pungent Roquefort blue cheese and laid on a roast red pepper sauce base. Pop one in your mouth and you're in familiar territory; chew through to the date and you're all over the map. The filling has a sweet bite that nicely offsets the salty bacon shell.

One of the more unusual selections on the menu is the Duck in a jar (VND170,000) that is essentially a glass pâté pot served with toast points for spreading or dipping. The contents of the jar are actually a cross between a mousse and a foie gras mashed with port wine to give it a soft, almost tangy aftertaste.

With a gentle sweetness running through our entire selection, this meal was nicely paired with a syrupy Lychee martini (VND125,000), its vodka rigorously absorbed into the lychee

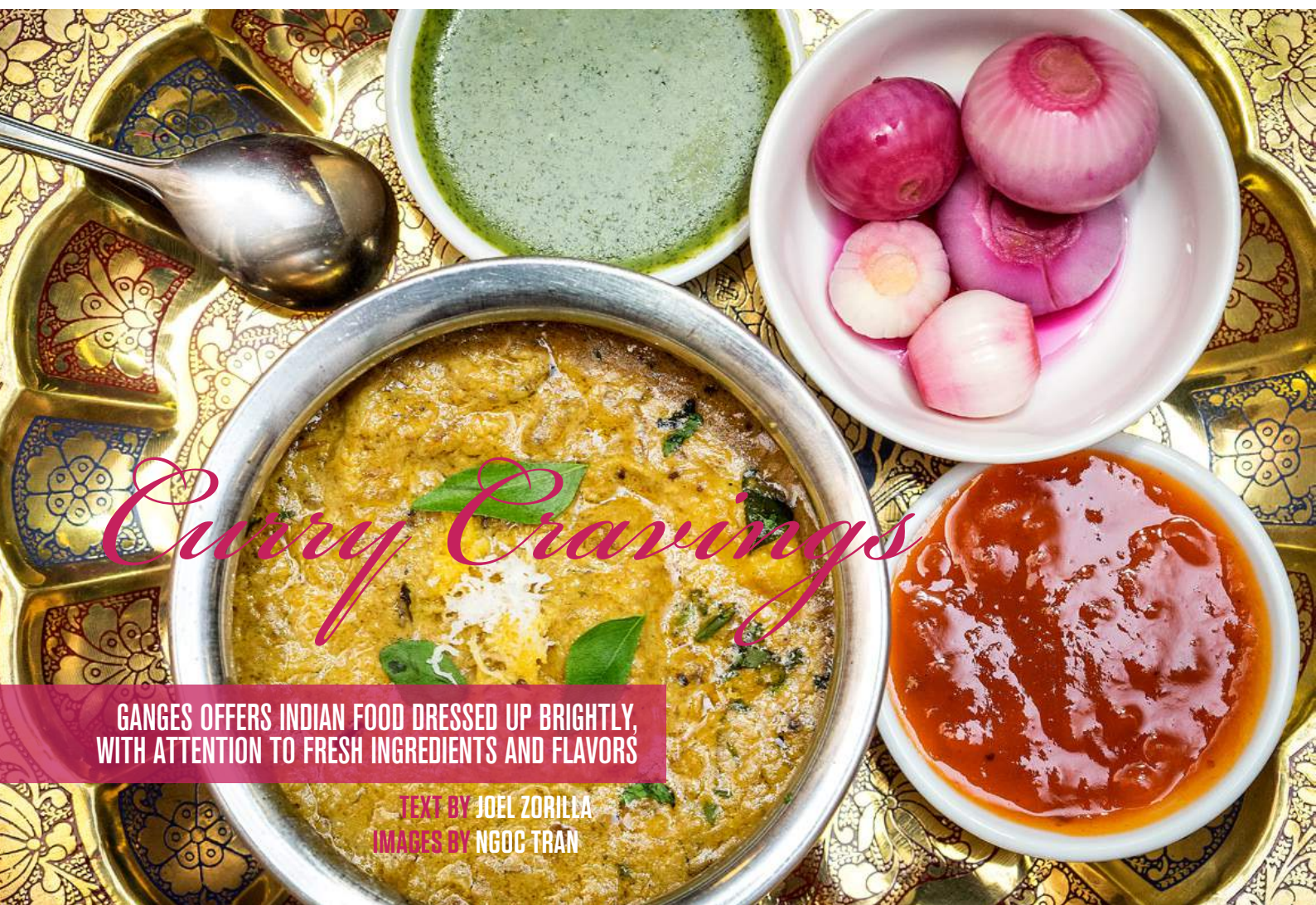
juice, making it a refreshing, easy hit.

Folks have been known to head to Ciao Bella for its desserts alone; the same sweettooths will be led to twenty21one for delights such as the Warm molten red velvet cake (VND135,000) with its strawberry compote and creamy mascarpone, somewhat reminiscent of a baked Alaska with its crisp sponge-cake shell and eruption of crimson lava with the dip of a spoon. Ciao Bella's pope's pillow meringue will have to stand aside for this rather more devilish upstart.

Tony himself, whose restaurant management flair is based on over a decade's worth of experience in LA and New York, is already entertaining significant lunch crowds at twenty21one—and although the restaurant is ever-so-slightly out of the way in terms of location, he does anticipate that evening crowds will be increasingly drawn in by the venue's cool ambiance at night, with its candles, low lighting, and Café del Mar soundtrack. Let this venue slowly seduce you, and you may just find yourself telling your social networks that you're feeling like 21 again. ■







GANGES OFFERS INDIAN FOOD DRESSED UP BRIGHTLY, WITH ATTENTION TO FRESH INGREDIENTS AND FLAVORS

TEXT BY JOEL ZORILLA  
IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

**IF I WERE STUCK** on an island with only one option for food to eat for the remainder of my life, that choice would undoubtedly be Indian. The complex combination of spices, curries, masala, yogurt, chili, garlic, ginger and more all intertwining to produce astonishingly rich flavors that few other cuisines even come close to achieving. **Ganges** (74A2 Hai Ba Trung, D1) rises to the occasion beautifully, recreating classic staples such as chicken masala, butter chicken, roti as well as dishes that are rarely seen on menus outside of India. Ganges opened last year and, true to its vibrant Indian culture, is decorated in radiant colors of oranges, greens, deep reds and yellows all laced into different elements of the interior, from the floor and tables to the cushions and walls.

The owner of the establishment, Padam, is an experienced chef from the famous tea growing Darjeeling province of India, having lived in Vietnam for the last 15 years cheffing at resorts in Muine and fine dining restaurants in Saigon, bringing with him the culinary treasures and knowledge of his homeland. He also

knows the perfect balance to keep different palates—expats, locals and visiting Indians—happy in terms of spice levels. Our meals were kept at just the right heat levels, preserving the sweetness of the curries, the flavors of the garlic and ginger while giving it just enough of a kick to remind you that this is Indian food.

The menu at Ganges is extraordinarily diverse, ranging from North Indian, which focuses on breads such as *naan* and *roti* as well as South Indian, which is famous for rice and tandoor, with some fantastic stops along the way giving you the full spectrum of what India has to offer. After ordering my all-time favorite







Indian drink, a Mango *lassi*, a yogurt-based smoothie that's complements fiery dishes, we asked Padam for his recommendations and started with another favourite—a large fluffy and buttery garlic *naan* (VND45,000)—it was grilled to perfection in a tandoori oven. The *naan* was delicious dipped in the gravies and curries from our main dishes, I could have gone on eating it for days. This was followed by the Chelo kebab mixed grill platter (VND195,000)—shrimp, chicken, lamb and fish seasoned the previous day with a healthy dose of ginger, garlic and a yogurt-based marinade before being grilled in a tandoori oven. The result was a tender array of succulent meats I could've ever hoped for in Saigon, and don't forget to dip them all in the bowls of delicious spicy and sweet chutneys that accompany the platter. When you think of Indian food, grilled meats don't readily come to mind, curries being more popular, but in my experience the tandoori ovens produce some of the world's most tender and succulent meats which, combined with the Indian mastery of layering spices to bring out the juiciness of the meat, it should not be passed up.

We continued down the Ganges River with the Coconut fish curry (VND120,000), a sweet and slightly spicy take on the South Indian dish. Ginger and garlic marinated fillets of fish cooked in a spicy coconut milk based curry served with a plate of basmati rice. The fish flaked off beautifully as I pull it out of the pot, the seasoning is phenomenal, and my god you don't want the dish to finish! After the fish is done, wipe down the bowl with any leftover garlic *naan*. With a solid start to our lunch we moved on quite excitedly to what would be my favorite dish of the day as well as a first for me, thanks to Padam's recommendation—the glorious Lamb *Rogan Josh* (VND160,000). A most tender slow-cooked lamb swimming in a rich gravy-like curry that reminded me of a homecooked stew during a hard winter's month, but much better. The tenderness of the lamb combined with the spice and butter loaded sauce is a testament to the mastery of Indian cuisine. Hungry for more despite our stuffed bellies we ordered dessert, the *Gulab Jamun* (VND45,000) is a ball of cottage cheese and maize mixed, deep fried and served in a sugary syrup producing a spongy, sweet and delightful grand finale to a fantastic meal. ■





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).

# Made in America

From California to New York, an introduction to US wines



**WHEN IT COMES TO** choosing wine, the US often gets overlooked unless, of course, you're American or live in the US. However, the US wine arena has quite a few delicious things to offer drinkers. It is one of the leading countries in both imports and exports of wine, and is one of the largest consumers of wine in the world.

Within the US, the center of the wine industry is without doubt California, which produces around 90 percent of all the wine in the States. Although the US has a long history in wine making, with the first vines planted by Catholic missionaries arriving to the country, the industry almost disappeared at the beginning of the last century with the Prohibition law, which gave a huge blow to wine making, and saw a rather slow recovery afterwards.

The state of California is the definite winner within the US in wine production. Its geographical situation is ideal for viticulture: lots of sunshine, hardly any rain during harvest times, low humidity and Mediterranean climate. The US divides its wine producing zones into AVAs (American Viticultural Areas) of which California has over one hundred of them. Along the North Coast of California, Napa, Sonoma and Mendocino are the most popular AVAs, with the first being famous because of the high quality of several wines that are produced

there. In Napa, Cabernet Sauvignon is king, followed by Chardonnay and Merlot. Within California, an up and coming area is Lodi. Located in the Central Valley, its location allows for the cool winds off the Pacific Ocean to cool down temperature, helping to produce robust wines.

Although California is the best known and largest wine producing area in the US, there are other states worth nothing. An example of this are the wines produced in Washington State, the second largest producer of wine in the US, where most of the vines are planted on its Western section. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Chardonnay are the widely grown grapes in Washington, but with the Syrah-based wines getting most of the international commendations.

The Oregon wine industry, with a mere one percent of the total share, is dominated by small family-run wineries producing cool climate wines, with Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris being the most common planted grapes. Finally, New York is the other main wine producing area, with vines mostly planted around the lakes. ■  
*American wines can be found at Wine Embassy (41 Quoc Huong, Thao Dien, D2).*

**RubyRed**  
Italian Wine Store  
206 Nguyen Van Huong, D2, HCMC

Focus in whole and retail sales, specializing in Italian wines with over 200 labels, 14 wine makers from 9 different Italian regions. Bellavista, Franciacorta, Pellegrino & Co., Castello di Buttrio, Castello di Querceto, Leone DeCastris, Contini, Casale del Giglio, Casari, Aldegheri, Piovene Porto Godi, Endrizzi, Zaccagnini, Cascine Chicco.





Vietnamese chef Jack Lee ([www.chefjacklee.com](http://www.chefjacklee.com)) has served a host of Hollywood A-listers from Angelina Jolie to Barbra Streisand, and recently returned to chef for Acacia Veranda Dining (149-151 Nguyen Du, DI). His biography by OI writer NPD Khanh will be released next year.



## LET THEM EAT (CUP)CAKE!

Red velvet cupcakes is a bit of melt-in-your-mouth heaven on earth

**WHO DOESN'T LIKE CUPCAKES!** Cupcakes have to be among the most versatile, easy to make desserts around—and they're a lot of fun to decorate!

They've been around for a long time—the history of cupcakes dates way back to the late 19th century. They were traditionally made using a 1-2-3-4 method: measuring a cup of butter, two of sugar, three cups of flour and four eggs—hence the term 'cupcakes.' In the last decade, cupcakes have gained in popularity and are now even being served at weddings as opposed to traditional wedding cakes.

Cupcake flavors are limited to your imagination, ranging from classic vanilla, chocolate, caramel apple to jalapeno cheddar. There's a cupcake for everyone.

There are lots of cupcake recipes out there, but this red velvet recipe is one of our favorites. Whenever I'm back home in California, I always spend time in the kitchen with my daughter baking cupcakes. This is one of our favorite bonding times. She likes to experiment decorating cupcakes with different shapes and colors. If you love cupcakes, this recipe is really worth a try.

### Red Velvet Cupcake

2 ½ cups sifted cake flour  
1 tsp baking powder

1 tsp salt  
2 Tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder  
1 oz. red food coloring (I use 1 Tbsp food coloring and 1 Tbsp water so it doesn't look too artificially red)  
½ cup unsalted butter, softened  
1 ½ cups sugar  
2 eggs, room temperature  
1 tsp vanilla extract  
1 cup buttermilk, room temperature  
1 tsp white vinegar  
1 tsp baking soda

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line two 12-cup cupcake pans with cupcake liners.
2. Sift together the cake flour, baking powder, and salt into a medium bowl and set aside.
3. In a smaller bowl, mix the food coloring (and water) and cocoa powder to form a paste without any lumps. Set aside.
4. In a large bowl, beat the butter and sugar together until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs, one at a time, then beat in the vanilla extract and the red cocoa paste. Scrape down the bowl with a spatula as you go.
5. Add 1/3 of the flour mixture into the butter mixture, beat well, and then beat in half of the buttermilk. Beat in another third of the flour mixture, then the second half of the buttermilk, and then the remainder of the

flour mixture. Beat until well-combined, making sure to scrape down the bowl with a spatula.

6. In a small bowl, mix vinegar and baking soda. Don't use a shallow bowl because it can fizz over. Add the vinegar mixture to the cake batter and stir well.
7. Fill cupcake cups with cake batter until they are a little under ¾ full.
8. Bake for approximately 18-20 minutes, until the cupcakes are done.
9. Cool cupcakes completely on a wire rack before frosting.

### "Light" Cream Cheese Frosting

8 oz. cream cheese, room temperature  
1 cup heavy whipping cream  
Powdered sugar

1. Keep bowl and beaters/whisk cool in the refrigerator before whipping the heavy cream.
2. Whip the heavy cream until it doubles in volume and is nice and fluffy.
3. In a separate bowl, whip the cream cheese until soft and smooth. Add sugar to taste.
4. Fold in the whipped cream into the cream cheese.
5. Pipe onto cooled cupcakes and enjoy! ■



# Wine & Dine

## BARS



### Chu Bar

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

158 Dong Khoi, D1



### Harry Casual

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

R1/49 Hung Gia 3, PMH, D7



### Last Call

Saigon's king of cool, Last Call is renowned for the finest cocktails in the mellowest of settings. Slink your way back to the Seventies in the velvety interior or watch over the passing crowds from the laid-back terrace. 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@icasianasagaigon.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, DI



## En Tea House & Restaurant

En replicates the feeling of the old Saigon by modern Saigoneses, 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, DI  
3520 9099  
dine@icasianasaigon.com



## The Workshop

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

27 Ngo Duc Ke, DI



## 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, DI  
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, DI  
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, DI  
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 IO, 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, DI (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, DI  
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 Phan Ngoc Thach, D3  
6683 8618



# 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)





# SPANISH



## 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. Mirto 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





# FRENCH



## Augustin

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

10D Nguyen Thiep, D1  
www.augustinrestaurant.com



## La Creperie

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

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



## 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

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



## 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



## Le Bouchon de Saigon

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

40 Thai Van Lung, D1  
www.lebouchondesaigon.com

## Also Try...

### La Cuisine

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

48 Le Thanh Ton  
2229 8882

### La Fourchette

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

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

### La Nicoise

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

56 Ngo Duc Ke, D1  
3821 3056

### La Villa

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

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

### Trois Gourmands

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

18 Tong Huu Dinh, D2  
3744 4585





# INDIAN



## Ashoka

A small chain of slightly more upscale Indian restaurants serving both Northern and Southern Indian cuisine including curries, naan and tandooris.  
**17/10 Le Thanh Ton, D1**  
**33 Tong Huu Dinh, Thao Dien, D2**



## Bollywood

Known for its complete North & South Indian cuisine, Bollywood's speciality 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  
 \* 5A 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, dovas and vada from the southern region.

**38 Hai Ba Trung, D1**  
 www.ganeshindianrestaurant.com



## Saigon Indian

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

**1st Floor, 73 Mac Thi Buoi, D1**



## Tandoor

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


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



## The Punjabi


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


**40/3 Bui Vien, D1**





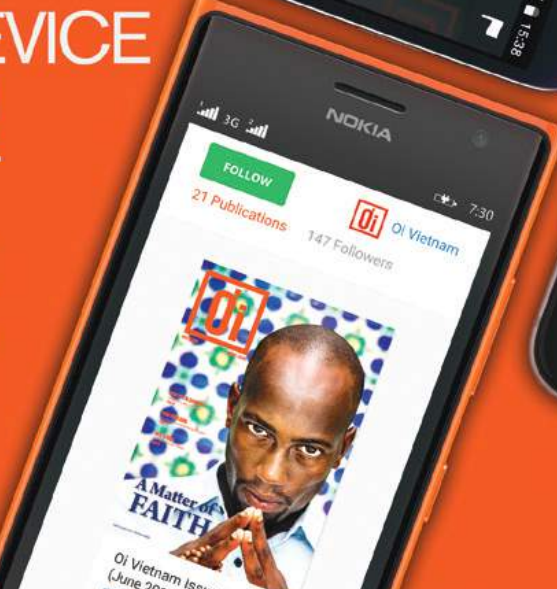

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# ITALIAN



## 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*



## Inter Nos

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

26 Le Van Mien, Thao Dien, D2  
090 630 1299  
info@internos.vn  
www.internos.vn  
Facebook: Internossaigon



## La Bettola

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

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



## La Cucina

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

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



## La Hostaria

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

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



## 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

## Also Try...

### Casa Italia

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

86 Le Loi, D1  
3824 4286

### Opera

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

2 Lam Son Square, D1

### Pendolasco

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

87 Nguyen Hue, D1  
3821 8181

### Pizza 4P's

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

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

### Pomodoro

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

79 Hai Ba Trung  
3823 8998





# JAPANESE



## 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 Yakiniku 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.

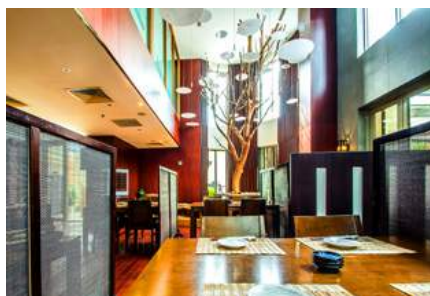
**7 bis Han Thuyen, D1**



## KESERA CAFE BAR

Café Bar KESERA is an ideal space to offer you fresh meals. We are here cozy and friendly serving specialist coffee, Japanese beers, fine wines, freshly baked homemade cakes, bagels and delicious Western and Japanese fusion foods. Live music every Saturday night.

**26/3 Le Thanh Ton, Dist 1.**  
0838 270 443



## Sushi Dining Aoi

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

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



## Yoshino

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

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

## 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**





# KOREAN



## Galbi Brothers

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

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



## 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 kooky 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



# STEAKHOUSE



## Canada Steakhouse

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

**219C Pham Viet Khanh, D1**  
**6294 8787**  
[www.canadasteakhouse.com](http://www.canadasteakhouse.com)  
 Facebook: Canadasteakhouse219c  
 10am - 11pm



## Corso Steakhouse & Bar

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

**Ground Floor, Norfolk Hotel, 117 Le Thanh Ton, D1**  
**3829 5368**  
[www.norfolkhotel.com.vn](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 from Australian and the US. Nossa brings food and decor together to create a cozy ambiance. With an attention to bringing authentic flavors, we provide good food, good prices and good taste.

**36 Pham Hong Thai, D1 / [www.nossa.vn](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)



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Scan for the full menu



# VIETNAMESE



## 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. New Quan Bui Garden just opened in District 2.

[www.bui.restaurant](http://www.bui.restaurant)  
17A Ngo Van Nam, D1  
First Floor, 39 Ly Tu Trong, D1  
55 Ngo Quang Huy, Thao Dien, D2



## Frangipani Hoa Su

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

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



## Mountain Retreat

Home style cooking from the Vietnamese north in a quiet alley off Le Loi, Mountain Retreat brings a rural vibe to busy central D1. The breezy and unassuming 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



## 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**



## Also Try...

### 3T Quan Nuong

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

Top Floor, 29 Ton That Hiep, D1  
3821 1631

### Banh Xeo 46A

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

46A Dinh Cong Trang, D1

### Cha Ca La Vong

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

36 Ton That Thiep, D1

### Com Nieu

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

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

59 Ho Xuan Huong, D3  
3932 6363  
[comnieusaigon27@yahoo.com](mailto:comnieusaigon27@yahoo.com)  
[comnieusaigon.com.vn](http://comnieusaigon.com.vn)

### Cuc Gach Quan

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

10 Dang Tat, D1  
3848 0144

### Highway 4

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

101 Vo Van Tan, D3  
[www.highway4.com](http://www.highway4.com)

### Hum

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

2 Thi Sach, D1  
3823 8920  
[www.hum-vegetarian.vn](http://www.hum-vegetarian.vn)

### May

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

3/5 Hoang Sa  
3910 1277

### Nha Hang Ngon

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

160 Pasteur, D1  
3827 7131  
[www.quananngon.com.vn](http://www.quananngon.com.vn)  
8am - 10pm

### Propaganda Bistro

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

21 Han Thuyen, D1  
3822 9048

### Temple Club

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

29-31 Ton That Thiep, D1  
3829 9244  
[templeclub.com.vn](http://templeclub.com.vn)

### Thanh Nien

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

11 Nguyen Van Chiem, D1  
3822 5909



# 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**



## 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)



## Noir: Dining in the Dark

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

**178/180D Hai Ba Trung, D1**



## Chanh Bistro

Chanh Bistro Rooftop Saigon is an international restaurant, café & bar with comfortable seating and a beautiful, romantic view on the rooftop of a 7-floor building. Chanh Bistro has set lunches on weekdays, selected from "A la carte" Menu for only 110.000++ VND

**Floor 6th, 43 – 45 Ho Tung Mau Street, Dist 1.**

**38214969**

[www.facebook.com/chanhbistro](http://www.facebook.com/chanhbistro)

**10:30 - 24:00**



## twenty21one

A new casual dining venue with an innovative tapas menu divided into two categories: Looking East, and Looking West, with dishes such as Crispy shredded duck spring rolls and Bacon-wrapped dates stuffed with Roquefort blue cheese. There are two dining levels: an upstairs mezzanine and downstairs are tables with both private and exposed positioning (open-air streetside; and a terrace by the pool out back).

**21 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3**

**TWENTY21ONE**



## 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

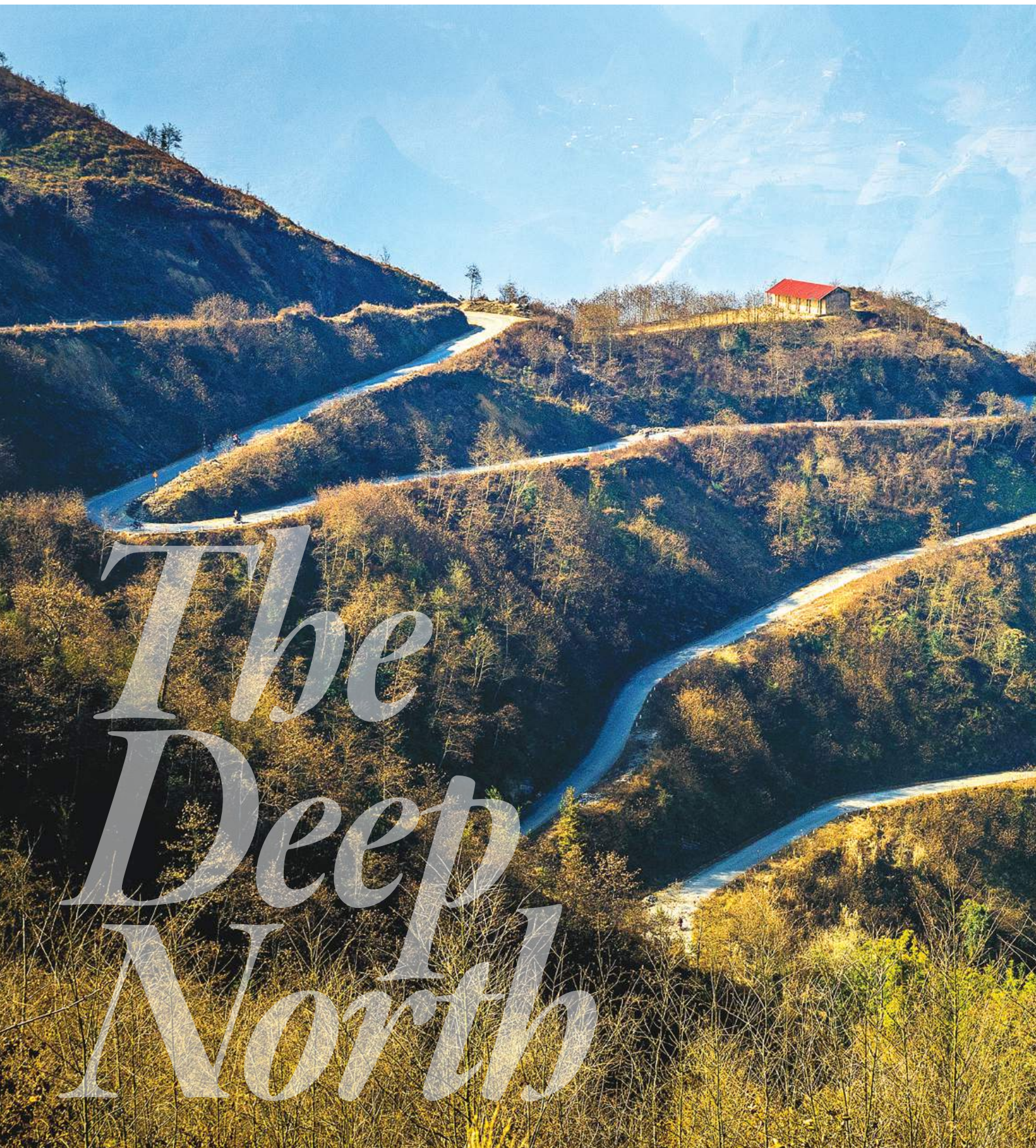
IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN











# *The Deep North*





In an ever-shrinking world, **Ha Giang**, with its uniquely preserved tribal culture, is one of those rare places that hasn't been corralled by modernity or prepackaged for visitors

*Text by* **ANNE OSWALD**  
*Images by* **ANNE OSWALD and NGOC TRAN**

**THE SOUND OF** crunching stones underfoot was almost deafening as we hiked up the steep gravel trail to the top of the peak, and onto the roof of Vietnam. Even in the cool northern air we were sweltering under the bright dry sun. The stones were loose and unstable under our weary legs and before long we were stopping for a breath. I gulped down my water and repositioned my daypack as a breeze rushed pass, giving us the energy needed for a final push to the top. With a sheer drop on our left side and solid earth to our right we hugged the inside wall as we journeyed northward and ever deeper into the mountainous green landscape.

Ha Giang doesn't so much scream for attention as it sits patiently, confident in the knowledge that its dramatic karst-ridden terrain will at first stun, and undoubtedly thrill any first time visitor to the region. Seated directly below China and reaching up as far north in the country as one can possibly travel, the vast majority of this province is made up of ethnic hill tribes, most notably the Hmong and Tay people. It feels like the edge of the world, or at least the country, and it is. It's the end of the line, the last stop, and Vietnam's farewell. There's something wild and liberating about traveling to the end of a place, to its furthest extremities. Like a mountaineer reaching a summit and gazing out towards infinity, this borderland feels like Earth's outer reaches.



Seeing the everyday activities of these hill tribes felt like a brief glimpse back to a way of life seemingly no longer in existence.



Thousands of limestone peaks, known as karsts, rise up from the ground at varying angles and sizes creating dense clusters of rocky, forested, lump-shaped mountains. This unique topography, while beautiful, is not ideal land for agricultural activity and so the cultivation of rice and other crops is limited in this region. For all the limitations the geography does place on growing and harvesting, people still rely entirely on the land for survival. The small valleys and slopes are covered in cornfields and rice paddies. The locals carrying their harvests to and from the fields traverse the dirt tracks and pathways connecting one village to another. What little space is left for other crops become small allotments for sweet potato, leafy greens and cassava. At the local markets these crops are then sold or bartered for the rice that sustains life for so many.

On we trekked across a narrow mountain pass into a Hmong village set in the shadow of a particularly mammoth peak. Heading down the

lone road towards the village were two young girls carrying large bundles of vegetation on their backs, their bright traditional attire making it arduously difficult for us to avert our eyes from the radiant pinks, greens and blues. As we walked pass we smiled, and they shyly smiled back before they ascended the gently sloping hill and faded from view. We rounded a corner and came upon a group of modest homesteads set in the valley. The village was quiet with only the faint sounds of clucking chickens and women chattering. As we reached the end of the road we heard an excited “*Nyob Zoo!*” (“hello” in Hmong). Standing in front of an unassuming wooden house were three women smiling and gesturing for us to approach. Their interest in me rivaled mine in them and as my guide fluently spoke the local dialect, we happily joined them on the porch for pleasantries. The eldest was most curious, eyeing me up and down as I stood reservedly in my t-shirt, mud-caked trousers and

hiking boots. She smiled cheekily at what must have been an unexpected and comically unsightly spectacle for a quiet Wednesday afternoon. She asked my guide about all of the particulars of my life and in between answers warmly looked towards me as an old friend would. There was a gentleness and openness in her expression that made me feel quite welcome, and with her permission I snapped a few photos.

After several minutes of conversation we carried on through this village and the next, with each passing one bringing more friendly smiles and exchanges as well as curious stares. Seeing the everyday activities of these hill tribes felt like a brief glimpse back to a way of life seemingly no longer in existence. Small children are seen out in the fields helping their mothers gather weeds as men ride past with baskets of piglets harnessed to their scooters. Young girls harvest the sweet potato fields with infant siblings strapped to their backs and elderly women weave hemp plants into







textiles outside their homes. Groups of adolescents walk down the road rolling used bicycle tires with sticks as they keep an eye on their goats grazing the hillsides beside them. The scent of pine and burning corn stalks gives the air a woody alpine freshness not found in regions further south, and as the early evening sun dips below the peaks cooling the temperature considerably, one notices how incredibly hard life is up in these mountains. There's a rawness and hardness to the people as they live constantly on the brink of feast or famine, vulnerable to the fickleness of the natural surroundings and dependent entirely on their own industrious measures. But their distinctive cultures and time-honored customs continue to exist, and like the intricately woven patterns and motifs sewn into the fabric of their traditional dress; these varied and vibrant cultures add immense value to the diversity and magnetism of the country as a whole.

As nightfall loomed and the villagers retreated into their homes we hurriedly

trekked back out of the valley and towards our pick up point nearer the road. Realizing that darkness now had the advantage, we quickened the pace and settled into a slow trot until we had reached the car. Driving along meandering roads perilously carved into the sides of the mountain and negotiating the famous Ma Pi Leng Pass was the setting for our final goodbye to the grandeur of this region. Staring out the open window at the silhouetted peaks, I thought about what I'd first heard of Ha Giang that made me want to visit. I'd listened to stories of its striking beauty, breathtaking roads and grand vistas, but it was the part about its wildness that had me captivated. The thought of exploring untamed pastures and the adventures they so often yield was what intrigued me most. I was certainly not disappointed, but where my expectations were vastly exceeded was the intimate way in which I experienced this wildness. The affectionate encounter I had with the women at their home and the warm smiles exchanged in

the villages that I hiked through, that was the real adventure I was hoping for. The mountains and scenery were always a given but those momentary human connections were not. I sunk back into the passenger seat contentedly and mused over this for a while.

A few hours later we arrived at our homestay in a traditional bamboo stilthouse, where we were treated to a generous supper of fried silk worms, spring rolls, sautéed pork, vegetables and lively conversation. Not long after the last scraps were devoured and the family had gone to sleep did I find myself lying cheerfully and haphazardly under a mosquito net, the abundant servings of rice wine having gone to my head. Despite the cloudiness, thoughts of the previous day's events filled my mind and I soon began to wonder if I'd ever return to this memorable place, to this last wild frontier. Too exhausted to ponder the possibilities, but with a smile anchored to my weather-worn face, I quickly drifted off to sleep in the cool and calm of the deep north. ■



**The mountains and scenery were always a given but those momentary human connections were not.**









# *New Zealand*

*Images by* JIMMY VAN DER KLOET  
*Lake Alexandrina - view from Mt John*





*Pancake Rocks - Punakaiki*





*Coastal drive - Picton*









*Hooker Valley*



*Hawkswood*



# BABY ON BOARD



## Tips for smoother travel with a baby or toddler

TEXT BY SOPHIA CHEN

I'VE TAKEN two of my daughters, now 8 and 11, from Vietnam back home to the US—a trip that can take as long as 30 hours—when they were as young as two and three months old without their father. Most people find this to be an impressive feat, as if I'd climbed Everest without a sherpa. Now to think of it, a sherpa would have been great. Many new parents in Vietnam may have to fly one or both ways on their own with a baby for various reasons. A little preparation and having the right stuff can be a lifesaver when you're short a pair of arms and legs.

### What To Wear

You probably know that traveling with a baby is not the time to do high fashion. You may or may not have a fondness for flower prints, plaids and calico but patterned clothes do wonders for obscuring pumpkin puree and other stains. Unfortunately, even flower prints won't obscure the smell of milk vomit so a change of clothes (or two depending on how long your trip is) will be necessary. It is sometimes helpful to wear a

lighter shirt under a thin long-sleeved shirt with extras kept in the carry on to change into without a trip to the bathroom, leaving the baby unattended.

If you're a nursing mother, opt out of button ups of any sort. I found an oversized sweater or sweatshirt usually was able to hide the fact that I was nursing an infant tucked under the folds of material. It also created a moister environment to protect the baby from the dry cabin air.

### What To Bring

The conundrum is, you want to pack less because you're alone and yet because you're alone, you need to pack just a little more. In your carry on, the essentials are: nappies (at least one per hour of travel), waterproof changing pad, wet wipes, tissues, small washcloths, two baby bottles with tops that prevent spills, pre-measured bags of formula, small cartons of milk or juice, extra teats, baby food and two spoons if your baby is on solids, two pacifiers if your baby uses them, several plastic Ziploc bags (1 liter/quart size), children's

Tylenol and any prescription medicine (bring doctor's written prescription), at least one change of clothes for both you and baby and (preferably quiet) toys and books, including a familiar toy or blanket that soothes the baby (don't wash it, let it smell 'familiar'). Toys that can be tethered with Velcro fasteners or string to a stroller or carrier are helpful and some toys that are new to baby can keep a fussy older infant preoccupied. A small blanket or scarf that can do triple duty is also handy as a privacy cover for when you are nursing, as a makeshift pillow in the stroller, or a cover if it gets cold at the airport (airplanes will have blankets).

A backpack is good for carrying things you don't need immediately like extra clothes while a more accessible shoulder bag should keep stuff you'll need in a pinch like a pacifier, wet wipes, baby bottle, passport, money and tickets. If you only need one bag, by all means just use one whichever type you prefer. I don't usually use the wheeled types because I can't wheel them and push a stroller at the same





ing like having great gear and then not being able to use it. See how much stuff you can hang on the stroller with the baby in it before it tips over! It's not much which should motivate you to pack even lighter. Also, practice folding, unfolding and carrying the stroller while holding the baby, a backpack and overstuffed diaper bag (remember your gym teacher—bend at the knees). If you're going to be in New York City or London on a budget, carry this load up and down a few flights of stairs to simulate the subway/underground experience. Extra credit if you can do it all while holding a bottle to the baby's mouth and singing Brahms lullaby.

### Choosing a Seat

According to travel agent manager Ms. Hoa, most airlines can now access their seat maps on a GDS system so you can request the bulkhead seats up front that have the space for a bassinet, suitable for babies 10kg and under. This means the sooner you book the better your chance of reserving these seats. If there is anything else you can request from the airline, like baby food, nappies and toys, by all means do it.

If the bulkhead seat is not available or you cannot book it in advance, you can gamble on a low season infant ticket, hoping that there will be empty seats available that you can take advantage of. These tend to be in the back of the plane and are worth scouting out once everyone has boarded. If you aren't as value conscious (euphemism for cheap) as I am, you may want to consider paying the child's fare (normally for children aged 2 to 12) at 75 percent of the adult fare so your child will have their own seat, which will be worth it for a long haul flight during peak season when you may not get the seat with the bassinet. Heck, if money is no object, fly first class. I can't think of anyone who deserves it more than a single parent with an infant on a long haul flight. Just hope your first class neighbors will feel the same way.

As for boarding, if they don't seat you first then relax and wait to be seated last. There's no point to standing in line for a long time. This allows the plane to fill up and if there are free seats somewhere, should you have a less than desirable arrangement at your assigned seat, you can go straight to a row with two free seats (or more) knowing everyone is already on board. This saves the trouble of getting settled and then having to move again or trying to switch seats with someone who may not speak your language.

### What To Worry About

Like I need to tell you, right? But there are a few things that are of special concern. Since small baby ears are particularly sensitive to changes in pressure, during take off and landing, you should let your baby nurse, drink from a bottle or suck on a pacifier to help their ears equalize. Yawning also helps so you could try a pretend yawn

to encourage your baby to do the same.

Congestion makes it difficult to impossible to equalize ear pressure. Unfortunately, the FDA (Food and Drug Administration of the US) has ruled that decongestants and cold and cough remedies are ineffective in children under two and may in fact be dangerous. If your child happens to have a stuffy nose during the flight, your options are saline drops to try to clear the nose or one of those bulbs that sucks out congestion. There's a good chance that they will make your child wail and not work otherwise. Luckily, crying also helps and will likely happen anyway as the pain takes its toll. A very congested child, however, will really be miserable, so avoid this situation if at all possible.

Another issue is whether or not to take a car seat. Safety wise, of course, having a car seat on the plane is best as turbulence can be unpredictable. In the US they are more commonly allowed on planes but I have had little luck thus far getting them allowed on board anywhere in Asia and according to Ms. Hoa, they are not allowed. It won't help your case any if you've bought an infant ticket at 10 percent of the adult fare which doesn't entitle your child to a seat and on top of that the flight is full. If I am alone I usually find bringing the car seat a hassle and far more bulk than it's worth.

If you are a non-English speaking parent traveling with two or three infants, you've got plenty to worry about! Traveling alone with more than three infants, may as well stay home, they won't even allow you to fly. If you are traveling alone with two or three infants, when you book you can request special assistance from flight attendants if you pay full fare for each infant requiring it. There is also special assistance for people who don't speak English. All of this must be requested in advance during booking and it's important to follow up with a call to the airline to be sure the service will be ready for you.

### What Not To Worry About

Though you wouldn't know it the way some parents (and grandmothers) obsess, your baby is unlikely to starve or dehydrate during the trip. Even if you lose your diaper bag with all the essentials, many airlines carry extra diapers and milk. If all else fails, you can spoon feed your baby. It's likely that if the child has survived thus far in your care, it will survive just a little longer. And don't worry too much about other passengers being bothered with your crying infant if you are doing everything in your power to soothe them. I find that nearly all Vietnamese and most people in general are extraordinarily tolerant of children and understanding of fussy babies, especially under the circumstances. For the others, their time toting around an infant will likely come and if it doesn't, at least you'll know that their grumpy genes won't be passed on to another generation. ■

time. The bag needs to be small enough to fit under an airline seat so you don't have to constantly access the overhead bin. An extra diaper bag is not counted against your carry on allowance.

Put your liquid items in the Ziploc bags for airport security inspection to save you the trouble of having to fool with it later. The liquid/gel/aerosol carry on restrictions are different depending on your destination. Baby's milk and juice are generally allowed but still need to be inspected.

A good, light but sturdy collapsible stroller is essential and does double duty as a mule, to carry your diaper bag and other carry-on luggage provided they have handles that can be hung on the stroller. A good baby carrier is essential for freeing up your hands. I prefer a front carrier to the backpack type if only to spare the person behind me the sight of my child spitting up. It certainly makes it easier to clean up if you can see it.

It is worth getting used to the carrier, stroller and car seat before your trip if they are new purchases. There's nothing



# >>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 Garden Restaurant

Cham Garden Restaurant is located inside Cham Villas Boutique Luxury Resort. Set in the midst of a lush tropical garden, this cozy and quiet restaurant serves Asian Fusion, Vietnamese and Western Cuisine. The ideal place for a romantic and exquisite dinner. **32 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, Phan Thiet** **+84 62 3741 234** [www.chamvillas.com](http://www.chamvillas.com) [www.facebook.com/chamgardenmuine](https://www.facebook.com/chamgardenmuine)



## 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 luxurioxus treatment rooms, Sheraton Fitness with 24-hour access, Sheraton Club Lounge, Link@Sheraton, Sheraton Adventure Club, and a purpose-built Cooking School. **26 - 28 Tran Phu, Nha Trang, Khanh Hoa** **058 2220 000** [www.sheratonnhatrang.com](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  
nhakhoadrhung@gmail.com  
www.nhakhoadrhung.com



## Also try ...

### 2000 Dental Clinic Trung Tam Implant

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

**125 Le Thi Rieng, D1**

### Elite Dental Group

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

**57A Tran Quoc Thao, D3**

### European Dental Clinic

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

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

### German International Dentistry

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

**1489 Nguyen Van Linh, D7**

### Saigon Smile

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

**96 Tran Nao, D2**  
6674 4255

### Smile Dental Center

Quality dental care with whitening, cleaning, and orthodontic services. Japanese equipment and techniques.

**173 Ton Dat Tien, D7**

### Starlight Dental Clinic

Award-winning quality care and personal service in clean premises, offering general dentistry, whitening and cosmetic surgery, implants, orthodontics, pediatric, and preventive dentistry.

**2Bis Cong Truong Quoc Te, D3**

### Westcoast International Dental Clinic

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

The clinic regularly hosts visiting dentists from many other countries.

**27 Nguyen Trung Truc, D1**  
3825 6999

## SPA



### Maison Mikio Boutique Salon

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

**Garden Plaza 2 Complex**  
**8 Ton Dat Tien, D7**  
5412 4773



### Moc Huong Spa

Moc Huong Spa is supported by top-ranking professional physiotherapists who combine Eastern with Western techniques resulting 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, Dist 1**  
**0839 117 118**  
**2A Chu Manh Trinh, Dist 1**  
**0838 247 433**



## 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





**IF YOU'RE NOT** from this country, then you've almost certainly left another life behind you, a whole support base of family and friends back home who used to be your entire social world. For whatever reasons caused you to settle on this new existence here, you'll have given up a rich network of folks from home in exchange for a very spartan (and sometimes superficial) one in Vietnam. Whether you love it or hate it, living in Saigon for a foreigner is more often than not a life turned upside-down.

There are some for whom this is no problem at all, but they're the minority. For most of us, this is not something done painlessly. The conspicuous absence of that support base often affects our experience of living abroad in ways that make us wonder if it was ever worth giving up everything that we left behind in the first place. The anxiety this causes can play all sorts of games with our minds, and often has a serious impact on the relationships we form with our children, partner, or close friends here. That right there is the most common downside of the expat experience—an unspecific sense of loneliness that can be mild, or otherwise desperately acute.

Let me put this in more concrete terms. If you fall into the above category, there is a fairly good chance that one of the following scenarios at least partially resonates with you: “My children don’t seem to love me as much as they do their nanny, or they seem to speak another language more fluently than my own, and it hurts.” Or, “My wife can’t seem to put down her iPhone, and I can’t convince her to have a serious conversation with me.” Perhaps, “My husband is working late all the time, and I feel trapped with my own children and have nobody to talk to about it. It seems as if he’s having an affair.” More insidiously, “There’s no way to control my own addictions here;” be it women, alcohol, substance abuse, or simply a vacuous online game.

Naomi Taylor ([counsellingwithnaomi.com](http://counsellingwithnaomi.com)), who is now resident in Saigon, has seen issues like this time and again as a parenting and relationship counselor originally working out of Jakarta and then Beijing. While employed at various international schools, her supportive role for students would often spill over into discussions, advice, and sometimes counseling for the parents as well.

“One of the things you notice when you start to work with children,” she says, “is that quite often the kids are OK, and it’s Mum, Dad, or both Mum and Dad who need a bit of support or guidance; perhaps a slight shift in their way of thinking and expectations. Then the pressure can lift off the children.”

In an international environment abroad, psychological pressures

common to most foreigners frequently emerge as factors in behavioural issues that have an impact on our children’s lives here, as well as on the ways in which we treat each other.

“For expats,” Naomi observes, “it’s more often not having that support around them, such as family; the transitions, and the making friends and people moving on so quickly. Noticing that they’re really alone out here.”

“The relationship between two adults,” she says as an example of how the expat experience can complicate strained family situations: “You hear a lot about—more often than not it will be the husband—having a relationship outside of the marriage. The impact that has on the whole family, from staying together here to work it out, to perhaps part of the family moving back to their own country. The suddenness

of it, the mixture of feelings, being put in that place of having to think ahead—in the practical sense of what they are going to do, what they are going to tell the children, and how are they going to resettle—but also there’s that emotional connection as well; such a large part of their life, so many friends... certainly that comes through my door.”

“A lot of expats carry guilt,” she continues. “Someone at home has taken ill, perhaps a parent, and you’re away—and you’ll have siblings who are stepping in to take that role, and that guilt of, ‘I want to be doing a bit more’, or perhaps a sibling is saying ‘this is hard, I need you here too.’ Amongst expat friends you can share that, because you have it in common. At home, you would be doing more if you weren’t too far away, but it’s different when you’re on the other side of the ocean.”







## Counseling for parents and couples who have difficulty adjusting to life as expats

TEXT BY MICHAEL ARNOLD

### Talk it Out

There are multiple situations such as these where counseling and therapy can offer the sense of perspective that's often lost when your basic support from home is absent. Such services, however, are often difficult to access in countries whose native language is not the same as your own, or where counseling culture is not widely developed, as is the case in Vietnam. While working in Beijing, Naomi offered parenting courses that were in many ways a solution to this problem, focusing on communications skills important not only to parenting, but in any relationship.

"I've come up with my own parenting course," she explains. "It's about communication, communicating with your children within a family, so that you get a good understanding of what the needs are of yourself and the

other person. This is what I do in my counseling too. We're always trying to solve problems. You come across a problem, you've got to find a solution to fix it, and then you can carry on. As parents, we are often trying to solve a problem for our children. We've got experience on our side, so we know better. So they come up with a problem... okay... here's the solution, here you go! It's fixed! What we miss is how the child sees it. Is the problem really what we're identifying as the problem? If we spend a bit of time talking to them and listening to them, actually it may not be quite what we're inferring it is."

"When we start talking to our children," she says, "what you find is that a lot of their problems aren't half as big as the initial explosion that they present to us. When we start talking, understanding them, or communicating and trying to understand, you use a skill

which is called active listening, where you're feeding back to them what you're hearing, what you see them presenting, their body language, really trying to get in touch with what their emotions are expressing. Active listening, of course, is one of the core skills in counseling too. So you become your child's counselor without being a counselor."

Naomi's advice, in short, is simple: "If we don't really listen, we don't really get to find out—and if we don't get to find out, we can't really support them. We can't really help them to become independent problem-solvers either, which is what we should be aiming for."

Naomi's courses for parents involve techniques that are applicable to broader relationship skills—and in the past, parents with particular difficulties of their own have elected to go into counseling to resolve their own factors in issues they've faced with the children at home.

"Within the world of therapy," explains Naomi, "you have goal-driven therapies such as solution-focused therapy or cognitive behaviour therapy – which is very much looking at changing patterns of thinking to address unhelpful behaviours and setting realistic goals to reach. I suppose the more traditional 'talking therapy,' person-centered therapy, is about understanding how you're feeling and where that feeling comes from. It's about looking at thought patterns and how behaviours are affected. I always like to look at what the needs are, what needs do you have that aren't being met. That can lead to the possibility of change. It's not me saying specifically, 'right, let's find the way to fix this.' It's getting them, the client, to start seeing how things could be different, perhaps getting them to see themselves in a situation, feeling very confident in a situation, feeling very comfortable in a situation. What is that situation like?"

Therapy doesn't offer magical solutions that wave deep-rooted personal crises away, but in many cases the change in perspective it provides can make an enormous difference in how they affect you—and for parents, this in turn can make a positive difference on the lives of their kids too.

"Sometimes you can't change the entire situation," admits Naomi, "but you can make it a bit more manageable, you can take away some of that stress. For example, with people who don't like living here, but they're posted here for two years and they have to stay—because it's the husband's job, and he's not going to change his job. How can you make those two years manageable rather than finding yourself looking back at it and thinking, 'God, I hated that time, I wish we weren't there,' because you're going to carry that with you. It's the children that will pick up on all of that." ■





Dr Anna is one of the veterinary surgeons at Animal Doctors International ([www.animaldoctors.vn](http://www.animaldoctors.vn)). Anna's special interest is neurology in which she gained experience in referral hospitals in Germany and Switzerland. Anna has moved to Vietnam following a successful stint as senior veterinarian for an animal charity in Thailand.

# CLEAN AS A HOUND'S TOOTH

## Partnering with your veterinarian to fight dental disease



**WE ALL BRUSH** our teeth, but how many of us do the same for our pets? Often we completely ignore our pet's teeth—which can be a big mistake!

Periodontitis is a bacterial infection of the mouth and causes inflammation, pain and sometimes bleeding. It's one of the most common diseases veterinarians see in pets and, unfortunately, it is frequently overlooked, especially in Vietnam where professional veterinary dentistry is not widely available.

It's easy to quickly check your pet's teeth at home to look for signs of dental disease—just open their mouth and look for these early warning signs:

- **Stinky Breath** – 'Doggy' breath is often an early sign of bacterial infection
- **Red Gums** – Gums should be pale pink, if they look bright red or there's a red line around teeth then it's a sign of inflammation and gingivitis.
- **Yellow/Brown** – Normal teeth should be almost white, staining or tartar is usually obvious, and make sure to check right at the back.
- **Poor Appetite/Weight Loss** – This can be a sign of advanced dental disease. Just because your pet is

eating doesn't mean they don't have dental disease or pain.

Luckily we can help to prevent dental disease with early intervention. Together with an experienced veterinarian you can formulate a plan that will be best for you and your pet. Here are a few examples of dental care you can do at home:

- **Brush** – Daily brushing really helps to prevent plaque (be sure to use an animal toothpaste as some human toothpastes are toxic).
- **Chew** – Give special chew toys that are designed to help reduce tartar build-up.
- **Treats** – Some pet treats have enzymes that reduce tartar and calculus.
- **Clean** – There is no substitute for regular dental cleanings by your veterinarian. These *must* be done under general anesthesia. Be very wary of anyone offering 'anesthesia free cleanings.'

If we don't remove the build-up of tartar (invisible) and calculus (visible) on our pet's teeth they will cause gingivitis (a painful inflammation), bad breath, dental disease and tooth loss. Not only is this unpleasant for everyone but it's very painful and can lead to many

secondary complications for your pet.

Pets with periodontal disease are also more likely to be diagnosed with heart disease as well as other forms of bodily organ damage as bacteria from the mouth constantly circulates through the blood and sticks to the inside of arteries and veins near the heart.

Consult your veterinarian at least once every six months to evaluate your pet's oral health. They should be able to answer questions about home care, as well as evaluate the frequency with which your pet should receive professional cleanings. Questions to ask your vet:

- Do they use a dental chart to record their work?
- Do they have an ultrasonic scaler to properly clean teeth? Manual cleaning is not effective.
- Are nerve-blocks used in case of extractions to reduce pain to your pet?
- Do they place an IV catheter and give intravenous fluids throughout the dental cleaning? Proper hydration is essential for a quick and safe recovery from anesthesia.
- Is there a monitoring equipment (oxygen saturation, E.C.G, etc) and a dedicated technician throughout the anesthetic?
- Are intubated (breathing tube inserted through the mouth into the wind pipe) used to protect their lungs from blood and fluids present in the mouth and also for delivery of supplemental oxygen?

It is vitally important that your pet has their teeth cleaned under anesthetic as this is the *only* way that a full oral examination can be carried out. It is also impossible to clean *below* the gum line, which is where most of the bacteria are found, in a cat or dog that is awake. Also, it is highly distressing and often painful for your pet as well as providing *no* benefit to their dental health to have them awake for the procedure. ■



# ACCOUNTABILITY VERSUS CREATIVITY

## Getting the balance right in schools



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

IT'S THAT TIME of year again when schools administer their final exams, but for teachers this can be a particularly daunting time with anxiety levels running high. No matter how skilled or experienced the teacher, or how strong their teaching history, speak to them and you will discover that every teacher worries that their students will underperform on test day and somehow they will be exposed as an impostor.

On the one hand, it is fair to say teachers play a very important role and have a big influence on the lives of many children and *should* therefore be held to account. But on the other hand, such a strong focus on academic learning (that can be measured and reported) can detract from developing a child's curiosity, creativity and problem-solving, which are likely to be increasingly important in the future. Getting the balance right then—between teaching, learning, assessment and reporting—is clearly something that is not easy.

The truth is teaching is more of an art than a science, and tests don't reveal everything a child has learned during their time spent with a teacher. Moreover, there will always be some pupils who underperform on test day, and this can happen for many reasons.

For schools that want to send their pupils to the best universities, regular, formal testing is appropriate, however, for those that aspire to develop well-rounded students; their approach *could* and should be very different when it comes to what and how they assess. Therefore, are assessment weeks really necessary at all? What purpose do they truly serve? These are questions schools need to be very clear about.

Understandably, key stakeholders, such as parents and school governors, have a right to know whether students, teachers and the school as a whole

are performing to a high level; and so, rightly or wrongly, teachers live in a world of accountability. Would schools provide richer education without the burden of testing? Perhaps, but it's a topic for another article.

### One Size Does Not Fit All

Historically, the main purpose of testing has been to compare students and to report to stakeholders. For learners, testing tends to simply confirm what they already think about themselves.

But what's to say that testing can't also be used to help improve learning? If the data are collated and used well, it's my opinion testing can, in fact, have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning in subsequent weeks and months.

I say this because the most successful schools and teachers look very carefully at the performance of each child over time and adapt their teaching accordingly. Within math for example, it is not uncommon for a child to be a strong mathematician overall but repeatedly struggle when it comes to one particular area, such as fractions. But without careful analysis, this problem may never be spotted or dealt with.

Also, why spend the recommended 12 days teaching fractions next term if it is already a strength within the class? Why not reduce that time and allocate it more wisely? These are the type of decisions the best schools and teachers make, so while some parents will sometimes ask for a copy of the textbook their child is working through so they can help at home, very few teachers teach this way. The truth is—learning is not as simple and straightforward as these textbooks might suggest. Learning is a very individual process and a one-size-fits-

all approach simply doesn't work.

Yes, every child needs to develop the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding in reading, writing and math, but the 'unwritten' side of the school curriculum is equally, if not more, important.

But while it may be easy to measure progress in math, how do you judge growth and/or progress in a child's social, emotional and attitudinal development? The accuracy of these judgements is very subjective and often relies not only the skill of the assessor but also how well they know the individual.

Testing, therefore, is not the be all and end all, but rather one of many pieces of evidence which should be taken into account when evaluating a student's progress and growth.

Consequently, when reporting to parents at the end of each year, schools need to be very thoughtful about what and how they report. Parents, too, need to be very clear about what they want for their child. Is it for their child to be the best mathematician in the class, or is it to be a *good* mathematician who enjoys school and is developing positive attitudes to learning, such as a resilient mindset and an enquiring mind? Being clear about this could drastically affect how you evaluate your child's report.

The teacher's comments are often the best way to gauge your child's personal, social and emotional growth. This is the qualitative part of the report where facts and figures simply do not and cannot describe.

So, regardless of your child's current development level, what's most important is that they have a love of learning that will stay with them until they enter adulthood. This is something that can be so easily lost or damaged and so, for me, it is these students who are the most successful products of a school. ■



# The TRANS ITION STARTS NOW

HOW TO PREPARE  
YOUR CHILD FOR SCHOOL

WITH THE NEW school year nearly upon us, the transition to a new class can be daunting for both children and parents alike. Most children starting Grade 1 this year may have had the full experience of Kindergarten already, but that does not mean the transition will be straightforward.

Starting Grade 1 can be a point of pride and excitement for some, but for others there may be tears or anxiety. By working together, teachers and parents can make this potentially stressful transition easier by creating a positive experience into the exciting world of learning. Below are some simple steps to smooth the transition process and help your child excel at school when they first walk through their new classroom door.

## Before School

- **Visit the school:** Before the first day of school, visiting the school with your child can ease their uncertainty. They can become familiar with the route to school, their new learning environment and potentially meet their new teacher and classroom.
- **Setting a routine for your child:** Before school starts, begin a bedtime and morning routine. The National Sleep Foundation stated that, "poor or inadequate sleep can impact their ability to learn at school." Children aged six to 13 need 9 to 11 hours of sleep. Sleep is critical to the development

- and growth of young children. Maintaining this consistent schedule gives children a sense of security and self-discipline.
- **Talk about their feelings:** Talk to your child about how they are feeling. If your child is anxious, reassure them that this is normal and other children are probably feeling the same way.
  - **Communicate with the class teacher:** Ask for the teacher's email address. Let the teacher know you want to help your child learn. If you feel uncomfortable speaking English, don't let a language barrier stop you. There will be someone at the school who can facilitate these discussions. If you believe your child is struggling at any point during the school year, let the class teacher know. It is likely that they have dealt with similar issues before and can offer some helpful advice.
  - **Join taster sessions or holiday camps:** Sending your child for holiday camps is a great opportunity for them to gain independence by spending time away from home. This summer, ISSP is running 2-week, 3-week and 4-week multi-activity camps, which will include outdoor field trips and exciting cooking, dance, science, math and English lessons (June 13 – July 8). ISSP also hosts free playgroups for children 6 months to 4 years old every Thursday morning to experience play-based learning in a school environment.

When parents take an interest in their child's education, children notice and the impact can be instrumental in the child's own attitudes and motivations to learn. The National Literacy Trust has recently reviewed the significance of parental involvement at home. It confirms that "learning at home is a powerful force for academic success... and can overcome other factors such as family background, social class and level of parental education." As a parent, there are some simple, but effective, ways to promote learning at home.



Hollie Slater is a Grade 1 teacher with a Post Graduate Certificate in Education at the International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP).

## Supporting Your Child's Learning At Home

- **Encourage Independence:** One of the most essential skills I encourage, as a teacher, is independence. This can start early at home by simply allowing your child to dress themselves, tie their own shoes, pack (and carry) their own bags. By helping children to be independent, you are promoting their problem solving skills, teaching responsibility and developing their self-esteem.
- **Read, Read, Read:** As a teacher, I believe that instilling a pleasure for reading is one of the most important things you can do to help your child succeed in life. By making books an integral and daily part of their lives, you are boosting their academic potential. Reading activities at home has positive influences not only on reading achievement, but language comprehension and communication skills too. Moreover, statistics from the Literacy Company have shown that out-of-school reading for just 15 minutes a day can expose students to more than a million words in a year. Therefore, to help your child learn at home—read daily and visit the school library!
- **Develop Curiosity:** From an early age, your child is learning critical language and communication skills. However, no matter your child's age, developing curiosity is essential. Children constantly have "why" questions. If we are not sure of the answers, it is not a problem. Helping the children find those answers is all part of the fun!

It is fundamental that a great home learning environment is fun, enjoyable and relaxed for the child. Ultimately, it is parental involvement that has the greatest impact on children's learning, with a range of positive outcomes from language growth to academic achievement. Any activity where your child can spend quality time with you can provide endless learning opportunities. ■





**CHOOSING THE RIGHT SUMMER SCHOOL** for your child can be difficult. In its fourth year, the Summer Learners programme at Renaissance International School Saigon is an established and trustworthy option for you and your child. Our programme offers your child the opportunity to experience an Internationally British learning environment whilst combining the very best activities Ho Chi Minh City has to offer. Your child is sure to feel engaged and excited all summer long if you choose the Summer Learners programme at Renaissance.

#### British Curriculum Academic Programme

This year, our Summer Learners will study a variety of topics depending on their age and ability.

#### Activities Programme

As in previous years, our Summer Learners programme has teamed up Ho Chi Minh City's premier activity providers:

- This year, VinSpace will once again be our Art partner.
- An exciting new partnership has been formed with Erato so the needs of all of our budding musicians and performing artists can be met.
- Saigon Sports Academy are returning to support our sports stars.
- Our long term partner in the kitchen, Junior Chef, are returning to develop culinary skills.
- This year, Push Climbing have joined forces with our Summer

Learners to promote safe and exciting climbing fun.

- For the golfers, we are excited to be once again teaming up with Asia Golf.

As well as the exciting activity providers, our Summer Learners will also enjoy a number of educational visits to some of the city's top venues.

#### Fully Qualified Language Teachers

Carefully selected to provide both skills and experience, our teachers are trained in TOEFL assessments to give guidance to pupils of all ages. Each class will have an experienced TA from the Renaissance staff team, all of whom have graduated from our in-house training programme and have British Curriculum experience.

#### TOEFL Primary, TOEFL Junior

Recognised worldwide for providing detailed feedback about each pupil's

skills, TOEFL primary and junior assessments allow parents to be confident that our summer school provides a world-class programme.

#### Assessment Included

All pupils will have the opportunity to complete a free TOEFL Junior or TOEFL Primary assessment at the end of the course. (Only applied for pupil's registration from 4 weeks or above)

**FREE registration and testing, bus for Phu My Hung route during this summer programme**

For further information, please kindly contact  
Email: [admissions@renaissance.edu.vn](mailto:admissions@renaissance.edu.vn) or call (08) 3773 3171  
- ext: 120/121/122 ■





# >>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



### 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 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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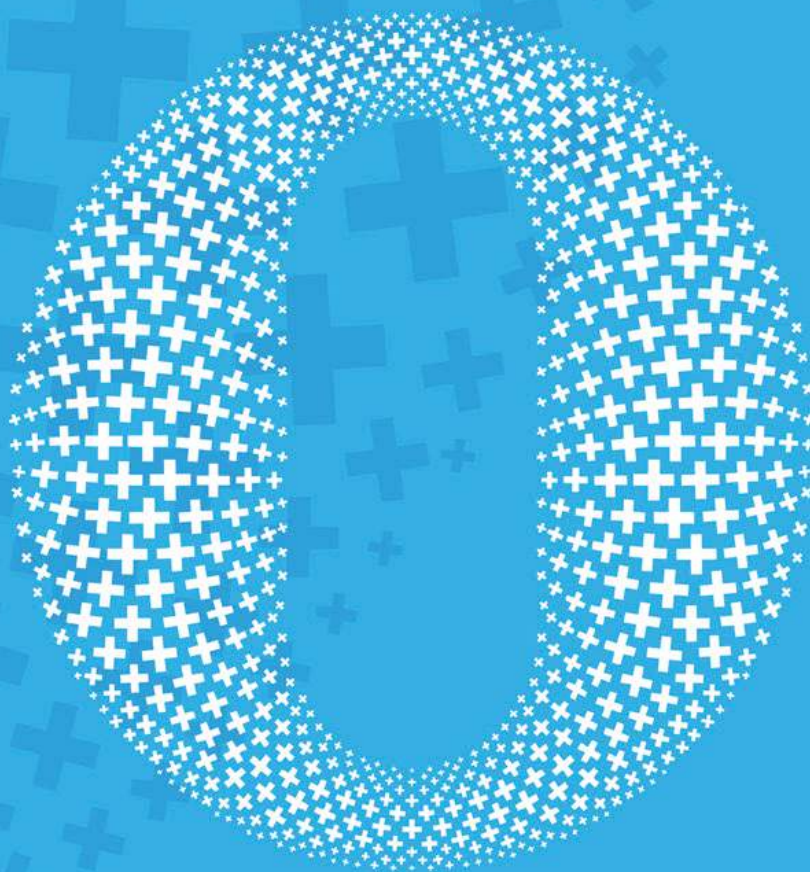


Wildlife At Risk (WAR) is a non-profit organisation based in Ho Chi Minh City  
Tel: +84 3899 7314 Fax: +84 3899 7316 Email: [info@wildlifeatrisk.org](mailto:info@wildlifeatrisk.org)  
[www.wildlifeatrisk.org](http://www.wildlifeatrisk.org)



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