



VIETNAM

9—2016

THE BLIND WRITER

Meet MasterChef Winner
Christine Ha

PAGE 20

RIDE IN STYLE, SAFELY

The Ultimate Motorcycle
Jacket for Saigon

PAGE 28

THE PROOF IS IN THE SAUCE

Vietnamese Comfort Food
With a View

PAGE 60

A SEASIDE ESCAPE

The Lesser-Known Side of
Vung Tau

PAGE 76

THE NEXT GENERATION



NHÀ XUẤT BẢN THANH NIÊN
ẤN PHẨM CHUYÊN ĐỀ QUẢNG CÁO - MIỄN PHÍ



Congratulations

to ISHCMC's Class of 2016!

Congratulations to ISHCMC's Class of 2016 for setting a new ISHCMC **highest average for their IB Diploma and Individual Subject Scores**. Furthermore, 28 students were awarded the Bilingual Diploma. 19 nationalities were represented in the Class of 2016, representing ISHCMC's truly international learning environment.



The International School Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC) is the city's 1st International Baccalaureate World School for students aged 2 to 18 years old. We are proud to have the longest history of graduating IB Diploma candidates to leading universities worldwide, including New York University, Seoul National University, University College London and University of Hong Kong this year.



Enrolling IB Students Now

+84 (8) 3898 9100

www.ishcmc.com



LUXURY CONDOTEL AT CHAMPA ISLAND NHA TRANG RESORT

Himalayan salt stone spa,
seafood restaurant, karaoke,
kids club, fishing, river games,
breakfast and coffee, private beach,
GYM, swimming pool...



CHAM OASIS
LUXURY RESORT CONDOTEL & VILLAS

Address: 304 2/4 Street, Vinh Phuoc Ward, Nha Trang City
Tel: (+84) 3568 569 - Fax: (+84) 3568 570 - Hotline: 0123 6009 777
Email: info@champaislandresort.vn - info@chamoasis.vn
Website: www.champaislandresort.vn - www.chamoasis.vn



Director **XUAN TRAN**

Managing Director **JIMMY VAN DER KLOET**
jimmy@oivietnam.com

Managing Editor **CHRISTINE VAN**
christine@oivietnam.com

Online Editor **JAMES PHAM**
jpham@oivietnam.com

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

Associate Publisher **KHANH NGUYEN**
khanh@oivietnam.com

Graphic Designers **PHAT DU**
phat@oivietnam.com

HIEN NGUYEN
hien@oivietnam.com

For advertising please contact:

Sales Manager **NGAN NGUYEN** 
ngan@oivietnam.com
090 279 7951

Account Manager **CAROLINE DORAN-TRAN** 
caroline@oivietnam.com
0126 973 3768

General **advertising@oivietnam.com**

Inquiries **info@oivietnam.com**



This Month's Cover

Photographer **Tien Nguyen**

Model **Na**

Designer **Thuy Design House**
(www.thuydesignhouse.com)

OI VIET NAM

NHÀ XUẤT BẢN THANH NIÊN

64 Bà Triệu - Hoàn Kiếm - Hà Nội

ĐT (84.04) 39424044-62631719

Fax: 04.39436024.

Website: nxbthanhnien.vn

Email: info@nxbthanhnien.vn

Chi nhánh: 27B Nguyễn Đình Chiểu
Phường Đa Kao, Quận 1, TP. Hồ Chí Minh
ĐT: (08) 62907317

Chịu trách nhiệm xuất bản:

Giám đốc, Tổng biên tập

Nguyễn Xuân Trường

Biên tập: Tạ Quang Huy

Thực hiện liên kết xuất bản:

Metro Advertising Co., Ltd

48 Hoàng Diệu, Phường 12, Quận 4

In lần thứ bốn mươi mốt, số lượng 6000 cuốn,
khổ 21cm x 29,7cm

Đăng ký KHXB: 1688-2016/CXBIPH/28-51/TN
QĐXB số: 791/QĐ-TN

Chế bản và in tại Công ty Cổ Phần In Gia Định
Nộp lưu chiểu tháng 9/2016

Website: www.oivietnam.com

CHAM VILLAS

Boutique Luxury Resort
The best resort in Phan Thiet



Special Promotion for Vietnam Residents:
from VND 2,770,000^{*)}

- Totally relaxing
- 18 Villas in 9000m² Tropical Garden
- Large Swimming Pool
- 60 Meters Private Beach
- Delicious Food in two Restaurants with German Chef

^{*)} includes breakfast, one complimentary massage per person per stay, tax.
VND 3.330,000 for Beach Front Villa or VND 2,770,000 for Garden Villa
(one or two persons, extra bed: VND 770,000). Valid 1 May - 30 September.

Contents



WINE & DINE

RESTAURANT REVIEWS

It's all about Asian cuisines this month as we showcase Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Chinese and Thai dishes that are surefire palate pleasers

54

IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN

FEATURES

P10 DATEBOOK

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

P16 TROI OI

Find out why tree trimming, a missing iPhone 6 and emergency aid stations made it into our list this month

P18 IN CONTROL

Singer Tia Hai Chau opens up about maturing musically and her latest single

P26 THE CITY OF TOMBS

Villagers compete to build increasingly lavish and elaborate tombs for their ancestors

P20 THE BLIND WRITER

She's a blind chef, a cookbook author and winner of the third season of MasterChef

P23 ONCE UPON A TIME

The ancient Vietnamese Cinderella story comes to life

P28 RIDE IN STYLE, SAFELY

Meet the man on a mission to create the ultimate motorcycle jacket

P32 WHO AM I?

For the Tonkin 19.45 Collection Inspiration, it's about the journey of self-discovery

MEMORABLE HOTEL ROYAL HOI AN



Right next to the charming Hoi An Ancient Town and bordered by the tranquil Thu Bon River, lies Hotel Royal Hoi An, MGallery by Sofitel inspired by the centuries old love story of princess Ngoc Hoa and Japanese Merchant Araki Sotaro. Featuring 119 luxurious and modern rooms and suites, two signature restaurants, a delightful spa, modern meeting facilities and a mosaic-tiled swimming pool. Hotel Royal Hoi An is an ideal hideaway for luxury romantic breaks, family vacations and inspiring events.

mgallery.com
accorhotels.com



HOTEL ROYAL
HOI AN

39 Dao Duy Tu, Hoi An, Viet Nam
Tel. +84 (0) 510 3950 777 | Fax. +84 (0) 510 3950 888
reservation@hotelroyalhoian.com
hotelroyalhoian.com | mgallery.com

Contents



COVER STORY

THE NEXT GENERATION

Schooling and parenting the future generation in Vietnam

FEATURES

P78 A SEASIDE ESCAPE

Beyond the oil rigs and tourist traps, there's another side of Vung Tau worth exploring

P82 UNDERWATER RELAXATION EXPLORATION

For a new wave of wellness-seeking pleasure, lay back and enjoy

P84 DARJEELING

A picture tells a thousand words, so let these photos of Darjeeling take you on a journey

P92 EDUCATION EVALUATION

A look at Vietnam's growing options of international schools

P94 LEVERAGING LANGUAGES

Is translanguaging the answer to 21st century multilingual classrooms?

COLUMNS

P31 TELL TAIL SIGNS

How the Internet of Things can help take care of our pets

P37 LEGAL EASE

Keep calm and find an alternative method to settling legal disputes in Vietnam

P63 CHEERS!

In a cluttered wine landscape, where so many seem the same, the Kiwis do it differently

P96 THE SYLLABUS

Social and emotional learning, teaching the heart as well as the brain



Metro Writers

Biographies • Commercial Books • Life Writing

LICENSING
Print on Demand
Copywriting
interiors
translate
publication
Publishing Licences
cover design
publication
editorial
proofreading
one-off print
PUBLISHING
professional editing
writing
single-copy print
conversion
eBook
drafting
book
layout
native speaker
authors
Vietnam
format
legal
publications
print
Design
Formatting
TRANSLATION
WRITERS
PUBLISHERS
ENGLISH/VIETNAMESE
BOOK PRODUCTION
GHOSTWRITING



www.metrowriters.com
info@metrowriters.com

Datebook

What's on this month...

SEPTEMBER 7-10

What: International Travel Expo

Where: Saigon Exhibition and Convention Center (799 Nguyen Van Linh, D7)

About: The three-day event is expected to host over 30,000 international and local trade buyers, travel professionals and visitors, including for the first time, popular international bloggers. It's a prime platform for both local and international companies to collaborate and discuss inbound and outbound tourism.

Among the highlights of the expo is the ACMECS Responsible Tourism Forum on September 7, organized by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Vietnam in collaboration with the People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City. ACMECS refers to the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy, a political, economic and cultural organization whose members include Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.

Contact: Visit www.itehcmc.com for more info

SEPTEMBER 9-17

What: The German Film Festival

Where: CineStar (271 Nguyen Trai, D1); free

About: A selection of eight films will be screened in five cities: Hanoi, Haiphong, Hue, Danang and HCMC. The film festival offers audience a versatile program for all ages and the chance to get an in-depth view into the German film scene. Eight films by renowned directors and famous actors deal with issues of human coexistence: love and pain, courage and fear, happiness and loss.

As a special guest, director, scriptwriter and producer Norbert Lechner will present his film *Fortune Favors the Brave* in Hanoi and HCMC, and will be available to answer questions from the audience. *Fortune Favors the Brave* tells the story of an unusual friendship between Vietnamese sisters Linh, Tien and 11-year-old Pauline.

Contact: Visit www.goethe.de for more info

SEPTEMBER 9

What: 22nd Anniversary Gala Concert

Where: Saigon Opera House (7 Lam Son Square, D1); 8pm; VND200,000

About: The program will also present Antonin Dvorak's *Symphony No. 7* in D minor and *Carnival Overture, op. 92*. The performance will be led by Maestro Mer. A. Tran Vuong Thach. Nguyen Huu Khoi Nam became a member of the French National Symphony Orchestra in 1997. Together with the Impresa Quartet, he came in first place at the Luteceva FNAPEC violin competition in Paris. He will perform Camille Sain-Saens' *Concerto for Violin in B minor* with the HBSO Symphony Orchestra.

Contact: Visit www.hbso.org.vn for more info

SEPTEMBER 9

What: Heart Beat Presents Marco Shuttle

Where: The Observatory (5 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4); 9pm (free before 11pm, VND150,000 after)

About: Marco Sartorelli is an Italian artist who produces dark, abstract techno. While it's true that Italian techno is often rich with these qualities, it's been surprising how much range this loose formula has had. Sartorelli, who comes from the city of Treviso and now lives in London, has always been drawn to overcast shades, although the way this has been applied has always differed greatly. He started out making club tracks with a focus on percussion and groove, but over the years his sound developed an expansive quality, something best exemplified by 2011's *The Vox Attitude*, a creeping broken-beat number that subtly subverted Ecstasy Passion & Pain's *Touch & Go*. Marco will be supported by Chris Wolter and Oko providing a perfect combination and a similar approach to their mixing with the dance floor at their feet.

Contact: Visit www.heartbeatsaigon.com for more info



SEPTEMBER 13-16

What: Everything Something Nothing

Where: Saigon Outcast (118 Nguyen Can Huong, D2); 7pm; free

About: A physical theatre performance transcending space and time in a show that will remind you of that forgotten place you've always lived in and what a funny thing it is to be alive. There are scheduled five pieces in 60 minutes. Pre-show Nomad Theatre will be bringing together the work of painters, sculptors, musicians, videographers, dancers and actors from around the city in a week long showcase of Saigon's best.

Contact: Visit Facebook: *nomadtheatrex* for more info



SEP
13-16

NATRAJ INDIAN CUISINE NORTH & SOUTH INDIAN FOOD

41 Bui Thi Xuan, D1

6679 5267 - 6686 3168

www.facebook.com/natrajindiancuisine




MOUNTAIN RETREAT
vietnamese restaurant

ROOFTOP 36 LE LOI St,
BEN NGHE WARD, D1
10:00AM—9:30PM
RESERVATION 090 719 45 57
FACEBOOK: *mountainretreatvn*





2016: A Transition Year

Pacific Cross Vietnam (Formerly Blue Cross Vietnam)

ANNOUNCEMENT: We are happy to say that we are now operating under our new name
PACIFIC CROSS VIETNAM.

Thank you for continued support in 2016.
All the best in the year of the Monkey!

For more information please visit
www.pacificcross.com.vn

SEPTEMBER 13

What: Linden Fair

Where: Rex Hotel (141 Nguyen Hue, D1); 5pm-8pm

About: Linden Educational Services is dedicated to helping students from all over the world discover the numerous educational opportunities available in the US. In each region, through a series of carefully planned events such as college fairs and presentations on US education, Linden connects students with representatives from accredited US institutions so that they can explore possibilities and pursue their goals in higher education.

Contact: Visit www.lindentours.com for more info

SEP
13



SEPTEMBER 15

What: Vietnam HR Summit

Where: White Palace Convention Center (194 Hoang Van Thu, Phu Nhuan); VND3 million

About: The Vietnam HR Summit is an annual event with the goal of connecting HR professionals and leaders in Vietnam, focused on sharing and discussing policies, strategies and ways to improve performance in the workforce. Under the guidance of speakers with extensive experience in human resources management and organizational leadership, the event will sketch a broad picture of modern management methods, and tighten links between businesses, human resource management and workers.

Contact: Visit www.vietnamhrsummit.vn for more info

SEPTEMBER 19

What: A Night of Romantic Songs

Where: Saigon Opera House (7 Lam Son Square, D1); 8pm; VND200,000

About: The evening will feature famous works by Schubert and Schumann performed by top Vietnamese opera artists, and harpist, string quintet and woodwind quintet from the HBSO. Schubert and Schumann are two standouts of the Germanic Romanticism, known for their romance and art songs. Schubert alone had composed more than 600 songs and many artistically acclaimed and frequently performed works.

Contact: Visit www.hbso.org.vn for more info



SEPTEMBER 25

What: The Distinguished Gentleman's Ride

Where: To be determined

About: Ho Chi Minh City is officially taking part in the world's largest charitable motorcycle event for owners of classic and vintage styled bikes. The Distinguished Gentleman's Ride brings together over 50,000 well-dressed gentlefolk on stunning motorcycles for Men's Health across 90 countries. The goal for 2016 is to raise awareness and USD5 million for prostate cancer research and suicide prevention programs.

All participating riders must be registered on The Distinguished Gentleman's Ride website to unlock local ride details and to be in the running for prizes.

Contact: Visit www.gentlemansride.com for more info

SEPTEMBER 29

What: Network Girls Evening Event

Where: Stoker (44 Mac Thi Buoi, D1); 6:30pm-9pm;

VND500,000/person for free flow food and drinks

About: Network Girls is a monthly event that gives expat and local female working professionals a channel to meet and connect, exchanging ideas on social life in HCMC, employment and business. Running over 10 continuous years, Network Girls continues to be a strong and reputable platform for women in Saigon. Network Girls meet on the last Thursday of every month for breakfast or cocktails & canapés.

Contact: To RSVP (required) and to join the email list, email Van at networkgirlshcmc@gmail.com



Quán

Vietnamese Home Cooked

Quan Bui Garden - Vietnamese Home Cooked
55A-55B Ngo Quang Huy, Thao Dien ward, D2
7am-11pm
Reservations 08 38989088
www.bui.restaurant



**CANADA
AAA ALBERTA BEEF
(IMPORT)**

**CANADA STEAKHOUSE
ALBERTA BEEF**

219C Pham Viet Chanh,
Nguyen Cu Trinh Ward, D1, HCMC

T (08) 6294 8787 F (08) 6293 8787

info@canadasteakhouse.com
facebook.com/canadas steakhouse

The Bulletin

Promotions and news in HCMC and beyond...



EXPLORE SPA OPENED

Located on the 9th Floor, Explore Spa by Le Méridien (3C Ton Duc Thang, D1; 6287 6697 or 6263 6688 ext. 6950) is an oasis of comfort offering a range of services from aromatherapy to signature massages using marine-based products and local ingredients across signature treatments. The ocean-themed spa takes inspiration from underwater seascapes, and begins with a journey across a bridge that allows guests to discover the coral reef-inspired Explore Bistro. Guests are invited on a peaceful underwater vacation when resting at the relaxation lounge, saunas and Jacuzzi rooms.

Highlights include the signature Four-Hand Choreography—giving the feeling of waves flowing across the body by using choreographed movements of two therapists. As a celebration of Explore Spa opening, the Underwater package is now VND1,176,000++ for a 95-minute session (a 30 percent discount on the regular rate) and includes a 35-minute marine body scrub and a 60-minute relaxing full body massage. All spa programs include full access to their relaxation lounge, sauna and Jacuzzi rooms. Promotion is valid for September, October and November.

NEW DIRECTOR OF CULINARY AT PULLMAN DANANG BEACH RESORT

Takahisa Erikawa was recently appointed as the resort's new Director of Culinary Service. Takahisa commenced his culinary career at the age of just 18, and has since gained a wealth of experience at four- and five-star luxury hotels and resorts in Japan, New Zealand, China and Fiji. Having traveled around the world to learn global culinary techniques, he has now developed his own inimitable style, which combines international flavors and ingredients with the exquisite cooking methods of his native Japan. Visit www.pullman-danang.com for more info.

CARAVELLE SAIGON FOOD PROMOTIONS

September 5-18: Elevate your casual get-togethers at Cafe de l'Opera (Ground Floor) with a selection of fine sashimi and seven kinds of imported sake. Unwind in splendid surroundings and allow your taste buds to roam over an array of fresh salmon, tuna, sea bass, mackerel and surf clams served sashimi-style with traditional Japanese condiments at VND450,000++ per person.

September 9-30: Caravelle chefs are answering the call for burgers and more burgers with a smorgasbord of miniature tasting options. Cocktail-size burgers, beef cheese burgers, chili prawn burgers and tandoori chicken burgers—they're all on order a la carte at Tapas Kitchen (Ground Floor) for VND368,000++ including hand cut potato chips and coleslaw salad.

September 12-24: Reflections (Third Floor) is welcoming carnivores with a special menu of prime US beef. Tenderloin, rib-eye or Black Angus strip loin ranging in weight of 150-350 grams will be expertly cooked over a charcoal heated iron grill and presented with a choice of two side dishes, traditional condiments and sauces: Black Angus beef strip loin (VND580,000++/200g), Rib-eye (VND590,000++/200g), Beef tenderloin (VND490,000++/150g or VND650,000++/200g). Visit www.caravellehotel.com for more info.



Qui
Cuisine • Mixology

BUSINESS LUNCH

HEALTHIER OPTIONS FOR YOUR DAY

MONDAY - FRIDAY 11:00AM TO 2:30PM

• • FROM ONLY 199.000VND • •



RESERVATION 08 38 28 88 28
22 LE THANH TON, D1, HCMC | QUILOUNGE

MANAGED BY
VISE
HOSPITALITY



SAIGON STAR
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL



**REAL GRASS FOR
REAL PLAY**

IPC & English primary curriculum
Experienced UK trained teachers
Maximum 16 children per class
Green environment

Residential Area No.5, Thanh My Loi Ward, District 2, HCMC

(08) 3742 3222, (08) 3742 STAR
enroll@saigonstarschool.edu.vn
www.saigonstarschool.edu.vn

TROI OI!

The country in numbers



58-YEAR-OLD

woman in Hanoi, who has been going through menopause for the last three years, has given birth to a healthy, 3.2kg baby girl. According to Le Thi Thu Hien, deputy director of the hospital and head of the assisted reproduction department, the woman had expressed her hope of having a baby against the backdrop of her old age. Despite doctors' warnings of the potential risks and failure of in vitro fertilization (IVF) as well as her lack of the physical ability to raise the infant, the woman insisted on going through with IVF. Earlier in 2016, the Hospital of Posts and Telecoms in the Vietnamese capital reported that Tran Thi Phuc, 53, and her husband, Nguyen Van Manh, 54, had given birth to their first daughter, Tuong Vy, after undergoing IVF at the hospital.



VND15 MILLION

fine was issued to a man for assaulting a flight attendant during his flight from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City. The business class passenger admitted he had slapped the flight attendant because he suspected her of stealing his iPhone 6 Plus. The passenger said in a report that after waking up, he found his phone no longer lying on the folding table and believing that the stewardess had stolen it, he slapped her.

"When I cleaned and folded the table as the plane was about to land, I did not see any phone there," she said, adding that she and her chief flight attendant then began searching for the phone. "But he stopped the search and suddenly slapped my face." The phone was eventually found 20 minutes later under his seat.



VND700 BILLION

is spent every year on mowing grass and pruning trees in public places around the country's capital, according to the head of the municipal administration. Nguyen Duc Chung, chairman of the People's Committee, stated that in order to prevent wastefulness, activities would be halted and the trimming work will only continue at gardens along Hoan Kiem Lake and a few other major sites. The People's Committee has decided to restructure the Hanoi Green Trees-Park Limited Company, downsizing it from 21 to six subsidiaries.

The company will be charged with planting trees, along with pruning grass and flowers in the city for better management.



25

emergency aid stations are scheduled to be erected in Saigon around areas with heavy traffic. The health department has proposed collaborating with an Australian university to train paramedics to man the stations, or an average of one per district. The emergency stations, which can use spare ambulances at district hospitals, would make sure patients get first aid promptly before they reach a hospital. Also, each emergency care station will be staffed and equipped to provide first aid for people of all ages and various conditions, from injuries to strokes.



2.08%

would be lost. If temperatures were to rise 2.4, 2.7 or 4C, Vietnam would lose 5.09, 6.31, and 12.72 per cent of daylight working hours.

“The lowest income-bracket work—heavy labor and low-skill agricultural and manufacturing jobs—are among the most susceptible to climate change,” the report noted. It estimated that 5.7 percent of Vietnam’s GDP would be impacted by rising temperatures. Fifteen to 20 percent of annual working hours in Southeast Asia have already been lost in heat-exposed jobs and this may double by 2050 as global warming continues.

of the country’s daylight working hours will be lost by 2025 because of rising temperatures, according to the “Climate Change and Labor: Impacts of Heat in the Workplace” report from the UNDP. In 1995, when temperatures rose 0.74C, Vietnam lost 0.8 percent of daylight working hours. In 2085, if temperatures were to rise 1.5C, 2.58 percent of daylight working hours



3,000-YEAR-OLD

Hoe’s Cave), an archaeological site in the central province of Binh Thuan. The discovery of the ancient tombs is the result of a month-long excavation conducted by the local museum and the National History Museum at Dong Ba Hoe in Ham Duc commune. Besides the tombs, scientists also found many ancient working tools such as stone axes, rudimentary grinding tables, and ceramic cups about 25 cm high, decorated with rope patterns. Archaeologist Truong Dac Chien, from the National History Museum, said this new discovery reveals development from the pre-Sa Huynh to Sa Huy culture.

graves found in central Vietnam. Vietnamese archaeologists have discovered 23 tombs and antiques dating back 3,000 years at the Dong Ba Hoe (Lady



Managed by



1st Anniversary | 10% OFF

ONLY VND ~~original 5,500,000~~ **4,950,000**
nett/couple/two nights

Ana Mandara Villas Dalat offers a special package to celebrate 10 years anniversary with additional **10% OFF** on package price

- Early check-in after **10:00** am (subject to availability)
- Two nights accommodation in Villa Room
- Complimentary 30 minutes foot or facial massage
- **10%** discount on airport transfer
- **10%** discount on Food & Beverage
- **10%** discount on Excursion
- Daily breakfast
- One special gift



ANA MANDARA VILLAS DALAT
RESORT & SPA



Period stay from 5 September to 15 December 2016 • Apply for new bookings, minimum 2 nights stay • Surcharge VND 420,000/room/night for upgrade to the next room category • Do not apply on public holidays period • All prices are inclusive of 5% service charge & 10% VAT

EMG HCM Office
6th Floor, 259A Hai Ba Trung, Ward 6,
District 3, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
emgsales@emeraldgroup.com
(84) (08) 6291 3030 ext: 123
www.emeraldgroup.com

Ana Mandara Villas Dalat Resort & Spa,
Le Lai, Dalat, Lam Dong, Vietnam
For enquiries, please contact:
ecom-dalat@anamandara-resort.com
(84) (08) 6291 3030 ext: 123
www.anamandara-resort.com

IN CONTROL

Singer **Tia Hai Chau** opens up about maturing musically and her latest single, ***Wasted***

Text by **JON ASPIN**

Image Provided by **DISTRICT 360**

IN THE PANTHEON OF POP STARS, where twerking, Twitter feuds and a willingness to shed some celebrity skin are all but expected, Vietnam's Tran Hai Chau appears to be the exception. Having lived under the glare of the media spotlight already, and after a period of what can fairly be described as 'growing-up,' the aspiring singer more commonly known as 'Tia,' is now more comfortable than ever with where her career is going.

For those unfamiliar, Tia became public property back in 2013, following her TV success on the first season of HTV's singing game show *The Winner Is*. A hybrid adaptation of *The Voice* and *Deal or No Deal*, she entered the competition as a 19-year-old, impressing with her composed performances and a voice that belied her stature. Taking on some of the biggest anthems in the world at the time including Rihanna's *Unfaithful* and Adele's *Rolling in the Deep*, she took out the final with her rendition of Jazmine Sullivan's *Bust Your Windows*. Immediate comparisons to those artists followed, particularly Adele, who she said she loves but "is nothing like me at all."

For a girl from Gia Lai Province in Danang, it was a surreal moment,

but a continuation of the form she had displayed since age five. That's when her father, himself a multi-instrumentalist, entered her in her first local singing contest. She won it, beginning a trend that continued throughout her childhood, and precipitated a move with her family to Ho Chi Minh City at 15. "I don't know, I just always won," she says, a little embarrassed by the fact. From there the competitions got bigger, culminating in her televised win.

However, there was something about *The Winner Is* that didn't sit well with her. "When I became famous because of the contest and had no songs of my own, I found it really hard to answer the question of what to do next," says Tia, explaining that she thought the end of the show might also spell the end of her career. Now listing Lana del Ray and Coldplay as major influences, she wasn't always so sure. "On the show, I didn't know what kind of music would fit me and suit my voice. I was so young and so innocent and everything was new. I was very nervous."

Tia is poised for a comeback with a new single out and an album in the works. "To be an artist takes a lifetime," she says. It's some distance from where she was at just a few years ago.

Let it Go

When we meet at Thao Dien's Park Lane, although she looks more tousled rock-chick than doe-eyed pop hopeful now, Tia is nervous again. This time it's not because she's about to perform with Brian McFadden, which she did at The Grand Ho Tram in December last year, or step onstage at the release of *Out of Control*, the ballad she recorded for Universal Music two years ago.

The reason for her nerves is that this is her first interview in English. It's no small deal, and marks a big step in her development as an international singer. That's what she wants to be, she says, and she's been working on it in collaboration with a close friend. He plays guitar, she writes melodies and her manager Tania helps her with lyrics. "It's very hard for artists singing in English here to be famous," she explains. "I still write in Vietnamese, but for me, it's very difficult to find my voice, to express myself the way I want to in my own language." It's something you hear a lot about in an industry mired in rainy day ballads and K-Pop clones.

Her ambition to become a legitimate artist might be seen as a microcosm of the new Vietnam she is

part of, one whose youth aspire to fulfill their true potential on the world stage, not locally. Whether she gets to make the art she wants to or not, Tia's firmly fixed on the long term, with a maturity which has everything to do with a new found calm. "Many people who have met me before can't believe that I'm the same person."

Having gone from budding starlet with little idea of where she fit in to the more centered young woman she is now, she credits a lot of it to her management, of learning what it means to be a strong woman, and to reading about Buddhism. And all of this has helped her deal with some real-world challenges that have included moving out of her parents' home, a problematic relationship with a boy and generally taking care of herself. "I'm able to 'let go' of things a lot better now too," she says.

This might include what fans say about her physical appearance. In an interview with daily newspaper *Tuoi Tre* published in July, she openly discussed her recent weight loss (she tells me it's 7 kg, but the newspaper quotes it at 10) achieved through yoga and healthy eating, after people criticized her for not having a 'sexy body.' "It's normal," she says, "a part of the job." Again, Tia is unfazed. "Many people have their opinions, but I don't care what other people think, I just live."

Occupational hazards aside, Tia is hustling, promoting her new single *Wasted* (available on iTunes), a song she recorded with Canadian producer Adam Hurstfield. She met him through the Universal Music contract she won on television and it is the first song from a debut album she's currently recording with District

360 and Believe Digital. Seeing her potential, Adam flew to Vietnam recently to record the song.

It's a catchy tune about girls who like falling for the (slightly) bad guy, someone who's "*a little too nine-to-five*" during the week, but shows his true colors at the bar on the weekend. Pop with attitude, and a departure from her first release and singing covers that she's known for.

Regardless of how *Wasted* performs, Tia is now seeing everything in front of her as part of the journey she is committed to, successful or otherwise. "The best feeling is not money, not success, but love," she exudes, "and I want people to know that through my music. If you do nothing, success will never come, so do the things that you never thought you would and success is guaranteed." ■





The Blind Writer

SHE'S A BLIND CHEF, A COOKBOOK AUTHOR AND WINNER OF THE THIRD SEASON OF *MASTERCHEF*. IT'S CHRISTINE HA

TEXT BY MICHAEL ARNOLD

IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN

FOR ANY WRITER, THERE IS A PROFOUNDLY tender relationship between thought and hand. Writing is a taming of that most apelike of all of our parts, where fingers built for clutching at boughs and running through coarse hair are urged to focus the clutter of the mind and build elegant structures of language on the page. That creative process is somewhat similar for a chef, who must command the subtle literatures of flavor into perfect order with steady flashes of the fingertips. Those skilled in both disciplines should find that there is a certain crossover in the mastery of food and words, and that the drive to communicate by building these elements into pleasing forms is one of life's most

compelling joys.

The satisfaction of that drive unfolded rather dramatically for *MasterChef* winner Christine Ha, popularly known as "The Blind Cook"—she was the first visually impaired contestant on the show, and her surprise victory has brought her celebrity not only for being a competent chef, but also as an inspirational public figure. What's not commonly known is that Christine is first and foremost a writer rather than a cook, and it was the book deal that came with her prize package that she considered her greatest kickback from the whole experience. The resulting cookbook became an international bestseller, and will soon be followed up by a memoir—which she hopes be ready for release



at some point in the not-too-distant future.

“Food was something that I didn’t really enjoy doing until I went to college,” explains Christine, who now regularly visits Vietnam, having recently appeared as a judge on the local version of *MasterChef*. “I had to teach myself how to cook, because in college I had a kitchen and I didn’t have a dorm cafeteria anymore. So I started by buying a very cheap set of pots and pans, and then I used a cookbook. I read it word for word and just tried to execute the recipes. Once in a while I would cook something that was actually good and that other people would enjoy. That made me really happy, to be able to create something and have someone else enjoy what I created.

I realize now that that’s obviously the link between food and writing, it’s being able to create. Creating something, putting yourself out there, making something to share yourself with other people so that they can relate to you and understand you.”

Like many Vietnamese-Americans, Christine grew up with parents who expected her to pursue a distinguished career in medicine or law; as a child, she would lock herself in the bathroom to enjoy reading while they weren’t watching. Eventually settling on the third-best option—studying business and entering the world of commerce—Christine’s path took a tragic turn when her vision began to fail in her early 20s. She was soon diagnosed with NMO, an autoimmune disease that

“Every time I come here, other people teach me new things,”

would inevitably rob her of her vision. It was partly having to adjust to the reality of her illness that prompted her change of track toward creative writing, which provided a form of therapeutic catharsis. She enrolled in a writing course at the University of Houston, and as her condition deteriorated, she began working on an autobiographical thesis called *A Literacy of the Hands*, which dealt with the process of learning braille, interwoven with the experience of the loss of her mother to cancer. It's the material in this thesis that she is now developing for her memoir.

“I didn't think that I would have to teach myself or learn braille, because audiobooks are so easy to get your hands on,” she says. “That's what I did through graduate school—everything I had to read, I read audio. Then I went to listen to someone who is visually impaired, and he was lecturing on how you're not truly literate if you're visually impaired and you don't know how to read braille. So I thought, that's true, because when you listen to audiobooks, you're taking in the different tones or the different inflections that the reader is placing upon the words. It's not until you actually read the books yourself that you're truly literate. So I told myself, if I'm going to be a true writer and graduate with an MFA then I need to learn to read! So I decided to do it.”

Learning to read all over again with her sense of touch was something Christine had to force. “I talk about that in the essay,” she explains, “the scientific research behind how when you read, you read with your eyes, so there's a part of your brain that understands literacy. Once you lose your vision and read with your fingers, the nerves that connect to that part of the brain now come from there. So it reworks itself. It's no longer connected to your optic nerves, but it's connected to the nerves in your fingertips. Then that becomes the literary part of your brain.”

MasterChef has represented something of a diversion for Christine, albeit one that's worked out particularly well for her. The chance to take hold of her ascendancy in the world of cuisine and divert that back into her passion for writing has been enormously satisfying. Her bestselling cookbook, *Recipes from My Home Kitchen*, manages to explore the Asian-American comfort food she grew up with while combining her love for food and writing.

“It was very exciting for me to work on that,” she says. “I had to submit a lot of recipes in a very short amount of time, because they were trying to publish it in time for the next season. I had a very short deadline, so it was a lot of long late nights testing and writing recipes. But writing the stories that go behind each recipe—that was much more of a fun experience for me, because it got me to write.”

The book explores the same Asian-American comfort food that won her the *MasterChef* title: “Comfort food is very important for me, it's food that tells a story,” she explains. “I'm all about comfort food because I've eaten all sorts of things in my life, from very humble street food to very expensive Michelin-rated restaurants around the world. But I think the food that brings me the most joy is when I eat food that brings back memories of childhood, or food that reminds me of certain people who I love, certain people who I care about. I think that goes for everybody; if you ask a lot of chefs, even the ones who create very high-profile progressive dishes, oftentimes when they go home from work, they will eat their comfort food, whether it's a taco or mac n' cheese, or something that just comforts them.”

Bringing the book to Vietnam has not only enhanced her

reputation here—in a country that cannot resist taking Christine Ha as their own culinary ambassador—but it has also filled in some of the gaps in the personal stories that lie behind her own cooking background. “When my book was translated, the editor told me that ‘you use some strange ingredients!’” she laughs. “An example is, growing up in America, my parents didn't have access to young coconut. So to make something like *thit kho*, the braised pork belly, you're supposed to use young coconut, but while I was growing up in America, my mom only had access to coconut soda. So I grew up only knowing *thit kho* as made with coconut soda. Coming here, the editor was like, ‘What is this? We use coconut!’ That's when I learned that my mom had to adapt her recipe to whatever was available to her over there.”

“Every time I come here, other people teach me new things,” she adds. “It's always like, ‘oh, I'm scared to take you somewhere to eat or cook for you because you're the master chef,’ but everyone has a unique story with their food. Who am I to say what is wrong or right, good or not good, you shouldn't like this or that—so every time I come here, it's a humbling experience, an amazing experience. I think that as a chef, as a writer, as any artist, you always need to stay hungry and you always need to keep learning. You should never feel like you know everything. I very much enjoy being told that I don't know anything.”

As an instant reality TV celebrity, it's inevitable that Christine's somewhat two-dimensional reputation as “The Blind Cook” precedes her, whether that be here or back in the States. “I think reality television has a knack for doing that. They can magnify certain aspects of you,” she admits. “At first it was very strange for me, because I wasn't in the entertainment field initially; I went to try out because I love cooking. But then I started understanding what the world of television was like, and being in the public eye, and then people watching you on television and thinking that they know everything about you, even though your TV image is only one aspect of you.”

Partly in response to becoming a caricature of herself, Christine insists on maintaining her own blog (www.theblindcook.com) and personally manages her celebrity social media streams to flesh out her public personality. “I guess I can't say I'm uncomfortable,” she concedes: “That is an aspect of me. For me, it's almost like the flipside—there's all these people online, and they're my ‘fans,’ but they don't seem real to me either. They're a two-dimensional character to me as well, they're these names online. It's not until I meet people in person that I feel that these people are real, and it really touches me that I've been able to affect so many people in a positive way.”

Regardless of how long her *MasterChef* spotlight shines, Christine Ha's direction in future will always be intimately involved with her dual creative passions. “People always ask, ‘why do you love food or cooking so much,’” she shares, “and I say food is very universal; everyone has to eat in this world, so I think two people who don't share the same political beliefs, share the same sexual orientation, the same socioeconomic background, whatever it is, you both still need to eat, and you can sit down at a table and share a meal together. I feel there's a love and understanding and mutual respect that is created by that setting. I think it's the same thing with literature. Everyone can relate to stories. Every story's been told, but there are different unique perspectives that a writer can bring to the table with their particular story. There's a certain sensibility, I feel. Cooking is the same as writing, it's about sharing your story, or your love, or whatever it is—and that's your connection with other people.” ■

Once Upon a Time

THE ANCIENT VIETNAMESE CINDERELLA STORY COMES TO LIFE

TEXT BY **MICHAEL ARNOLD**, WITH ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY **NPD KHANH**

IMAGES BY **DUY DINH** AND **LUCIOLA**



THE PAST DECADE has been a period of phenomenal change for Vietnamese cinema. One of the most significant drivers of that change has been the influence of returning Overseas Vietnamese dramatic artists and filmmakers, who have been working to bring a touch of Hollywood panache to the entire homegrown industry. This trend was largely initiated by American *Viet Kieu* Charlie Nguyen's 2007 martial arts flick *The Rebel*, often regarded as the first true commercial Vietnamese-language film for coke-&-popcorn audiences. At a

time when there simply weren't enough theaters to financially sustain a big-budget cinematic release, *The Rebel* proved that local movies could still attract sell-out crowds. Everything that has happened in Vietnamese cinema since that time has been touched by its success.

The Rebel's leading actress was young starlet Ngo Thanh Van, a Norwegian-educated girl from Tra Vinh who had returned to Vietnam to become a model, actress and singer. Van now has her own talent agency (VAA) and a decade's worth of experience in the industry

under her belt—and last month, she released her own major contribution to the evolution of local cinema with *Tam Cam: The Untold Story*. Part Hollywood-style blockbuster, part Chinese kung-fu fantasy piece, and 100 percent Vietnamese in execution—the film is a beautifully-rendered treatment of the traditional Vietnamese *Cinderella* fable *Tam & Cam*.

Tam Cam is something of a cautious epic. While it doffs its hat to international giants of the genre such as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*,



the film holds firmly to its Vietnamese roots through its somewhat rural sense of humor and conspicuous locally-inspired costume. One of *Tam Cam*'s riskier elements is its cast of mostly new, relatively inexperienced actors—while there are a few veterans taking supporting roles (including distinguished entertainer Thanh Loc, as well as Ngo Thanh Van herself, who plays the part of the evil stepmother), the film is dominated by its ensemble of fresh-faced young leads.

One of the film's surprise performances is delivered by rising talent Ninh Duong Lan Ngoc, who plays Cam—the evil stepsister who conspires with her mother to murder Tam after she marries her handsome prince. Lan Ngoc has received several awards for her previous roles as heroines; she was originally cast as *Tam Cam*'s protagonist, but switched as soon as the bad-girl part became available after the original actress couldn't commit to the project.

"When I heard that, I immediately asked to play Cam," says Lan Ngoc,

speaking to *Oi Vietnam* just before the premiere of the film last month. "There was nothing for me to exploit in Tam, I could have performed her with my eyes closed, she was too easy for me. I'm not afraid of villainous roles, I was just worried that I couldn't adapt—so far, all of my characters have been ones with a sad destiny, essentially honest girls. Tam is even 'lighter' than my previous characters; there's no background context, she's always assisted by the fairy, whereas my previous characters were taken from real life. They have to fight back when things get tough, they have to suffer to overcome their trials. When Tam cries, the fairy just appears. But Cam is different. There were many things I had to change—in my voice, my manner, my performance... I didn't want it to be similar to anything I've done before."

In the fairytale, the spirit of Tam returns to life as a bird, and later in other forms, to protect her beloved prince in times of peril. In previous dramatic treatments of the story, the

effective immortality of this character has often drawn suspicion. "It's said that in the end, Tam boiled Cam and her mother alive," says Lan Ngoc. "People sometimes think the cruelest character is Tam, because she was like a demon that can't be killed. I didn't look at it that way. When we do something cruel, there should be a kind of restlessness in us that makes us wish we hadn't done something wrong or brought about bad consequences. I think Tam was reborn after she was killed in order to give Cam a chance to look back and rethink what she did—'if I had a second chance, I wouldn't kill you.' But no, she didn't. I see Cam as being undeniably cruel. People shouldn't be able to say that her cruelty comes out of obedience to her mother and that she's actually a good person underneath: Cam is bad to the bone, inside and out."

STANDOUT ROLE

Now 26, Lan Ngoc has been appearing in movies since she was 19.



She'd been attending casting calls since her first year at the College of Theater and Cinema, but hadn't had any luck until she reluctantly attended a long-shot tryout for a major project—Nguyen Phan Quang Binh's *Floating Lives*—and scored a major role. “It was a huge project with a big investment that had been in development for three years,” remembers Lan Ngoc. “I realized that there was no way I could hope to be involved, but out of respect to a good friend, I went for casting. Afterwards there was the usual ‘OK, now you can go, we’ll call you if there’s anything.’ So I said to myself ‘Fine, back to my studies.’ At the time, I was considering another major, because my family background is in police work, and I wanted to follow that path—but before anything else happened, I was told I was chosen. In general, it was really tough to get that role, that opportunity. But when we actually started to produce it, there were even more difficulties. A young actress without any experience knows nothing. There was a lot of pressure. I

cried a lot.”

The filming regime was tough. “I wasn’t allowed to go home for two months, I had to stay in the studio at Long An,” says Lan Ngoc. “It was like an isolated island. I wasn’t allowed to go home because the director wanted me to nurture a certain mentality. My character in *Floating Lives*, Nuong, is a girl who suffers from an untold sadness deep in her heart; the director wanted me to cultivate that mindset. Those two months were very hard. I didn’t know how it would be perceived when it was released. Then when it did come out, people read the character differently than I expected, saying she was very good, very natural. That was an opportunity for me to be noticed by audiences. Now whenever my name is mentioned, people think of Nuong. Anything we do passionately really does get rewarded in kind.”

Lan Ngoc has delivered a number of other strong performances in her short career since playing Nuong, but the character of Cam is certainly a standout

role for her, and she is exceptionally proud of the production. “People rarely judge costume movies accurately,” she observes, “but we have our own way of thinking. For example, *Blood Letter* [Victor Vu’s 2012 martial arts drama] was set in a specific dynasty, while *Tam Cam* is in no specific dynasty or time. We always imagine that those characters would wear traditional simple costumes, but the costumes in the film were really amazing. No one could have ever thought of those details but Ngo Thanh Van—big headgear with huge flowers, the heavy brass armor worn in the castle—exceptionally beautiful. The costumes are gorgeous, they don’t need to match a certain dynasty. Our setting is similar to one you might see in China, there’s an old castle, but we weren’t as developed, and had no choice but to create one in 3D. There’s lots of 3D work in this movie. It’s still a stretch to compare it to *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, but we can still suppose this is a blockbuster for Vietnamese people. There are many breakthroughs, such as the 3D work. It was supposed that those things couldn’t be done here, but we did it.”

To Lan Ngoc, this production of *Tam Cam* still represents the Vietnamese culture at heart, despite the influences of international cinema and cinematic techniques. “Each place has its own culture,” she reasons. “In *Cinderella*, people look very elegant—even her stepmother, her two stepsisters. But in *Tam Cam*, they’re ordinary people, the typical Vietnamese countryside people of the past. Cinderella doesn’t have to do farm work or go fishing. She went to a great ball, while in *Tam Cam*, it’s just a local fair. There are many other added details, but in sum, it’s still the case that the good people are always rewarded, while the evil ones will be punished. The common story ends with Cam and the stepmother put in jail, while Tam becomes a queen and lives happily ever after with the prince. That’s for children, that’s why the fairytale gives only the most beautiful parts. Only as adults do we explore the other details.”

Ultimately, Lan Ngoc recognizes the long tradition that *Tam Cam* represents. “There were versions of this story made as play, *cai luong* opera... but never a movie until now,” she says. “Van is a foreigner, a lot of her friends are foreigners, so when producing movies, she also aims at foreigners so that they can come to enjoy it, just as we Vietnamese go to watch *Cinderella*. That’s also part of our love toward our country. When we do something, we expect it to be taken overseas and made well-known. I think not only *Tam Cam*, but every Vietnamese movie shares that same expectation. We just want to promote and expand our film industry.”

Tam Cam: The Untold Story is currently showing at BHD cinemas nationwide. ■

THE CITY OF TOMBS

Villagers compete to build increasingly lavish and elaborate tombs for their ancestors

TEXT BY **NPD KHANH**

IN VIETNAM, BELIEF OF THE AFTERLIFE and the importance of its preparation runs deep among the populace. “There’s a saying that’s really popular around here: “Life is fleeting, but death is eternal.” Everybody here knows it, and while some don’t agree with it, most do. Death is serious business for people in Hue,” says 82-year-old Luong Do, keeper of Hue’s An Bang tomb city.

Located on the outskirts of Hue, An Bang village’s transformation from a former fishing community into the bustling city of the dead it is known as today began in the early 90s when a national economic uplift brought wealth to millions of Vietnamese. With their newfound windfall, the villagers used it plan for their afterlife or the death of their relatives. Before long, elaborate mausoleums and ornately gilded sepulchers started replacing rough-hewn tombstones and cheap markers made out of wooden sticks. Their sizes and beauty grew as the people accumulated more wealth. Singular tombs soon graduated into sprawling complexes of interconnected clan mausoleums. In ten years, the once unassuming An Bang graveyard ballooned from a small plot to overtake the village almost entirely. These days An Bang is known first and foremost for its thousands of tombs fit for kings and the almost single-minded dedication to the preparation of the afterlife of its residents. It has even appeared on *Agence France-Presse*, an international news agency headquartered in Paris, for the sheer majestic and wildly eclectic architecture of its cemetery.

“People from other provinces in Vietnam often find this puzzling. They wonder why we spend so much money on grand graves when our own houses are in shambles,” says Luong Do. “But to the people of Hue and An Bang,





there is so much riding on a tomb. A tomb is not just the resting place of a singular person, at least not to us and not anymore. A tomb is forever. A grand tomb constructed as a symbol of the child's love and respect for their elders will bequeath great fortune on their descendants. In An Bang, a shoddy tomb or even just a plain one can be taken as a sign that the children of the dead care nothing for them, and that is a mark of great shame upon the living."

Unlike nearby Hue, where UNESCO regulations are in place to preserve the 18th and 19th century buildings, locals in An Bang have been free to let their creativity run wild. From Buddhist-style temples to Gothic tombs, with a hefty sprinkling of Romanesque columns, the cemetery's aesthetic is anything goes. While traditional Vietnamese dragon carvings are popular, some graves also appear to draw inspiration from Hindu imagery, with others featuring Christian or Islamic symbols. A few of the tombs stand empty as some villagers have built them in advance of their own deaths, including one that was completed in 2005 and is now waiting for its owner.

Because of the enormity and meticulous details on the tombstones, they require constant upkeep and this is where Luong Do, and other professional tomb keepers like her, come in. And in An Bang, even the tomb keepers are special, with some families claiming they are the descendants of the keepers of the imperial tombs.

"I was not always a keeper," says Loung Do. "I've been a keeper for 20 years, but before that, I was a construction worker, and before even that, a fisherman. My grandfather though, he was a keeper to the tomb of emperor Thieu Tri, and he taught my father the proper way to maintain a tomb, and my father in turn taught me. It was a position filled with great pride. But war took that from our family. For decades we did whatever we had to just to survive. It gladdens my heart that near the end of my life, I can return my family to their roots."

Luong Do is in the process of passing down the family business to his sons and grandsons. He says there is more that goes into the keeping of a tomb than just dusting. There are funeral rites to be observed and remembrance rituals to be carried out. And, above all, everything has to be kept in pristine condition and the cleaning must be carried out with the utmost of respect. There are even months when the keeper is required to live in the tomb itself and not with his family. This is a task that comes with a lot of pressure according to Luong Do.

"Not everyone can be a tomb keeper," he says. "A proper one that is. One that is fit for the old kings. I have great hope that my grandsons will carry on the family's legacy. I would hate for us to stray from our calling again." ■



IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN

RIDE IN STYLE, SAFELY

MEET THE MAN ON A MISSION TO CREATE
THE ULTIMATE MOTORCYCLE JACKET

TEXT BY TAYNE EPHRAIM

THOMAS GROVÉ, amongst other things, is a video game publisher, design consultant, cyberpunk aesthete, climbing enthusiast, and most recently, a man on a crusade to change the way people dress and protect themselves while riding their motorbikes. Not content with the poor choice of motorbike jackets available in Saigon, in terms of both protection and style, Thomas, decided the best course of action was to make one himself. His latest project is Séfu Fashion (Facebook: *sefu.fashion*) and, specifically, the Athena jacket.

"I put strong stock in the axiom 'action speaks louder than words,' and so rather than just talk about my jacket—which I will do also—I thought it best to wear it and let the jacket speak for itself," Thomas says.

And it certainly is a distinctive piece: a little sci-fi, reminiscent of 90s cult films like *The Matrix*, but still minimal, sexy and sleek. Thomas wears the Athena prototype jacket everywhere, testing it on planes ("it makes the armrests more bearable"), dinner functions and even sailing in the Caribbean.

"The girl's version is sexier than the guy's version," he says. "There wasn't originally going to be a guy's version, more of a unisex option, but when you think about it, there's nothing sexy about the word 'unisex.' You can put that in the piece, by the way. Sex sells."

After a year of intensive research and design, Thomas is ready to launch Athena, his first product, with only a few details left to finalize. He fills me in on his process and how he got started. "I do a lot of work inside my own head—putting things together, visual prototyping—mostly when I'm driving."

IMAGE BY REGGIE J. DOAN
MODEL: KIM B NGO



Making the daily commute downtown from across the bridge in Thao Dien gave Thomas plenty of time to think. He found himself paying attention to what people were wearing as they rode their motorbikes. “When you hit the streets here in Saigon, you notice all the people wearing hoodies,” he says. “The thing is, they’re not that good looking, they’re hot, and they’re not protective. It can tend to be uncomfortable riding your motorbike under the tropical sun. I felt like those people wearing hoodies must be feeling it a lot worse though, and so I started prototyping in my head some different solutions. I wanted something that would make the ride more comfortable, but still look good.”

When the idea of jackets first came up, Thomas initially thought of importing them from the US, but nothing seemed right for Vietnam. “The problem is that the jackets on the market make you look like an American football player, and it’s a real mismatch with the Vietnamese aesthetic. I could import them, sure, but they’d be expensive and no one would want to wear them anyway because they’re so heavy and hot to drive in. So, we really had to go back to the drawing board. We sat down with a blank piece of paper and asked ourselves, what kind of jacket we would like to wear if we were starting out from scratch?”

Inexperienced in fashion, manufacturing and fabrics, Thomas had to learn everything. “I could tell you more than you would ever want to know about nylons and polyesters,” he says. Thomas ended up sourcing a nylon fabric developed by DuPont during the Second World War for bulletproof vests, the same company who, along with producing the raw materials for parachutes, powder bags and tires, also had an important part to play in the Manhattan Project, constructing the plant that produced the atomic bomb.



IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN

“That’s the material of the patch you can see on my elbow here, and the shoulders,” he says. I reach over and it feels tough enough, but whether it would be stopping any bullets remains to be seen. “It’s pretty tough, eight times stronger than denim. But you don’t want too much of this stuff on you. It doesn’t breathe that well, just for padding, which is why I introduced the air mesh vents all over the place. Initially it was just to get more air into the sleeves, but it ended up looking pretty damn cool.”

Safe, Fresh Breeze

The fact that Thomas’s Athena jacket resembles something out of an anime film is no accident. “My background is in game design. I’m really into cyberpunk, like *Ghost in the Shell* and *Akira*. I can’t escape the 90s. Those are my formative years and you could say that I’m still there.”

This background offers its own

peculiar advantages, especially when it comes to bringing original concepts to the design table. Thomas’s first few years in Vietnam were spent working as creative director at Game Loft, a company that has been ranked amongst the biggest mobile game publishers worldwide, with a quarter of their worldwide workforce based in Vietnam.

“It’s quite common for people working in video game design for a long period of time tend to get burned out, and that’s especially true with a big company like Game Loft; it’s a lot of pressure. And that’s pretty much what happened with me. After two years of designing games I felt it was time for something new,” Thomas says.

A lot of his innovation, including the ideas behind Séfu, Thomas attributes to Design Exchange, or dxSaigon, a project he started up after leaving Game Loft. “It started off as networking events for

creative minds to mingle. What I realized through dxSaigon, bringing together all these different disciplines into one space, was that if I were to talk to an architect or a fashion designer or a graphic designer, I was learning new approaches, new innovations which I could apply to become better in my own craft.”

Through these events he met a young fashion designer from Denmark. New to Saigon, she was looking to collaborate. “I’d had this fashion project rolling about in the back of my head for some time,” he says. “And this was my opportunity.”

It was around this time that Thomas had his first motorbike accident. “You could say that was a bit of a turning point. A revelation of sorts,” he says of the event. Picking himself up off the road, bruised and bleeding, it suddenly clicked. “After that I had it, the three pillars of my design. It had to be something that looked good, was comfortable to wear and was protective. And thus Séfu Fashion was born.” “Séfu” means “safe” or “fresh breeze” in Japanese and also comes partly from the name of Thomas’s son, Ryusei.

Originally intending to market it as a luxury item, he and his team quickly realized that demographic, many of whom choose taxis or private cars over scooters anyway, was the wrong approach.

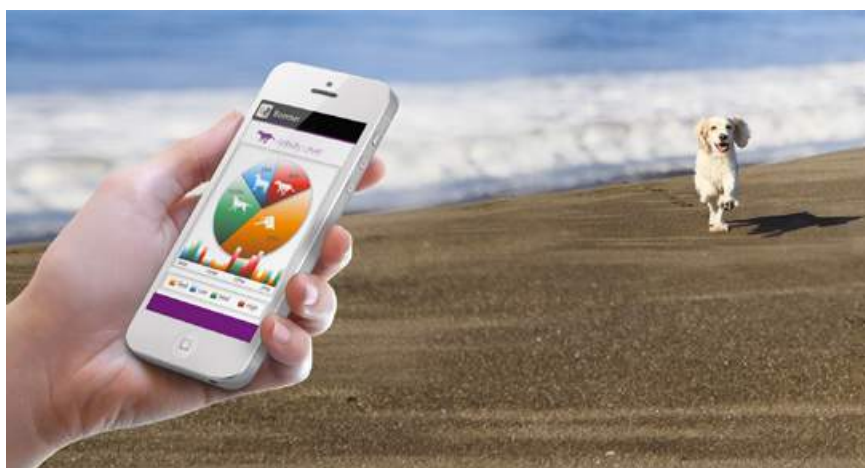
“The goal of the project is to protect people, especially women,” Thomas explains. “But I also have to make the whole thing worth my time. Initially I had the idea that I wanted to target a niche market, and later if someone wanted to make something similar for cheaper than that’s great. Kind of like the iPhone model, where the first iPhone comes out and it’s really expensive and then a year later something very similar that’s half the price comes out and now there’s something for everybody. That was my original approach.”

But Thomas found a better way to reach his goal. By selling online, through a website, Facebook and Instagram, direct to the consumer, he cuts out the middle man and is able to bring it down to wholesale price. “My market is anyone who has an office job and rides a scooter, which is lot of people.”

He also has other, more “classic” designs in the works. A woman’s trench coat and a men’s sport blazer, designed to be a little more high-end. Thomas has also started development on a hoodie. “The hoodie is already huge in Vietnam. With all the research that’s gone into the Athena jacket, the concept is to add the same protective patches on the shoulders and elbows, and apply it to a hoodie. I’m very excited about it and I think it could just end up being our bestseller.” ■

Pet Tech

How the Internet of Things can help take care of our pets



THE CONCEPT OF PET TECH, or the Internet of Things (IoT) for Pets, is all about connecting, interacting and receiving real time information of our dogs and cats through intelligent, internet-connected devices and software in the privacy of our home or in public spaces.

It has only been a few years since we first heard of the brave new world of IoT—tracking apps, wearables and devices designed to enrich people's lifestyle. Now there is increasing attention focused on creating similar devices for our pets. As the concept of pet humanization develops in Vietnam, where pet owners see themselves as 'pet parents' and treat their pets as family members, pet owners will begin to adopt devices that connect them to their favorite furry buddies through their smartphones, anywhere anytime.

This article provides a brief introduction of three common categories of smart pet products and services to consider: pet wearables, apps and cloud-based software, and connected interactive monitoring devices. Devices include health and wellness monitors, GPS trackers, smart interactive toys, training tools, and remote-controlled cameras and feeders. The devices may have built-in WiFi, RFID or Bluetooth networking

capabilities, facial recognition software and even the ability to take a selfie of our pets and sending it back to our smartphones.

In Vietnam, many owners are concerned about the quality of pet care services they receive and the limited availability of nutritious pet foods. One inspiration in the development of pet tech devices by the designers, many with a background in veterinarian medicine, was to develop devices to empower and educate owners to use technology to monitor a pet's health regularly and to be able to quickly take preventive action if necessary.

If we focus on the problems of pet ownership in Vietnam there are five areas of concern where pet owners can use pet tech intelligently and thoughtfully (iOS and Android compatible):

Behavior: Separation anxiety (this home alone syndrome can create fear, noise and commotion in pets) and training. These interactive video monitoring and treat dispenser devices can comfort 'home alone pets' by allowing you to connect and communicate remotely, take selfies and dispense treats. Check out petbot.com and petchatz.com.

Environment: Security and safety, weather conditions (heat, humidity and



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

rain storms), and parasites (ticks and fleas). Apparel and bedding designed with 'intelligent materials' to combat elements from the environment. Check out Ruffwear (ruffwear.com) and Dog Amore (dogamore.net).

Smart, connected pet collars with GPS tracking and smartphone app health monitoring. Security features include 'virtual lease' technology and positive reinforcements to control behavior remotely. Check out petpace.com, fitbark.com and whistle.com.

Health and Wellness: Health and wellness tracking apps (apps and cloud-based software) allow you to input symptoms and receive comprehensive information on diseases through communication with a veterinarian. Check out doggydoc.com and caninejournal.com/dog-apps/.

Diet and Feeding: Weight control, feeding and dehydration/hydration controls. Smart bowls and feeders can feed pets remotely, eliminating the need for full bowls of food and water that spoil quickly in the heat. The devices can be remotely used for those short vacations without your pets, and also eliminates daily overfeeding. Check out petnet.io and sureflap.com.

Entertainment and Playing: Interactive toys and training tools for socialization. Interactive devices used remotely or at home and controlled from a smartphone. Check out puppod.com and getshru.com.

Pet technology is a recent trend and many of these devices are still developing and some only available as pre-orders. A few will only work within the designer's proprietary internet networks in North America or Europe. But it is possible to experiment and 'hack' together a solution using a combination of available devices, apps and with regular consulting with your veterinarian. Anything that increases the security and awareness of preventive health care of our pets is warmly welcomed, insuring a richer and longer life with our 'fur babies' in Vietnam. ■

WHO
AM I?



For the *Tonkin 19.45 Collection Inspiration*, it's about the journey of self-discovery. When we grow older, we forget who we are and try to conform to society's standards and traditions, therefore this collection was created with the message: We travel distances to find out who we are but we forget that where we started our journey, that is where we truly belong and our dream is always there, beside us.







DESIGNER VANISTA CONCEPT
(66/32 NHIEU TU, PHU NHUAN)

PHOTOGRAPHER VIET TU NGUYEN
MODELS TRAN THANH THUY
HANG NGUYEN

HAIR & MAKEUP XI QUAN LE
STYLIST HOANG THU



THE SAIGON INTERNATIONAL DARTS LEAGUE (SIDL), PROUDLY SPONSORED BY TIGER BEER

TEXT BY **OI VIETNAM**
IMAGES BY **HOANG KHANH LAI**

THOUGH THE MUSIC GROOVES in the background, onlookers remain silent and still as the archer lines himself up and stares at the tiny red sliver underneath the number 20 at the top of the board. Standing perpendicular to his target, he sharply inhales before releasing the dart with a smooth, swift movement below the elbow, his body otherwise motionless. The dart arcs toward the board before landing squarely in the center of the sliver, denoting a score of 60—the highest score you can achieve with a single dart. He confidently proceeds to throw his remaining two darts into the same tiny space, as the previously breathless crowd erupts into cheers.

In 2002 **The Saigon International Darts League** (www.thesidl.com) was officially founded with six teams and eight locations. A lot has changed in the last decade—the league has grown to include corporate sponsorships (Tiger Beer has been their official sponsor for five consecutive years now), charities and plans for major future expansion.

SIDL has turned Tuesday night (7pm sharp) into a weekly event in Ho Chi

Minh City. Now with over 300 members, and 20 bars serving as darts venues, SIDL has become the largest regular gathering of expats in the city. Although the league is comprised of expats from around the world, they are eager to promote darts amongst the Vietnamese as well.

Competition nights are on Tuesdays at 7pm. They currently have 3 divisions with 7-8 teams per division. The winners from the first half of the season were:

Division 1: The Vinyls, played at Vinyl bar; Division 2: The Bounced Checks, played at Shrine Clubhouse; Division 3: The Nomads, played at Malt bar. The winner with the most personal trophies was Mr. "Guppy" Liem.

The second half of the season started on August 9 and will run until December. Those interested in joining can check out their Facebook page: Saigon International Darts League or email kris.goetghebeur@gmail.com for more info. ■



See You In Court!

Keep calm and find an alternative method to settling legal disputes in Vietnam

Dear Marijn,

My name is Azad and I work for a Turkish manufacturing company. We've been operating in Vietnam since 2008 and throughout the years we've been involved in a few minor business disputes. Once, we even started court proceedings in Ho Chi Minh City, but when we realized that it could take a very (very) long time, we decided to drop the case and we managed to find an amicable solution with the other party. I wonder whether arbitration would have been a better option for our company. Could you please tell me a bit more about that?

THE ISSUE that you described is very common because not many foreign investors like to use the Vietnamese courts to settle their disputes. One of the reasons for that are the lengthy court proceedings in Vietnam, and the (perceived) lack of independence of the judges is another one. Compared to "traditional" proceedings at a court, arbitration is considered an "alternative" method of dispute resolution. Other examples of such alternative methods include: mediation, conciliation and expert determination.

Arbitration can be defined as a process by which the parties agree to submit a dispute to a non-governmental decision-maker, selected by or for the parties, to render a binding decision, resolving a dispute in accordance with neutral procedures, offering each party an opportunity to present their case. I realize that this is a rather long and complicated definition, so let me try to break it down for you. The first important element to keep in mind is that arbitration is "consensual" by nature. In other words, the parties must have agreed, for example via an arbitration clause in their contract, to submit the dispute to arbitration. The second element is the involvement of a non-governmental decision-maker, which clearly distinguishes arbitration from court proceedings. Finally, the fact that arbitration often results in a final and binding decision (in legal terms: an "arbitral award"), separates it from mediation and conciliation.

There are various kinds of

arbitration. In your case, I assume we are talking about arbitration between two or more private companies. However, arbitration between a foreign investor and a host State is also possible. You can think of an expropriation dispute relating to a big construction project. When States arbitrate against each other, we are talking about "State-to-State arbitration" or "interstate arbitration." This kind of arbitration often involves disputes over territorial and maritime boundaries, and the recent arbitration in The Hague about China's territorial claims in the East Sea is a good example.

Now why would your company choose to go with arbitration instead of court proceedings? One of the main advantages of arbitration is that it offers a neutral forum for parties to settle their dispute. Instead of having to choose between either the Vietnamese courts or the Turkish courts, you may now choose to settle your dispute in a neutral place, for example in Switzerland, Singapore or in Hong Kong. A related advantage of arbitration over court proceedings is that you would be free, at least to a large extent, to determine the rules of the arbitration and even to choose your own arbitrators. In practice, there is a wide selection of specialized institutions, rules and arbitrators available to tailor the arbitration proceedings to your specific needs. Obviously, this is in sharp contrast with the fixed, and sometimes burdensome, court proceedings. Another key characteristic of arbitration is that there is normally



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.

no appeal possible against an arbitral award. Furthermore, arbitration is usually private and confidential, and it is potentially faster and cheaper than court proceedings. Please bear in mind, however, that arbitration may involve costs that you would not necessarily find in court proceedings, such as arbitrator fees, rental costs for hearing facilities and travel expenses if you decide to hold the hearings abroad.

Unfortunately, arbitration in Vietnam has yet to reach its full potential. One of the reasons for that is related to the so-called "recognition and enforcement" of foreign arbitral awards. Thanks to the 1958 New York Convention, of which Vietnam has been a member since 1995, foreign arbitral awards are generally enforceable in most jurisdictions around the world. However, in Vietnam it has proven to be extremely difficult to enforce a foreign arbitral award, for example if one was rendered by the ICC International Court of Arbitration in Paris.

An alternative option, which is becoming more and more popular, is arbitration at the Vietnam International Arbitration Centre (VIAC). Generally speaking, foreign investors consider that arbitration at VIAC is more flexible, efficient and faster than proceedings at the Vietnamese courts. Compared to international arbitration, VIAC proceedings are potentially faster and cheaper, which is especially attractive for smaller disputes. Furthermore, the procedure for enforcement of a VIAC arbitral award is more straightforward than the procedure for recognition and enforcement of a foreign arbitral award.

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. ■

The Next Generation

From pregnancy to parenthood and from preschool through to university, in this month's issue we speak to students, parents and educators to gain some insight into the complicated world of growing up in Vietnam.

IMAGE BY NAM QUAN





HAVING A BABY in Vietnam is becoming an increasingly common occurrence among expats from a variety of countries. However, the decision to give birth here rather than in a neighboring city such as Bangkok, or to return home, is not a straightforward one—it involves careful thought regarding a variety of issues, ranging from how to find the highest quality care to a plethora of cultural and bureaucratic considerations.

For the majority of prospective parents, finding the right hospital is the most important step in planning for the birth of their child. In Ho Chi Minh City the main maternity hospitals are Hanh Phuc Hospital (www.hanhphuchospital.com), Tu Du Maternity Hospital (tudu.com.vn) and the Saigon International (SI) Maternity Hospital (sihospital.vn). Highly rated obstetrics services and maternity care for foreigners are also provided by Franco-Viet (FV)

Hospital, Family Medical Practice and Columbia Asia. Keep in mind that while local public hospitals may offer less in terms of desired services and facilities, top-end international hospitals may occasionally tend towards over-servicing in the area of medical diagnosis and treatment, perhaps in an effort to justify their higher fees, and also to avoid the possibility of litigation.

Tu Du is by far the busiest maternity hospital in the city. According to the



Born in Vietnam

Key cultural issues every foreign woman should know to have a safe and comfortable childbirth experience in Vietnam

TEXT BY JESSICA ANDERSON

unless they have partners, family members or friends to translate. The quality of care at SI may be higher than many local hospitals, yet the cost is much lower than foreign-owned and managed hospitals.

FV Hospital is promoted as the “premier” health facility in Vietnam offering international standard healthcare, which of course strikes a chord with those who would prefer a foreign doctor, or are interested in five-star VIP services. Also, many of the staff speak some French and/or English, including midwives and maternity nurses. However, despite an excellent and progressive approach to pre-natal care and delivery, there have been reports from several parents of an unwillingness to communicate clear information about the condition of babies who are taken away to receive special neo-natal care. This situation is unacceptable to many foreigners, who may need to demand detailed explanation and justification for such action, and the right to veto any non-essential treatment which may separate them from their baby.

Smaller private clinics such as the Family Medical Practice generally provide an excellent standard of medical care with a high level of English, at a premium cost (which of course is much lower than private medical care abroad). And perhaps most importantly, they offer an understanding of Western attitudes and expectations concerning childbirth that is invaluable for many foreigners; because it's not something that should be left to chance, it is important to meet all key staff as early as possible to ascertain the philosophy of the service provider towards maternal and infant care.

It's a... Lot of Paperwork!

Despite high levels of training and experience at any hospital, certain cultural differences can present a variety of difficulties to overcome. For example, the World Health Organization recommends that babies should be fed colostrum, the initial yellowish breast milk that contains protein, vitamins, minerals and antibodies to boost infant immune systems, within one hour of birth. However, it is common practice in Vietnam for this ‘dirty’ milk to be discarded and babies to be fed bottles of formula until the mother's ‘real’ milk comes in. Therefore, it is imperative to insist that breastfeeding be commenced immediately and to forbid the use of bottled formula by nursing staff if the mother wishes to breastfeed exclusively.

IMAGE BY NAM QUAN

Deputy Director there, they perform an average of 150 deliveries a day. As with many large public hospitals, it suffers from limited funding which has resulted in inadequate staffing and facilities to cope with overwhelming demands. And while there is wide acknowledgement that under these trying conditions the hospital manages to deliver an efficient level of medical service, the reduced standard of care compared to that offered by the private sector may not

be suitable for most foreigners who can afford to pay more.

The VND58 billion Saigon International Maternity Hospital was the city's first private hospital, and caters mainly for Vietnamese women, including the wives of foreigners. Although some staff, mostly doctors, speak English, the majority of nursing and administrative staff speak Vietnamese only, which can be an insurmountable barrier to non-speakers,

When it comes to the birth itself, the principle should be the same. It is essential to ensure that perceptions of what is going to happen in the delivery room are compatible. And the most effective way to guarantee this is the preparation of a birth plan that outlines the parents' wishes and for it to be discussed with doctors and midwives early in the pregnancy. For instance, unless requested to do otherwise, some hospitals remove babies from their mothers immediately after birth for extensive testing that could easily be delayed to maximize bonding time. If it is not possible to find individuals who are sympathetic and prepared to respect this 'negotiation' process, then it is time to explore alternatives. And while such plans are routine in many countries, they are not so common here, so don't be surprised if it's a matter you have to raise yourself.

Other requests that can be specified in a birth plan range from preferred pain control methods to positions for laboring, and whether or not a partner can be present for the birth (which some Vietnamese hospitals

will not allow). Many Western women are concerned with the high level of medical intervention which is prevalent in Asia, so it is critical to demand that the necessity for procedures is clearly explained and for consent to be gained before they are performed. This particularly applies to unnecessary induction of labor and caesarean section deliveries (which now account for more than a third of all births in Vietnam) if these are things you wish to avoid. The key ingredient for successful planning is to make sure that everyone is aware that the lines of communication must be kept open at all times.

And once you are holding your precious bundle safely in your arms, there are other issues that must be addressed. The children of foreigners born here must apply for a Vietnamese birth certificate before they can register at their own embassy to be granted citizenship. This process involves taking the hospital-issued birth certificate to the Department of Foreign Affairs (with countless copies of your own passports and proof of residency documentation). As children born to foreigners cannot

be registered as Vietnamese citizens, you must also take a letter from your own embassy or consulate stating your intention to register your child as a citizen of your own or your partner's country (with a written Vietnamese translation). After the Vietnamese birth certificate has been issued it must be translated into your own language, and submitted with the above mentioned documents to your embassy.

Choosing to have a baby in this country is a complex, and at times difficult process, but it can be done, and it has the potential to be a hugely enriching experience. The key to success is to do a thorough research, and arm yourself with adequate information (and a comprehensive insurance policy to cover any worst-case scenario situations) before making your decision. Then you must find a health care service that is capable not only of meeting your medical requirements, but also of respecting your wishes and communicating effectively with you throughout your pregnancy, the delivery of your baby and during the post-birth period. ■



Nanny State

A how-to and a how-not-to guide to the world of nannies

TEXT BY SOPHIA CHEN
IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN



MOST PARENTS will tell you that looking after kids is a full-time job. Even without trying to juggle work and an attempt at a social life, taking care of your little ones can be as draining as it is rewarding, so it's unsurprising that most expat mums and dads hire home help. An advantage of living in Vietnam is inexpensive childcare: a space at a daycare center in the US or Europe can cost anywhere from USD600 to USD2,500 a month, and the cost of private care infinitely higher; but in Vietnam a full-time nanny who works the standard Monday to Saturday week will receive approximately VND5 million to VND10 million a month. Two years ago that figure could be as little as VND2 million a month—especially among local Vietnamese families—but as the economic boom continues, wages and local expectations are on the rise. This may be a big jump, especially when you consider a Vietnamese accountant will typically earn just over VND4million a month after finishing school, but VND10 million is hardly a pinch for most expat pockets.

However, even if you are prepared to hand over more than the market price, finding your perfect Mary Poppins is becoming harder and harder. Nannies might be better paid than graduate positions or sales roles, but changing expectations and career aspirations mean that many Vietnamese simply do

not want the job. Jason Liu, an expat who has relocated here, has tried to hire his sister's former nanny for his own children for 50 percent more than the wage she earned from a local restaurant. She refused.

"It's also getting harder to find a live-in nanny," he adds. "Now the only people who want to do that are people from the countryside, somebody that you find through someone else's help, or a distant relative of yours. But if you can find someone from the countryside who will accept an average Vietnamese salary, for most expats this arrangement is far from ideal—if you can't speak Vietnamese, you simply can't communicate."

Another factor driving higher wage expectations is foreigners' large disposable income and differing value system. "Expats that are hired overseas to come here have large allowances for their cars, drivers and home," adds Jason. "It's ridiculous. An acquaintance told me he has a car allowance of USD1000 a month, so paid their driver USD800. These people are driving the inflation."

It's understandable that if people think they can earn more, they're going to ask for it, and the increasing demand for nannies coupled with a deficit of employees means it's very much an employees' market.

Samantha is an expat mom who has found it hard to replace her former

nanny. "She left a couple of months ago. I found one person, but she didn't want me—she went with someone else as she preferred to look after a baby than older kids. Now it seems the help is interviewing you, and from the 20 women that applied, there's only two that I would consider."

Like many others, Samantha agrees the best way to look is through word-of-mouth. Another popular point of contact is the notice board at the An Phu supermarket, where many nannies advertise their services, and Facebook but the posts on there are hard to quality check. Poaching your nanny from another family can be an effective method, although you may find yourself unpopular.

"How long it takes to find a nanny really depends on your requirements—finding a nanny that speaks English well can be very difficult, and there's more demand now as there are more and more foreigners," says Samantha. "If you don't need a nanny fluent in English, it'll cost around USD250-USD350 for live-in. For a working week of 40 to 50 hours, the wages are a little lower. For a nanny that can speak English, depending on availability the monthly wage will be USD350+, but in every case we will need to discuss if who will pay insurance, provide meals, the 13th month salary etc."

While local agencies can only

provide Vietnamese nannies there is an alternative—some expats prefer to hire foreign au pairs for the educational development and stimulation these au pairs give their children. One Spanish expat businessman explained how he hired American or Canadian au pairs through www.greataupair.com as he wanted his young children to learn English at home. Then, once they started at a local English-speaking international school, he hired Spanish-speaking au pairs so they could study their native Spanish language at home.

“The point with a foreign nanny is not just to look after the kids—the Vietnamese do this very well—but to make sure they don’t spend their afternoon watching TV or doing nothing,” he says. “I want them to be active, play games, do art and crafts, sport... and foreign nannies understand this better.”

Another important point is that the difference in wages is not particularly great. “The salary varies, but in the last five years that I’ve employed au pairs, I pay between USD200 and USD300 a week,” he adds. “Of course on top of that we have to provide food and accommodation as she lives with us and is really part of the family. I’m guessing the wage of an experienced Vietnamese nanny is around USD400 a month, so the difference is not that huge.”

With agencies charging USD400 a month for English-speaking nannies,

paying slightly more for Western help is certainly food for thought, especially as foreign au pairs come with a relevant educational background and will often hold first aid certification.

Au pairs are relatively easy to find—there are many websites that offer an introduction service between au pairs looking for work and families overseas, but while hiring a foreigner comes with certain reassurances, the element of Vietnamese cultural contact many expats want for their child and the family as a whole is lost. For those who do want to be able to communicate easily, employing an English-speaking Filipina nanny at a local rate is another option.

If you do opt for a Vietnamese nanny, the problem then is to determine whether the person in front of you has the capability and personality to take care of your children. For many expat families the ultimate question is, can you trust them?

“It’s the hardest thing in the world to do,” says Tracy, mother of three. “If only someone has a formula for judging it. You can only ask them questions. I try and get someone back for a second interview. I won’t employ anyone who hasn’t worked for Westerners or hasn’t got children themselves.”

American expat Grace says her head begins to ache at the mere mention of the process of hiring nannies. In the last two years, she and her husband have

gone through a total of five nannies since they had their child. They let the first one go because she wasn’t that clean, the second because she wouldn’t feed her child who kept crying, the third because of a personality conflict, and the fourth because she went about her work in too leisurely a manner. The fifth resigned on her own because she lived too far away.

Tracy has a list of qualities that she looks for in a nanny. “Look for intelligence, the ability to think for themselves, and an independent character. Someone with a smiley happy face, who will bring warmth and joy into family—she’ll be central to your life, so it’s important that your kids like her.”

If you are lucky to find the local equivalent of Mary Poppins, who’s practically perfect in every way, how can you make sure she’s happy enough to stay? Nguyen Giang worked as an expat nanny for many years, and while she lists a reasonable monthly wage is important, she ranks a good relationship and trust at the top of her priorities. “For me, I tell them: ‘Believe that person and build a relationship.’ When I went to my first family they opened their home to me, they made me feel welcomed. I didn’t get a high salary there, but I feel they are *my* family. My advice is, even if your nanny sometimes makes mistakes, don’t treat them badly—nobody is perfect. Most important is finding someone who is happy, good for children. If you love children, it’s not really a job.” ■





Someone Special

Teachers, charities and parents are fighting to improve education for children with disabilities

TEXT BY **LORCAN LOVETT**
IMAGES PROVIDED BY **THE KIANH FOUNDATION**

THREE YEARS AGO, a deaf-blind toddler who self-harmed was brought out of a psychiatric hospital and into The Kianh Foundation, a charity for children with disabilities in the central province of Quang Nam. The bright girl's behavioural issues challenged staff, but eventually her strength and determination were guided towards

learning; her independence grew, she was given high-powered hearing aids and is now beginning to express herself through sign and some words.

Behind her success story are the failings of a woefully ill-equipped public school system for children with disabilities. Under qualified staff, scarce equipment and unsuitable classrooms

plague the hopes of families who struggle to give their children brighter futures. Stigmas in Vietnamese society contribute to the problems, discouraging parents from sharing their child's disability with the community. Although the mountain of challenges is steep, a handful of institutions and individuals are overcoming it.

Parents in Ho Chi Minh City displayed an inspiring example by launching a non-profit school for autistic children eight years ago. They acknowledged, however, that it was an act of desperation: Vietnam has no public school dedicated to educating children with disabilities. Some public schools accept children with special needs—16 in Ho Chi Minh City, according to director of the HCMC Integrated Education Support Center, Nguyen Thanh Tam, in 2014—but they are put into general education classes.

Private specialized schools in the major cities attract families from rural areas, which lack services, although these are often unlicensed, with hefty tuition fees and unqualified teachers. An undercover *Thanh Nien News* reporter exposed the heinous depths that specialized schools can sink to when he secretly filmed staff at the now-closed Vuong Special Primary School in Saigon. Their crimes included flogging a student with a coat hanger and smashing his head against a door.

Nevertheless, educationalists have seen positive developments over the decades. Vietnam's current tilt towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in education began in the early 1990s with two pilot projects, one rural and one urban. Awareness campaigns and house-to-house searches for children who were missing from school lists identified 1,078 potential students with a range of impairments. An evaluation of the schemes four years later found that 1,000

of the children had been successfully included in general education classes.

The schemes spread to three other provinces and eventually 4,000 new students were enrolled in neighborhood schools, further integrating the children into their communities. Despite its success, a 2011 World Health Report said that only two percent of preschool and primary schools in Vietnam are inclusive and 95 percent of children with disabilities still do not have access

to school. Reliable statistics have been rare since then, but the projects helped change attitudes and policies on disability, ultimately leading to greater efforts on inclusion.

Special education specialist at Saigon Star International School, Stacey Conner, says full inclusion can be “a serious drawback” if executed poorly. “There’s a danger that the child will be subjected to inclusion in a classroom where they’re constantly unsuccessful,”



STACEY CONNER

IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN



says Stacey, who is introducing a pyramid-style system of support to ensure no student slips through the cracks at her school.

During her 10 years in the field, Stacey has taught students with medical disabilities such as cerebral palsy, and intellectual disabilities; for instance, when a child has an IQ of 70 or lower. She alters the curriculum for children with special needs without removing them from main group: a class may read a paragraph while the child who cannot manage the task combs through the text and marks out a particular letter. Improving the class's understanding of

disabilities and encouraging children through positive reinforcement also play vital roles.

"You want to make sure that [an alternative curriculum] doesn't alienate the child socially or emotionally because they're completely taking everything in that's happening [around them]. You don't want them to feel like they're being socially and emotionally not at the appropriate grade level."

Explaining to parents of a student in an international school that a child is showing a disability is a sensitive task because "not everybody wants a diagnosis," she says, hastening to add

that the school is not legally qualified to diagnose—only to recommend outside service providers.

As a consultant outside of her role at the school, she has seen conditions being stigmatized. "I'm hesitant to say people do believe this, but [some] say it's sort of a punishment in a way, a karmic comeback for someone who has made mistakes or done something they shouldn't have done, and now it's coming back on the parent in this form, which is heartbreaking because these are beautiful, wonderful children that you work with and you love. Often [the parents] don't want to talk about it or reach out for help because if they reach out for help other people will know and it will get out in the communities."

Parade of Promises

The National Law on Disability (2010) dedicated a chapter to education for people with disabilities. It guaranteed monthly subsidies of VND180,000 for those with disabilities that prevent them from working and VND360,000 for those who can't carry out daily activities.

"If you are living on a local salary, it would be incredibly daunting [to make sure your child receives the appropriate education]," says Stacey.

The law flaunted a parade of promises: the right to education for children with disabilities, reduction and potential exemptions on their school fees, and guidelines on teaching and assessing the children, to name a few.



Stacey says there's a discrepancy between policy and implementation of that policy, an observation echoed by Vietnam National University's *Journal of Education Research* (2013). The study interviewed local authorities, sector departments, and people with disabilities along with their families, a third of whom said they could not afford to pay the cost of textbooks and transportation.

The study revealed that even in the specialized schools families and charities had to supply equipment such as Braille and wheelchairs, but it favored specialized schools over the inclusive approach and reported an increase in services for disabled children from 2009 to 2011.

Nick Keegan, director of Business Development at The Kianh Foundation, said via email that facilities for children with disabilities were "virtually non-existent" when the charity began in 2001. "There has been a noticeable increase in support and training provided by foreign NGOs. However, there is still a huge need for specialized services and support that has yet to be adequately addressed."

The charity has helped at least 200 to 300 hundred children and their families, and currently supports 100 children. Over the years, the most common disabilities of children in the charity have been cerebral palsy and Down's Syndrome although there's been a rise in the number of children with autism.

Nick said that they have received children who were initially accepted into the school system but then asked to leave when there have been no clear signs of development. The charity aims to guide some of the children with behavioural issues or mild cognitive disabilities back into the mainstream system. Early intervention, a preference of Stacey's from Saigon Star, has seen results at the charity.

Young students are taught skills to prepare them for a structured, academic environment, so far sending five pupils back into the school system; the latest being a five-year-old boy with high-functioning autism who had spent two years at the charity.

"We will be monitoring him closely but he is yet another example of how early intervention really works," said Nick. He added that families of special needs children in rural areas are forced to keep their children at home because of ill-equipped local schools. "In particularly difficult circumstances, families often give up their children to an orphanage or similar institution, as they simply cannot cope. There is a real and desperate need for special needs education and therapy support services, not just in rural areas. It is heart breaking for families to be faced with the decision of having to surrender their children to an orphanage."

Nick recognizes that city services for children are improving and increasing but still inadequate while the situation is far dire outside the cities.



"Like many things in life, significant improvements cannot result without significant investment," he added. "Not only financial investment but also time, resources, effort and a willingness to improve. There is a lot of good foundation work being done in Vietnam by the authorities and development partners. Funding and a long-term commitment are necessary to build on progress made to date and to bring about a significant scaling-up of the reach and quality of services." ■





School on a Hill

In the world of international schools, the newly opened Anne Hill International School aims to stand out

IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN & ANNE HILL INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

ANNE HILL is owner and principal of Anne Hill International School (*annehill.school*)—a new International School in Ho Chi Minh City, which caters to children from 18 months to six years. Anne is a Singaporean who has lived and taught in many countries with a long-standing career in early childhood development. In this article she discusses upcoming plans for her school and her views on pre-school education in Vietnam.

Why did you choose to start a school in Vietnam? Having been in early childhood development for 27 years in various capacities—teacher, principal and owner—for a very long time I have wanted to bring this all together in a meaningful way. It helped that I have close relatives residing in Vietnam, which gave me more reasons for coming here. I have not only chosen to be the

principal, I have actually invested my own money. I ran my own school in Singapore (called Tots & Kids) from 1990 to 2000. At that time, private childcare education was becoming popular among Singaporeans and the expat community. We started with 12 children and by the second year we had over 120 students. Many parents have asked me if I am a businesswoman. I am an educator first, then a businesswoman with a long-term view. Our investment decisions are built on this fundamental principle.

What will convince parents to send their kids to your school? To start, the curriculum we offer and our responsiveness in dealing with changing needs. Our teaching methods incorporate the Maria Montessori Approach, the Jolly Phonics program and thematic-based learning. We pay

close attention to introducing creative and outside-of-the-box learning activities, ensuring classes are engaging for the children. Hence, our motto: ‘Learn, Grow, and Play’ the AHI way.

We emphasize child-centered education as opposed to teacher-led classes. Nowadays, children are often focused on the digital and visual, and we believe outdoor play, social interaction and hands-on activities are just as important. Children need to be engaged with other children to learn core skills such as sharing through physical games and outdoor activities, communication, tolerance and basic reading. Responding to parents’ requests, we will also be running swimming programs and other physical activities such as Zumba classes. Secondly, we have a strong emphasis on teaching quality, health, safety and hygiene standards. It helps that we are a mid-sized school in a single



been one year in preparation beginning with site location, construction and licensing requirements. Over the past several months, a lot of work has been put into preparing programs, teaching materials, staffing, meal planning and ensuring that the school runs smoothly from day one. Right now it is about applying the final touches and rehearsing for the start of school.

What is your view on early education in Vietnam? Rapid economic development along with demographics, technology and lifestyle changes are re-shaping educational needs of the middle class and the expat community. Parents are a lot more involved in the education process and seeking high-quality, affordable education for their children. Expats will be looking for the same standard they have been enjoying in other countries. Regulations will evolve to meet this need and so will the services offered by existing and new schools. ■

location where everything is under one roof supervised by one principal. This allows us to pay close attention to quality, and we ensure a low student teacher ratio, something that is foremost on parents' minds. Thirdly: our location and facilities. We sit on 20,000 square feet of land on Giang Van Minh in District 2, walking distance from The Vista apartments and Villa Riviera compound. More than half of the land is dedicated to outdoor play areas. Our classrooms were purpose-built to fit our teaching methods and with comfort and space in mind. Aside from the traditional playground, we have introduced novel activities such as an outdoor water play area, an eco-garden, a mini putting green and a custom-built trampoline catering to young children, the first of its kind in Vietnam.

Mothers and fathers play an important role in shaping a child's well-being in the early stages of their development. We make every effort to engage parents, from weekly hand-written reports and personalized feedback, to workshops and joint child and parent activities. Finally, we want to ensure good quality education is affordable. We have pegged our pricing competitively to meet the needs of discerning parents, while at the same time providing additional value wherever possible, such as extended opening hours till 5pm daily.

What would you like your kids to take away from their time at your school? Our school emphasizes physical, intellectual, emotional and social development, abbreviated as PIES. Aside from providing children with a good foundation for mainstream school (such as a good command of English, phonetics and basic mathematics), we want our children to be gracious, civic and environmentally conscious, worldly, and to seek out fun and meaningful activities. Above all, we want the children to relish their childhood.

What are your current and future plans for the school? We are encouraged by the high turnout at our open house on May 22. Since then, the interest has been overwhelming. Our immediate focus is to ensure we are ready to accommodate students for our first semester in August. This school has



My Life as... a public high school student

TEXT BY CLARA PHUOC NGUYEN
IMAGE BY NAM QUAN



THERE'S NOTHING LIKE being a 12th grade student in public high school. OMG! It means a timed bomb has been set for the university entrance exam and failure is not an option. What would happen if I fail? My parents would get an earful from neighbors and relatives. Just the thought of it glooms my day.

It's 6am and I am getting ready for the day. History test is on and I am fearless as my friends and I have strategized on tackling it—writing the answers onto our table and legs. Yes, legs. Sometimes I think we're so creative, and we always know when to pick the right moments to peek. The teachers will never find out in a zillion years.

My name is Khanh Ha and I am an above average student. One thing about me is I hate literature.

6:15am: Riding my scooter to school and wearing Monday's uniform—an *ao dai*. My older sister told me that in her time, she had to wear an *ao dai* to school every day, except when she had Physical Education. Perhaps because of that, there were more poems written about high school then than now.

6:30am: Flag saluting ceremony.

6:45am: 12th graders have to take a quiz every day at this time. Some days are scheduled for history while others are for literature. Four unlucky souls are called up to the board and have to write answers on the board as quickly as they can. The ones with better memory get better grade. Today the quiz is about literature. I cannot understand why we have to cite word by word a poem.

Shouldn't literature be about how we feel and appreciate a novel or a poem?

7am: The first subject of the day is math. I like math. Math is clear and straightforward. Unlike literature where we are punished for thinking the poem sucks big time, math is fair. We calculate correctly, we get the points.

7:45am: Another math period. The teacher gives us some exercises to do and he is off somewhere. I think he is off for his morning coffee. The class is like a fish market now and I am sure the teacher next door will come over in a second and shut us up. There she is and we are doomed now.

8:30am: Break time. My tummy is rumbling and I am running like the wind to the canteen for a *banh mi*.

9am: History test. No fear really. The materials needed for the test are either on the table surface or on my legs. The numbers of airplanes taken down and the number of soldiers captured are all... on my legs. I am so thankful for my mother who has given me such a long leg to use now.

9:45am: It's time for English period. We seldom have speaking exercises in English class, only grammar, reading or writing lessons. The other day I went to the shopping center and was asked by tourists for direction. I know how to show the way. I learnt it already but words kept sticking in my throat.

11:15am: Phew, the last period of the day is biology. This year biology is not part of the graduation exam's six subjects so the teacher allows us to study any other subject we want. And he just sits at

his desk reading the newspaper.

12pm: I ride my scooter home for a quick bite and a much-needed nap. The afternoon tutorial on math, literature and physics is going to start real soon.

2pm: It's the school's regulation for all students to take tutorials in the afternoon but what is the point of extra studying time if the teachers do not really teach the extra stuff? I do not blame our teachers for saving the 'secrets' of passing the university entrance exams for the evening paid tutorials since their salary do not make ends meet.

7pm: I am at my math teacher's home for a private tutorial. He is well-known for helping a good number of students pass the university entrance exam.

To be honest, my friends and I do not know what we like to study in university. We just pick the easiest to get in. The more intelligent ones might choose more prestigious universities. I wish to study baking and I would immediately apply for it if it is taught at university. There are only vocational schools that offer cooking and baking courses, and wearing a vocational tag is not fondly seen in society's eyes and will make my parents lose face. A degree is always more welcomed than a certificate; even an irrelevant degree is still better regarded than a practical and useful certificate.

12am: My eyes automatically shut off. In my dream I see me in the exam room with eyes open staring at the test paper, horrified! ■

Fields of Study

Vietnam is becoming a destination for studying, whether online or on campus

TEXT BY TAYNE EPHRAIM
IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN



SEVERAL YEARS AGO I overheard a conversation between two expats and what struck me the most was what one of them said: “Play in the East, study in the West.” And while it may have sounded like somewhat of a truism at the time, throwing up my own university options, I’ve come to believe that the notion couldn’t be a more misleading one. With more options than before, whether they be online or in the increasing numbers of internationally-recognized learning institutions located in Vietnam, the glimmering prospect of having both your play *and* your study in the East is now more viable than ever. *Oi* speaks to two students who are making that dream a reality, both online and on campus.

Australian Chris is a long-time Saigon denizen and is midway through an online course. “I’m studying international relations through Murdoch University, and I love it,” he says. “And, in fact, a lot of what I learn I can apply to what I see living overseas. There are units on globalization, tourism, international business and a heap of other stuff. So it covers a lot of the aspects of living here in Vietnam. The other thing is that what I’m studying is quite broad and it gives me a lot of options for living overseas after I graduate.”

Chris teaches on the side to support himself. “The city essentially becomes my classroom. I get to discover Vietnam while going to class at different coffee shops. Sometimes it can get a little noisy, you know, maybe they play a little too much Celine Dion, but other than that it’s pretty good.”

After moving to Asia, Chris realized fairly quickly that he liked it here and wanted to stay. “But I wanted to do it professionally,” he explains. “And so studying online seemed like the obvious choice. Mainly because I want to keep traveling, try new things and new places, and studying online fits with that.”

But there are some definite disadvantages, according to Chris. The social aspect is the first thing and the level of independence required to get those assessments in on time. “I think it takes a certain amount of self-discipline, definitely,” he says. “Studying over here can be pretty solitary at times. It would be nice to be able to hang out with other students studying the same thing and develop a connection with people on your wavelength. But that can be hard to get studying out here.”

Chris adds that Saigon’s vibrant expat scene makes up for the lack of student connection. “It’s really no problem for me. You’ve got all these cool places and all the social events going

on here, I’m meeting new people all the time. It’s not like I’m just sitting alone at home all the time.”

Textbooks are another issue that crops up when one elects to study a degree on faraway shores. Getting them sent from overseas can be difficult, not to mention costly. But there are ways around it. “I tend to download a lot of mine from online and get them printed out for cheap at a photocopying shop,” Chris offers as a pro tip. “It saves a lot of money, and time.”

As it turns out, a lot of the materials needed for online courses are conveniently found... online. The reading materials, PDFs, pre-recorded lectures and slides can be downloaded by students as needed.

When it comes to exams, major cities like Saigon set up special testing locations in conjunction with associated learning institutions. “Once every three months I go there and sit the exam. There’s someone in the room watching called the ‘invigilator’ whose job it is to make sure you don’t cheat. They give you the test papers and then they take the test papers back at the end. That’s it.”

Chris makes a winning case for people in similar situations, bitten by the Vietnam bug but still needing that degree, and uneasy with the prospect of relocating back home in order to get it.

For some the idea can be a difficult one. Studying online may just offer a more practical alternative.

“The best part about studying online is the flexibility,” he adds. “You can study 12 months of the year if you want, or just one semester if you want to do that. It’s up to you as the student as to how big or small your study load will be. For me, the advantages of studying online far outweigh the disadvantages. Finding a work schedule around my studying is very easy. I don’t have to work 9-to-5 here. It’s not at all difficult to find jobs teaching odd hours, which is really beneficial when you’re studying. The cost of living is much lower here so I can have a much more comfortable lifestyle. You work the study around your life, not the other way around. I’d say that’s a pretty big advantage.”

Students, Listen Up

Twenty-five-year-old Vietnamese Duc graduated in 2012 from RMIT Vietnam with a Bachelor in commerce. He spent two years working for JP Morgan before deciding he wanted to change things up a bit, and headed back to school. Now he’s working with the university’s international student recruitment department and studying for his Masters there part-time. As part of his job, he jettisons around the globe trying to lure prospective international students to RMIT’s campus in Ho Chi Minh City.

“It’s a good job for me,” he laughs, having just returned from a university fair in South Korea. He seems to be

pretty happy with the way things have turned out. But it wasn’t always that rosy. “In [local] high school I wasn’t a good student at all. You never could have imagined I’d be where I am now if you saw me back then. I’d just go to class, zone out, come home and play video games. School as I remember it was just a lot of sitting and listening, a lot of remembering dates and facts—dry knowledge. I got tired with all of that, I stopped trying to get high marks and just sort of slid through the system.”

The turning point came with a tour day at RMIT. “I saw that things were totally different there,” he recalls. “In my imagination, the idea of going to university had always seemed quite boring. Vietnamese universities have this traditional way of thinking. You sit in a hall with two or three hundred other students and the lecturer crows on and on.” It’s a system that hasn’t really changed all that much since the mandarin schools of a thousand years ago: The teacher speaks, the student listens.

“It’s very different at an institution like RMIT,” Duc explains. “In Vietnam, the university education system is like this. The student has to be quiet and obey the teacher. The student cannot ask questions without the teacher’s permission. But here, you can just jump in the conversation anytime; you have the freedom to disagree with the teacher. There is an open conversation between teacher and student, a much closer relationship. There is a real support

from the teacher.”

Some students struggle with the transition, unused to the kind of active participation encouraged at Western universities. “They trained for all their school years in the traditional education system and find it hard to change,” he says. “Some of them maybe enjoyed it that way and are doing well under that system. For the less confident it can be more comfortable. Some students are passive learners. But for other students who maybe struggle with the language barrier, for example, can be afraid to speak up. You have to keep in mind the different cultures and mindsets that affect people’s approach to learning.”

But it’s not just Vietnamese students opting to study here. Vietnam, Saigon in particular, has seen a burgeoning increase in the number of foreign students in recent years as more internationally-recognized learning institutes open campuses here.

“Before there weren’t a whole lot of foreign students studying in Vietnam,” says Duc. “And most of the ones who did were already living here, like Koreans whose families had moved to Saigon for business, but now there’s a lot more students coming over from Europe. They know Vietnam and Southeast Asia is the next big thing in the global market and they’re coming here to find opportunities, and to experience what it’s like to live in an Asian country. I’d wager more than 80 percent of them will get a job related to Asia after graduation. That’s the trend.” ■



Wine & Dine

NGON ASIA HOUSE





IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN



FIVE FOR DINING

AN AMBITIOUS PLAN TO SERVE KOREAN, JAPANESE, CHINESE, THAI AND VIETNAMESE CUISINES UNDER ONE ROOF, AND SOMEHOW IT WORKS

TEXT BY JOEL ZORRILLA
IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN AND NGON ASIA HOUSE

NGON ASIA HOUSE (2nd-4th floor, Saigon Garden, 99 Nguyen Hue, D1) is the ultimate in Asian dining, with five separate kitchens and five trained chefs dedicated to five different cuisines—Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Thai and Vietnamese—spread out over three floors.

I'm usually wary of restaurants that serve food from more than one country, let alone five. With a menu of well over 400 items including drinks and desserts it was both overwhelming and wonderful. However, here is the difference between NGON and most tourist traps that tend to cater to everyone: NGON has five head chefs specifically trained in their respective cuisine supervising each kitchen. And

the result? A hugely diverse menu with quality to back it up. There is, literally, something for everyone.

We ordered dishes from each country and started with Vietnam—grilled minced pork meatballs with rice vermicelli (VND95,000). The tender and succulent meatballs were served with lettuce, noodles and rice paper. We used the rice paper to wrap up the meatballs, lettuce and noodles and dipped it unceremoniously in a bowl of sweet fish sauce. The taste was a fantastic combination of sweet, salty, tender and crunchy all in one. To further enhance the flavors, I sipped on a glass of their Cabernet Sauvignon house wine (VND95,000) while my two companions indulged in a refreshingly pulpy mango

passion juice (VND65,000) and a mojito (VND75,000), which was light, limy and not too sweet.

With such a delicious start, we continued onto Thailand. The Thai red curry with roasted duck served with jasmine rice (VND95,000) was exactly what you would expect in Thailand, evenly spiced throughout the sauce and duck, with that great mix of sweet, spicy and creamy. The duck was tender, complementing the sauce in winning fashion. Next we explored one of the trendiest cuisines at the moment—Korean. Taking advice from my fellow diner (who's a quarter Korean) we ordered rice with grilled pork ribs (VND85,000) served with lettuce, sticky rice, soybean paste, tiny dried fish and





kim chi. Following directions from the expert, we placed the pork in the middle of the lettuce leaf, added slivers of rice and *kim chi* then sprinkled on tiny dried fish—the only problem with this dish was that we wanted more. It was such a fabulous medley of flavors and textures I could have gone on all night eating it, but we had to move on to the last remaining countries: Japanese and Chinese.

For Japanese, we ordered the sashimi rice bowl (VND95,000). When it comes to Japanese food, the rule is: If it's done properly, it's one of the top five greatest cuisines in the world. And this was the proof—sweet and vinegary sticky sushi rice blanketed in a heavenly assortment of salmon, shrimp, tuna and crab. It's hard to imagine how such a simple dish can produce such astonishing flavors, but it does so prodigiously. For our last hurrah before the desserts we ordered

two items from the Chinese menu. One was the classic *mapo doufu*, or spicy Sichuan tofu (VND75,000). Hailing from the Sichuan province of China, the dish was an awesome mix of tofu set in a spicy chili bean based sauce. It's a classic of the province, famous for its oily red sauces which rely heavily on the iconic Sichuan pepper. The other dish—a standout of the night—steamed Shanghai soup dumplings (VND75,000). These artfully prepared dumplings have just enough thickness in the dough to house inside a steaming mix of scrumptious broth and ground pork. It's an explosion of flavors when you bite in; the richness of the broth coupled with the tenderness of the pork is nothing short of spectacular. If you're a fan of dumplings, go here. If you're not, go here and forever be a dumpling fan.

For desserts we tried three eccentric treats. The mango pudding

(VND45,000) was my personal favorite, doused in a layer of condensed milk, it was a creamy affair. The taro cassava green beans, seaweed, water chestnut in coconut milk (VND35,000) was exotic in every way you could think of, and as strange as its sounds it was actually everything you want in a dessert, sweet and satisfying with a textural afterthought that is incredibly memorable. And last, but not least, glutinous balls in ginger syrup and coconut milk (VND35,000) again, it's a great juxtaposition of satisfyingly sweet, strangeness and a great way to end a fantastic dinner.

As of June, NGON Asia House has eliminated the money card ordering system. The restaurant is now fully staffed with waiters and the previous five separate menus have been incorporated into one, reducing confusion among first time diners. ■





MOSHI MOSHI, MATCHA AND MOCHI

FLAVORS OF TRADITIONAL AND MODERN JAPAN CONVERGE AT NEWLY OPENED MIYAMA CAFÉ



TEXT BY MARTIN ZORRILLA AND SONIA GREGOR
IMAGES PROVIDED BY MIYAMA CAFÉ

OUR VISIT was welcomed by a soft “*irasshaimase*” as we approached **Miyama Café** inside the Takashimaya Saigon Center mall (L3-01, 65 Le Loi, D1). We settled in soft fabric seats, at a table of pale cedar wood, soothed by the minimalist Nordic-style interior. To quench our thirst we opted for some deluxe fruit drinks (VND198,000). These were made with fruit harvested at peak season then flown to Vietnam. The Japanese melon drink was wonderful—sweet, aromatic and ice cold. The Provence pear drink tasted like sunshine in the French countryside.

The savory dishes at Miyama are the work of Chef Avi Sternberg, who trained in Japan for eight years. Taking its cues from

Tokyo, the cuisine is a seamless blend of Japanese classics with Mediterranean and European influences. All the set lunches came with traditional sides of miso soup, rice, salad and pickles. The soup and rice were made with authentic *dashi* broth, a cornerstone of quality Japanese cuisine. We chose set lunches Ni Set D (VND228,000), featuring *hirekatsu*, a crisp fried cutlet of tender pork, and Ni Set E (VND328,000) with steak *sukiyaki*. The side that most impressed came from Ni Set D, juicy pork and scallop *gyozas* served in small steamer baskets. The sides included some well-chosen international influences, such as the roasted red pepper and feta bruschetta in Ni Set E.



The salads at Miyama deserve special attention. Large enough for a light meal, they are made with four types of vegetables, sourced from Miyama's very own farm in Dalat. Diners can select chicken, shrimp or salmon, grilled with seasonings like Japanese teriyaki sauce or Jamaican jerk spices. The dressings enhance this international fusion, with options like raspberry vinaigrette, Asian ginger sesame or Mediterranean tzatziki. Our big jerk salad arrived with freshly grilled shrimps (VND238,000), cherry tomato confit, cucumbers and punchy black mint leaves.

The mains here are as light and balanced as the Japanese cedar trays they are presented on, intended to leave you satisfied but not stuffed. In traditional Japanese tea ceremonies, a small meal called *ichiju-sansai* is served, to leave participants with room for tea. Miyama also offers *ichiju-sansai* sets, which include a choice of full dessert. And indeed, the tea and dessert menu is truly spectacular. There are towering French pastries and homemade ice cream. The

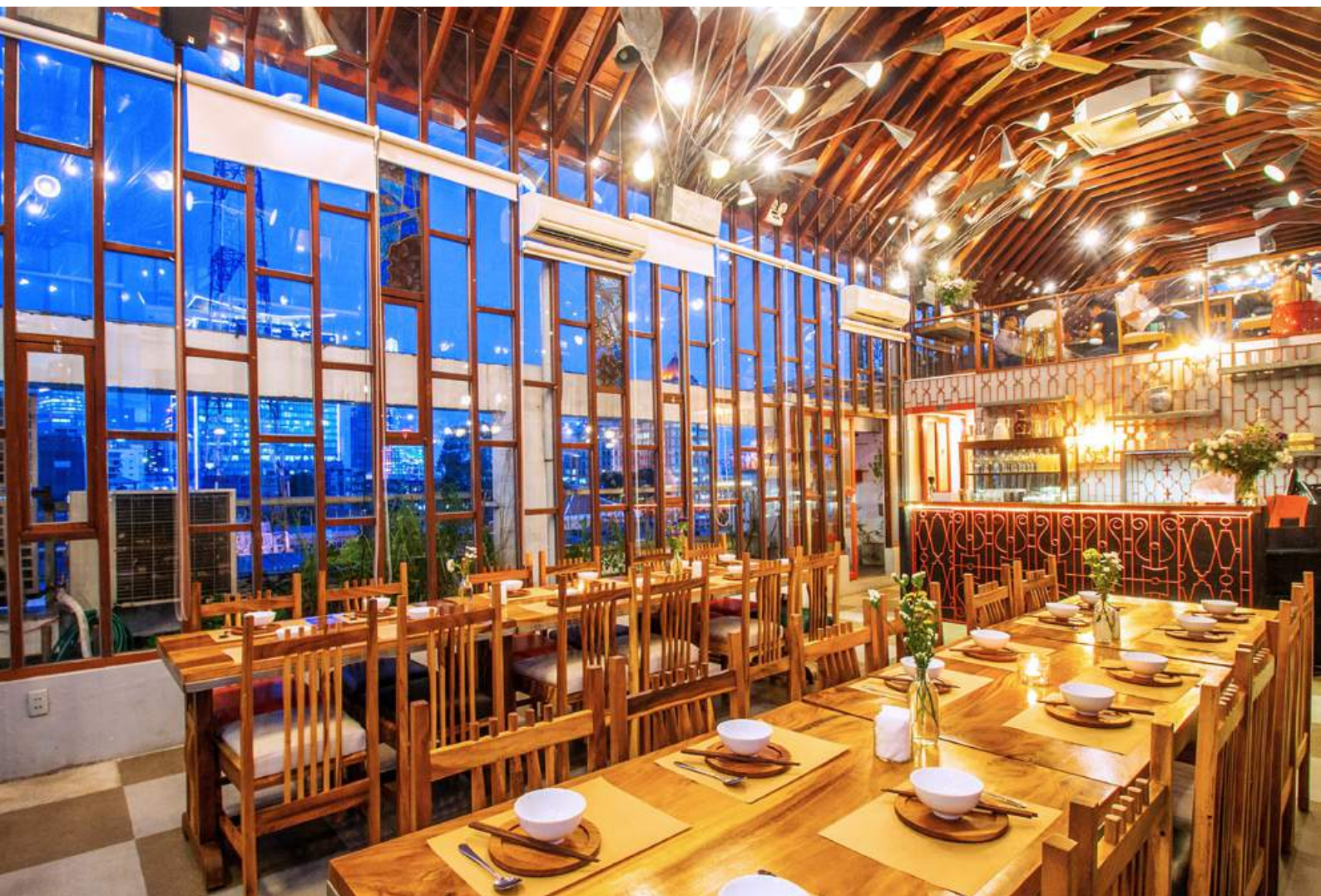
pastry chef was trained in Japan, and the premium matcha is imported straight from Kyoto. We indulged in a selection of Japanese mochi (VND218,000) and the maple chiffon cake (VND98,000). The mochi is made fresh daily, and had an ideal chewy texture, an indication of the skill and patience required to craft them. Each mochi was filled with a rich cream in a different flavor: Matcha, *kinako*, Valrhona chocolate and *yuzu*. Our chiffon cake was not to be outdone. Soft and cloud-like, its subtle sweetness and strong maple aroma paired perfectly with whipped cream.

If you haven't experienced a Japanese tea ceremony, this is the perfect informal introduction for you. Finely ground matcha powder and 75°C water are beaten with a bamboo whisk. The resulting cup is a layer of bright green foam over a strong drink that is nutty, bitter and sweet. Drink it like an espresso, in small sips. The Japanese word *umami* is used to describe rich, even meaty flavors, and you can taste this in the tea, as well. For anyone interested

in specialty coffee or chocolate, Matcha should be on your list. Beginners can opt for the *oi-matsu matcha* (VND198,000), a drinkable blend of *asahi* and *gogou* leaves. Matcha enthusiasts can treat themselves to the *tenka-no-mukashi* (VND398,000) featuring pure *asahi* leaves. The *tenka-no-mukashi* has such an ideal balance of umami, sweetness and bitterness that it is ranks among the best in Japan.

As it sits in a sharp corner of Saigon Center's second floor, any seat in Miyama affords unusually verdant views of the treetops on Pasteur Street. "Miyama" means "beautiful mountain," and in the light cool space we indeed felt as if we were on a snowy peak gazing down on the urban landscape below. One could spend a pleasant afternoon here, ordering trays of coffee and sweets. Or you could take a culinary dive into modern Japanese cuisine for lunch, or try a tea ceremony at the spacious marble bar. Whether you're impressing friends, or just yourself, go to Miyama Café. ■





The Proof is in the Sauce

Looking up to find delicious Vietnamese comfort food

TEXT BY SONIA GREGOR AND MARTIN ZORRILLA
IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

IF YOU'VE EVER WONDERED where your food comes from, then head to **The Fish Sauce** (OCB Building, Rooftop, 6th floor, 41 Le Duan, D1) for the answer. All the vegetables are organic and locally sourced, and the pickles and sauces are

made in house. Prepare for a culinary tour of the Vietnamese countryside, with flavors that are comforting and hearty, or new and unexpected.

The celebration of local flavors begins with the cocktail menu, each inspired by a district in Ho Chi Minh City or a city

in Vietnam. For example, the District 4 features passionfruit and gin, a nod to its port location (VND85,000). More herbal and complex, the Trang An is made with white wine, lime and homemade fermented apricots (VND85,000), and is named after a UNESCO site in northern



Fishcake spring rolls with herbs, Fish Sauce signature taro cake and light lime cheesecake

Vietnam where fermented apricots are a popular snack. While we sipped, we admired the woodwork of the lofted ceiling and the lights that sprout like banana flowers from the ceiling. On all sides the clear glass walls allow diners to take in views of the city skyline.

The Fish Sauce's fishcakes are made entirely of real fish, not added fillings, and we can taste the difference from the supermarket versions when we ordered their fishcake spring rolls with herbs (VND80,000). Thick slices of springy chewy fishcakes tightly wrapped in rice paper, accompanied by a dipping sauce that features the restaurant's namesake, which was fermented by small producers in Phu Yen Province. It has the deep amber color and complex nutty aroma of the high-quality stuff, with an addictive umami twist.

The roasted duck salad (VND95,000) delivered perfectly caramelized fatty slices of duck. These decadent meaty morsels were balanced by the fresh crunch of sliced banana flowers, basil and green bananas. If you have any doubts about the merits of banana flowers, this is the dish to prove you wrong. The freshly sliced flowers soak up the citrus

ginger dressing, providing a light crunchy backdrop for stronger flavors.

A highlight of the menu is the many delicious soups. Out of all the tempting options, we chose the chayote squash soup with minced pork (VND70,000). The clear broth seemed both rich enough to serve on special occasions, and healthy enough to eat when you're sick. Grated chayote 'noodles' gave the soup body with morsels of pork and green tea buds swimming in each spoonful.

We paused in awe when they brought out the braised howling fish in claypot (VND75,000). This showstopper comes to the table still bubbling, with a caramelized sauce that smells like carnivore heaven. Fleshes of fish soaked up the sauce, while crispy garlic and tender cubes of pork fat surround them. You definitely need some rice to temper this indulgence and absorb the sauce (side of white rice, VND10,000).

After those rock star dishes, the steamed farm-raised chicken with steamed rice, mung bean, onion, coriander and greens (VND140,000) was a welcome dish of comfort food. Shreds of succulent chicken and fresh green papaya rested on a bed of rice and mung

bean, with a side of fiery ginger soy sauce. Diners can also choose from an extensive list of organic vegetable sides, we went with a morning glory stir-fry with fermented bean curd sauce (VND45,000) and were pleasantly surprised.

Traditional ferments of fish and soybeans translate to flavors that are meaty and complex without being overwhelming.

Don't leave without trying some desserts. We couldn't resist the Fish Sauce signature taro cake (VND40,000) when we heard that its caramel sauce was made with real fish sauce! It had a smooth chewy texture like mochi. Our first impression of the caramel sauce was simply butter and sugar, but on the third bite there was a faint whisper of fish sauce. We kept eating, trying to taste it again. For the less adventurous, the light lime cheesecake (VND55,000) is perfect, fluffy and melts in your mouth. The creaminess is complemented by a crunchy salt and sugar crust, and fresh lime zest.

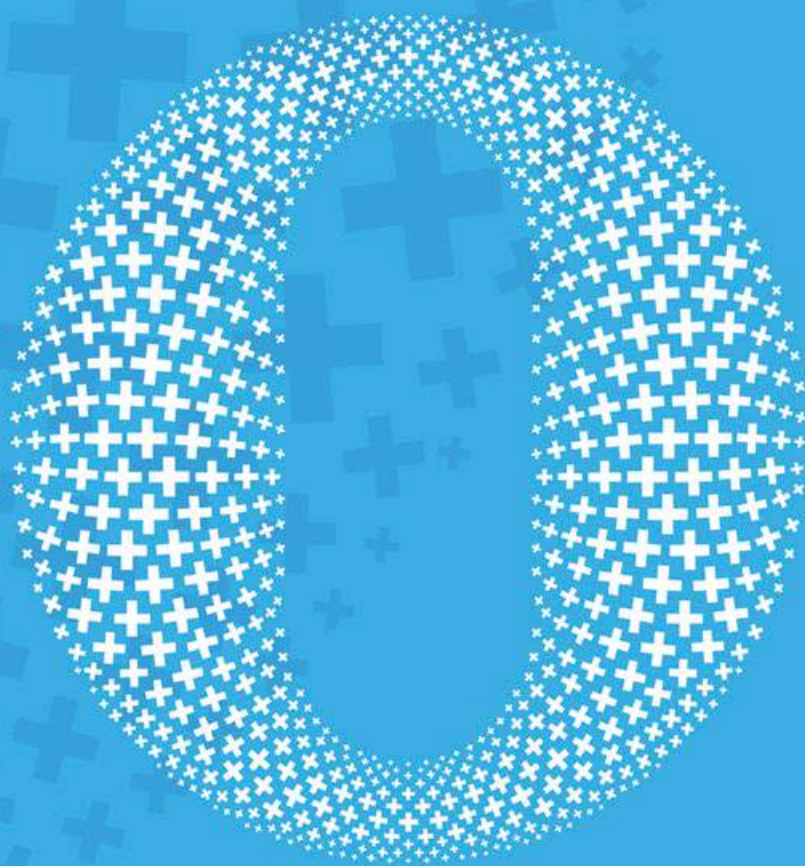
The Fish Sauce impressed with their fresh local flavors and unfamiliar ingredients. Rather than reinventing Vietnamese cuisine, it feels like they have found the best parts of it to showcase. ■

From left: braised howling fish in claypot, fermented shrimp paste fried rice, roasted duck salad, and steamed farm-raised chicken with steamed rice, mung bean, onion, coriander and greens



Many children die in Viet Nam
daily from drowning or
traffic accidents.

We believe that number should be ZERO.
Do you?



BELIEVE IN ZERO
unicef.org/vietnam/believeinzero

unicef 

Land of the Long White Wine

In a cluttered wine landscape, where so many seem the same, the Kiwis do it differently



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.



NEW ZEALAND is far away, in fact so far away from everything that it's almost isolated from the nearest country by over 1,500km. Such isolation, together with the climate and the particularities of the different soils that can be found in New Zealand, have helped the wine makers in this beautiful country stand out by with their different, but beautiful, wines.

The "land of the long white cloud" has a total land area of 268,021 square kilometers and because the country is comprised of two narrow islands, the vineyards are never more than 120km away from the ocean; this helps cool

them and provide a moderate maritime climate, benefited from long daylight hours, ideal for wine making.

As a result of cool temperatures, the grape ripening time is long, which allows flavors to develop further while keeping good acidity (that makes wines last), a balance that is characteristic of New Zealand wines.

Grapes are grown on both islands, with several differentiated wine growing regions and sub-regions. Of these, perhaps the most famous is Marlborough, where around 75 percent of all New Zealand wine is being produced.

Marlborough is New Zealand's flagship wine region; actually it put New Zealand on the international wine map with its delicious Sauvignon Blanc. Some of the first pioneers to arrive to the country first planted vines in this region around 1873, however, it was in the 1970s when the sector boomed through the hands of entrepreneurs like Sir George Fistonich (founder of Villa Maria) who brought the wine making techniques from Croatia when his family emigrated to New Zealand, and who had the vision to do something different, something good, something unique.

New Zealand's, and in particular Marlborough's, Sauvignon Blancs are considered amongst the best in the world. Quite different to those made in France and other world regions, they bring the minerality, purity and acidity, characteristic of the terroir in Marlborough.

However, and even though most of its production is Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough is producing some amazing Pinot Noir, as well as other varieties like Chardonnay and Pinot Gris. Wine makers are experimenting with blends, as well as with new grapes, trying to make the most out of the particular land characteristics.

Central Otago is another iconic wine region in New Zealand. The region's first world medal was awarded in Sydney in 1881 from vines planted by Jean Feraud. Currently its main production is Pinot Noir, which produces outstanding wines characterized for ripe fruit and ripe flavors, with lots of complexity and a pleasure to the palate.

Many say that if you like Burgundy wines, you cannot like New Zealand wines, however, I love both. Although different, both styles have their own characteristics and unique personality, different but equally precious, and a pleasure to drink. ■

Wine & Dine

BARS



Air 360 Sky Lounge - Events

This rooftop bar combines vibrant music, fancy designs and 360 degree view of Saigon's skyline to make it one of the best spots for drinks, lounging and events.

0974 58 77 88

22-23 floor, Ben Thanh Tower,
136-138 Le Thi Hong Gam, D1
www.air360skybar.com



Chill Skybar - Dining

A modern lounge, bar and dining space that is considered the first "Skybar" concept in Vietnam. It is perched on top of AB Tower, exclusively on the 26th and 27th floor with views of the city's skyline.

0938 822 838

Level 26, AB Tower, 76A Le Lai, D1
www.chillsaigon.com



La Vie En Rose

Combining sophisticated decor with live music and a extensive vintage wine, La Vie En Rose is the go-to place to while away your worries.

0936 933 833

21st floor, Ben Thanh Tower, 136-138 Le Thi Hong Gam, D1
www.lavienrose.com



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

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@icasianasaiagon.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 Capriosa 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 Saigonese, complimented by authentic Vietnamese cuisine and deluxe teas, for anyone who wants to look for Saigon's sense of nostalgia and friendliness.

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

Facebook: Entehouse



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@icasianasaiagon.com



The Workshop

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

27 Ngo Duc Ke, DI



Also Try...

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 Pham Ngoc Thach, D3
6683 8618



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

CHINESE



Dragon Court

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

11-13 Lam Son Square, D1
3827 2566



Dynasty

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

New World Hotel
76 Le Lai, D1
3822 8888
www.saiгон.newworldhotels.com



Kabin

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

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



Li Bai

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

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



Ming Court

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

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



Ming Dynasty

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

23 Nguyen Khac Vien, D7

Also Try...

Hung Ky Mi Gia

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

20 Le Anh Xuan, D1
3822 2673

Ocean Palace

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

2 Le Duan Street, D1
3911 8822

Seven Wonders (Bay Ky Quan)

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

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

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

Shang Palace

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

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

Yu Chu

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

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



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

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. Mirko and Mr. Christian Boarin).

206 Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien, D2



Wine Embassy Boutique

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

41 Quoc Huong Street, Thao Dien, D2

Also Try...

An Phu Supermarket

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

43 Thao Dien, D2

Annam Gourmet

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

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

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

The Warehouse

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

15/5 Le Thanh Ton, D1

Veggy's

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

23A Le Thanh Ton, D1

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 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.

11 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.

39 Tran Ngoc Dien, 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



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



Natraj

Known for its complete North & South Indian cuisine, Natraj's specialty is its special chaat & tandoori dishes. Parties, events & catering services are available, with Daily Lunch Thali and set menus. Available for delivery. Complete menu on Facebook.

41 Bui Thi Xuan, D1
6679 5267 - 6686 3168
www.facebook.com/natrajindiancuisine



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 Bui, 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



BRITISH
BUSINESS
GROUP
VIETNAM



Venue Sponsor



BBGV HCM 16th FUN RUN FOR CHARITY

SUNDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 2016

TIME: 7:00am - 10:30am

FUN ON STAGE: 7:15

4KM RUN STARTS: 8:00

Tan Trao, Phu My Hung,

Tan Phu Ward, District 7, HCMC

Run, walk or stroll

Fun morning for everyone
Great team building event
All proceeds go to charities.

Food, games and activities
Music performance on stage
Great prizes to be won.

Registration from 5th Sep 2016 at:

- BBGV: G/F 25 Le Duan Blvd, Dist 1.

T: +84 8 3829 8430 E: info@bbgv.org

- Snap Café: 32 Tran Ngoc Dien Str, Dist 2,

T: +84 8 3519 4282

- RMIT: 702 Nguyen Van Linh, Dist 7.

- Online registration at ticketbox.vn

Suggested donation to charity

• VND150,000/adult; VND75,000/child;
5 and under FOC.

• 10% discount for 50 or more runners.

Gold
Sponsors



Silver
Sponsors



In-kind Gold
Sponsors



Media
Sponsors



In-kind Silver
Sponsors



Co-Sponsors
& Supporters



Disclaimer: Neither the BBGV, nor any other entity or individual involved in the organisation of the Fun Run shall be liable for any injury, damage or loss of whatsoever nature and howsoever arising, suffered by any participant

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.

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



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

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



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



Miyama Café

Miyama Café was born from an ambition to transport a truly modern Tokyo cafe into the midst of bustling Saigon. From grand desserts to inspired modern Japanese food and service, Miyama Café's minimalist space and large glass windows allow diners to views of the bustling city below. They use the finest and freshest ingredients to create beautiful and delicious set meals and desserts.

Takashiyama Saigon Centre Mall
Level 3-01
(08) 2253 1076
www.miyamacafe.com



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, DI



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, DI
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, DI
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, DI
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.

RI-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 Bui, 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 Bui
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 Bui 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 Bui, 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
 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



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



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/Id1 Thai Van Lung, D1
www.wildhorsesteakhouse.com



Baba's Kitchen
 164 Bui Vien, District 1
 49D Xa Lo Hanoi, District 2
 Phone: 083-838-6661 & 083-838-6662

Open 11am to 11pm
 North & South Indian food

Halal & vegetarian dishes
 Of course we can cater!
 order online at vietnammm.com & eat.vn
 "Baba brings India to Vietnam"



wok n'roll
American Chinese Food

Full Menu
www.woknroll.vn

We wok hard for you!

SUPER FAST DELIVERY!
 0122-690-8881

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

17A Ngo Van Nam, D1

First Floor, 39 Ly Tu Trong, D1

55 Ngo Quang Huy, Thao Dien, D2



Five Oysters R

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

234 Bui Vien, D1



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 R

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 R

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



Also Try...

3T Quan Nuong

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

Top Floor, 29 Ton That Hiep, D1

3821 1631

Banh Xeo 46A

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

46A Dinh Cong Trang, D1

Cha Ca La Vong

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

36 Ton That Thiep, D1

Com Nieu

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

59 Ho Xuan Huong, D3

3932 6363

comnieusaigon27@yahoo.com

comnieusaigon.com.vn

Cuc Gach Quan

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

10 Dang Tat, D1

3848 0144

Hum R

Hum is a vegetarian restaurant where food are prepared on site from various

fresh beans, nuts, vegetables, flowers, and fruits. Food are complemented with special drinks mixed from fresh fruits and vegetables.

2 Thi Sach, D1

3823 8920

www.hum-vegetarian.vn

May

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

19-21 Dong Khoi, D1

3910 1277

Nha Hang Ngon

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

160 Pasteur, D1

3827 7131

www.quananngon.com.vn

8am - 10pm

Propaganda Bistro R

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

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

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

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



BoatHouse

With amazing views of the Saigon River, the restaurant's open seating plan is the ideal space for business lunches, romantic dinners and lazy weekend brunches. The menu is international with focuses on Mexican and American comfort food. There's live music almost every night of the week.

40 Lily Road, AP5C, 36 Thao Dien, D2
boathousesgn@gmail.com
+84 8 3744 6790
www.boathousesaigon.com
www.facebook.com/boathousevietnam



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



Eleven

Eleven 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 38222605
Mail : info@elevencafe.com.vn
Facebook : ElevenCafeVN
Website : www.eleven.com.vn



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



Ngon Asia House

Contemporary three-storey bistro that welcomes you with style and leads you into a house of sumptuous colorful food cultures, rich in both in flavors and inspirations. More than 350 savory street dishes from Korea, Japan, China, Thailand and Vietnam come together in one designer space. The drinks menu includes a great selection of wine, cocktails and smoothies. If you can, grab a table by the tall glass windows overlooking the Nguyen Hue Pedestrian Walkway – a great spot for people watching.

Facebook: "ngonasia" / www.ngon-asia.com
2nd - 4th Floors, Saigon Garden
99 Nguyen Hue, D1
08 3821 3821



Rose Garden

With its main focus on Vietnamese cuisine, Rose Garden also has an extensive international menu that includes pastas, sandwiches and wraps. Located with the backpacker district, the restaurant is a great spot for people watching and soaking up the city's vibrant atmosphere. The freshly made juices come highly recommended.

232 Bui Vien, D1
(08) 6680 0847
Facebook: RoseGardenSaigon



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



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.villaroyletreasures.com

Travel & Leisure

VUNG TAU







A Seaside Escape

Beyond the oil rigs and tourist traps, there's another side of **Vung Tau** worth exploring

Text by TAYNE EPHRAIM

Images by NGOC TRAN

VUNG TAU is a place I'd brushed over in the past and mentally scratched off the list. So when asked to return and give it another try, mid monsoon, I take it as a chance to dig a little deeper and see what the city has to offer beyond a long strip of beach and a giant hollow Jesus. And as it turns out: quite the bag of little delights, for those willing to go the extra mile.

For the unfamiliar, Vung Tau, somewhat like Italy (albeit on a much smaller scale) juts out into the ocean like a strangely shaped boot. At the foot of this boot lie two mountains, Little Mountain (at the heel), and Big Mountain (at the toes). It's a two-hour or so drive from downtown Saigon, with the newly built Long Thanh expressway slicing a good hour off the old time. Or,

alternatively, there is the refurbished hydrofoil service departing daily from Bach Dang pier in District 1.

I pack my camera and some books into my trusty satchel and head out of the big smoke (Saigon) to the beach. The minivan drops us off on the main beach strip and we waste no time in acquiring some wheels, renting a scooter from a hotel in town and zipping out to explore the peninsula's lesser-known sights.

Beyond the hotel-lined beachfront and seaside restaurant strips the forested hills of Vung Tau are honeycombed with gorgeous little roads that snake their way across the promontory hills, leading to old fortifications, shrines, grottos, and a lighthouse. The French put a battery atop each of Vung Tau's mountains, and the cannons are still there today, pointed

out to sea. Some of these roads, however, are military, as we unwittingly discover, following one into the back door of a small military base with squat French-built bunkers cut into the face of the face. Only as I'm about to dismount for a photo opportunity do I realize my error, quickly backing out and away before alerting any personnel to our unwanted presence.

Getting our bearings back, we head out for the lighthouse on Little Mountain for some winning views over sea and city. While nothing remarkable, it's a curious edifice, a stubby cylinder on the mountain top with the odd spectacle of birdsong recordings playing out of loudspeakers at an amplified volume in the effort to attract the real thing. Go figure. The views afforded from this



vantage point over the long finger of coastline and brightly-colored houses of the town nestled below make it well worth the effort. Also of note are the old French fortifications and an overgrown bunker, just down a set of steps from the lighthouse and its viewing platform. The hilly topography at the tip of Vung Tau's peninsula is teeming with such relics and they make for an intriguing addition to the city's attractions.

Years back I'd road tripped out to Vung Tau with some friends. We'd found the trail that winds its way across the top of Big Mountain and followed it to a bombed out radar installation, a relic from the war. But where once stood only weeds and twisted steel, a kitsch waterpark has sprung up. Mo May, or Sky Park, which also includes on its premises a zoo, a zip line and a

rollercoaster, comes complete with its own cable car to ferry up holidaymakers from Tran Phu Street below. Needless to say, things change fast, awfully fast, in Vietnam. Even in little Vung Tau.

See Food

Another neglected gem offering scenic views is Doi Con Heo, or Pig Hill. Located on a rocky outcrop above the shell of an abandoned hotel project, this secluded little spot overlooks Hon Ba Island and offers beautiful photo opportunities. We reach it by small lane which winds its way up, passing by clucking chooks and curious children with monk-styled hairdos. Perched right above the city, the hill's barren rockiness makes it feel like a world away from the bustle below, and an ideal camping spot for the more adventurous.





Hon Ba Island is perhaps the most curious sight in Vung Tau. This mysterious little outcrop of land (technically an islet) is linked by a natural land bridge to the coast, accessible only when the tide is low enough to reveal it, which is about once a month. The temple crowning the islet's tip was built back in the 18th century to appease the goddess of the sea and bring good fortune to the fishermen. It was also a French fort for some time, the remnants of which can still be seen. When the tide goes out long lines of pilgrims clamber their way over the sharp rocks and oysters to pay their respects.

Other than being a weekend playground and easy-to-reach beach getaway from the big smoke, Vung Tau has much to offer the budding foodie also. Our appetites kick in and we go in search of the local specialty, *banh khot*, a grilled rice pancake topped with shrimp, squid and chopped scallions. We find ourselves on Hoang Hoa Tham Street, somewhat of a central hotspot for the dish with no shortage of offerings to choose from, just as another squall moves in over the city. The Western food offerings in Vung Tau are equally

as delightful, owing in no small measure to its thriving expat community, with highlights such as the popular David Pizzeria and stellar Bistro 9 worth making the trip for alone.

We venture on to the very tip of the peninsula, Mui Nghinh Phong, Cape of the Greeting Wind, and wander up to the top of its little hill. Looking back, a small cove is revealed, tucked away in the fold of the cape; a hidden beach, devoid of the tourist traffic, and a pleasant surprise. A little stairway leads down to the beach. An abandoned restaurant hangs above and adds an eerie, forgotten atmosphere to the place. There is a small yellow shrine to the ocean nestled in amongst the rocks. I watch its keeper lighting sticks of incense before stripping down to his jocks and wading into the surf for his afternoon swim. A local woman collects limpets and oysters with her pants rolled up to her knees. A swimming monk and a smiling lady move about the rocks—these are timeless images. It's a magical little spot, with the sun getting low on the horizon, and one that I hope remains that way, a sanctuary from the feverish rate of development. ■



Oasis Living in Nha Trang

Text and Images Provided by **UMA CONDOTE**

NHA TRANG is a well-known seaside resort with a huge potential for tourism. It is not an exaggeration to say that nature has blessed Nha Trang with a beautiful landscape. After many years of development, Nha Trang is now a dynamic city, brimming with vitality and newly widened roads and fantastic resorts. Many enterprises in Nha Trang are giving opportunities for those who love all the excitement of a beach city to truly enjoy a modern lifestyle and live in high-grade apartments, condos or villas.

When talking about Nha Trang, many think of the deep-blue sea with banks of white sand. However, few people know that the Cai River, which flows into Nha Trang's bay, is also full of poetics and charm. The Cham Oasis is incredibly lucky to be located in such a strategic position, where the Cai River directly flows into the sea of Nha Trang. It also benefits from being on one of two beautiful islands at the center of Nha Trang, contributing to the prosperity of the entire area.

Travelers can easily make their way to Tran Phu Street and a variety of other attractions such as Cham Oasis, Ponaga Temple and the Stone Cathedral. Cham Oasis boasts high-class villas and apartments named "Uma Condotel" and "Kubera Condotel," and have the first five-star villas close to the very heart of Nha Trang. Although Uma Condotel is already welcoming guests, Kubera Condotel is still being completed and will be open for business soon.

If you are looking for a quiet space to live with modern security, situated next

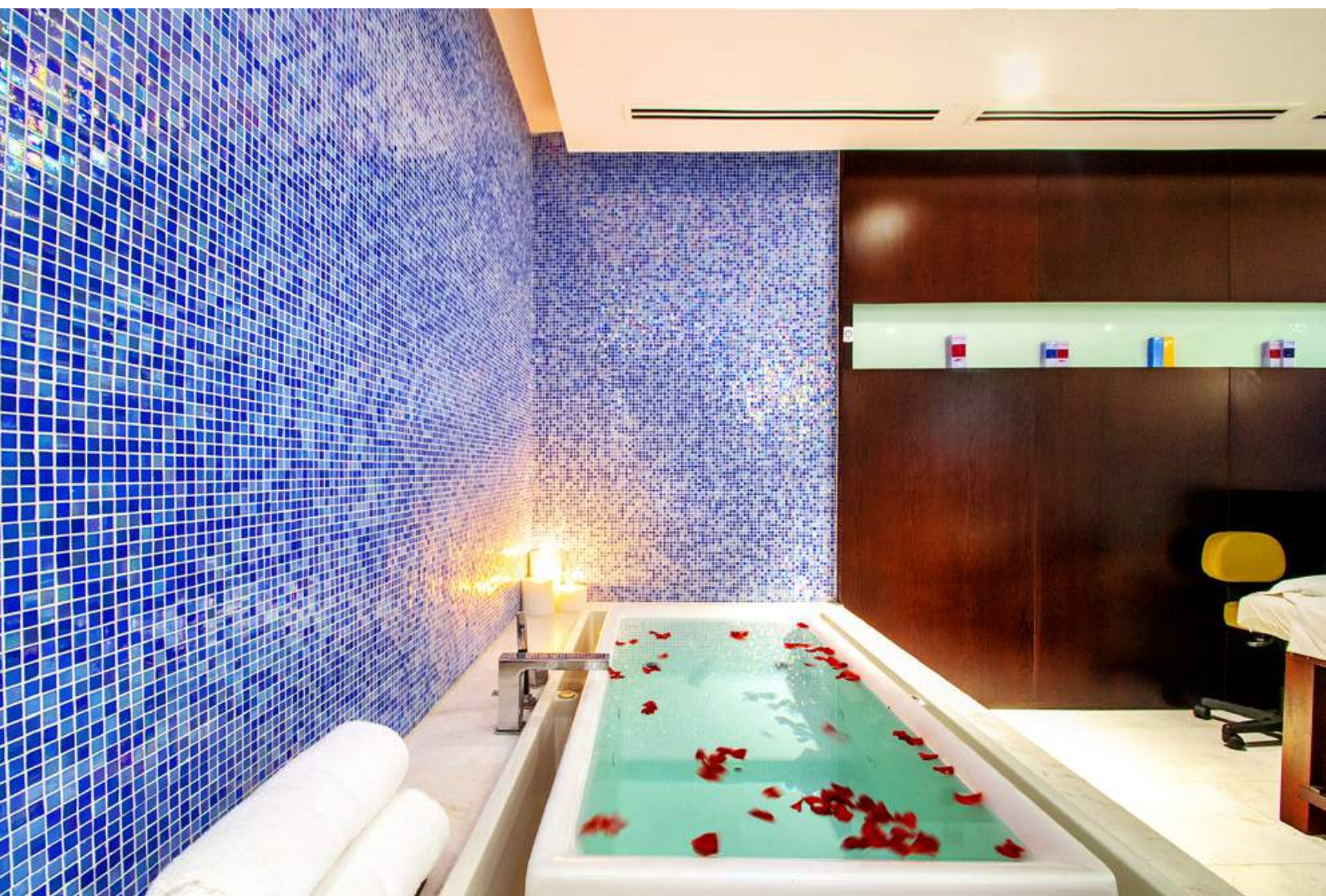
to the river with wonderful mountain scenery, then Uma Condotel is the perfect option for you. Uma Condotel is in a perfect location, connected to the mainland by a bridge and principal roads heading directly to center of the city, shopping areas and entertainment venues. In common with all the comforts available on Champa Island, such as excellent eating and drinking establishments, and all the best in health treatments and relaxation; Uma Condotel is gradually completing its entertainment areas, including a central park, jogging paths around the island, a swimming pool, a gymnasium, a mini-mart, secured basement parking,

restaurants and even a private bus to take you directly to the beach. Uma Condotel – Cham Oasis will provide a well-aired green space, which will bring wonderful relaxation to you and help balance your life and get your energy back.

Nha Trang is quickly developing and will soon become one of the most modern cities in Vietnam thanks to contributions from many enterprises such as Uma Condotel and Kubera Condotel. We hope you will join us to enhance the development and future prosperity in tourism of Nha Trang and Vietnam.

Visit chamoasis.vn for more info ■





Underwater Relaxation Exploration

For a new wave of wellness-seeking pleasure, lay back and enjoy

Text by SONIA GREGOR *Images by* NGOC TRAN

THE NEW EXPLORE SPA at Le Méridien Saigon (9th Floor, 3C Ton Duc Thang, D1) is an oceanic delight for the senses. When the elevator doors opened, I found myself in a large room of iridescent tiles. Wooden arches floating in midair beckoned me forward, over a small bridge, and to a seat at a

curved boat-like desk. On the desk were mysterious bottles, salts and oils for different spa treatments. I was offered a perfumed cup of iced tea, and asked to choose between several samples of massage oils. I chose the one called Breathe, for its light herbal scent. This would be used during the second half of

my treatment, after the sea salt scrub. Then my masseuse appeared and I was whisked away to my own private massage chamber. The lights were dim, ethereal music played and a small diffuser gave the room an enchanting smell. I was given a bathrobe and slippers to change into in private.



Having stepped out of my dirty Saigon street shoes, I was thrilled to start the treatment with a rejuvenating foot soak. Warm water filled with slices of citrus and lemongrass welcomed my weary soles. As I breathed in these spicy Vietnamese herbs, my whole body began to relax. Next my feet were scrubbed with cinnamon-scented sea salt and pumice stone. Newly clean and sweet-smelling, my feet were toweled dry and placed back in their slippers.

I lay down on the massage table, and a deliciously warm mixture of oil and sea salt was smoothed onto my back. I had heard that this unique Le Méridien scrub contained not just sea salt, but extracts of pearl and algae as well, imbuing it with all sorts of powerful oceanic health benefits. The circular strokes of scrubbing moved in waves along my back, not painful, like small flashes of light going off. I was reminded of bioluminescent tides on the beach, when every wave flickers blue lights as it breaks on the shore. When I walked into the Explore Spa, my skin had been peeling from sunburn during a trip to Vung Tau, but soon that dead skin was a distant memory. Once I had been scrubbed all over, legs and arms, a rain shower in the adjoining bathroom was

turned on, and I leisurely washed the salty mixture from my body.

The massages at Explore Spa are a unique blend of Swedish and Eastern traditions. They use natural essential oils to heal and remove toxins from the skin. At the start of my massage, I was asked what level of pressure I preferred. You can opt for a very deep tissue massage, but I chose something less intense. My massage began with strong pressure on targeted points along the spine, causing my back to crack and relax. Then it changed into longer strokes that slowly wore away my tight muscles. A lavender eye pillow relaxed my face while my legs and arms were kneaded and stretched. Finally, my favorite part, the head and face massage, stimulating my scalp and softening the muscles along my jaw.

After being salted, scrubbed, perfumed and stretched, I awakened from this dream-like realm, amazed to find that only 90 minutes had passed. I felt like I had journeyed to a kingdom beneath the sea, and returned younger than when I left. My body was utterly relaxed and awake, shining and fresh. I was offered a reviving cup of ginger tea. As I sipped, I listened to the happy sounds of children playing in the pool next door. The calming, shimmering

spa offers facials, massages and a range of sea-inspired spa treatments. With a Jacuzzi, sauna and steam room to help you unwind, this is truly the place to escape.

The Explore Spa is a great space to socialize, in addition to pampering yourself. Beside the indoor pool is the Explore Bistro that serves up health-conscious fare like wraps and smoothies. They also offer sparkling cocktails, perfect for a spa day with friends. Group bookings at the spa are encouraged, and there is a double massage room if you would like to share the experience with someone. Whatever your needs, there is a treatment for you: detox, anti-cellulite and anti-aging therapies are all offered. I'm especially eager to try the Four Hand Choreography, a 75-minute massage with two therapists working in sync.

To celebrate their new opening, Explore Spa is currently offering 30 percent off on the Underwater Spa Package (90 minutes of a blissful foot soak, salt scrub and massage) that I experienced, making it VND1,176,000++. If you hurry to Le Méridien Saigon (www.lemeridiensaigon.com), they'll help you forget about hurrying for the rest of the day. ■





Darjeeling

Images by JIMMY VAN DER KLOET

Chowrasta, Darjeeling's main square, is where the town's major roads converge, offering stunning views of the surrounding mountains and valleys. From there you can walk to the Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park, the largest high altitude zoo in India. Walking a few kilometers further you can visit the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, featuring a telescope given by Hitler to the Commander-in-chief of the Royal Nepal Army in 1937.





*The train station is home to the “Toy Train,”
a vintage British-built B Class steam
locomotive dating from 1881.*



Darjeeling train station is the last on the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway. A narrow gauge runs from New Jalpaiguri, climbing 2,100 meters over 78 kilometers.

>>The List Travel



Ana Mandara Villas | Dalat

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



Boutique Hoi An Resort

Explore the rich heritage of Hoi An at Boutique Hoi An Resort. Discover authentic Vietnamese cuisine and hospitality, unwind in the swimming pool surrounded by lush tropical gardens or indulge in a massage at our hotel spa. Our villas are directly on the beach facing the sea with large terraces for the ultimate in privacy and relaxation.

34 Lac Long Quan, Cam An, Hoi An
+84 (0)510 3939 111
www.boutiquehoianresort.com



Cham Villas - Boutique Luxury Resort

Best resort in Mui Ne. Located right by the beach in one hectare of lush tropical gardens, this 18 villa property is ideal to get away from the hustle and bustle, to chill out and be pampered. Each villa has a bath overlooking a private garden and a large private patio with comfortable club chairs and a day bed. Two restaurants provide culinary pleasures to round up a perfect holiday.

32 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, Phan Thiet
+84 62 3741 234
www.chamvillas.com



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
www.facebook.com/chamgardenmuine



InterContinental Nha Trang

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

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



Mia

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

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



Pullman Danang Beach Resort

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

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



Sheraton Nha Trang Hotel & Spa

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

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



The Island Lodge

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

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

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

SKIN CLINIC



Stamford Skin Centre

Stamford Skin Centre is a Laser Dermatology Clinic developed by Stamford Healthcare Ltd. We never cease to improve our quality of medical care.

99 Suong Nguyet Anh, Dist. 1, HCMC
(08) 3925 1990 or 0908 453 338
www.stamfordskin.com

SPA



Aveda Herbal Spa & Wellness

Aveda is an authentic Indian spa specializing in Ayurvedic and herbal treatments for revitalizing the body and soul in a clean, professional ambience. Meet qualified Panchakarma specialist to know your health history and body constitution through Ayurvedic theories. Their Panchakarma expert will advise the best treatments, dietary and lifestyle plan based on your prakriti (body constitution).

Villa 1, Hem 21 (21/1) Xuan Thuy, Thao Dien, D2,
www.avedaaherbal.com
(08)3519 4679 / 090 697 7110
avedaaherbal@gmail.com
Facebook: avedaaherbal/avedasaigon



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. 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.yckspa.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.
90-92 Dinh Tien Hoang 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



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!
+84 8 39432853 sgnexpress@seal.com.vn www.seal.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



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

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

AEC 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 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

Education



Education Evaluation

A look at Vietnam's growing options of international schools

TEXT BY SAMI YOSEF

THE LOCAL REAL ESTATE MARKET has been in a sort of “honeymoon” phase when it comes to foreign investors, as the state allowed foreigners to purchase property for the first time in July 2015. The fact that you see so many new projects showing up around the city obviously shows that local developers are expecting foreigners, and obviously locals, to pounce on their new supply of developments.

As foreign investment in Vietnam expands and the country offers an increasingly favorable alternative to China for many multinational companies, so Vietnam is attracting more expat families and with it, a growing number of English-medium international schools.

These are schools for children between 3 and 18 years old, where learning takes place in English and typically follow a Western approach, with globally-recognized qualifications and good standards of teaching and learning. International schools in Vietnam vary in their size, orientation, facilities, fees and demographics; attracting both Western and Asian expats, as well as an increasing number of children from local families.

The International School Consultancy (ISC Research), which tracks information on the world's international schools, lists 109 international schools in Vietnam for pre-school, primary or secondary students. Most of them are either British or American-oriented in the curriculum and qualifications they offer. Ten of Vietnam's international schools offer students the chance to study the International Baccalaureate (IB), working toward the IB Diploma.

Ho Chi Minh City is not only the

leading city in Vietnam for international schools, it is also one of the top cities in the world for its selection of international schools, with a current total of 64. Hanoi is the only other major city in Vietnam offering a significant range of international school options, with 32 schools.

Although originally established for expats, it is no longer just these families who are today enrolling at Vietnam's international schools. An increasing number of local parents are now seeking them out over local schools because international school students stand a much higher chance of obtaining a place at a reputable Western university and, with it, a passport to good career opportunities and success both abroad and back home.

As well as graduating from these schools with globally-recognized qualifications, international school students study all, or the majority, of their subjects in English, ensuing they develop a very high competence of the language. They are also educated in a way that prepares them for the independent learning approach demanded by the world's leading universities. With increasing competition for placements on university degree courses, particularly those in Britain, the US and Canada, it is this combination of qualifications, skills and language ability that sets the students apart.

Meeting Demands

However, options for local families at international schools in Vietnam are limited. Some international schools—those that are 100 percent foreign-owned—have restrictions set by the

Vietnamese government on the number of local children who can attend.

At these schools, enrolment of local children is capped at a maximum of 10 percent of the total student population for primary schools, and 20 percent for secondary schools. There is speculation that these caps for local children may be removed or relaxed in the future, but the government is yet to release any statement confirming this.

There are no restrictions, however, at the locally-owned international and bilingual schools where up to 100 percent of the students can be Vietnamese. These schools do have to comply to certain government requirements, including teaching Vietnamese culture and the Vietnamese language. Needless to say, this offers a particularly appealing solution for local families, providing children with an education that combines internationally-recognized curricula and examinations with local cultural identity.

As a result of the lack of enrolment restrictions for locally-owned bilingual and international schools, many such establishments have opened recently in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi to respond to the growing demand from Vietnamese families. Although some are achieving very high standards of teaching and learning, not all Vietnamese-owned international schools meet the standards that many parents expect. Accreditation helps to identify reputable schools, and parents considering the Vietnamese-owned international schools may want to look for schools that have achieved WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) or NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges) accreditation to guide them in their choice.

The high density of international schools in Ho Chi Minh City means that the international schools have to remain competitive in the quality and range of their education provision. Most of the leading schools for educational standards are close to capacity or have waiting lists and are much in demand by both expats and wealthier Vietnamese families. The potential lifting of local enrolment restrictions at many of these schools will be very good news for local families resulting in greater choice and more opportunities.

Association membership and accreditation are two ways of identifying reputable schools. The leading international school associations in Vietnam include COBIS (the Council of British International Schools), EARCOS (East Asia Regional Council of Schools) and FOBISIA (Federation of British International Schools in Asia). They have codes of practice that schools need to maintain.

Another good way to judge an international school is its accreditation. Look for registered, accredited international schools. Some schools may say they are in the process of applying for accreditation. In a situation like this, it's worth investigating how long that has been going on for. No accreditation process should take more than two years.

Learning Environment

Think about the learning environment you want for your child. With increasing school options available, you need to decide your priorities. These can include the size of the school, student demographics, the learning resources available in the classrooms, the number of native English-speaking teachers and school leaders on staff, the type of curriculum, the learning approach, sports or arts facilities, proximity to your home, support for special education needs including gifted and talented children if necessary, and so on.

Think about the curriculum that you want your child to be learning. Sometimes schools will deliver a national curriculum (such as the National Curriculum of England) but provide a more international focus to make it relevant for all children in the school. Children do benefit from learning within the context of the country they are living in as well as from an international perspective.

There are also a number of respected international curricula now offered in many international schools including the International Baccalaureate (IB) which has programs for all ages (PYP, MYP and Diploma), or the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) and International

Middle Years Curriculum (IMYC). These internationally-oriented curricula, which are relevant for all children in all countries wherever they are living and learning, can be a badge of quality for an international school and often suggest a strong focus on the learning needs of all children.

Also investigate the exam qualifications that a school offers. Some international schools take British GCSEs and A levels, others study towards American High School Diplomas, and others take more international-oriented exams such as the IGCSE or the IB Diploma.

The curriculum your child will follow and the qualifications they can achieve may impact the higher education opportunities available to them.

Sami Yosef is the Southeast Asia Consultant at The International School Consultancy. He is based in Bangkok and surveys and interviews international schools throughout the region including those in Vietnam, collecting data and intelligence on the market. Much of this research is used by the schools to support expansion and new development. Sami is one of a team of regional research consultants based around the world. More information is available at www.iscresearch.com ■





While English is the main language at school, students in all grades are highly encouraged to learn additional languages such as German, French (from 3 years old), Spanish and Vietnamese (from 6 years old).

Leveraging Languages

Is translanguaging the answer to 21st century multilingual classrooms?

TEXT BY NPD KHANH

IMAGES PROVIDED BY EIS

IT IS HARD TO ARGUE against the importance of English as a truly world language. Used by almost 942 million people around the world, and in five of the world's top ten largest economies, it is considered vitally important in global business, diplomacy, politics, and even in science. For these reasons, international schools are enjoying a phenomenal rise in popularity in Vietnam as parents around the country, both local and foreign, perceive English fluency as tantamount to the success of their children's future and their ability to navigate an increasingly globalized world. For the sake of English fluency, students are often told to leave their mother language at home and to speak only English while attending interna-

tional schools. In recent years, however, new academic research and studies in the science of learning have suggested that this approach maybe a flawed one.

"I have seen children who, after a few years in international schools, are more fluent in English than in their mother tongue... and are praised for it by their parents and teachers," says Iain Fish, Head of School at European International School Ho Chi Minh City (EIS; www.eishcmc.com). "However, in the last 10 years, there has been a growing understanding, a growing recognition of the value and importance of children maintaining their mother language alongside learning English. New studies have shown that children who maintain their mother tongue often demonstrate

better conceptual learning and overall academic performance. They often also acquire English more quickly. The very same studies show that overly focusing on English over a child's birth language may end up hobbling the child's cognitive and emotional development in the long term."

Citing research on the concept of "translanguaging," Iain goes on to explain. "Language is one of the most fundamental parts of our learning process. We are shaped by the languages that we speak. We see the world through it, express ourselves through it, learn of new ideas and concepts through it. And we do this most comfortably and easily in our mother tongue. This is doubly true for multilingual children or children

in their formative age. When there is a focus on English over the mother tongue during a child's formative years, it comes at the detriment of cognitive development."

Adding: "What we are saying is that while English is very important and yes we should still maintain English as the primary language of instruction in international schools, we should never do this at the cost of sidelining the student's mother language. A strong grasp in the mother language is the foundation of strong lingual skills and conceptual learning."

According to Iain, as international schools all over the country receive more and more children of diverse ethnicities and nationalities, the issue of preserving the mother tongues becomes increasingly relevant and pressing.

Change is Coming

This academic year, change is coming to EIS. In a bid to bring research into practice and attempt a better educational approach, the school is setting up a campaign to reconnect and embrace mother languages alongside its official language of instruction.

"Obviously we cannot upturn our foundation of English as the language of instruction. However, there are many ways we can support the students and provide them with opportunities to maintain and appreciate their mother language within the setting of the school. We are encouraging teachers to be more open and flexible with non-English

languages used within the classroom. We are educating parents on how to support their children at home. We are reaching out to the wider community to seek ways to support multilingualism. We are setting up structures in the school programs and timetables to allow space for mother languages to enter into what is previously an English-only environment," claims Iain.

On the surface, these may seem small tweaks to the established system, but to some teachers and parents, these changes go against decades-old traditions. For years, the English-only environment has been synonymous with international schools. Many teachers speak only English. To them, allowing mother languages in the classroom means letting go of control, of not knowing what their students are up to. And yet Iain speaks of going beyond even that. He talks of possibly allowing students to do research for homework in their native language. He talks of setting up individual or small group sessions where outside tutors can be brought in to work with the teachers in interacting with the students in their native languages.

"It's a leap of faith," he admits. "Changing one's mindset is a difficult thing to do. We want our teachers to know that this is about valuing languages and the cultures that come with them. Too often children come into an English-speaking environment, and because they are not given the chance to speak their native languages at school, it belittles that language. It devalues that language. You have got teachers saying,

'Oh no, you can't speak Finnish at school. It's an English-speaking environment.' The message that is coming down all the time is that your native language is not important. English is important, your mother language is not important. And that is not healthy for these kids. Simply by giving the students scope to use their mother languages, we increase the value of their home language. At the end of the day, we want to create an environment in which a child's English acquisition grows, their mother language is supported, and their cognitive ability grows unhindered."

Despite years of research backing up the advantages of a strong mother language foundation and the growing recognition of its importance, the kind of development going on at EIS is very much in its infancy in international schools all over the world. It requires nothing less than a sweeping cultural change within the international school setting, and cultural changes take time.

"It's a long-term thing," says Iain. "It's not going to happen overnight and it's not going to happen all at once. Things will have to be managed carefully. Right now, we are just beginning to promote these concepts with teachers, parents and students and setting things up for big changes in the future. So far, responses have been promising. Our end goal is to have our students graduate as true bilinguals with, ideally, a very strong third language. That's going to take commitment from the school and from the parents, but, in the interest of the children and their development, I think it's an investment worth making." ■



Students went to 100% alimentaire, a French shop next to the school. They tasted different products, ordered food, played games and practiced French with French locals and EIS parents who can speak the language.

What Do You Teach?

Social and emotional learning, teaching the heart as well as the brain



“WHAT DO YOU DO FOR A LIVING?”

“I am a teacher.”

“Oh! What do you teach?”

This is a more complicated question than most people realize. I have provided instruction on many things including, but not limited to, literacy, mathematics, science, geography, vocational training, community skills, occupational therapy, speech, art, music, languages, etc. Those are only subjects though, and they change depending on where I am teaching. What never changes is the fact that I teach students—that is what I teach.

Traditionally, educators are charged with providing rigorous academic instruction in order to maximize subject-based performance for all students. This is what we measure with assessments and chart on our data trackers during a student’s educational career. What we do not measure in our pupils nor ask of our teachers is how they will instruct and account for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in their classrooms. It is not a required course credit to earn most diplomas, so how can we concern ourselves with, or even justify, dedicating instructional minutes to it?

The answer is because I do not just teach literacy from 9am-10am and assume a child does not need me for the next 15-minute break. Teachers do not stop teaching when we are on the playground for duty or at lunch or on school trips. The reason for it has nothing to do with professional eagerness or a desire to get ahead in our careers.

The reason is not only do I have

to have answers for questions about punctuation and perimeters, but I also have to have an answer when the child who was picked last for the dodgeball game feels left out. I have to have an answer for the student who asks me if he did something wrong since his parents are getting a divorce. I even have to have an answer for the pain-taking silence coming from the girl who just moved here from another country.

The girl picked last is struggling immensely in mathematics in spite of her aptitude for it. She does not have the coping skills she needs to work effectively during group activities. She feels isolated, alone and depressed. Playground rules might ensure she is a team player, but they do not prepare her for the rules of networking she will encounter in her adult life. She will need fortitude, the ability to advocate for herself, and fearlessness to overcome the challenge. There are no standards to measure these.

The boy in the middle of the divorce used to be the class clown with his boisterous, playful demeanor. Now he never raises his hand and sits by himself at lunch. He is on-target, but he should be well ahead with his gifted mind. He has developed a healthy fear of failure. “Nothing ventured, nothing gained” for most of us, but for him, “nothing ventured, so I can’t be a disappointment to anyone.” He needs tenacity, a sense of self-worth, and the ability to forgive himself and others to overcome the challenge. There are no standards to measure these.

The girl who just moved here never turns in homework, never wants to

go on school trips, and never goes to birthday parties or sleepovers. She is struggling in all subjects, and the other students describe her as a little mean. She is angry because she was happy where she was before. She does not have the skills she needs to adjust when life simply is not fair. She needs resilience, adaptability and positive psychology to overcome the challenge. There are no standards to measure these.

I have to have an answer so I can reach them. And by an “answer,” I do not mean a vague blanket statement of comfort. When I say “answer,” I mean concrete activities a child can employ in order to process their emotions, the emotions of others, and their choices. Concrete *skills*.

When students feel disconnected, they detach from a school’s social network as well as their learning. Multiple studies have proven when a student is in emotional distress, their academic performance can decline significantly. Inversely, a study from Loyola University Chicago demonstrated that students who received explicit instruction in SEL at schools showed an 11 percent increase in academic achievement. I know that is just a number, but imagine an 11 percent increase in your salary, in the size of your house, and even your time off. Now think about that 11 percent in schools. SEL programs are vital to the future of education.

The world is most certainly a smaller place, and all we have to do is turn on the news to know that even as adults we can still be at a loss for words or actions in the wake of tragedy. As educators, we must ensure the next generation is academically prepared, but we must also take care to teach not only the skills they need to pick themselves back up when they fall, but also empathy to help the person next to them when *they* do. Going back to the original question: What do I teach? I teach intellectual and emotional nourishment. I teach kindness, courage and relentlessness. I teach *people*, hopefully, to follow their hearts for the benefit of their minds. ■



Stacey Conner is a specialist in Special Educational Needs. She joined Saigon Star International School as Class Teacher in August 2015.

Education

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS



Anne Hill International School

Anne Hill International School is a school for children from 18 months up till 6 years old and its curriculum incorporates the Montessori Method, Jolly Phonics and enrichment programs.

Classes are conducted in spacious, safe and well-equipped classrooms with a low student-to-teacher ratio.

Outdoor facilities include a large covered playground, covered and gated swimming-pool, built-in water-play feature, mini-trampoline, mini-golf area, tent fun area, sandpit, and eco-garden.

"Learning is a journey, not a race."

33 Giang Van Minh, An Phu Ward, HCMC

School ages: 18 months to 6 years old

Website: annehill.school

Phone: +84 906 846 939, +848 3740 4019

info@annehill.school



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 Trung 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 Trung Toan, D2
+84 (8) 3898 9100
admissions@aaavn.edu.vn
www.aaavn.edu.vn



Renaissance International School Saigon

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

www.renaissance.edu.vn

Saigon South International School

Founded in 1997, Saigon South International School seeks to accommodate an increasing need for American education for both local residents and expatriate families. SSIS enrolls over 850 students in Early Childhood – Grade 12 from over thirty-three countries in a spacious six-hectare, well-equipped campus.

www.ssis.edu.vn

The 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

Also...

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.aivietnam.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

DISCOVER O! VIETNAM ON YOUR DEVICE WITH ISSUU

You don't have to wait to pick up **O! Vietnam** locally – you can enjoy each issue (and all previous issues) as soon as it's available, right on your phone, iPad, or other mobile device. Scan the QR code below and download the Issuu app for iOS or Android (or visit issuu.com on your Windows phone) and subscribe to **O! Vietnam**.

issuu.com/oivietnam

REFLECTIONS GETS GRILLING *for* U.S. BEEF WEEKS

From 12th – 24th September

Caravelle's atmospheric fine-dining experience, Reflections is welcoming carnivores with a special menu of prime U.S. Beef from 12th to 24th September.

Tenderloin, rib-eye or Black Angus strip loin ranging in weight of 150 – 350 grams will be expertly cooked over a charcoal heated iron grill and presented with a choice of two side dishes, traditional condiments and sauces.

*For more information, please call 0906 900 523
or email: culinary@caravellehotel.com*



Exclusive benefits for members of Caravelle Classique Club are applicable

CARAVELLE HOTEL – THE HEART OF SAIGON

19-23 Lam Son Square, District 1
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
hotel@caravellehotel.com
caravellehotel.com
+848 3823 4999



Reflections
RESTAURANT





"MUSIC IS TO THE SOUL WHAT WORDS ARE TO THE MIND."
MODEST MOUSE



www.aisvietnam.com/10thanniversary

enrolments@aisvietnam.com

+84 8 3742 4040


AIS
10
CELEBRATING **10** YEARS
OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

