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VIETNAM

12-2016

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

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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

Graphic Designer **HIEEN NGUYEN**
hien@oivietnam.com

Editorial Intern **ROISIN MURRAY**

Photography Intern **VAN RAMBO**

For advertising please contact:

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

General **advertising@oivietnam.com**

Inquiries **info@oivietnam.com**



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Photographer: **Ngoc Tran**

MUA: **Kim Bi**

Model: **Singer Melissa Mondeja**

Stylist: **Fashion Designer Brian Vo**

Studio: **EDGE**

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ĐT: (08) 62907317

Chịu trách nhiệm xuất bản:

Giám đốc, Tổng biên tập

Nguyễn Xuân Trường

Biên tập: Tạ Quang Huy

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Gala Dinner Buffet (8:00pm onwards)
*From VND 1,980,000++ per person***

Christmas Day – Sunday, 25th December

Luncheon (11:30am – 3:00pm)
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*From VND 2,490,000++ per person***

NINETEEN LAYS OUT LAVISH YEAR-END BUFFET*

Saturday, 31st December

As 2017 draws closer, make your last meal of the year a memorable one! Look over 2016's highlights, surround yourself with friends and loved ones, and indulge in a magnificent buffet in the heart of Saigon at Nineteen's New Year's Eve Gala Dinner

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24th and 31st December 2016

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*** Please visit www.caravellehotel.com or scan the QR code below for price details*

**** Tickets for Saigon Saigon Bar are available at the entrance from 7:00pm on 24th and 31st December*

*For more information, please contact Caravelle Festive Counter at the Hotel Lobby
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Datebook

What's on this month...

NOVEMBER 30-DECEMBER 3

What: The 14th Vietnam International Trade Fair

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

About: Organized for the past 13 years, the Vietnam Expo in Ho Chi Minh City serves as a bridge for trade promotion between Vietnam and international enterprises, especially in the Asia area. In 2015, the fair attracted 450 participants with 550 booths from 16 countries: China, Taiwan, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Japan, the US, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Romania, Spain, Thailand, Singapore, amongst others.

Key areas of focus are international pavilions, machinery and electronics, home improvement and ecotech (ecological technology is a new feature this year). Its debut is a response to the green technology trend within renewable energy in manufacture and industrial activities, with the ultimate aim of contributing solutions to global climate change and environmental pollution.

Contact: Visit www.hcm.vietnamexpo.com.vn for more info



DECEMBER 3

What: Festive Fair at the International School Saigon Pearl

Where: International School Saigon Pearl (92 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh); 9am-12pm

About: Join the International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP) for their Free Festive Fair, for children aged 18 months-11 years old. It features a morning of festive fun that includes cookie decorating, making Christmas tree trimmings, a visit to Santa Claus and more. Children 18 months to 4 years old can also visit the free Mommy and Me playgroup.

Contact: Visit www.issp.edu.vn for more info



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DECEMBER 8

What: Ravolution Music Festival

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

About: Ravolution Music Festival is a brand new festival experience organized by Anternation and Kingdom Corporation in partnership with Greenhouse. The organizers promise to set a tone for electronic music culture in Vietnam as the growth of EDM in Asia continues to thrive. The headline act, KSHMR, has had a run of success in 2016 with a number of singles such as Touch and Wildcard, plus performances at Coachella and EDC Las Vegas.

Contact: Visit www.secc.com.vn for more info

DECEMBER 8-10

What: Home(icide) for the Holidays

Where: Cafe-Restaurant (1st Floor, 171 Calmette, D1); 7pm; VND800,000

About: This is an adult murder mystery dinner theater where you and your friends get to play detective and enjoy live music while dining on a three-course meal. Get out your jewels and furs, because the Saigon Players will spoof celebrity fundraisers, questionable causes, and the “beautiful people” who support them. Nautical, naughty or pirate attire is encouraged. All proceeds will go to two local children’s charities: Kids in Vietnam and the Friends of Street Children Association.

Contact: Email saigonplayerstickets@gmail.com for tickets

DECEMBER 8

What: Tech Meetup at Ansarada

Where: Ansarada (3rd floor, E-town 1, 364 Cong Hoa, Tan Binh); 7-9pm; free

About: Ansaradal, in partnership with PYCOGROUP and Saigon JavaScript, has teamed up to co-host an event about Microservices in .NET. It will be hosted in a collaborative environment where the tech community can share their ideas and learn from one another. Speakers include Owen Senior, an expert in .Net and Microservices, and Nicolas Embleton, who has extensive experience of leading product development in Vietnam. For a chance to listen to the experts and expand your network within the tech community, this event is not to be missed. The venue can only accommodate 100 attendees so save your seat early to avoid potential disappointment.

Contact: Visit team.ansarada.com/hochiminhcity for more info

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All the best in the year of the Monkey!

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www.pacificcross.com.vn



DECEMBER 9

What: Fashion as a Response: A Cultural Anatomy of Fashion's History

Where: Vietnam Fashion Academy (Second floor, 14 Ton That Dam, D1); 10am-4:30pm

About: A lecture series delivered by Professor Amanda Hallay from LIM College in New York. This approach to fashion history will focus on placing clothing into a larger context; the lecture will address the problem of fashion being taught out of context, and presented as nothing but a series of pretty dresses that seem to exist independently to the socio-economic, political and cultural landscape that created them. Professor Hallay will demonstrate to the attendees that culture is instead a circuit board, and everything from politics to art, to science to dance is connected, sparking off the other to produce the zeitgeist of an era. Lecture highlights include The Dawn of Fashion: Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt, and Glamour's Golden Age: Fashion of the 1930s and 1940s.

Contact: Visit vietnamfashionacademy.com for more info

DECEMBER 10

What: Saigon International Guitar Festival.

Where: Ho Chi Minh City Conservatory of Music (112 Nguyen Du, D1); 8-10pm

About: With a mission to bring great guitar music to the city and to inspire young guitarists, the Saigon International Guitar Festival 2016 festival returns once again in December. The SIGF is the only international classical guitar festival in Vietnam featuring internationally acclaimed guitarists and educators. The guitarists performing hail from the US and Australia, and promise to deliver an incredibly rousing program of classical guitar music. The third installment of the annual event hopes to contribute to the development of the art of classical guitar in Ho Chi Minh City and Vietnam, in the context of global exchange and integration of the arts.

Contact: Visit www.hcmcons.vn for more info



DECEMBER 6-12

What: International Kite Festival

Where: Vung Tau Beach (Vung Tau, Ba Ria)

About: This year's week-long festival, with the theme "Dance of Peace," will take place on the beautiful beaches of Vung Tau City. The event attracts 60 kite artisans and connoisseurs from 25 countries and territories including Germany, the Netherlands, the UK, France, Sweden and Singapore. Nearly 50 artisans from Vietnam's big kite clubs, including Phuong Hoang of Ho Chi Minh City and Dieu Hue of Hue, will also join the event. There will be competitions in kite making and kite flying, along with a special evening kite performance. A food festival to promote traditional Vietnamese cuisine will be also organized during the festival, while performers of art troupes from the province and neighboring provinces will present music and dance performances to entertain visitors.

Contact: Visit www.vietnamtourism.com for more info



DECEMBER 9-11

What: The Nutcracker Ballet

Where: Ho Chi Minh City Opera House (7 Lam Son Square, D1); 8pm, from VND200,000

About: *The Nutcracker*, by P.I.Tchaikovsky, is one of the most well-known and performed ballets. The HBSO version, which premiered in 2011, was choreographed by the talented Johann Jakhelln Constant and was a great success. Constant has had much experience staging this work for Ballet Quad Cities in the US. This year will include HBSO ballet dances, French ballet dancer Chloe Glemot, HBSO symphony orchestra, HBSO female choir and the talented conductor Tran Nhat Minh.

Contact: Call 3823 7419 for tickets

DECEMBER 10 & 11

What: The Sixth International Conference on Language, Literature, Culture and Education (ICLLCE) 2016

Where: Liberty Central Saigon Citypoint Hotel (59 Pasteur, D1)

About: The conference is an interdisciplinary forum discussing theories, research findings and new advancements in the areas of language, literature, culture and education. This year, the featured theme will be "Human Research in the Twenty-First Century." The keynote speaker is Dr. Mah Boon Yih, acclaimed lecturer, author and consultant who has won numerous awards and has been featured in the Who's Who in Science and Engineering 2011-2012 and 2016-2017.

Contact: Visit icsai.org/icllce6 for more info



DECEMBER 10

What: 21st Annual AmCham Governors' Ball - A Southern Christmas.

Where: InterContinental Asiana Saigon (Corner of Hai Ba Trung and Le Duan, D1)

About: The theme is "A Southern Christmas". This year's holiday fête will feature gourmet fare, diverse musical entertainment and the usual abundance of holiday fellowship and cheer. As the Governors' Ball brings together the extended American community of its members, spouses and friends, together with US and Vietnamese business and government leaders, it provides a unique opportunity for companies to inform a very large audience, in a festive and charitable setting. As in the past, all proceeds from the 2016 Governors' Ball will go to support AmCham's flagship CSR initiative, the AmCham Scholarships Program. The Scholarships Program recognizes top Vietnamese students at Vietnam National University and other select HCMC schools, and helps prepare them to become local leaders in business, education and society. The Program is managed entirely by AmCham Alumni/ae and HR associates at AmCham member companies, and it annually awards approximately 80 coveted scholarships to outstanding local students.

Contact: Visit www.amchamvietnam.com for more info

DECEMBER 18

What: Bud Music Festival

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

About: The Budweiser stage will host one of the world's top DJs: Afrojack. This Dutch DJ regularly features in the top 10 of DJ Magazine's Top 100 DJs, and is well-known for headlining some of the world's most coveted EDM music festivals, including Tomorrowland, Ultra-Music Festival and Coachella. Tickets are priced at VND399,000 per person for regular tickets, VND350,000 per person in a group of four and VND800,000 for the VIP experience.

Contact: Visit ticketbox.vn/budweiser/en for more info

DECEMBER 18

What: Christmas Concert

Where: Ho Chi Minh City Opera House (7 Lam Son Square, D1); 8pm; from VND200,000

About: HBSO will hold a Christmas Concert filled with choral compositions. The program is an opportunity to embrace the spirit of Christmas. The sound of the choir will create a sense of awe through signature pieces such as *Ave Maria*, *Mille Cherubini in coro* by Franz Schubert, *Hallelujah* by George Frideric Handel, and *Gloria in excelsis Deo* by Antonio Vivaldi. The concert will be performed by the HBSO full choir, HBSO symphony orchestra, staged by and under the baton of the talented conductor Tran Nhat Minh.

Contact: Call 3823 7419 for tickets

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DECEMBER 29

What: Dancing with Classical

Where: Ho Chi Minh City Opera House (7 Lam Son Square, D1); 8pm; from VND200,000

About: The event will see the return of the famous Vietnamese conductor Le Phi Phi, who currently has a successful career in Europe, and has also made many contributions to the development of the genre in Vietnam. The program will bring different dance pieces, from the noble waltz to the upbeat tango, bolero and mambo. This concert will be performed by the HBSO symphony orchestra with wonderful music from Tchaikovsky, Ravel, Brahms, Johann Strauss, Leonard Bernstein and Leroy Anders.

Contact: Call 38237419 for tickets

The Bulletin

Promotions and news in HCMC and beyond...



CATHAY DRAGON LAUNCHES NEW ERA

Last month, the Cathay Pacific Group announced a new era of growth and opportunity for its two airlines. Cathay Pacific's wholly-owned sister airline Dragonair is to be rebranded as Cathay Dragon. The two will remain as separate airlines, operating under their own licenses. By more closely aligning the two brands, this rebranding will capitalize on Cathay Pacific's high international brand recognition and leverage on Cathay Dragon's unique connectivity into Mainland China. The airlines' customers will benefit from greater convenience and a more seamless travel experience.

"We can assure our customers that Cathay Dragon will continue to provide the same high level of products and services that made us a four-time winner of the World's Best Regional Airline award. We will have the same dedicated team continuing to offer their friendly and caring service style. We will also continue to build on our experience and understanding of what our passengers like and treasure, such as speciality Chinese and Asian dishes as well as popular local Hong Kong snacks," said Cathay Dragon's Chief Executive Officer Algernon Yau.

The rebranding, however, encompasses far more than simply a new name and look. It will introduce both airlines to a wider audience, from the growing inflow of overseas passengers who are more familiar with the Cathay Pacific brand, to the increasingly large numbers of Cathay Dragon passengers from Mainland China who seek the convenience and assurance of an internationally-recognized premium airline with global connectivity.



JOIN THE PARTY

Party Inc. was established by friends who enjoy hosting parties and want to make party organizing easy and fun for everyone. They source supplies not easily accessible in Vietnam to help create magical parties for children, special occasions, and cheerful office or home gatherings.

They offer "one-stop shopping" to reduce the stress of traveling all over town looking for disposable tableware, bargaining on prices with different vendors, having to design and print your own banners, or not being able to find that something special for your party.

Browse through their site (www.partyinc.co) or visit the store located at 385 Tran Hung Dao, D1.

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PULLMAN DANANG BEACH RESORT HONORED AT WORLD LUXURY HOTEL AWARDS

Pullman Danang Beach Resort (www.pullman-danang.com) has been named as Asia's best "Luxury Coastal Resort" at the World Luxury Hotel Awards 2016. The recently-refurbished resort received the prestigious award in a glittering ceremony in Doha, Qatar in October.

"We are delighted and extremely honored to have been named Asia's best 'Luxury Coastal Resort,'" said Christian Bernkopf, General Manager of the Pullman Danang Beach Resort. "Now in their 10th year, the World Luxury Hotel Awards have become the pinnacle of the industry. This award is extremely gratifying, especially following our recent renovation. It is pleasing to know that the comprehensive program of upgrades we undertook has been well-received, and that we have cemented our reputation as Asia's foremost luxury beach resort."


Pullman Danang Beach Resort enjoys a beachfront location with a private stretch of white sand overlooking the East Sea. It complements this stunning setting with an array of luxurious rooms, suites and cottages featuring luxury amenities from CO Bigelow. The resort's exceptional facilities include the Nang Spa, the newly-revamped Azure Beach Lounge and Epice restaurant, plus space for meetings, conferences, exhibitions and events, including unforgettable beachfront weddings.



PROMOTIONS ON HERITAGE LINE'S LUXURY CRUISES THROUGH APRIL 2017

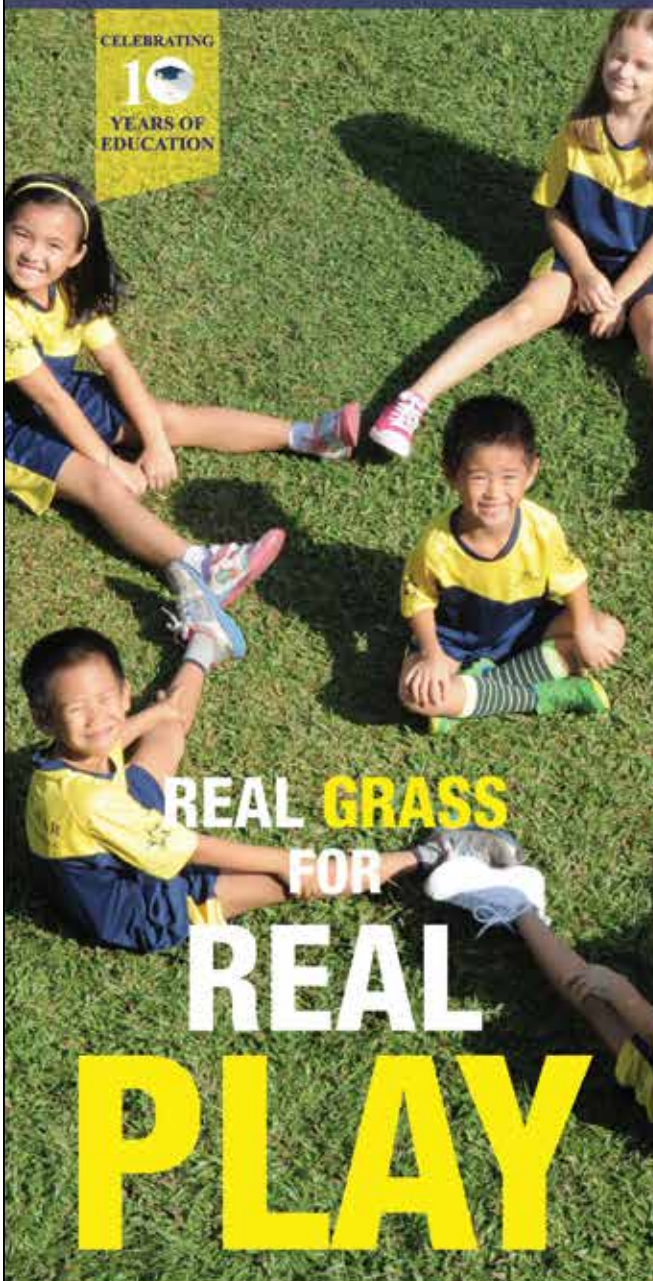
Heritage Line, one of the most prestigious luxury river cruise companies in Southeast Asia, recently launched promotions for Mekong, Myanmar and Halong Bay cruises. Outstanding deals on all cruise destinations are on offer through April 2017 with discounts of 50-65% on 3-11 night cruises on Myanmar's Ayeyarwady River aboard the luxurious Anawrahta. Additionally, enjoy special discounts on all 7-night December sailings aboard the boutique Jahan or Jayavarman river cruisers plying the Mekong River between Saigon and Siem Reap and be entered to win a free 4-night cruise on the Ayeyarwady!

Visit www.heritage-line.com/promotions for more info.




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TROI OI!

The country in numbers



1,000

YOUNGSTERS PARTICIPATED IN the Dance for Kindness flash mob on Hanoi's pedestrian streets last month to celebrate and promote World Kindness Day. The event calls on people to overcome territorial, cultural and religious borders to create a world of trust, belief and love. Besides dancing, an exhibition named "Kindness" was also held, featuring paintings of kids. The proceeds from the sale of the paintings will be donated to the "Warm Winter in Mountainous Areas" fund. Besides Hanoi, the 2016 Dance for Kindness was also held in Vinh, Danang and Ho Chi Minh City with the participation of about 2,000 volunteers. The flash mob dance is the third of its kind to be held in Vietnam.

2 tons

OF ELEPHANT IVORY and 70kg of rhino horn were incinerated in Vietnam for the first time ever on November 12 as the country aims to join the international community in sending a strong message to illegal wildlife fauna and flora traders. Thirty barrels of seized elephant tusks and three barrels of rhino horn were sealed and transported to the Nam Son waste treatment complex in Hanoi's Soc Son district. The barrels were closed in the presence of managers, international organizations and correspondents. Hundreds of samples were taken by scientists for traceability, hoping to track the criminals.



USD 63 million

WAS LOST BY VIETNAMESE BILLIONAIRE, Trinh van Quyet, after Trump was elected US president. Quyet, president of real estate developing company FLC, suffered heavily as both shares that he holds, FLC and ROS, decreased sharply in value. Vietnam, like many other countries, witnessed a sharp fall in the stock index after Trump unexpectedly won the election. The VN Index lost 20 points on November 9. However, the closing index decreased by 6.2 points only, or 0.92 percent, to 670.26 points. The VN30 Index decreased by 6.59 points, or 1.03 percent, to 635.42 points. This shows that blue chips saw sharper price decreases than other shares, which means that the richest stock millionaires suffered the most.



471

HYDROPOWER PLANT PROJECTS have been removed from The Ministry of Industry and Trade's power development plan. The projects that have been terminated were mainly small hydropower plants requiring huge area of land, which were difficult to connect to the national grid and failed to attract investors. Relevant authorities were asked to carefully examine hydropower project proposals and to reject unqualified ones, particularly those that failed to meet environmental and social requirements. Investors of hydropower plants whose construction or operation influenced forestland are required to grow alternative forest cover and pay forest environment service fees.



1.2 tons

OF RICE IS CURRENTLY LEFTOVER from domestic businesses, according to the Vietnam Food Association (VFA) and the Ministry of Industry and Trade's statistics (MoIT). This is the result of excess supply over demand. The excessive amount of rice produced, coupled with other factors are

bringing down prices and increasing leftover quantity in 2016. In the first 10 months of 2016, Vietnam's rice export turnover reached over four million tons at USD1.9 billion, down 18.24 percent in quantity and 14.25 percent in value compared to the same period in 2015.

USD 89.6 billion

WILL BE SPENT ON PUBLIC investment in the 2016-2020 period, under a resolution that received a majority of votes from National Assembly (NA) delegates on November 10. The NA specified that capital will go

to national target programs, national key projects, to those in mountainous, border, island and disaster-prone areas, ethnic minorities, climate change response, fighting drought in the central highlands and central region, salt intrusion prevention in the Mekong Delta, and on settlements for those affected by the Formosa steel mill pollution incident in four central provinces last April.



4 million

MEN IN VIETNAM WILL have little chance of getting married by 2050 if the current imbalance in the nation's sex ratio persists, experts say. According to the Hanoi Population and Family Planning Department, the capital city's boy-to-girl ratio at birth in the first nine months of this year remained high at 113.6:100. Imbalances nationwide

will lead to a shortage of women, which means that by 2050, 2.3-4.3 million men in Vietnam will have little chance of finding wives, the General Directorate of Population and Family Planning estimates. The imbalance in sex ratio at birth and a preference for sons has become a pressing issue in the country. The preference for sons is so deep-rooted that several measures taken in recent years to tackle gender imbalance, including increasing awareness of family planning, are still facing several obstacles.



52 million

VIETNAMESE, OR FIFTY-FOUR percent of Vietnamese people, are already online; Vietnam represents the fifth-largest online population in Asia-Pacific behind China, India, Japan and Indonesia, according to the small and medium enterprise (SME)-focused "Go

Digital" workshop held by Google and the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) last month. The workshop aimed at helping local SMEs get the most out of the internet for their business development. Recent research from Google and the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) noted that digital households in Vietnam are younger, larger and more affluent than their non-connected neighbors. They are likely to be important influencers in their social circles and often the early adopters of products and services. This means they are more valuable to marketers. The research estimated that online households are 1.5 times more valuable than households that are not connected.



THE EVOLUTION OF THE SHOPHOUSE

Step back in time to 17th century Cholon, where shophouses dominated the skyline

TEXT BY JOEP JANSSEN IMAGES FROM LIVING WITH THE MEKONG (BLAUWDRUK PUBLISHERS)

THE SUN COMES UP. I am walking through the streets of Cholon as the first people awake. After they have done their morning workout and have eaten a bowl of *pho*, the shops open. Here in the old neighborhood you still find traditional ‘shophouses,’ deep buildings with shops on the street and living accommodation above them. The facades look a bit like Dutch canal houses—and at the same time they don’t, with all the Chinese characters and ornaments decorating nearly every shop window.

The neighborhood quickly comes to life. There is a street for motorbike parts, but also one for tools, and another one for rice. In the middle of the shopping area is the Ba Thien Hau Pagoda, built in 1760 by the Cantonese community. A Buddhist monk dressed in orange robes steps outside. He has a friendly face, “Nice to meet you, sir. Where are you from?” When I say I am from the Netherlands, he smiles and says he supported Holland in the World Cup. Then, more seriously: “Our temple is dedicated to the Chinese God of the Sea,” he explains. “He protects fishermen and merchants at sea.”

In the early years of Cholon, this help was more than welcome. The Chinese founded the city in 1872, by a tributary of the Saigon River. Because of overpopulation and conflicts, many people from southeast China made the long sea-voyage to Vietnam. The city they built—in effect the Chinese counterpart of Saigon—consisted of an efficient street pattern with terraced houses, connected to the water. It was basically the first

form of urbanization in the area now known as Ho Chi Minh City. Later the French expanded the network of canals in the city. In combination with markets, temples and shophouses, it created a vibrant city. The Vietnamese name of “Cholon” fittingly means “big market.” The city was annexed by Saigon in 1931.

The commercial city captured the imagination of many European visitors. “Cholon shines bright and festively, like a sun from another planet,” young French author Fournier wrote about Cholon in 1929. During her evening stroll, she smelled the scent of fish sauce and saw nothing but shop windows with “Chinese signs with hidden meanings and rituals that have been written from top to bottom.” And she added that in those shops, “They make and sell anything. In the evening, it looks beautiful: many people are working in peace and quiet.” Cholon is the birthplace of the ‘shophouse’ in Ho Chi Minh City. A typical shophouse is a terraced house, flanked by other houses on both sides. The Vietnamese call them “*nha po*,” which literally means “house on the commercial street.” The shophouse is closely connected to life on the street.

When I was driving through the city, I noticed how much they dominated—they determine the look of the city. On the other side of the black river, there were old and new shophouses in bright colors next to each other. That was at the edge of Cholon. Of course, I had seen them in town before, but then they were part of the busy street life. The river created a distance that I apparently needed to understand the meaning of

shophouses. As I was squinting my eyes while looking across the river, I imagined I was in Amsterdam for a moment.

I am invited to have a look in one of the shophouses by the river. I follow the owner through a hall, past the front room and a small storage room to the dining room and kitchen. Stairs lead to the bedrooms on the first floor. The owner tells me he used to keep the families’ valuables in the attic. He shows me the courtyard, where a girl is doing the dishes. Behind there is a crumbling building with a shower and a toilet.

I carry on walking through the center of Cholon. Roll up doors allow the full width of the shop to be opened. When the roll up doors are closed at night, the street looks desolate. It is tricky to walk past the houses in a straight line: the pavement is cluttered with motorcycles and plastic chairs, and some electricity cables are hanging so low above the ground that people trip over them. It makes me walk slowly, allowing me to have a good look inside. What does the shop look like, what do they sell and what are the people doing? Usually the shopkeeper is hidden behind a newspaper somewhere among his goods. When a customer wants to buy something, they negotiate first. The price is brought down, and the shopkeeper takes a seat in a leather office chair behind an oak desk and writes the invoice.

Then he sits back down between his displayed goods, making himself comfortable.

I stumble upon an old building opposite a new block of offices. It





A 1931 photo of a Chinese grocer amidst his merchandise on display. Chinese from Canton built streets with rows of shophouses in Cholon: shops built in between houses on either side and with residential accommodation on the upper floors.

is divided into several houses, each measuring no more than five meters. I end up talking to a woman who lives in one of the houses. She is happy for me to take some photos inside.

The woman pushes open the squeaky, steel gate. It is cool inside. A strip light hangs from the ceiling in the high front room. The harsh light shines on the blue painted walls. In some places, the white paint underneath is showing through. The black and white tiles on the floor are laid out in a checkerboard pattern. Many tiles are worn down, some are cracked. Next to the altar is a classic sculpture. "This old lion," the woman says, "is 150 years old, and it is the pride of our family." We walk past dark brown cabinets and a large bed to a room at the back of the house where several items have been stored. Her mother is watching television in the corner of the kitchen. Sunlight shines down from the open roof. A pair of trousers is hanging to dry. At the moment, it is dry and there is no wind, yet when the monsoon rain clatters on the floor, the wind blows through the cracks of the shutters, and through the walls of the small courtyard. When we are back on the street, the woman points to the Chinese characters on the facade of the house: "This is a tribute to the community and the people who made this building." Only now I realize the building used to be a temple, and has been transformed into shophouses. There are many of these hardly visible traces of history in Cholon. The wom-



Old shophouses along the canal

an explains why the inside and outside still have the original atmosphere: "My mother is very attached to the house and does not allow us to change its history."

THE CANALS OF AMSTERDAM

In the middle of these shophouses that keep memories of grandparents alive, I wonder if there are really any Dutch influences in the shophouses of Ho Chi Minh City. I imagine I am walking past the canals of Amsterdam. There is a row of houseboats moored along the canal. I can hardly see inside the boats. They all have curtains blocking the windows. Wooden planks connect the boats to the quayside, where cars are parked.

The street is narrow. The pavement is not much higher than the street itself. It is tricky to walk here, as the fences, flowerpots, bicycles, passers-by and steps force me to walk in the road. I walk past the canal houses and see shops, workshops and warehouses. A van is unloading goods. The main floor of the canal house is slightly above eye level. It is hard to tell what happens behind the old facades. They are either houses or offices, but I can't get a detailed view of their interior. There are people living in the basement downstairs as well. When I look at the facades across the canal, I notice the alternating pattern of bricks and windows. The win-



center, the smelly canals are so dirty that they barely reflect the canal houses. On the Kali Besar—the canalized Great River that flowed right through old Batavia—a woman sells food on the street. She moves a few plastic chairs, unlocks the door and shows me her canal house. Once inside I am practically outside, as there is no floor or roof. The rich history of the city turns out to be in the hands of the poor people. Merchants and officials have left for the quiet, green suburbs of Jakarta.

In the 17th century, Batavia looked like the center of Amsterdam because of its network of canals surrounded by trees, and rectangular blocks that were divided into small, deep canal houses. As the frugal East India Company spent hardly any money on public buildings, the prosperity of the city was mainly reflected in its civic architecture. The facades of the houses were usually symmetric and the lay-out was simple: one door with cross windows on either side. On the first floor, the front of the house would have one or two windows. Facing the street, on the ground floor, would be a room that could serve as commercial space. Behind this would be a smaller room facing the open courtyard. The number of courtyards depended on the depth of the building. The dining room and kitchen would be at the back of the house. The canal areas of both Amsterdam and Batavia were finalized around 1660.

As I am curious about the urban history of Jakarta and the influence that the Netherlands have had on it, I make an appointment with Candrian Attahiyyat, head of archaeological services. His office is located in the former Dutch town hall on the main square of Batavia. On my way to his office, I notice the city is not made for pedestrians: there are hardly any pavements, or they are too narrow. Perhaps this is a legacy of the Dutch colonial period. In Attahiyyat's office, light shines in through a high window. When I ask whether the Dutch have influenced the characteristics of the shophouses, he explains that Chinese immigrants in the old Batavia were allowed to build their own homes within the rational Dutch system of urban planning. Just like in Dutch cities, the Chinese homes along the waterways were focused on trade. The commercial architecture of Amsterdam mixed with that of the trading cities in the south east of China.

This is also described in travel reports by the Englishman James Cook, says

dows let enough light in, yet are small enough to maintain people's privacy. The canal houses in Amsterdam were built after the canal ring was constructed in 1613. It would take another 50 years for the 17th century trade city to be completed. Amsterdam was a construction pit where the largest urban development project in the world took place. There was a great need for this as the city was growing rapidly: more than two thirds of the population in the provinces had moved to the city. That made the Dutch delta landscape the most urbanized area of Europe. In '*Vande oirderingh der steden*,' dating back to around 1600, Dutch engineer Simon Stevin explains why Dutch cities like Amsterdam were so successful. At the mouth of a large, navigable river, they benefitted from fertile land as well as boats from overseas passing through the city. According to Stevin, this location was unique and brought the Netherlands wealth and power. It also led to the exportation of the methods used for building the canal ring.

Without a predetermined all-encompassing plan, officials, land surveyors, carpenters, merchants and architects contributed to urban developments. The municipal council monitored only a few rules regarding urban planning. This meant specific problems could be solved with practical and lucrative solutions. For example, historian Jaap-Evert Abrahamse states the canals were not built because they would look nice—in fact, the rich citizens would have preferred

living on a boulevard—but to obtain soil to elevate the land in the marshy delta. The canals also served as defences, ways of transport and were used as an open sewer system. Until 1850, Amsterdam remained a "clean virgin with smelly veins." As I walk past the canals, the canal houses stand out. The Herengracht and the Keizersgracht were designed as large city homes for rich citizens such as merchants and shareholders.

In the 17th century, taxes were not based on the width of the facade of a house. Presumably, the houses are narrow because land prices on the street and the water, where there was light and there were people, were incredibly high.

THE CANAL HOUSE GOES OVERSEAS

Simultaneously with the growth of the Dutch city, the power of the East India Company increased. This internationally-operating company built colonial settlements, using knowledge of urban planning and architecture from the Netherlands.

Batavia, now known as Jakarta, became the most important trade city in Southeast Asia. The spatial planning of the Dutch city was exported to Batavia. And here, too, canal houses were built. Would this be the source of the spread of shophouses through Southeast Asia? During an earlier stay in Jakarta, I pondered this question because of the many similarities between the capital of Indonesia and the district of Cholon in Ho Chi Minh City. In the old town



There is constant momentum in the townscape due to the unregulated building process of the 'new-style' shophouses. Each house is different because they vary so much in height, material and color.



Interior of an old shophouse



Traces of history: Chinese signs on the front of a house

Attahiyyat. In 1726, there were 1,242 Dutch houses and 1,200 Chinese houses within the city walls of Batavia. These numbers show that there was a fine balance between Dutch and Chinese people.

I shake his hand, and step outside, pondering: as far as I can see, the concept of the shophouses spread as a result of blooming trade and increasing population density in the cities of Southeast Asia. The dominant position of China in commercial trade caused knowledge and skills to be exported from Batavia to Vietnam.

WIND AND WATER

Back in Ho Chi Minh City, I realize the shophouse offers a range of opportunities for a more sustainable city. The terraced houses result in compact, low buildings, high in density. This saves a lot of energy,

as most journeys can be made by foot. The buildings have been adapted to the climate in many different ways: tenants have built rows of balconies above each other against the sun, they use sun boilers to heat their water, they use evaporating water to cool down their houses and patios have been designed to allow for air circulation. These small-scale solutions reduce the use of air conditioners, and help the people save money. One Vietnamese architect who puts this into practice on a daily basis is Vo Trong Nghia. His firm Wind and Water is named after *feng shui*, an ancient Chinese philosophy about living in harmony with nature.

When I worked for him in 2012, he gave me a few tips: soften the city with green facades and roofs and cool down the houses with patios. This retains the water much longer, and the space inside

will be cooled without using electricity.

The building "Stacking Green" is a tribute to the small, rectangular house. The front and backside of the four-meter-wide and 20-meter-deep building consist of concrete planters. Rainwater is collected in a tank and is used to spray the plants. The green facade and roof protect the tenants from sunlight, noise and pollution. A skylight and the open, green facade allow wind to blow through the houses—a refreshing change from the tropical heat.

For now, this 'reappreciation of the shophouse' appears to have only limited impact, as the focus is still on the modernization and westernization of the city. But in Singapore, for example, maintaining the few remaining old districts with shophouses has become policy. Initially these districts, too, were replaced by modern, high-rise buildings. But when it was realized that the historical city was a tourist attraction, it was possible to save parts of the old Chinese districts. This district is now the most important source of income in terms of tourism.

Perhaps Ho Chi Minh City can take an example from this, and brand itself as shophouse city—putting its cultural heritage on the agenda once and for all.

WILD LIVING IN VIETNAM

Ho Chi Minh City is an example of how planning and chance can co-exist and even embrace each other. This city structure reminds me of 'wild living' a term coined by Carel Weeber in the Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* in 1997. He distanced himself from the 'state architecture,' where tenants lived in terraced houses in identical neighborhoods, and argued for pri-

vate commissioning. He believed that anyone should have the opportunity to buy a lot and build a house on it.

Carel Weeber has been in Vietnam several times. In 1975—Weeber was 37—he made his first trip, which he documented in postcards. I find the complete collection in the archives of Het Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam. Many cards depict buildings and bridges shot to pieces and rice fields full of bomb craters. The pictures form a sharp contrast with the beautiful landscape we know today. Weeber also drew many cards showing the dominance of the water. One card depicts a fishing boat floating alone on the waters of Hanoi.

On February 21, 1975, he writes: “The neighborhoods look more like traditional Asian cities, Tokyo, Bangkok. The disorderly appearance of the neighborhoods camouflage the damage of the war. Ideal way of building.” Another note on a postcard, a day later: “The disorderly character creates such a powerful image that destruction is absorbed into it, it doesn’t disturb the image.” What Weeber described here is exactly what he later had in mind for the ideal image of ‘wild living.’ I ask Weeber about it.

“Before I came to Vietnam, I used to spend a lot of time in Japan in the 1960s,” Weeber says. “There, I came across self-regulating urban development. The similarities are striking.” ‘Wild living’ and grid cities are universal; the Netherlands are an exception. Weeber says that in Vietnam, private taste is beginning to determine what public spaces look like. The streets haven’t been designed by supervisors and are a mishmash of different buildings. The image of the city is created by random and unstructured private building. According to Weber, this is a gift to the city from its inhabitants. Weeber argues for neutral and facilitating urban development, where the spatial characteristics of the grid are combined with chaos, spontaneity and unplanned private developments. His ideals have a lot in common with the type of urban development that took place when the canal rings were constructed. In the 17th century, the local authorities did not get involved in architecture—everyone could build whatever they wanted—but merely ensured that the building regulations were adhered to. Weeber calls it “objective urban development,” independent of taste, and based on chaos, chance growth, geomorphology and geometry.

Ho Chi Minh City is constructed from

private developments, bearing a close resemblance to Weeber’s ‘wild living.’ The downside is evident: the construction of dominant new areas that have no connection to the city, and the ease with which some neighborhoods have been demolished. But on a smaller scale, it is clear that the unstructured construction of the ‘new style shophouses’ creates a dynamic cityscape. Every house is different, as heights, materials and colors vary greatly. The architectural styles differ, too. This eclecticism leads to a wide variety of neo-gothic, baroque and classical elements in the facades of the houses

On my walk, I meet Vo Van Thai, a shopkeeper in the Chinese medicine street Hai Thuong Lan Ong. He shows me an old photo of his house. “It was designed by the French around 1890, and built by the Vietnamese.” He proudly tells me his house is built with materials from France, China and Vietnam. The house has a French-colonial architectural style, with subtle decorations from China. “The ground floor used to be a Chinese medicine shop, but now it is empty,” says Mr. Thai. The old man is unsure about the future. “If I demolish my house and build a new one, I can sell it for a higher price. But that would mean the house that has been a home to my family for generations will be lost.”

Because of the growing economy and the lack of protection, many old shophouses have been demolished. New, higher shophouses bring in more money. Also, the city simply lacks the power and the money to maintain the traditional shophouses. The function of shophouses in Ho Chi Minh City changes, too. Whereas it used to be a shop or a workplace that was directly connected

to the street, now I often see closed shop fronts with hair salons, bars, copy shops, restaurants and massage parlors behind them. Basically, the shophouses have developed into new types of buildings like shop-apartments, where shops are combined with furnished flats. Over the years, shophouses have proven to be a flexible work-living space—reflecting the vibrant street life in Vietnam. ■



The Vietnamese architect Vo Trong Nghia designed a housing tower in Ho Chi Minh City in 2011, with ‘green’ gables made up of cement plant containers. They protect the residents from sunlight, noise and air pollution.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In 2009 architect Joep Janssen lived and worked in Ho Chi Minh City for four years and in his book, *Living with the Mekong. Climate change and urban development in Ho Chi Minh City and the Mekong Delta*, he gives a personal account of how Vietnam and the Vietnamese people cope with the consequences of climate change and urbanization. In a historical analysis he shows how the developments of the city, particularly Cholon, and its architecture have been influenced by French colonials as well as the canal ring of Amsterdam.

Living with the Mekong. Climate change and urban development in Ho Chi Minh City and the Mekong Delta is available in English and Dutch, and can be ordered at: www.uitgeverijblawedruk.nl, www.blawedrukpublishers.com and Amazon.com.

As Seen on TV

As diverse a background as one could imagine and a career to match, we ask TV chef and restaurateur Bobby Chinn, how he ended up cooking for 16 years in Vietnam, and find out about his *banh mi* shop in Saigon

TEXT BY **SAM SINHA** IMAGES PROVIDED BY **BOBBY CHINN**

HOW IS IT THAT A CHINESE-EGYPTIAN, born in New Zealand, educated in California, Cairo and the UK ends up becoming doyen of Vietnamese cuisine and Vietnam's favorite adopted son? According to *The Mind of a Chef* culinary legend Anthony Bourdain, the answer is simple: "What Bobby doesn't know about Southeast Asian food is not worth knowing."

From the opening of his very first restaurant in Ho Chi Minh City, Bobby made a specialty of creating modern dishes from traditional ideas. His 'apple smoked pork belly, braised cabbage, egg' is a contemporary take on a Vietnamese classic.

He soon became acknowledged as a world authority on Southeast Asian cuisine. Regular appearances on international television and a bestselling cookbook about the history and nuances of Vietnamese food have cemented his reputation and led to his cooking for the likes of Bill Clinton and Bob Dylan.

This is all the more incredible when you consider that Bobby only started cooking in his 30s. Before that he worked a number of jobs trying to find his calling. This included stints performing as a standup comic, selling seafood to "the mob," and working as a trader on Wall Street, none of which satisfied him.

He tells me, "I followed the natural progression that we all follow. Go to school, go to college, get a degree in something that might have value, without ever questioning my personal happiness."

"Making money wasn't exactly making me happy. When I left Wall Street, I was open to anything and everything. I





Apple smoked pork belly, braised cabbage, egg



Seafood Ceviche,
Mangosteen Coconut Dressing, Truffle Oil

lived my life like an algebraic equation, going through the source of elimination to find out what I loved, or what I thought I might love. I didn't know what it was or what it could be, so I worked through a lot of jobs until it made sense."

Never quite fitting in as he was constantly on the move, Bobby developed a thick skin and an ability to win people over to his side. "My life was influenced by the circumstances in which I found myself. A matter of survival, a circle in a square peg, not exactly filling in the holes." With a tremendous resilience Bobby never let knock backs stop him from trying something new. He explains "growing up between three continents, many schools, many inter-

national students and in many different social classes made me very open and accepting to whatever life threw at me."

It was while working as a waiter at Elka, a Franco-Japanese restaurant in San Francisco, that he started to hang around the kitchen. He charmed the chefs into teaching him how to make classic stocks and sauces and discovered a talent and passion that he had not previously explored; much to the disdain of his father, who had sent him through the English public school system at great expense, hoping he would settle into a sensible career.

Once he had realized what he wanted to do, Bobby set about learning as much as he could and worked for Hubert Keller

and Jeff Inahara, gaining culinary skills and all-important experience. All was going well until his progress was suddenly halted by a serious back injury which left him unable to work. "The back injury derailed my career as a chef for a whole year, during which time I laid in bed, read cookbooks, watched *Great Chefs*, *Great Cities*, watched PBS, and learned a whole lot without actually cooking."

After surgery on his back, Bobby was declared, 'stationary and disabled' and was told he would not be able to work as a chef in America by law. A devastating blow, which would have ended many a budding chefs' career, but Bobby took it in his stride and looked for a way to continue cooking.

Go East, Young Man

Through his ever-supportive father, Bobby found himself with an opportunity for a move to Vietnam. Health and safety laws being less stringent than in the US, he was able to work legally, and now had to set about making his name in a new country and continent. "In many ways Vietnam worked out very well for me, because no one really cared over there," Bobby explains, and with a cheeky grin, "I would be able to get my staff to do the heavy lifting."

As always his unfailing charisma allowed him to get a new start. "I had met Alexander Egert [owner of Phu Cuong Son in Saigon] on my first trip to Vietnam back in 1993. We chatted, nothing came of it, then my name was getting tossed around on a new project called The Riverside." Already he was making a name for himself and sure enough there was a job at the end of it, and more contacts. "Alexander flew me out to cook for him and seven of his guests, and ended up hiring me after that dinner."

Bobby was desperate to open his own place and started with a restaurant called Saigon Joe's in Ho Chi Minh City. This only lasted a couple of months and was the first in a string of false starts, restaurants opening and then being shut down or Bobby being kicked out soon after. As ever the determined Chef Chinn would not give up. "I've opened five restaurants in Hanoi over a period of 13 years starting in 1997. Not one was easy. Saigon wasn't any easier!"

Bobby seems most proud of his eponymous restaurant that he opened in Hanoi in 2001. "When I built the restaurant I wanted to do something that no one had ever dreamed of here. I named the restaurant after myself to protect myself. I had been kicked out of every restaurant that I had ever worked in here, and if it happened again at



Lobster Noodles

least they would have to rename it.”

This restaurant did help to build a reputation for Bobby, allowing him to diversify into television projects and writing. His cookbook, *Bobby Chinn's Vietnamese Food* is full of authentic recipes with a fascinating outsider's perspective on the country's cuisine.

Perhaps, though, this broadening career path contributed to its closure a few years later. “I decided to close it because my eye was no longer on the ball, I had way too many responsibilities and interests in other projects and I couldn't afford to leave it in the hands of anyone else.”

Nowadays Bobby flies all over the world, judging cookery competitions, cooking on TV in the UK, US, Asia and just about everywhere. He tells me, “I've just finished filming the first season of *Top Chef Middle East* in Dubai on MBC network. I've been doing private events, World Gourmet Festival in Bangkok, as well as the Food & Wine festival in Hawaii. I'm in constant development of new shows and working on several restaurant projects and a little consulting.”

Despite all this, he still finds time whenever he can to sit with the locals at the street food stalls which Vietnam is famous for. “In Hanoi, I only eat on the streets unless I eat at Don's. Dishes range from *banh cuon* on Bat Dan Street, grilled quails, *bun bo*, sticky rice, *pho* in the Old Quarters, crab soup. I'm a creature of habit.”

“In Ho Chi Minh City I eat at Hoang

Yen when I want a little luxury, but random street stalls all over the place, Ben Thanh Market, *banh xeo*, I'm still open to trying new dishes and places all the time.” It's refreshing to hear a renowned chef who still likes to eat the humble food that is made by working people.

This enthusiasm for the food of the people feeds into his own cooking and he has recently opened a *banh mi* operation in Ho Chi Minh City. “It's a family business run by my father. We would always hope for more business, as our production costs are going to be higher than a street vendor and it's a damn good sandwich!” It is good to hear his father is still supportive after all that Bobby has achieved and overcome. Bobby hopes the family-run enterprise will fare better in longevity than his early restaurant openings.

Vietnam and its food culture have had a similarly turbulent history to Bobby Chinn, and perhaps this is what has drawn him to the place. He explains the origins in his book: “Vietnamese cuisine massively benefited from the 16th century European trade, especially the traditions brought in by French colonials.” The French influence mixing with the Chinese and native tribal food traditions is often talked about as what sets Vietnamese food apart from its neighbors, but Bobby thinks there is more to it than that.

“What has taken the French hundreds of years of culinary evolution, the Vietnamese had already been perfecting over the last thousand years.

Vietnam had the key ingredients and techniques at its fingertips for centuries. Its food is light, healthy, and generally easy to make. It can be subtle yet bold and is about quality ingredients, color, contrast, texture and execution.”

With this characterization, Vietnamese food is at the stage that the rest of the world is just catching up to. They were doing gluten and dairy-free, light, healthy food before it ever became a trend in hipster joints in the West.

Bobby attempts to take the best from what he has learned about Vietnamese food and refine it. Modern twists are employed alongside traditional ideas; refined presentation alongside ancient technique. His fine-dining style ‘lobster noodles’ place sautéed lobster tail into a humble noodle dish, a modern take on the much loved *cha ca Ha Noi*.

On his future, Bobby is typically pragmatic. “There are a lot of opportunities, it's working on the one that feels right, and makes the most amount of sense. Restaurants or TV, that's the question. I gave up on planning a couple of years after graduating from college so I think it's fair to say that I go with the flow and what feels right.”

Bobby exudes a charm and openness which seems to have been his key to success. Along, of course, with his extraordinary resilience and refusal to give up. His lack of a permanent place in the world made him adaptable enough to adopt a new home, Vietnam, which, reluctantly at first, has adopted him into its own food culture. ■



MEET BRIAN CALEDA, THE 'GENIUS' WHO'S READY TO SOLVE ALL YOUR TECH PROBLEMS

INTERVIEW BY **CHRISTINE VAN** IMAGES BY **NGOC TRAN**

DESCRIBE YOUR PATH TO VIETNAM AND OPENING IKNOW.

I was born to Filipino parents and spent the first eight years of my life in Manila. My father had a career opportunity that took the family to Indonesia, so I was raised in Jakarta until I graduated from high school. However, my grandparents had immigrated to Hawai'i over 30 years ago, so I had been going back and forth to Hawai'i for summers and ultimately decided to attend university at Hawai'i Pacific University, finishing a degree in Biology.

I worked in conservation for the University of Hawai'i, dealing with invasive species, and eventually I took a job in environmental consulting. Day-in day-out based in an office, doing monotonous research and technical writing led to dissatisfaction in my career choices, and what changed everything was the day I bought the first iPhone in 2007. An onset of fascination with Apple technology emerged and I pursued a job working at Apple, and became part of the team that opened the third Apple Store in Hawai'i at the Royal Hawaiian in Waikiki, where I ultimately ended with a position in corporate sales and had an insider's experience of all things Apple.

What was great about working for Apple, was that they give you the freedom to choose what path you would like to

choose as you continue with the company, so I actually dabbled in positions as a Creative, Specialist and Genius. Eventually, I took time off to travel for 10 months and the conclusion of my travels led me to Vietnam, where I started **iKnow** (94 Xuan Thuy, D2; Facebook: [iknow.com.vn](https://www.facebook.com/iknow.com.vn)) in 2010.

HOW HARD WAS IT TO SET UP IKNOW? HOW DO YOU BECOME AN "AUTHORIZED APPLE RESELLER"? WHERE ARE THE PRODUCTS COMING FROM AND HOW DO YOU ENSURE THE PRODUCTS DON'T GET SWITCHED OUT DURING THE DISTRIBUTION CHAIN?

Setting up iKnow as a business was not difficult at all. However, achieving my expected level of customer service at the shop, developing staff to be knowledgeable enough to understand the connection between people and their technology so as to be well-rounded solution-providers, finding reputable suppliers for parts and products—that took a good three years. And every day we continue to work on this. With the copious amount of repair shops that carry unreliable parts, provide inept repairs and uncaring service here in Saigon, I always wanted iKnow to stand out from that.

As for becoming an "Authorized Apple Reseller," there are conditions and policy that you must fulfil and adhere to, which



requires submitting documentation, providing a substantial amount of capital and also going through a rigorous selection process, which is clearly outlined on the Apple website. I looked into it when I first started the business, but decided that with the technical resources available to us in Vietnam, being directly associated with Apple just didn't fit what I wanted to do with the shop. For example, if a customer has a problem with their video card, an Authorized Apple Service Provider is obligated to replace the entire logic board, whereas with us, we have the capabilities of solely replacing the card which translates into a much more cost-efficient solution to the customer. When a situation merits it, however, we do work with a preferred Authorized Apple Reseller and Service Provider. They provide us with support in ways that only official Apple Service Providers can, especially when it comes to dealing with warranties.

Products that we carry at the shop are from various sources, mostly Singapore, Hong Kong, the US and products designated specifically for Vietnam. For brand new devices, it's fairly straightforward to track products and determine origin, legitimacy and warranty through the product's serial number. Having said that however, of course, there are exceptions.

WHEN NEW PRODUCTS ARE RELEASED IN THE US, HOW FAST DO YOU GET THEM INTO YOUR SHOP?

Quickly. Because we are not an Authorized Apple Reseller we are not limited by Apple policy and can tap into various means of getting them before they are officially released in Vietnam.

HOW CAN CUSTOMERS TELL A GENUINE AUTHORIZED APPLE RESELLER FROM A FAKE ONE?

The easiest way is to check the Apple website: locate.apple.com.

HOW DO YOU BUILD TRUST WITH YOUR CLIENTS TO GAIN REPEAT CUSTOMERS AND RECOMMENDATIONS?

We ensure that we communicate to them every step of the way. Just like a consultation with a doctor for an ailment, first we listen to customers regarding the symptoms they are experiencing with their devices. Based on the given issues, experienced technicians run software and hardware diagnostics using resources available at the shop. Then we recommend a repair solution based on what we find and communicate to customers: what happened, why it may have happened, how to proceed with the repair, how much the repair will cost, and what they can expect in regards to wait time and resolution.

We provide a warranty for all our repairs and support customers as needed post-repair. Fairly simple process, but following this process for the last six years has gained us traction and recognition organically. I've also been a stickler to providing added value services that most shops neglect to think about, such as free diagnostics or even a thorough cleaning of a device before returning it to its owner.

WHEN RECRUITING TECH STAFF, HOW DO YOU TEST THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF THE PRODUCTS AND PROBLEM SOLVING?

It is a common misconception that only a certified technician can properly repair electronics. There are some very capable self-taught technicians out there that have been honing their craft with passion. In fact, even in the US, except for some counties in California, no certification is required to operate a cellphone or computer repair shop.

I have gone through proper training courses in the US and in Singapore for technical troubleshooting of Apple software and hardware, however, most technicians who are here in Vietnam do not have this opportunity. So when we hire technicians, we make sure, first of all, that they already have prior tech background in repair or computer science. Either they've graduated with a degree in the tech field and/or they have prior work experience in the industry. This creates a good foundation to work with and I personally train our technicians, not only on repair but customer service skills. It's a continuous process of learning for all of us at the shop.

THERE ARE RUMORS THAT SOME REPAIR SHOPS WILL SWITCH GENUINE APPLE PARTS WITH FAKE ONES. IS THIS TRUE AND WHAT DO THEY DO WITH THEM?

Certainly this happens. Unfortunately, just like any other industry, there are businesses that try to take advantage of their customers. Especially here in Saigon, we hear endless stories of this, consequently giving the tech repair industry a bad reputation. Throughout the years, we've received devices taken to other shops prior to coming to ours and discovered other components have been tampered with, removed or missing, without the owner's knowledge. From experience, I see it more often than I'd like to. I am not certain what these repair shops do with these parts, to be honest. Perhaps they are collected and used as centerpieces on their living room console where they look at them daily.

But it's not necessarily about 'fake' parts that people should be concerned about. If it's fake, it won't work properly and you'll notice that from the get-go. It's more about the quality and reliability of parts used for repairs. Most parts used by repair shops globally that repair Apple devices are in fact 'unofficial' Apple parts. They are produced in the same factories as those that produce official Apple parts, it's just that they lack the part/stock number officially designated by Apple. If you want to ensure that they are using an 'official Apple part' then you should stick with an Authorized Apple Service Provider, but know that you will certainly be paying Apple prices.

In every repair industry, may it be automotive or electronics, aftermarket parts are commonly used and as long as the quality of the parts are certified, guaranteed and warrantied, you should feel confident about the repair.

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO ONLY USE APPLE PRODUCTS WITH EACH OTHER? FOR EXAMPLE, DOES



IT REALLY MATTER IF I USE A NON-APPLE CHARGER/BATTERY TO CHARGE MY IPHONE OR MAC?

It's quite important to use genuine parts and accessories with your Apple products. Again, they don't have to be Apple products, per se, but they should be quality and genuine parts. Many reputable brands, such as Anker, Belkin, Monoprice and Remax (just to name a few), make compatible and quality accessories and cables to be used with Apple products. Furthermore, just because a part or accessory has an Apple logo, doesn't mean it's legit.

For instance, buying a cheap knock-off cable and charger that are non-MFi certified and don't provide the proper amperage and current to your Mac or iPhone can actually cost you more in the long run because it could cause heating and battery problems, or even worse, issues with the power supply on the main board. Have you ever plugged in a cheap cable that you've bought from Saigon Square, and then get the message on your iPhone: "This cable or accessory is not certified and may not work reliably with this iPhone"? Avoid that if you want to keep your phone longer.

WHAT'S THE WORST DAMAGE YOU'VE SEEN TO AN IPHONE AND MAC? AND WERE YOU ABLE TO FIX THEM?

There was an iPhone 4s that came in a few years ago and the lady that brought it in was a long-time customer who was going back and forth between Saigon and Alaska. She thought she had lost it one winter and when she came back in the spring as the ice and snow were melting in her backyard, she found her phone, which she realized had been frozen for three months! She brought it to us and we were able to repair it.

As for a MacBook, there was a French guy who had been working in an international aid organization somewhere in Africa for awhile and when he came back with his Unibody MacBook Pro 13", he complained it was running hot all the time. Sure enough we ran it for a few minutes and the thing was like a hot pan that just came off the stove. We opened it up and saw that most of the interior of his Mac was filled with red clay, which was obstructing the fan and causing the heat sinks to be less efficient in diffusing heat. We were actually surprised that it didn't explode in this condition. We saved that one too.

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON MISTAKES YOU SEE CUSTOMERS DO TO THEIR PHONES AND COMPUTERS?

Overcharging. Using crappy cables and accessories. Never shutting down their phones and, especially, their Macs. Not putting a passcode on.

TELL US ABOUT THE APPLE COURSES YOU TEACH AT IKNOW.

When I started iKnow back in 2010, the core of the business was actually to 1) teach people how to make their devices

work for them in a practical manner and 2) work with kids at the international school to be more creative with the iPad and show them how to use it not just for games, but also as a tool for learning. Since then we've put workshops on for students and teachers at the top tier international schools, such as SSIS, BIS, ISHCMC, AIS, and now currently with IGS, providing creative workshops for students using Apple devices. From there, the repair and retail side of iKnow evolved.

At the shop, we cover a range of topics in our workshops, typically in the form of one-on-one or small group sessions, from being more efficient in navigating all the new changes to the new operating system you just installed, to learning how to use Photoshop. Put it this way, if you want to learn how to do something with your Apple device, we can teach you. Even if we can't help you figure something out, we can at least point you to someone who can!

UNFORTUNATELY, PHONE THEFT IS RAMPANT HERE. IF A CUSTOMER WANTS A PHONE UNLOCKED, DO YOU FIRST CHECK TO SEE IF IT WAS REPORTED STOLEN? HOW?

Yes, we take these matters very seriously. If we have a suspicion that a phone or device has been stolen there are ways to determine this. Apple knows that these cases exist and they have actually implemented security features in iOS that work to prevent the further use of a stolen device. So even when you are able to wipe a phone out that has been locked with a passcode, you'll need to get passed Activation Lock, which can only be unlocked if you know the Apple ID that was previously logged into the phone and its associated password. That's why enabling a passcode for your phone and configuring Find My iPhone is such an important security habit. What's great is that as of early this year, Vietnam was given direct support by Apple and has its own call center that you can ring locally. You can inquire about not only troubleshooting issues, but also Apple ID password woes and also iPhone security status. They go through a rigorous verification process for such issues and you can report a stolen phone (as long as you know the serial number or IMEI) and also inquire whether a phone has already been reported stolen.

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS? WILL YOU ADD OTHER BRANDS?

That's a good question that I can't really answer accurately! I'd like to think that the concept of iKnow can be taken to other countries, but let's see. As for adding other brands to the mix, in August this year we just opened a new shop on 94 Xuan Thuy in Thao Dien, District 2. We have partnered up with another company called ITM to provide a one-stop shop for Apple, Windows PCs, Android and Linux devices. iKnow takes care of all the Apple products, and ITM does the rest. We have also bumped up the retail side of the business and offer all kinds of computers, accessories and gadgets. ■

THE CONSTANT GARDENER

Just about every dish tastes better with fresh herbs-and there's no better way to get fresh herbs than to grow them yourself

TEXT BY TAYNE EPHRAIM

IMAGES BY VAN RAMBO



LOOKING BACK ON MY TIME as a university student, maintaining a small herb and veggie garden was one of my fonder achievements. Having toyed with the idea of resurrecting this old pastime here in Saigon, when it came down the grapevine to my attention that an enterprising young individual had formed a business around precisely this idea, that is, selling small herb gardens, I endeavored to seek this person out and meet her for myself.

Linh Bach is a civil engineering student from the southern highlands dissatisfied with civil engineering. "I don't want to be a civil engineer like my father," she admits to me. "I want to grow things. And I want to show people how they can do it too."

Like a hobbit, she has a deep and abiding love for all things that grow. "There's a big problem now in Vietnam with what plants are natural and safe to eat, and which ones are toxic and come from China," she tells me. "There is just no way to tell for sure. A lot of the time



they all get mixed up together by the supplier before they reach the markets. This worries me a great deal.”

Linh’s drive is to see more people growing their own food again. Even if that simply means raising the herbs they sprinkle on their noodle soups and pastas. “In the city it’s hard to grow your own food. So I wanted to make it easier for people to obtain edible plants that they can keep on their balcony or rooftop. It’s quite expensive and difficult to find even simple herbs like basil and oregano in Saigon,” she says. “I had a friend from Lam Dong Province who I went to school with and she told me she had some seeds she’d got from Australia. So I took the seeds and planted them in my student dormitory. When the plants matured I kept the seeds so I could keep growing more. Now I have many kinds. I want people to see how easy it is to try it too.”

The softly spoken Linh relays the sad fate of the initial herb garden in her student dorm. “They were eaten by rats,”

she says. “So I grow them now at my boyfriend’s house. The rosemary keeps the mosquitoes away, so he doesn’t mind.”

Her inventory of plants at present includes the aforementioned rosemary, along with thyme, basil, parsley, lavender, chocolate mint (yes, just to clarify, that is an actual herb), lemon palm, strawberry and raspberry, with oregano, aloe vera, and potted lemon trees also available upon demand. The plants go for VND60,000 and up apiece and come delivered to your door for a small fee of between VND10,000-VND20,000, depending on district, cradled in a pot and ready to be loved, each already having been hand-raised into adolescence, about a handspan high. She also offers advice on how best to raise an herb garden successfully in Saigon’s hot and moist climate, and wishes her customers to know they’re welcome to call on her if ever they need a helping hand.

“Raising plants is something like raising pets, only a lot easier,” Linh jokes. “You never have to worry about having the time to take your strawberry plant for a walk. All it needs is a little sun, a little water, air to breathe, and a little love. And if you do it right, you can eat them too, and they won’t even mind.”

And to make things easier still, she has started selling crocheted plants, cacti and mushrooms also (from VND50,000-VND80,000 depending on type and size,), which don’t need to be watered at all, are adorable, and can never die.

“Actually most of my customers so far have been foreigners,” she says. “I didn’t expect that. For Vietnamese, they just want a plant for the smell or decoration, not so much for cooking.”

She has been selling her plants since about last Christmas, and is a regular at Saigon Outcast’s monthly farmers markets. “It’s been really great for me. I’ve met so many nice people from all over the world; I can improve my English and help people grow their own garden at home.”

In Outcast, she’s found a community of likeminded souls willing to help her along the way and spread the good word. “My first customer was a retired chef from Canada,” she tells me. “He was so happy to see someone selling herb plants he bought them all up on the spot. I had waited hours for any customers at all, and then he came and changed my luck. Now I always sell all or most of my plants when I have a stall. I wish that man happy fortune.”

When not preoccupied at the flea markets, Linh sells her wares from her Facebook page, *Vuon Nha Linh*, tends to her growing diaspora of herb plants, and works at finishing her studies.

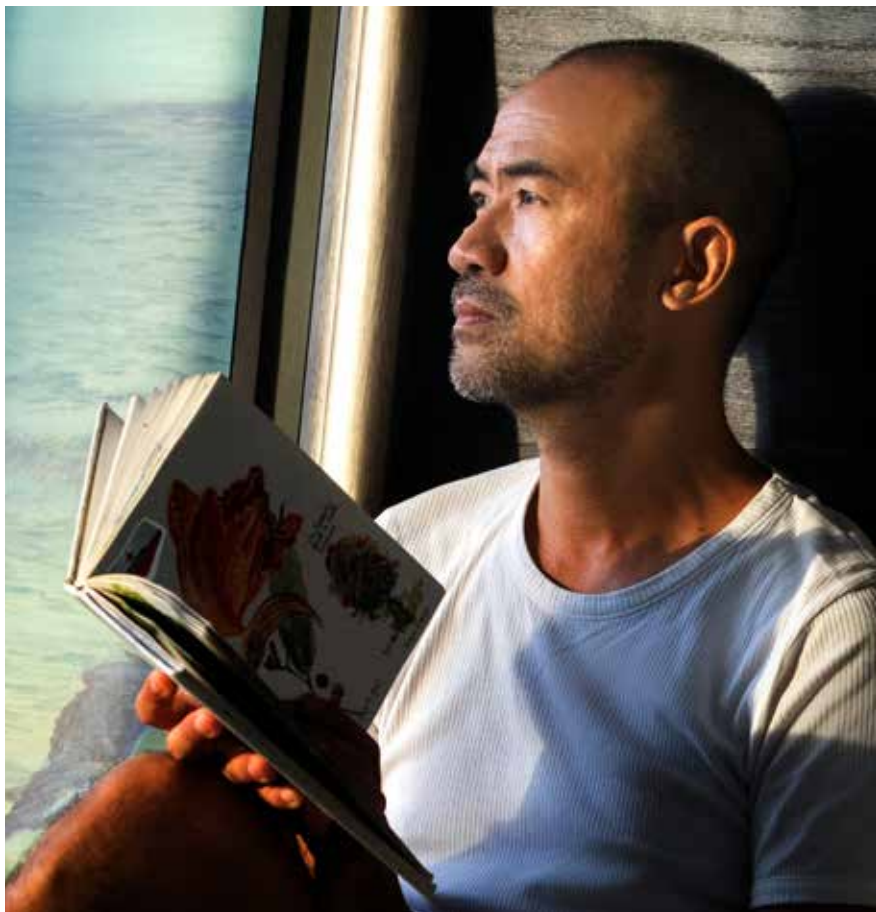
“What of your plans for the future?” I ask.

“Maybe I’ll go to Israel and work in a kibbutz,” she answers. “They have programs there to teach you about agriculture and how to grow your own food. I’m very interested in that.”

And she’s not the only one. A whole collective of gung-ho gardeners, mostly students like herself, are starting their own food farm out near Cu Chi in collaboration with local farmers in an effort to take back their natural, non-toxic produce from Chinese conglomerates and their malign agricultural practices. I wish her all the best. My future balcony garden depends upon it. ■



SIESTA: Greater bamboo lemur, Madagascar



WILDLIFE ARTIST DAO VAN HOANG is sitting next to his easel in his 10th floor apartment overlooking the Saigon River. Despite his impressive oeuvre, the 52-year-old conservationist is quick to downplay his artistic credence.

"I don't consider myself as an artist," he says. "I don't have an art background or see things the way an artist sees them, I guess. I don't know a lot of artists. I don't exchange ideas with them. I don't go to an artists' club. I feel uncomfortable."

His easel holds an unfinished painting of a rhinoceros, its skin emanating the texture of cracked earth, thick and scorched by the sun. He's mulling over the idea of introducing a little bird to enhance the scene's composition.

Soft afternoon light pours over his bookshelves stacked with titles such as *Primates of Vietnam* and *Fishes of the Mekong* and colors the curious souvenirs of a well-seasoned traveler; a wooden gecko, a hand-painted boomerang, antique cameras salvaged from Parisian boutiques.

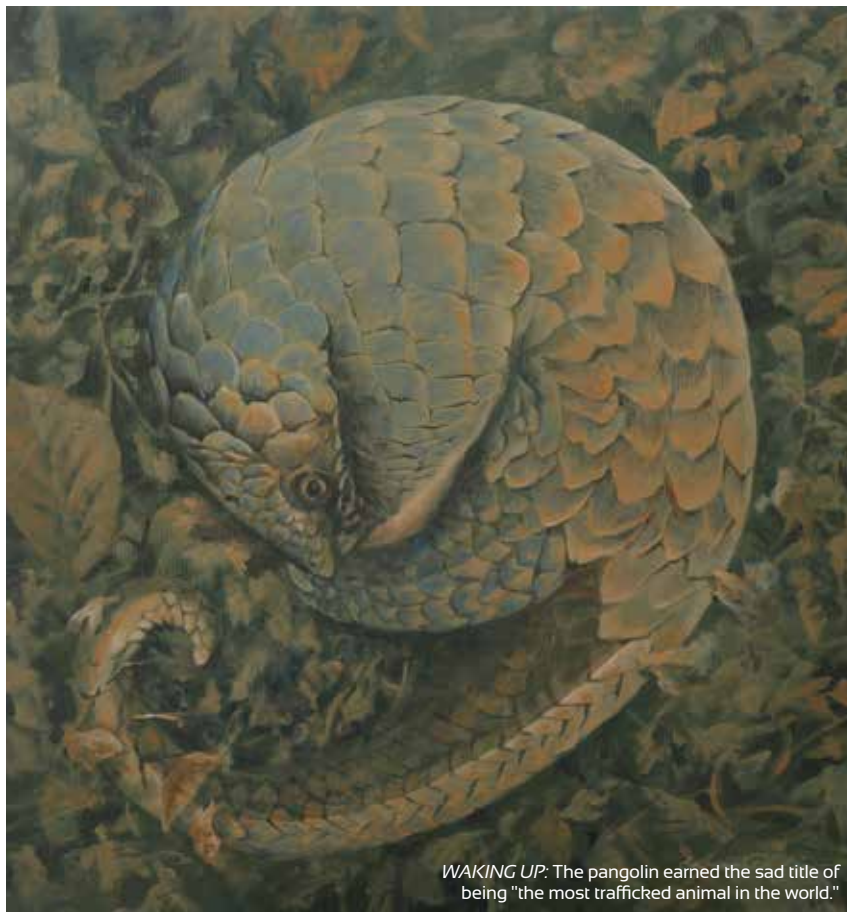
But most intriguing are the canvases, which capture the hidden idiosyncrasies of animals in a way more memorable and permanent than photography. One portrays the gentle curiosity of a tiger, another the fluidity of pacific reef herons flying over the sea of Muine.

DRAW OF THE WILD

Artist Dao Van Hoang speaks about the importance of wildlife conservation through his art

TEXT BY LORCAN LOVETT
PORTRAIT BY NGOC TRAN
ARTWORK BY DAO VAN HOANG





WAKING UP: The pangolin earned the sad title of being "the most trafficked animal in the world."



UPROOTED: Red Shanked Douc Langur (*Pygathrix nemaeus*)
This isn't a real scene, as the Red-Shanked Douc Langur is rarely on the ground, let alone sitting on an uprooted tree. However, I liked the intricate shape of this root, even though it's not a healthy image for nature conservation. I hope this lone langur, perched on a lone felled tree, will evoke more thoughts on conservation.

"To promote myself I have to call myself a wildlife artist but deep inside I don't think that's the end purpose of what I do," he says. "I love animals and paint them to know them better."

Hoang uses acrylic painting to create detailed and realistic renderings of animals in their natural habitats. His work can be seen in murals in national parks and public spaces as well as on canvas. He travels the world, sketchpad in hand, drawing the animals he encounters.

Before embracing this lifestyle in 2013, Hoang was creative director for several advertising agencies. At one point he was even a French army soldier. And although his focus is now on the tropical nature of Southeast Asia, it was the tamer countryside of Western Europe that accompanied his youth. He arrived there as a refugee in 1980 after a desperate voyage off the coast of South Vietnam at the age of 15.

Growing up in Saigon, Hoang marveled at the creatures in the zoo and made picture books of them from magazine clippings. At the climax of Vietnam's war with Pol Pot's Cambodia in 1979, his mother made the painful decision to send her only son away from his homeland with one of his five older sisters. The family had saved up enough money for the two of them, deciding that anything was better than conscription in a war-torn and

economically impoverished country.

The plan was to slip out of Saigon in a sampan, a flat-bottomed boat designed for rivers, and reach Thailand within three days. A tremendous storm swept away most of the food supplies on the first night but fortunately the 23 passengers and crew survived. Without any knowledge of sea navigation and only a small engine to support them, they looked on helplessly as their sampan began to drift.

"Somehow we survived for six, seven days...until day 10. Then we saw from a distance a small stretch of sand. We were so happy."

They had reached a small Indonesian island and were taken to a refugee camp the next day. After hearing Hoang speak a few French words, Red Cross volunteers sent them to France where Hoang attended a boarding school. After a decade, Hoang was granted a permit to see his mother in Vietnam though it came with a mandatory year in the French Army, a clause specifically for refugees who wished to gain citizenship and return to France.

"I hated the army. It was the longest year of my life," reflects Hoang, who returned regularly to Vietnam until settling permanently in 1996. He became an art director for an advertising agency and then rose to become its creative director for more than 15 years.



CYCLE: Pacific Reef Heron.
A scene witnessed along the coast of Binh Thuan. The peaceful sunset and tranquil flight of the heron reminds me of the cycle of life: waves come and go, the wing flaps of the birds, the sun up and down, even the birds function as one individual flying out and into the picture.



TOSS: Great Hornbill



LAZY DAY: Clouded leopard

“My first few years in advertising were very passionate but after 10 years you know enough and the bad side of it.” Leaping from director in a lucrative industry to fulltime painter has unsurprisingly dented his cash flow.

“I still don’t make a living with it,” he laughs. “I didn’t think I could make a living but I saw other wildlife artists who could make a living. I had to try my luck to follow my passion. I said to my wife I want to give it a try for five years and after maybe 10 exhibitions I’ll decide if I have failed or succeeded.”

RHINOS, SNAKES AND TIGERS. OH MY

Nearly into his third year as a wildlife artist, Hoang has held exhibitions in the US, Thailand, Italy, Singapore, Cambodia and Vietnam. Things seem to be going well.

He sprawls three of seven travel diaries across his desk. Meticulously neat and beautifully illustrated, they are like the personal records of an adventurous Victorian naturalist. The pages are filled with flora and fauna from along the equator.

“I love Africa and also Central and South America,” he explains. “Everywhere you’re around the equator and have the jungle. With the jungle there are more things to see.”

The majority of Hoang’s paintings

are inspired from his “first emotions” of seeing his subject. Painting a lemur, for example, would mean first pinpointing its home, Madagascar, on the map, and then traveling there to see it. So far he has been to almost 30 countries across five continents.

Of course, observing each animal like this is an expensive pursuit, and impractical for each work. He looks for inspiration in books and videos for some paintings, especially when choosing a theme to exhibit, such as the *25 Most Endangered Primates* collection he made for a conference in the US. “Some of them I’ve never seen either in the wild or in rescue centers. I have to paint

from created emotions through reading them and watching videos of them.”

His usual three-step process for painting begins with field trips; sketching, photographing and studying the animals. Then comes the ideation; more studying its anatomy, ecology and behavior, even checking with a specialist before sketching the composition. Around 70 percent of the painting is achieved on the first day of brushwork, he says, and the rest is usually completed within two weeks. An average (50cm x 70cm) acrylic on canvas is priced between USD700 and USD1,200.

Studying wild animals comes with its risks. American herpetologists who are



DEEP POOL: Saola (*Pseudoryx nghetinhensis*)
This elusive bovidae live in the remote mountains of the Annamites, but only a few big mammals are left since the 1950s. The challenge to paint the “Saola” (Vietnamese name), based on a handful of existing photographs, was just too great to miss.



TRIO: Caovit gibbon. I resisted the temptation to add leaves in this painting, preferring to bring out the parallel between the naked branches and the extraordinary sized limbs of these gibbons. We now know, for certain, that one male prefers the company of two females, but I'm not so certain they would sit that close to each other. This is a story of hope amidst all the depressing news in conservation; scientists discovered this small believed-to-be-extinct gibbon population and managed to convince the government to set aside the area for their protection, which is now becoming a beautiful forest.

friends with Hoang invited him on an annual research trip in the jungles of Vietnam. They trekked in the snake's habitat from 8pm to 2am every night searching for reptiles. "I tried to pull the tail of a snake without knowing what it was. We need to know the snake before you handle them but that time I was maybe a little bit too passionate and too stupid."

The snake turned back and bit Hoang. It was a kukri, fangs sharp enough to puncture birds' eggs, but non-venomous. "He bit me here," says Hoang, pointing to his hand. "Gnawing on my finger, the blood running. The next day I felt it was pretty stupid. Luckily I'm still here today."

Around 2009, during the time Hoang freelanced for Vietnamese charity Wildlife at Risk, the cable channel Animal Planet filmed him and his colleagues releasing Siamese crocodiles and pythons into Cat Tien National Park. The Javan rhinoceros once roamed that area until the last one was shot and killed by poachers in 2010.

"I try not to think negatively but most of the time you can't help but

being depressed. [The Javan rhinos'] fate was doomed anyway. There was a very small population to be viable. Rhino is too late, tiger is too late. Pangolin, there's still hope. There's a strong wave of awareness about them now."

Hoang cites traditional medicine and the curiosity of eating new meat as the biggest threats to some animals but he has also had some positive experiences. In 2014 he joined wildlife charity Fauna and Floral International on a trip to Cao Bang where they discovered endangered eastern black crested gibbons living near a village. To save the gibbons, the government rehomed the people—a "case for hope," says Hoang.

He plans to paint hornbills, primates and owls for conferences in Borneo, the US and Italy next year. He also will continue to paint the "small, inconspicuous animals of Asia."

"I would like to bring them out to the public and say they're just as beautiful as the wolf of North America or the lynx of Europe," he adds.

See Dao Van Hoang's work at daovanhoang.com. ■

Wildlife artist Dao Van Hoang's top five nature spots in Vietnam

1. Cat Tien for big mammals, birds and butterflies.
2. Cuc Phuong for the beautiful landscape and rescue centers that house primates, pangolins, turtles and more.
3. Son Tra Peninsula for big populations of red-shanked douc langur.
4. Nui Chua for land and marine protection, coral reefs and turtle nesting.
5. Con Dao for pristine coast and coral reef.





HAPPINESS BRINGS HAPPINESS

IMAGES PROVIDED BY **SEAM THE WORLD**



FOUNDED BY FASHION DESIGNER Cac Lam, Seam The World (STW; www.seamtheworld.com) is a charitable organization that uses fashion and art to support orphans and underprivileged children around the world. Through events that focus on painting, fashion, photography and cooking, STW has reach out to children in Cambodia, Nepal, Cuba and now Vietnam. Through support and sponsorship from Viet Bamboo Bike, Camera For Kids, artist Richard Streittmatter Tran, and many others, STW hopes to bring a better future for those in need.

“The ambition of Seam The World is to inspire and spread our activities with these two messages: ‘The best thing is when our happiness also bringing happiness to others,’ and ‘Sharing is the best experience to experience,’” says Cac. ■



The



Ocean is Calling

INSPIRED BY VIETNAM'S COASTLINE, AND NHA TRANG SPECIFICALLY, AQUARY IS FOR ADVENTURE SEEKERS - WHETHER IT'S IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT BEACH, DIVING DEEP INTO THE OCEAN OR JOGGING ALONG THE BEACH TO CATCH THE SUNRISE - THE BEACHWEAR LINE IS MADE BY, DESIGNED FOR, AND WORN BY LOVERS OF THE SEA.





SWIMWEAR AQUARY
(aquary.com.vn)

PHOTOGRAPHER DUC NGO

MODELS ARTEM SHESTAKOV,
PAULO ROTHHAARPHA

MAKEUP TUNG CHAU

SET DESIGN TUYET NGUYEN

ASSISTANT ANH TRAN



FIRST AID FOR PETS

BE READY TO DO FIRST-AID ON YOUR PET IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY

KNOWLEDGE OF BASIC FIRST-AID can save your pet's life, and help to avoid the feeling of panic that accompanies emergency situations. While we all hope that we never face an emergency, however, a little bit of preparation is incredibly valuable.

Always remember that any first-aid administered to your pet should be followed by immediate veterinary care. First-aid care is not a substitute for veterinary care, but it may save your pet's life until they get to the hospital.

It may be surprising but both animal and human first-aid follow the same basic **ABC** (Airway, Breathing and Circulation) principles:

1) **Airway:** Make sure the airway is clear of any obstruction so the animal can breathe freely. Remove any obstructions from the *mouth* and the back of the throat, lift the chin up and carefully stretch the neck into a straight line and gently extend the tongue if needed.

2) **Breathing:** Check the rhythm of your pet's breathing. If your pet is not breathing then check to see if they are unconscious. If there is no breathing then perform rescue breaths by closing your pet's *mouth* and gently blowing into its *nose* until the chest expands, give one breath every five seconds.

3) **Circulation:** Circulation refers to the distribution of blood through the heart's pumping action. If there is no heartbeat and you have already

started rescue breathing then gently lay the pet on their *right* side and start chest compressions at a rate of 100/minute. The heart is located just behind the elbow of the front left leg.

We often see these four emergency incidences frequently in Vietnam; therefore it's important to know the specific required first-aid steps for each:

Hit By a Car / Motorbike

- Ensure the animal is in a safe place and call a vet immediately so they can prepare for your arrival.
- Follow the **ABC** procedure.
- If there is active bleeding, apply firm pressure to the area. If the blood is from a hind leg and is high pressure then apply a tourniquet above the bleeding (this needs to be removed within 15-20 minutes).

Poisoning

- *Never* make them vomit unless under veterinary guidance—this can cause severe consequences.
- If they vomit, ensure there's no sign of breathing difficulties; complications can happen quickly, especially if unconscious.
- Give your pet access to water, good ventilation and preferably air-conditioning.

- Contact your veterinary immediately and, when possible, show them the poison.

Heat Stroke

- Immediately take your pet out of the heat and into a cool environment.
- Shower your pet with room-temperature water and then cover them in wet towels (the water should *not* be icy cold as this *slows* heat loss).
- Put medical alcohol on your pet's footpads to facilitate heat loss.

Nose Bleeds

- As a general rule nose bleeds *always* look worse than they really are.
- Place an icy cold compress on the top of the nose.
- Do *not* raise the nose!
- Nose bleeds can often be a sign of an underlying disease (such as Tick Fever or coagulopathies) and are important to be checked even if the bleeding stops.

Always keep a basic pet first-aid kit in your home, labeled with your veterinarian's 24/7 emergency number, this can be a basic human first-aid kit purchased from any pharmacy. A little preparation goes a long way in case of an unexpected emergency situation. And ask your vet if they offer a basic life support training course for pets to keep your knowledge fresh and up-to-date! ■



Dr. Eugene has worked as a veterinarian around Southeast Asia for the last four years, from the Philippines and Thailand to Malaysia and now Vietnam. He is driven by a desire to provide the best care for his patients and has a wide range of experience in all aspects of veterinary medicine, and a special interest in surgery and intensive care. Dr. Eugene provides both first and second opinions on all manners of companion animal cases while also overseeing the provision of clinical care for Animal Doctors International in Ho Chi Minh City.





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WORK THIS WAY

Foreigners with degrees forego work permits, however...



A member of the Paris Bar, **Antoine Logeay** has been practicing law first in France, mainly in litigation and arbitration, then in Vietnam for three years as an associate of Audier & Partners based at its Hanoi office. Also a member of the Paris Bar, **Caroline de Bellescize** has been practicing mainly business law and real-estate law for three years in a French law firm and is currently an associate at the HCMC office of Audier & Partners. Audier & Partners is an international law firm with presence in Vietnam, Myanmar and Mongolia, providing advice to foreign investors on a broad range of legal issues.

Dear Antoine and Caroline,
I am a Turkish citizen, planning to move to Vietnam permanently. I heard that a new decree has been issued allowing foreigners with three years work experience and a bachelor's degree the ability to obtain work in Vietnam without a work permit. Is this correct? What would be the proof of work, and would part-time jobs count? Also would a foreigner on a student or tourist visa in Vietnam be covered in this decree?

VIETNAM HAS RECENTLY EXTENDED the possibilities for foreign workers to obtain a work permit exemption. Decree 11/2016/ND-CP was adopted in February 2016 (effective April 1, 2016) and provides the rules and conditions for foreign workers in Vietnam for obtaining a work permit or, as the case may be, an exemption from a work permit. According to the new decree, several groups are exempt from work permits, for example, foreign investors of limited liability companies or foreign workers appointed by foreign agencies or organizations to teach or do research in international schools.

Concerning your specific question, a foreign worker, who has a bachelor's degree, or equivalent or higher qualifications, and has worked at least three years in his training field corresponding with the job position he is appointed in Vietnam, is considered as an expert and may be granted exemption from a work permit. However, this would be granted only in two cases: 1) The foreign worker has been employed for at least one year in a foreign company engaged in one of the following services: business, communication, construction, distribution, education, environment, finance, health, tourism, culture, entertainment and transportation, and he has been temporarily reassigned within the same company to its commercial presence in Vietnam or 2) He comes to work in Vietnam for no more than

30 days at a time, and no more than 90 days per year. Please note that the new decree does not include any provision requiring a specific kind of labor contract (definite, indefinite, full-time, part-time, etc.) in order to be eligible for a work permit exemption.

If you are one of the above, and therefore eligible, your employer can request the Department of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs (the labor management body at the provincial level) to certify that you are indeed eligible for exemption. Please be advised that this must be addressed to the authority at least seven working days before beginning your job.

The application for the certification of exemption from a work permit would notably include documents proving that you are eligible. In the case of an expert reassigned within the same enterprise, this could be a letter of appointment of the foreign worker at the commercial presence in Vietnam with a specific working duration at the expert position and an attestation from the foreign company that you have worked for them for at least a year. Diplomas, an attestation from a company confirming that you are an expert and an attestation from a company or companies proving that you have worked for at least three years in your training field conforming to the job in Vietnam might also be provided. The duration of the exemption certificate will be maximum two years.

Now let's go back to your question

regarding a foreigner with a tourist or student visa. The new decree applies to foreign citizens moving to or living in Vietnam for employment, without consideration to the visa of the applicant. Nevertheless, be aware that the visa is granted accordingly to the purpose of the entry in Vietnam. A foreigner can be engaged in activities in Vietnam only if it is in accordance with the stated purpose and the purpose of the visa cannot be changed. Moreover, a foreigner working in Vietnam without a work permit (except the case where they are exempted in accordance with the authority's confirmation) will be expelled from the country. Thus, a foreigner entering Vietnam with a tourist visa is not allowed to work in Vietnam and to convert his visa into a working visa, let alone require a work permit/exemption from a work permit.

The situation is, however, different for students. The new decree allows those who are studying and working in Vietnam, students who are studying in schools, or training institutions in foreign countries and executing their internship in Vietnam upon agreements, to request exemption. This means that a foreigner having a student visa and being one of the above will be covered by the new decree.

*Every month, **Antoine and Caroline** answer legal questions from readers. If you have any legal question you want answered, send them to legal@oivietnam.com. ■*



Sven Roering is a Managing Partner at Tenzing Pacific Investment Management. He holds an Economics Degree from Rhodes University in South Africa, and is a candidate in the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) program, having successfully completed level 1 and is currently working towards the level 2 exam.

FRINGE BENEFITS

How to set up an employee pension plan in Southeast Asia

I am a manager of a footwear production company, with factories and operations in Vietnam, Myanmar, Malaysia and Cambodia. I started the company with three partners about two years ago. Since then the company has become profitable, but at the same time we face more competition from similar companies entering the market. Because of this we would like to improve our employee recruitment drive and begin hiring some of the best professionals in the industry, as well as the best graduates from overseas universities. We've figured that expanding our employee benefits, through group healthcare plans, would be one strategy. We would also like to explore the viability of setting up a company pension plan for the benefit of our employees, as many of our multinational competitors do. Would this be possible from here?

EXPANDING YOUR EMPLOYEE BENEFIT options is most definitely a key element of a robust recruitment strategy, particularly in frontier Asia, as many prospective employees are drawn to regional metropolises like Singapore and Hong Kong, and can often feel uncomfortable accepting a positions in, say, Myanmar from abroad. Quality employee benefits, through pension and healthcare provisions, are great ways to attract top talent and differentiate your SME from competitors.

It is, in fact, possible to set up a company pension scheme for the benefit of your employees, also known as an occupational retirement scheme. Various companies providing fiduciary services (trustees) will be able to construct your scheme/plan, which would be tailored according to the needs and requirements of your organization.

Selecting the correct jurisdiction

from which your plan will be constructed and administered is of particular importance. Hong Kong is quite attractive, as the introduction of the Occupational Retirement Schemes Ordinance in 1993 brought Hong Kong into line with other jurisdictions that incentivize pension provision for employees—income tax relief may be available at the time of investment, accumulated interest is not taxed and withdrawal is also tax-free. Hong Kong also has a growing network of tax treaties that can assist in avoiding pension-related tax liabilities in the employee's home country.

One of the Hong Kong-based firms specializing in the construction of occupational retirement schemes is Sovereign Trustees Limited. They would be able to construct and administer what is known as a "defined contribution" plan; for example where the employer and employees make joint contributions to the plan, and the

employees are entitled to benefits based on total contributions plus interest at retirement. This is a contrast to defined benefit (final salary) schemes, which guarantee employees a fixed income during retirement, regardless of the performance of the underlying investments. You would thus be shifting risk from your company to your employees.

Your company would have the option to dictate specific rules within the plan, such as the minimum retirement age and what percentage of an employee's salary the company will contribute to a plan. Employees do not need to be residents in Hong Kong to be members of a plan; therefore employees operating in various regions will be able to become members. Employees are able to contribute as much to the plan as they like, and may remain members when they leave the company.

Once the scheme has been constructed and is able to accept contributions, the underlying funds would have to be invested in order to realize interest and growth over-and-above inflation to maintain your members' purchasing power during retirement. With interest rates at historically low levels, it would be necessary to invest in corporate equities, bonds and possibly real estate. Tenzing Pacific provides investment advisory services, and would be able to construct a portfolio of active mutual fund managers or direct equity, bond and commodity investments, on behalf of your plan, subject to your requirements and restrictions. ■



Holiday Gift Guide

TEXT BY ROISIN MURRAY IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

Long ago, many in the world decreed that the end of the calendar year should be a time to give people gifts. Some partake in this tradition with Christmas gifts, or gifts for Hannukah, Festivus, or even Oatmeal Muffin Day (December 20th, don't forget). Some celebrate via white elephant parties, family gatherings, or just because so many things were on sale so why not? Whether you need something big for your best friends, meaningful for your mom, lavish for yourself, or an inexpensive whatever for a distant Facebook buddy who sent you a holiday card, we are here to help. Our holiday gift guide is full of ideas handpicked by *Oi Vietnam* staff. Enjoy!



Spirituality With Style

STEP INTO A BIKRAM YOGA CLASS or vegan café and chances are you'll see any number of people wearing strings of beads coiled around their wrists or necks. Some version of these beads—called Japa mala, mantra or prayer beads—are used in a multitude of religions, including Buddhism and Hinduism, to help focus the mind while meditating. For many wearers, they hold spiritual significance. But now some jewelry designers are making mala beads stylish enough to be worn with more than those Lululemons. They can be found in intriguing materials such as blue lace agate, studded with Swarovski crystals or embellished with precious stones that would look great with a cocktail dress.

"I like Japa mala very much, but I couldn't wear them as often as I wanted because they didn't match my clothes. I wanted to create designs where you could wear them in the evenings and they would still look beautiful," explains **Japa Mala Saigon** (Face-

book: *japamalasaigon*; prices start at VND250,000) creator Sussan Yanine. Based out of her showroom in Phu My Hung in District 7, she sells both ready-to-wear and customized Japa malas.

Sussan first stumbled across Japa mala in Bali while she was vacationing in Ubud. "I went to Bali for a week a couple of years ago. One week transformed into three months. I couldn't leave that place; there was just so much positive energy." The trip also introduced her to the art of making Japa malas and their spiritual and meditative benefits. "Making Japa malas brings me a lot of relaxation. It's really special to make them. I feel more powerful in a way."

But the positive benefits of Japa malas do not only extend to the designer. They are hailed for their apparent healing properties. Sussan considers their ability to improve physical and mental health as inherent in the stones. "The healing properties of the stones are what make

them special." The specific benefits vary depending on the color of the stones used. "For example, black is used to repel bad things. Some colors combat different sicknesses. Others can be for positivity." She emphasizes that if they are used as rosary beads, using the individual beads as counting aids to recite mantras and chants rather than as fashion statements, the benefits dramatically increase.

Sussan's Japa malas are made out of the highest-quality beads, sourced from across the globe, from South Africa for agate to Chile for Lapis Lazuli. "I have people in different countries that choose the beads for me, piece by piece. You have to be really careful about that or you end up selling plastic. All the materials I use are good quality, even the tassels and threads." So for that friend who's a spiritual guru, meditation maniac or jewelry lover, or if they happen to be all three, a Japa mala necklace as a Christmas gift won't disappoint. ■



Bath, Beach and Beyond

FORGET THE MINI BAR, the room service and the king-size bed. There's one hotel luxury we'd all raid the bank to have at home: the fluffy towels. "Nice towels are something that is missing in Vietnam. You use towels daily, but it is almost impossible to find good ones here," say Ina Stas and Tina Riehle, creators of luxury towel brand **Bo Saigon** (pronounced "*beau*," meaning "beautiful" in French; www.bo-saigon.com). Shopping at supermarkets like Co-op Mart and Citimart only yielded coarse polyester blended towels that left the skin irritated, so the two decided to upgrade the common household item into "daily treasures."

"Our towels are practical but good to look at too, which don't always go together, and because they are beautiful towels, they almost become like decoration when you see them hanging in the bathroom," she adds. The

towels are woven from 100 percent cotton, with an intricate, maze-like Vietnamese design for extra flair. The design is taken from a carving inscribed onto the side of a rice chest in Tina's house. "We wanted to establish a connection with Vietnam so this [design] is a connection from us to the beautiful country that we live in."

Vietnam has not only inspired them creatively but has also provided Ina and Tina with the perfect conditions to set up their business. "It's much easier to access production and to develop, people are very gifted with their hands here."

But aren't all towels basically the same? Not according to Tina. "If you

go to the beach, large towels are often super heavy. What distinguishes our towels is that they are lightweight, and take up less space as a positive consequence. They absorb very well and dry much faster than a heavyweight towel."

While Bo's towels look and feel lush, the designers are adamant the price tags do not reflect it. "You should have the feeling that it's a really nice product, but at a fair price." The large towels are priced at VND490,000, while the medium are VND190,000 and a pack of six small ones are VND260,000. "We are upscale in the display and the quality of the product, but not in the pricing," Ina concludes. ■



Party People in the House

IF VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE, then **Party Inc.**

(www.partyinc.co) is so diverse it might as well be the UN. Red Chinese lanterns, pastel lamps like you would see at a party in Malibu and “Frozen” party sets that seem to be at every five-year-old-girl’s birthday. The air-con and the quiet speakers playing 80s party hits are a world away from the hot and sweaty hunt in Cholon for a decorative item or two. The English-speaking shop assistants offer some suggestions on how to make my upcoming birthday party better. I opt for some glitter top hats in bold colors, glow sticks and several Hawaiian skirts for the drinking competition planned.

I meet My An, the owner, when she comes back from an errand and she tells me what I already know—sourcing party supplies in Vietnam is a trial of frustration and ultimate failure. Opened

18 months ago, her shop has a fully-functioning showroom, an online delivery site for those too busy to visit the shop, and they can even help plan events.

When she arrived in Vietnam there were more house parties happening, and a tighter knit group of expats. She soon became a guaranteed invite at celebrations because everyone knew she could dress a room with impossible-to-find pom-poms, honeycombs and stylish centerpieces. “For my friends’ children’s birthdays, we ran around town the entire month before the party looking for the right materials and then having to color, paint, cut, glue to create pom-poms and paper fans and party hats,” she says. “Pulling together one party took ten times the effort here than it did in the US, so I thought why not make party decorations easier. Hence, we opened Party inc.”

“The best ideas always come out of

something you are passionate about. Your customers can tell when you’re doing something you love,” she says. After trawling the local markets and craft shops for years, she knew that a one-stop shop was needed. “Throwing a party should be fun, not stressful. Going to Cholon to bargain with this vendor for this and that vendor for that is incredibly time consuming, and always coming away with the job half-finished was unsatisfying.”

“We used to be in D4 and have chosen a much better location for the new shop, that still keeps the rent low, so products are affordable. So we are focusing on online retailing. Online is a channel for the busy person with a job and kids,” she adds, “that makes it easy to order what you know you need and maybe find something you didn’t know about. We have a lot of work to do to increase the content on our site – videos, tutorials and décor ideas, but we are getting there.”

You can find **Party Inc.** at 385 Tran Hung Dao, D1 (a five-minute drive from Ben Thanh Market). ■



Ready to Wear

“FOR YEARS, PEOPLE HAVE BEEN saying to me why don’t you design clothes? Clothes are your thing! And then I realized the only thing that was stopping me was me,” says Virginia Stevenson, creator of clothing line **NINI** (www.nini-pretaporter.com). After attending a workshop in Vietnam marketed as an opportunity to “reveal what your dream job is,” Virginia finally quashed all the doubts and embarked upon a career in fashion. NINI was initially launched at a pop-up market and the positive response to her ready-to-wear collection reassured Virginia that she had made the right choice.

With collections that she defines as “feminine, refined and relaxed lines, with a focus on singular colors and noble materials,” NINI is for women of all ages. “I want my customers to wear the clothes and feel like themselves, rather than the model on the website,” Virginia explains. This is the rationale behind the unique method she uses to display her clothes online; rather than employing standard models, Virginia uses faceless illustrated models instead. For Virginia, this allows customers to more easily visualize themselves in the clothes. “I don’t want a person to represent my clothes. I want people to represent themselves with my clothes,” she clarifies.

Her first collection is available at The Closet (81 Xuan Thuy, D2), and her second collection is currently in produc-

tion. “I think of a story to tell in the collection so that there’s more harmony in all the clothes.” Some pieces are inspired by a particular memory or experience. “I used to get all my clothes in the second-hand shops in France, where they have really cool stuff that nobody buys.” While others come directly from her childhood memories. A wrap-around skirt in her new collection was inspired by a missing item at the hands of typical sibling antics: wardrobe rummaging. “I had one just like that when I was younger, but my sister stole it and never gave it back. I was so bitter, so I thought I have to make it.”

The use of natural fabrics, such as silk, cotton and linen, is key for Virginia because this ensures that her garments are “flowing, dancing fabrics” and are “easy to wear and convenient.” Finding high quality materials with a wide range of colors in Vietnam, however, hasn’t been easy. She buys from local shops that import fabrics from countries such as Korea. But these difficulties haven’t deterred her because she believes the materials in their clothing is what really distinguishes a designer, and sets them apart from the rest. “I look on all these clothes websites and everything has been done before. There is nothing that hasn’t already been done. But that’s why the innovation in the fabric is so important; it’s that little something that makes it exciting.” ■



Graphie Anthropology

ANNABELLE AUDIER SPENT SIX MONTHS of her university life living in a mud-hut in Nepal, a two-day walk from the nearest road. It was here that her fascination with other cultures would form the core concept behind the stationery business she later establishes in Vietnam called **Mekong Belle** (www.mekongbelle.com; Snap Café (32 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2)). For Annabelle, the designs on her cups, cards, notepads and activity books aim to “capture some of the cultural elements of Vietnam in a graphic style using visuals.”

“As the country develops and modernizes, some of the traditional elements get lost. So it’s really about honoring the traditions in Vietnam and capturing them before they disappear completely.” She explains it’s important to document traditional Vietnamese items, such as the thermos flask and old weighing scales, in her products. “I wanted to capture them in something that people could take home; in designs, in notepads, cups.” Given that a large majority of Mekong Belle’s customers are tourists and expats, she has ensured that they can always take a memento of Vietnam with them to their next destination.

Annabelle draws on inspiration from different aspects of Vietnamese life. Some are influenced by socialist art, particularly propaganda posters. However, while paying homage to Vietnam’s past, Annabelle emphasizes that her products are not about war. “In this day and age I don’t want to be discussing war through my designs. My designs are much more contemporary, and are about honoring traditions that Vietnam has to be proud of.”

Other more direct encounters with real Vietnamese people have also proved a source of inspiration. An evaluation of an education project in Dien Bien Phu gave her the incentive to document her experiences. “I was working with a lot of ethnic minorities, so I used these people for inspiration: the Red Dao, the Flower Hmong, the Kinh.” This experience translated into a bestselling notebook appropriately named “Rainbow People,” which displays the different faces of 54 ethnic groups of Vietnam.

Also a social work consultant, Annabelle has always been active in charity endeavors. The majority of her profits from Mekong Belle go towards community projects for the disabled. After calling Ho Chi Minh City home for many years, Annabelle feels a moral obligation to help those less fortunate. “I feel privileged as a foreigner to have been able to live here, and I feel a strong responsibility to give back to the country and help where I can.” ■





The Cinderella Man

TEXT BY JAMES PHAM & ROISIN MURRAY

IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

IF CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN then it's his shoes that are his signature. Even in the heat and dust of Saigon, there are those inevitable occasions when a great pair of shoes, along with the style and confidence boost they bring, simply cannot be beat. It might sound out of place in a land where cream-colored plastic slippers and ragtag flip-flops hold sway, but Andy Nguyen believes the (handcrafted Italian leather) shoe

is now firmly on the other foot.

"The market in Asia is saturated with cheap shoes of low quality which you can buy almost anywhere," says Andy in the plush confines of **Mangii Shoes** (7/9B Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1). Surrounded by vintage black-and-white photos and racks of classic Oxfords and stylish double monks, the young entrepreneur says the idea of starting his own brand of luxury custom-made shoes sprang from a mix

of business, fashion and a bit of science.

"The Vietnamese by nature are very hardworking and meticulous which makes us good workers," he says. "But we lack the know-how to make our own high-quality products which means we end up making shoes, clothing and furniture for foreign companies. Vietnam is one of the largest shoe manufacturing nations, but it's just labor, not creativity. That's a pity because it's something that we Vietnamese can do."



several books of swatches of standard and premium Italian dyed leather and patina which can be uniquely hand-colored. Andy's philosophy is to balance practicality and luxury, spending money where it should be spent—mainly in the premium construction of the shoe using high-quality but not ultra-premium materials, the difference between a USD200 pair of shoes and an USD800 pair. "Some people may really need that quality," says Andy, "but the majority need something that looks great while lasting ten years. If luxury products are unaffordable, I've lost the opportunity to provide my customers with something they really deserve."

I settle on a trendy double monk in a navy Italian leather. It'll take at least a week for the shoes to be made in Andy's workshop where craftsmen use traditional methods to hand-make the shoes, starting with stretching the leather upper over a last that's been modified with tiny fractions of leather and cork for a perfect replica of my feet. While it's the upper that everyone sees, the secret to a well-made pair of shoes is actually in the sole, made up of the insole, the welt and the outsole (the part that touches the ground). "Anyone can make an upper," says Andy, "but less than 20 factories in all of Southeast Asia can stitch the sole because it's so time-consuming and requires a high level of skill," as opposed to gluing the shoe together which is what most shoemakers do. "It's the hand-stitching that gives a well-made pair of shoes longevity. The first stitch holds the shoe together while the second stitch in the outsole ensures that the shoe is repairable. Simply cut the outsole and replace it with another piece of leather. Once it's stitched up again, the shoe can be completely like new," says Andy.

Just over a week later, I'm back at Mangii Shoes to try on my new pair of shoes and they fit like a glove. It's the best gift I could've given myself, thanks to the Cinderella Man.

Ready-to-wear shoes start at VND3,600,000. Custom-made shoes start at VND4,500,000. The shop also sells beautiful dress socks and other shoe accessories. Visit www.mangiihoses.com for more. ■

"I've always loved shoes," he continues. "But the shoes I found were either too expensive, too ugly or too painful. I knew there were other people like me, desperately looking for good shoes to wear. The market is here." With that, he spent three years learning from a shoe master before purchasing his own workshop and spending the next two years repurposing it from mass production to making shoes by hand. "It wasn't really 'brainwashing,'" he says with a laugh, describing the arduous process of changing the mindset of craftsmen who had spent decades making shoes based on someone else's designs and specs. "But it took a long time to convince them that a market for high-quality shoes did exist, even if it meant making only 10-20 pairs a day instead of a hundred. They simply found it hard to understand why we needed to spend so much time on a single pair of shoes."

With a slight Singaporean lilt acquired from studying Chemistry at the National Institute of Singapore, Andy seamlessly transitions to the fascinating science of shoemaking as he takes my measurements using both a Brannock Device and a tape measure. "Shoes are the only fashion item that involve science. Just look at all the research that has gone into creating the perfect

running shoe," he says as he pronounces my feet mostly symmetrical. While 70-80 percent of his customers can comfortably fit his ready-to-wear line, some need custom-made shoes because one foot (usually the dominant one) may be millimeters larger than the other or genetics and environment may contribute to a variance in foot and toe width. "Vietnamese tend to have shorter, wider feet with splayed toes because they grow up walking barefoot or wearing flip-flops while Europeans usually have longer, narrower feet with the toes closer together because they're used to wearing shoes from a young age," he says. "Shoe companies use a vast amount of data to find the median for their customers in a certain location, meaning a shoe size in one region of the world may fit differently than the same size somewhere else."

Andy next has me try on a pair of fitting shoes to determine what minor adjustments are needed - where the shoe feels loose or tight for that truly customized feel, something that measurements on their own cannot capture. From there, it's simply a matter of selecting from the ten or so shoe and boot styles the shop specializes in (although one-of-a-kind shoes are also a possibility) and the type of leather from



Silver Wear

SILVER HAS ALWAYS BEEN a part of Kim Quyen-Tran's life. Her parents own a shop selling silver in their hometown of Can Tho. So when Kim decided to start her own jewelry collection called **Taini** (3A Station (3A Ton Duc Thang, D1), her parents were naturally her first go-to contact.

"I went back home and asked my parents if I could use some of their silver to make jewelry," she says. "I just love the color of silver, it's simply beautiful." The production process is also a family affair. "I design on paper, and then send it to my father in Can Tho. He makes it, and then delivers it back to me."

Kim's collection is inspired by her numerous visits to flea markets with extra personal touches to create a background story. "The first ring I ever made was inspired by one of my mother's

favorite hairpins. It was a bestseller."

"I make handmade jewelry and keep it simple," she adds. "Now in Vietnam there are too many jewelry shops that only sell over-the-top and dramatic jewelry." Kim's wants to bring jewelry back to basics, where less is more.

She also explains the meaning behind the name "Taini," which is a play on the word "tiny" with a Vietnamese twist. Kim chose it to convey the delicate nature of the jewelry she creates. Pieces in her collection range from VND100,000 to VND300,000.

Establishing Taini helped Kim fulfill her childhood dream. "Ever since I was in primary school I have only ever wanted to be a business woman." Currently a university student studying economics, Kim hopes to put her degree to use to grow from taini to big. ■



It's a Hard Rock Life



WITH A SELF-PROFESSED alternative style and a love of tattoos, jewelry and accessories designer Jérôme Peschard is clearly very inspired by the rock generation. "I don't want to grow up. I still think I'm 18 at the time of hard rock," he chuckles. "The spirit of our brand, Iron & Oil, is that wanting to be somebody else is wasting the person that you are."

Jérôme started **Iron & Oil** (Facebook: *Iron & Oil "Luxury jewel and Accessories for Rock'men"*) when saw

a demand for unorthodox jewelry for artists, musicians and rock lovers like himself. "Young people in Vietnam want to wear different things because lots of products are all of the same style. I want to make something a bit different. It's a risk, but I prefer it." He cites Led Zeppelin, AC/DC and The Who amongst some of his biggest influences, and this love of heavy metal has obviously permeated his designs. A recurring image found in his accessories collection is the skull, emphasizing the hard rock and metalhead style

that's synonymous with the music genre. But the skull doesn't represent death says Jérôme, "The skull is a reminder that life is short, so you have to live it really well."

Living, and looking, well with Iron & Oil accessories can set you back anywhere from USD200-USD2,000. "We only use full silver sterling, never alloy. We also use 18 carat gold, pink gold and white gold," says Jérôme. The first week of December will also see the brand expand to rock-inspired t-shirts with their signature skull design on the front. ■



Let Yourself be Wooed

IMAGES PROVIDED BY WOO

"I CAME TO VIETNAM 10 YEARS AGO to work for a development center. I saw that there was a lot of talent and resources in the country, but I also saw that many people did not have access to opportunities or markets," says Saskia de Knegt, founder and CEO of luxury lifestyle brand **WOO** ("WOO" stands for "world of opportunities"). This observation drove her to create a brand that would empower disadvantaged people, while also being socially responsible and environmentally friendly. "In creating our product we strive to impact the lives of people engaged in our brand in a positive way; to empower them, to educate them, and to be good for the environment," she adds. Products range from candles, to perfumes and diffusers, all finished with a European-inspired design. Based in both Amsterdam and Vietnam, WOO (woocares.com) is a global company with a focus on creating employment opportunities across Vietnam and opening up real markets to Vietnamese people. WOO products are currently available to purchase in The Snap Café (32 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2), with a shop opening next year in District 1.

Instead of looking at people who are not yet completely

engaged and empowered as only liabilities, it's about seeing their essence," Saskia explains. WOO is committed to creating opportunities using the market as a means of pulling people out of poverty, and promoting the interests of the workers who are a part of WOO's production process. "We use as little machines as possible so that it's handmade. Because when it's handmade, it includes the hands of many people who need opportunities." Every step of the production process is tailored to ensure that the maximum number of people are benefitting from such employment opportunities. Even the cotton bag packaging for WOO's candles are out-sourced to NGOs in Vietnam who employ people with disabilities.

So how does Saskia ensure that WOO is fully committed to being environmentally friendly? The brand sources its ingredients sustainably. This includes visiting bee farmers to establish optimum results coupled with positive impact for the farmers when procuring beeswax for their candles. WOO's dedication to being eco-friendly is exemplified by the use of one particular ingredient in their candles: recycled bottles. Ranging from water bottles to wine bottles and vodka bottles, these recycled products are used to create candle holders. WOO liaises with restaurants, hotels and garbage collectors to get them. The emphasis on being 'green' is central to the brand. "Being socially aware is our mission: it's the DNA of our company," Saskia reiterates.

However, she stresses that while the components that make up the products are sustainably sourced and made of recycled parts, the results are of the highest quality. "We don't do a concession for quality." After searching for premium candle wicks in both Vietnam and Japan, WOO now imports them directly from Germany, as Saskia maintains that "Germany have the best candle wicks in the world." A testament to their quality is the company's guaranteed that their candles will burn for 100 hours. ■



FEW CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS are as enduring as that of the family getting round the table together—sometime between the Queen's speech and the *James Bond* movie—to play a game together. In fact, the only one that rivals it is probably the family getting round the table together and having massive rows while they play a game together. Of course, to do it properly you need some decent board or card games: standard edition Clue and Monopoly just won't cut it in Saigon.

Darren and Tran, the creatives and owner behind Vietnam Themed Games, design the interactive tabletop games to reflect the beauty, history and fun side of Vietnam. "Our aim is to release a new game every few months, not only adapted versions of existing games, but original games too. So, whether you're a local, expat or tourist, we hope you switch off your phones, sit down with your friends and family, and join in the fun," says Darren.

Visit Facebook: [vietnamthemedgames](https://www.facebook.com/vietnamthemedgames) for more info or email vietnamthemedgames@gmail.com for free delivery.

Game On

IMAGES PROVIDED BY VIETNAM THEMED GAMES

1880 SAIGON MONOPOLY & 1900S HANOI MONOPOLY

(VND750,000 each; available in English or French)

Be transported back in time and immerse yourself in the exotic surroundings of "The Pearl of the Orient" (Old Saigon) and "The Paris of the East" (Old Hanoi) in these beautifully illustrated versions of the classic board game.

Set amid the late 1800s to early 1900s, the two cities are full of opportunities for entrepreneurs and fortune-seeking adventurers. Tree-lined streets are bustling with the clatter of horse drawn

carriages and rickshaws while the quays and canals support a constant chain of sampans, barges and steamboats that feed a brisk and competitive trade. Claim your stake in these thriving cities by buying and trading properties. In the thrilling race for power and glory, only one will emerge victorious.

These vintage-themed designs were created with the help of historians, using a rare collection of old photos to truly capture the time period and details of each city. Each game board displays both the old names and current names of the city streets.

1880 SAIGON MONOPOLY DEAL & 1900S HANOI MONOPOLY DEAL CARD GAMES

(VND300,000 each; trilingual:

English, French & Vietnamese)

Deal and steal your way to success—just collect three property sets to win. Sounds easy but beware the dreaded Debt Collectors, Sly Deals and Deal Breakers, which can flip your fortunes in the play of a card. 106 beautifully-designed cards will take players through all the thrill of the chase, the gains, the losses, bankruptcy and victory just like the legendary board game.



TRAFFIC OI! (Inspired by the famous French card game Milles Bornes)

(VND300,000; trilingual: English, French and Vietnamese)

Vietnam's crazy traffic is made fun in this chaotic road race challenge where players try to be the first to drive across the country. Meander through busy streets and the countryside, while your opponents try to slow you down with flat tires, red lights and accidents. Start your Drive Pile, build up your kilometers, and look out for Bonus Cards and Safety Cards that can protect you from others. 104 cards with hilarious characters, and illustrated with some of Vietnam's most famous cities and landmarks. As an extra design bonus, all the cards can be linked side by side to display one huge continuous scene.

CLUE/CLUEDO: THE QUIET AMERICAN EDITION

(VND700,000; available in English only)

The body of a young American was found in the river. He was sent here on a secret CIA mission. He got involved. He fell in love. Conspiracy and romance left him cold in the water. His death has caused a stir. Tension is in the air and everyone is under police surveillance.

A murder mystery board game based on the movie version of the classic novel *The Quiet American* by Graham Greene, set against the backdrop of the French Indochina War in Vietnam. Gameplay is the same as the classic Clue/Cluedo game, only the names and locations have changed.

This collector's edition also contains a second set of Intrigue cards. These can be added to play the Advanced version with some twists... there may be more than one victim!



SAIGON PUB CRAWL

(VND450,000; bilingual: English and Vietnamese)

Stock up your wine cellar and experience all the adventures of a legendary pub crawl with your friends and try to win the title "King of the Crawlers." Pub and Event cards have players "trapped in Roundabout, Lose 1 turn" and "Sucked into Vietnamese Wedding Party, Have 1 drink with everyone at table." The main goal of Saigon Pub Crawl is simple: be the first to check off all 12 pubs on the list to win. ■



Wine & Dine

VIET KITCHEN



IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN





Divine Dining

The recently-opened Việt Kitchen elevates Vietnamese cuisine to the nth level

TEXT BY MARTIN ZORRILLA & SONIA GREGOR

IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

IN A CITY OBSESSED WITH BUFFETS, the recently opened Việt Kitchen has decidedly raised the standard. The sleek restaurant is housed on the ground floor of the **Renaissance Riverside Hotel Saigon** (8-15 Ton Duc Thang, D1), and is a testament to good design, fresh food and talent in the kitchen.

Việt Kitchen serves a breakfast buffet (VND450,000++) from 6-10am, a lunch buffet (VND490,000++) from 12-2:30pm, and a dinner buffet

(VND990,000++) from 6-10pm. An a la carte menu is served all day and features international cuisines as well as Vietnamese dishes. The buffets offer a wide range of classic local fare as well as International and Japanese cuisines.

For our visit we chose the dinner buffet. Walking across the hotel lobby into the restaurant, we were immediately struck by its modern, chic décor—sharp geometric shapes pierced into the floor and reflected in the art and furniture, while dark wood under-



tones in the furniture and floor gave the space a warm, inviting ambiance. However, the most impressive display in Việt Kitchen is, without a doubt, the food. In one corner, a small mountain of fresh seafood beckons while across from it steam floats up from a hot noodle counter. Even the salad bar, a multilevel colorful affair built into a column in the middle of the room, seemed like a well-placed green garden.

Our dinner began with wine. Diners who opt for the buffet at Việt Kitchen are treated to a complimentary beverage of their choice, including beer, or free flow drinks (including beer and wine) for an additional VND350,000++. We opted for a glass of Lindeman's Premier Selection Brut (VND150,000). A Semillon Chardonnay from Australia, the wine was fruity with a subtle hint of citrus. Given the thrilling range of foods we were planning to sample, we also ordered a glass of red wine, a Michel Lynch- JM Cazes (VND190,000). The wine was a palate pleasing blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

The set up at Việt Kitchen is an innovative system designed to ensure ev-

erything is fresh. Distinct stations allow diners to choose ingredients, which are then prepared on the spot or in the open kitchen. We walked over to the sashimi station and chose salmon and octopus then the chef deftly sliced our selection within seconds. As for the mouthwatering seafood, your choices can be steamed, grilled or cooked in tamarind sauce. There are, of course, plenty of additional options throughout the floor: two fully-stocked salad bars, an impressive array of charcuterie options, and an extensive range of prepared hot dishes. However, the hot dishes are purposely set out one modestly-sized portion at a time, from the open kitchen, for two important reasons: nothing sits out for too long, and no dish sits empty for long. The open kitchen also means that you can speak directly to the chefs, who also carve the meat of the day according to the diner's specifications.

For our visit we were treated to a rosemary-marinated grilled leg of lamb, which was rich in flavor and melt-in-your-mouth delicious. Other notable highlights included a moreish duck stew and a baked eggplant with a balsamic

glaze. The pasta bar was comparable to a mini trattoria, where guests choose the pasta type and ingredients for the sauce then watch as the dish is prepared on the spot. We had the penne pasta with a sauce made from fresh tomatoes, mushrooms and garlic. The resulting rich sauce and al dente pasta could have come from any nonna's kitchen.

We then ventured over to the seafood station to 'catch' a juicy lobster, and asked for it to be grilled with butter and garlic. The grilled lobster arrived at our table wafting of garlic and sporting light char marks. It was tender, perfectly grilled and undeniably fresh. Aside from lobster, crabs, shrimp and oysters, there was an extensive selection of snails, which are divine when cooked in tamarind.

Somehow we made it to the dessert bar by the end of the night. We tried the almond profiterole and coconut ice cream. The profiterole hinted of excellent dark chocolate and the ice cream was impressively smooth and rich. From the modern design to the selection of food and the superb service, Việt Kitchen had exceeded all expectations. ■





Let's Take it Outside

Everything-seafood, barbecue, desserts-seems to taste so much better when eaten outside

TEXT BY BRIAN JUNG IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN



Chicken Kebab with Cous Cous and garden salad



Apple tarte tatin



Chocolate Mousse

NESTLED IN AN ALLEY, UNASSUMING at first glance, is **The Patio Bar-Restaurant** (52 Ngo Quang Huy, D2). Walking up the path I couldn't help but feel as if I was entering someone's backyard. And this is exactly what the owners had intended. They wanted the place to feel intimate and welcoming—the restaurant as an extension of their home. For those who enjoy the warm Saigon weather, the Patio is completely outdoors, basically no walls, with a large brick fire pit on one end and a large window showcasing the chefs in the kitchen working their delicious magic.

The main focus, or rather the main event, at Patio is their barbecue. The brick fire pit uses real wood, not charcoal, which allows them to change the smoke and flavor of the meat simply by changing out the wood. On my visit, several local free-range chickens were slowly turning above crackling flames.

We started our dinner off with a couple of appetizers. The Spanish chorizo bruschetta (VND185,000) was a delicious mix of spicy chorizo, red pepper, stewed tomato and ground beef—perfect on the slices of toasted baguette that came with the dish. They were addictive, and I made a mental note to order it again for a future evening with friends over wine. The next dish was a large serving of clams in melted butter (VND135,000) with delicately diced garlic and parsley. The clams were tender and soft. This is a must try dish and I'll admit if it didn't appear uncouth in this rather upscale

place I might've just licked the plate and each shell dry.

We ordered two Patio signature dishes for our main courses. The first was the chicken kebab with cous cous and garden salad (VND235,000), and here is where the barbecue aspect of the restaurant really shined. The tiny char marks were delicious and didn't taste burnt but instead they gave depth to slightly sweet chicken. The meat was tender and burst almost apologetically with juice, a testament to the proper rotisserie. A quick dip in the cous cous was not unrewarded, as the fluffy, slightly buttery grains soaked up the juices of the chicken, adding to yet another mouthful of flavor.

The second *pièce de résistance* was definitely a sea salt encrusted sea bass for two (VND595,000). The white crystal mound of salt broke off when the chef lifted the entire fish from the saucer. The salt works to seal in moisture and gently steam the food in its own juices, seasoning it slightly in the meantime. The finished product is invariably moist, succulent and bursting with flavor. Sides included a clay pot of baby potatoes sautéed in butter and generously topped with chopped parsley. The potatoes yielded soft flesh, and were light and creamy.

The evening and dinner, which were both lovely, ended with two decadent desserts: an apple tarte tatin (VND125,000) with vanilla ice cream, whipped cream and caramel sauce; and a chocolate mousse (VND125,000) served in a cocktail glass topped with whipped cream and shaved chocolate. Both were cool and sweet, perfect for a night out. ■

WINE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

Exciting wine regions you've never heard of



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.



WE ARE ALL FAMILIAR WITH THE POPULAR and famous wine producing areas around the world, or at least many of them. In France, Burgundy and Bordeaux top the list; Chianti and Barolo in Italy; California in the US, Rioja and Ribera in Spain.

However, over the past two decades or so, wineries in lesser-known areas have moved from producing bulk, uninteresting table wines to making refined, good to great quality wines, much cheaper than the more famous areas.

Today I would like to introduce you to Yecla on the Mediterranean coast of Spain.

Located 96km away from Murcia, the capital of the region, Yecla has been producing wine for over 2,000 years. Long, hot, dry summers, mild winters, and the proximity to the Mediterranean Sea makes Yecla ideal for grape growing and wine making, with vines planted between

500 and 800 meters above sea level.

There are 15 authorized grapes grown in Yecla, with the most popular being Monastrell, also known as the “grape of the Mediterranean.” Tempranillo, Grenache, Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot for reds, as well as Macabeo, Airén, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc for whites, are some of the most commonly planted grapes.

The wines produced in the area of Yecla are regulated by Yecla Origin Denomination. Although the planted area is rather big, there are only seven wineries producing wines in Yecla. Of them only one, Bodegas Castaño, has its wines available in Vietnam.

Castaño wines are a great example of amazing wines, produced in a wine region that not many people know about, and sold at low prices, making them some of the best value-for-money wines.

Hécula, the star of the middle range portfolio, and continuously awarded between 90 and 92 points by Spanish

and international experts, delivers a beautiful expression of the local grape Monastrell (Mourvedre). It's a powerful wine, with good complexity and length, and definitely one of my favorites when I discovered it in Spain a long time ago.

However nowadays, Solanera, also from the Castaño winery, tends to be my favorite wine from Yecla. Another fantastic, inexpensive wine, it has been chosen by expert Robert Parker as a top three best value-for-money wine in the world, and is given 92-94 points. The blend of Monastrell, Cabernet Sauvignon and Grenache, made from grapes coming from old vines, delivers a beautifully complex wine, elegant and charming.

A Bordeaux or Barolo with 90+ points would probably break the wallet for most of us. But this family-run winery brings us two fantastic wines at a ridiculously low price, so that we can have premium wine every day without worrying about the cost; one of the beauties of making wine outside the famous producing areas! ■



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www.metrowriters.com
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Wine & Dine

BARS



Acoustic Bar

As the name suggests, the Acoustic Bar is the ideal place to catch some high-quality live music in a lively atmosphere. Plus, the frequent rotation of performers means that even the most regular of patrons are kept on their toes.

El Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3
83930 7627



Aperitivo

Italian cocktail and wine bar Aperitivo has quickly established itself as a favourite in Thao Dien's bar scene. Cosy, friendly, and chic, with a quality cocktail and wine list, delicious deli sandwiches by day and night, Aperitivo is a great place to relax and unwind after work.

80b/c Xuan Thuy, Thao Dien, D2.
9am - late, closed on Mondays



BiaCraft

Located in the heart of District 2, BiaCraft is renowned for its extensive selection of craft beers. The back to basics décor only serves to enhance the laidback ambience which BiaCraft prides itself on.

90 Xuan Thuy, D2
8374 46863
www.biacraft.com



Malt

Hailed for its shuffleboard table and its smoke-free environment, this American-style bar has quickly established itself as a favorite amongst the expat community. The many local IPAs on tap are not to be missed, either.

46-48 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
9184 84763.



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 Tavern

With its reasonably priced drinks and famously friendly staff, it is no wonder that expats refer to this British bar and restaurant as a 'home away from home.' You can even purchase a British-style Sunday roast to accompany your cold beer.

R2-24, Hung Gia 3, Bui Bang Doan, PMH, D7.
www.thetavernpmh.com

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: resident band Living Cuba from 9pm, Tuesday to Sunday, Carnival Party on every first Wednesday of the month.

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





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CAFÉS



Bach Dang

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

26-28 Le Loi, D1



Café RuNam

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

96 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
www.caferunam.com



En Tea House & Restaurant

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

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



K.Coffee

Accented with sleek furniture and dark wood, this cozy cafe serves fresh Italian-style coffee, cold fruit juices, homemade Vietnamese food and desserts. The friendly owner and staff make this a great spot to while away the afternoon with a good book or magazine.

86 Hoang Dieu, D4
8253316 / 090 142 3103



La Rotonde Saigon

Situated in an authentic French colonial structure, this relaxed café is the perfect haven to escape the hustle and bustle of District 1. The east meets west interior décor is reminiscent of Old Saigon, and is greatly complemented by the Vietnamese fusion cuisine on offer.

77B Ham Nghi, 1st Floor, D1



The Workshop

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

27 Ngo Duc Ke, D1

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



SPANISH



La Bodega

La Bodega is a quaint Spanish restaurant serving succulent tapas dishes in a setting infused with a Latin-American vibe. With a bar open till late serving reasonably priced cocktails, this is the perfect place for both foodies and mojito lovers alike.

11 Xuan Thuy, D2
0120 757 3288



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



WINE

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

Finewines

Vietnamese company specializes in providing imported wines, wine accessories and beers at reasonable price to luxury price.

50 Hai Ba Trung St., D1

Red Apron

As a part of Celliers d'Asie, one of the leading wine importers and distributors in Vietnam with more than 1000 international wines and spirits from over 200 producers in both old and new world.

102 Ham Nghi, D1

Saigon Wine Club

Saigon Wine Club is the first online wine club in Vietnam, offering free speedy delivery aiming for delivery in 30 minutes.

92 Nguyen Huu Canh street, Binh Thanh

Saigon Cellars

A shop specializing in premium-label and easy-drinking wines from Australia and New Zealand. Winner of multiple global awards and served in 5-star hotels worldwide, Saigon Cellars is part of business class service on Singapore Airlines.

6/7 Cach Mang Thang Tam

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



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



Le Jardin

This place is consistently popular with French expats seeking an escape from the busier boulevards. It has a wholesome bistro-style menu with a shaded terrace cafe in the outdoor garden of the French cultural centre, Idecaf.

31 Thai Van Lung, D1



Long Phi

French-owned, this longstanding restobar has been a favorite among late-night revelers because of its late opening hours - 4am. The menu is a combination of Vietnamese and French with pasta dishes thrown in to cater to everyone.

207 Bui Vien, D1



Ty Coz

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

178/4 Pasteur, D1
www.tycozsaigon.com

Also Try...

La Cuisine

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

48 Le Thanh Ton
2229 8882

La 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 Buoi, D1



Tandoor

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

39A - 39B Ngo Duc Ke, D1

39304839 / tandoor@tandoorvietnam.com



The Punjabi

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

40/3 Bui Vien, D1

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ITALIAN



Ciao Bella

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

11 Dong Du, D1
3822 3329
tonyfox56@hotmail.com
www.ciaobellavietnam.com

Ciao Bella



Inter Nos

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

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



La 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 Forchetta

La cucina La Forchetta is located in a hotel building in Phu My Hung. Chef Gianni, who hails from Sicily, puts his passion into his food, focusing on pastas and pizzas with Italian meat and fish dishes as well delicious homemade desserts. Most of the tables are outside, so you can enjoy a relaxing outdoor dinner.

24 Hung Gia, PMH, D7
3541 1006



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



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

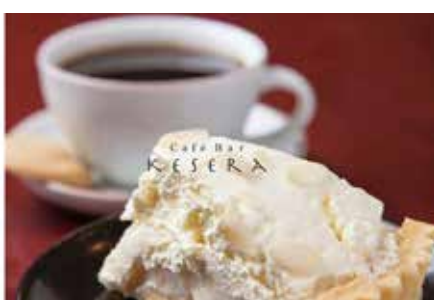
JAPANESE



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, D1



Sushi Dining Aoi

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

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



Yoshino

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

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

Also Try...

Blanchy Street

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

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

Chiisana Hashi

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

River Garden, 170 Nguyen Van Huong, D2

6683 5308

K Cafe

One of the larger Japanese restaurants in the city, this exemplary sushi venue is an ideal choice for business and friendly gatherings.

74A4 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3824 5355
www.yakatabune-saigon.com

Osaka Ramen

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

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



KOREAN



Galbi Brothers

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

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



Lee Cho

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

48 Hung Phuoc 2, D7
5410 1086



Seoul House

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

33 Mac Thi 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



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



El Gaucho Argentinian Steakhouse

The fine dining steakhouse boasts a modern yet rustic decor, giving it an inviting ambiance and genuine atmosphere. The authenticity of the Argentinian cuisine is strictly followed by the methods of preparation, hand-made charcoal grill serves as the focal point in the kitchen to maintain and accentuate the original flavor of the meat.

74/1 Hai Ba Trung, D1



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



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

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Halal & vegetarian dishes
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www.woknroll.vn

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Scan for the full menu

VIETNAMESE



Quan Bui

Leafy green roof garden, upmarket restaurant with reasonable prices and a wide menu of choices. Open style kitchen advertises its cleanliness. Designer interior with spotlighted artwork and beautiful cushions give an oriental luxurious feeling – augmented by dishes served on earthenware crockery. New Quan Bui Garden just opened in District 2.

www.bui.restaurant

17A Ngo Van Nam, D1
First Floor, 39 Ly Tu Trong, D1
55 Ngo Quang Huy, Thao Dien, D2



Five Oysters

Five Oysters serves authentic and excellent Seafood & Vietnamese food with SG Green beer at VND12,000 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 2014-16 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

Red Door offers traditional Vietnamese food with a contemporary twist. The restaurant is also a platform for art talk, science talk, and social talk; where ideas and passions are shared.

400/8 Le Van Sy, D3
012 0880 5905

Facebook: Reddoorrestaurant



Time Bistro

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

44 Nguyen Hue, Ben Nghe, D1
09 8910 4633

www.en.timebistro.vn



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

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

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

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



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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



Saigon Kitchen Club

Saigon Kitchen Club specializes in fresh, healthy and perfectly-portioned meals delivered to your home or office. They offer a variety of packages: Full Day, Lunch, Family and Weight Loss. The ingredients used are 100% pure olive oil, brown sugar, brown rice and strictly no MSG; giving diners exquisite and healthy meals. Place order through the website

www.saigonkitchenclub.com

or call **0888.629.788**



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



Travel & Leisure

PHOENIX ISLAND







ON A SLIVER OF ISLAND IN THE WASH of the Mekong, just outside of My Tho, sits the obscure remains of one of the more bizarre chapters in Vietnamese history. The island is Con Phung, Phoenix Island, and the man at the center of our story is one Nguyen Thanh Nam, otherwise known as “*Ong Dao Dua*” (Coconut Monk).

In the war days, with the country locked in the midst of bloodshed and turmoil, a cult sprang up on this island, founded by the idiosyncratic and French-educated figurehead. A cult centered around three simple precepts: peace, harmony, and of course, coconuts.

Like Gandhi and Uncle Ho, the Coconut Monk’s origin story begins humbly enough, with a Western education. The young Nguyen studied chemistry in France, a period where he also developed an interest in religion, architecture, and the Apollo space program. Presumably fairgrounds and theme parks also, judging by what was later to come.

The turning point came after his return to the homeland, and a prolonged meditation in solitude atop Sam Mountain, just outside the city of Chau Doc in the Mekong. Nguyen took a vow of monastic silence and for three years meditated alone on his mountaintop, at the end of which he had formulated his bizarre new religion, a blend of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Taoism, space exploration, and an abiding love for the coconut.

With his newfound followers, he set up residence on the tiny Phoenix Island, and became, in a sense, the Walt Disney of his very own Disneyland. His temple, like a floating theme park in miniature, has been described as a “pop-art maze of

THE COCONUT MONK

His bizarre life on Phoenix Island remains his most enduring legacy

TEXT BY TAYNE EPHRAIM

IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

towers, pennants, crucifixes, swastikas and colorful ornaments.” There were ornamental dragon pillars supporting giant sculptures of blossoming lotus flowers, pink minaret towers, painted globes, even a hand-wrought replica of Apollo 11, scaled down to the size of a dodgem car, all of it emblazoned in riotous colors. And at the center of this bizarre amalgamation of symbols and artifacts was constructed a man-made grotto fashioned after Sam Mountain, a papier-mâché peak from which he lorded over his coconut kingdom.

But although founded by a hermit, it was no hermit kingdom. All were welcomed to the island, regardless of faith or creed: pacifists, draft dodgers,

and the simply curious alike. The floating temple became a sanctuary from the war and perhaps the only arms-free zone in a country torn apart by conflict. Throughout the war years the government maintained a hands-off policy and mostly left the island to itself. The Coconut Monk and his followers were permitted complete autonomy, provided the monk remained on his island and kept his meddling in affairs off the mainland.

At the height of his influence, the Coconut Monk could count more than 4,000 disciples amongst his ranks, Vietnamese and foreigners alike, from both sides of the conflict. And among those drawn to his coconut philosophy were some surprising personalities, including the off-



spring of the famous novelist John Steinbeck, author of *Grapes of Wrath*, widely regarded as one of the greatest American novels of the 20th century, and Hollywood icon Errol Flynn. Steinbeck's son, John Steinbeck IV, shared his father's name, but not his political views, which were staunchly pro-war and anti-communist. Steinbeck, Jr., however, remained against the war throughout, essentially bullied into the war by his father (he was drafted and served in the army as a war correspondent). Sean Flynn, son of Errol Flynn, would end up disappearing in Cambodia on assignment some years later, his body never found, believed to have been executed by the Khmer Rouge, along with a number of other photojournalists who

disappeared into the chaos of that time.

With the help of others, Steinbeck and Flynn started up their own news reporting service, Dispatch News Service, and ended up breaking the story of the My Lai massacre. It was during this stint of reporting while in Vietnam that he came under the spell of this strange island and its coconut guru.

Of his disciples, most were young, with many deserters from both sides burnt out from years of war and struggle trading their military fatigues for brown monastic robes. His devotees did not kill animals and gained as much of their nourishment as much as possible from the sacred white fruit: the flesh, the milk, the juice, the oil and leaves, cultivating groves

of coconuts for this purpose. The Coconut Monk as exemplar of this new way of life subsisted on nothing at all other than coconuts, becoming a "coconut vegetarian", extreme even by vegan standards.

The continued generations of conflict, it is widely stated, opened the way for such eccentric religions and cults as the coconut religion to spring up in the region, with another notable example being the Cao Dai faith (a religion which counts, amongst other notable saints, William Shakespeare, Neil Armstrong and the Prophet Muhammad). With all orthodoxy shattered, people were open to trying new things, no matter how bizarre they may have seemed on the surface. It was an extraordinary time.

In the year 1969 the Coconut Monk set out on a one-man peace mission to Hanoi—by bicycle. He snuck off the island under cover of night and pedaled his way from the Mekong Delta, getting as far as the southern highlands before he was intercepted by a tribe of Montagnards and sent back to his island.

The Coconut Monk built a helipad onto his floating pagoda to receive delegates from the Joint Military Commission, awaiting their arrival to convene "beneath the tall painted figures of Jesus and Buddha" on his island, and broker for peace. While he fruitlessly awaited their arrival he crafted a plaster map of Vietnam, scaled to the size of a long table and complete with mountain chains and carved rivers, which he would walk over daily with his stick, prodding the various painted landmarks, praying for reconciliation and peace. "Now in his small world he can go from Saigon to Hanoi," his aide said in an interview from



the time. A trip his Coconutship made “often.” The map is still there today.

With his star on the rise, and in an effort to demonstrate to his followers his extraordinary devotion to his new faith, the Coconut Monk constructed a globe-shaped cage of wrought iron, which he suspended above a lotus pond. He then preceded to live and meditate from within this cage, taking his coconut meal and preaching from it to his gathered disciples. There was even a small opening in the bottom for him to defecate. The cage also still remains, swinging to this day in the Mekong breeze before his man-made grotto.

COSMIC ASPIRATIONS

But the war days were coming to their close, and his Coconutship couldn’t seal himself away in meditation from Cold War history in his cage forever. The conflict ended, and with the new government taking power, the Coconut Monk and his followers were declared a cult, and his religion abolished. So ended the brief reign of the coconut kingdom.

The site today sits largely forgotten and in decay. The river has silted up beneath the once-floating temple, so that it’s not floating anymore. But the colorful pillars, minarets and grottos, though weather-stained and peeling, still remain in place. And hanging from a white metal tower hangs his very own Apollo 11, testament to his cosmic aspirations. The only moon it is ever likely to land on, though, is the husk of some fallen coconut beneath.

The pagoda and its surrounds have become swallowed up by the Mekong Delta tourism machine, encroached upon by a coconut candy factory, a thatched

museum dedicated to various coconut enterprises (with those of the Coconut Monk, bizarrely, rating no mention at all), bamboo restaurants, and souvenir stalls catering to the masses on their whistle-stop boat tours from the big smoke.

On my visit to the island, after taking a hired boat over from the My Tho jetty, I encounter a kind of corporate team-building exercise in action, two opposing companies stripped down to their glistening brown bellies and wading through a muck of muddy water up to their knees in a man-made stream, wicker fish traps in hand, in a competition to see which can catch the most fish. A man shouts down instructions and encouragement through a handheld megaphone while the company women wave printed banners. Just beyond this spectacle, past a crowded table host to a food-cramming competition, the once-golden dragon pillars of the Coconut Monk’s kingdom poke up over the coconut palms. If anyone would take it upon themselves to inspect them at all, they might be forgiven for assuming it simply to be an abandoned addendum to the festivities, some kind of forgotten Disneyland in miniature, never entirely constructed and left to rot before it could coalesce into something that quite made sense.

A monsoon storm rolls over and the patrons, domestic and foreign alike, take shelter where they can, many, in the covered walkways once belonging to his Coconutship’s pagoda, oblivious to their significance.

I take the chance to slip into the painted grotto and scale the fenced-off stairway spiraling up the sides of the Coconut Monk’s holy mountain to a kind of inner sanctum where he once orated at length with his young guests, such as Steinbeck and Flynn, and couldn’t help but draw some connection from them

to myself. Bemused, curious, enraptured as they by this strange tropical land of coconuts and incense. ■

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Travel



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390 Ap Thoi Binh, Thoi Son, My Tho
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KASHMIR

IMAGES BY JIMMY VAN DER KLOET



Located in Srinagar, the summer capital Jammu of Kashmir, Lake Dal offers recreational opportunities to both locals and tourists. Indigenous to Kashmir, Shikaras (wooden boats) cruise the lake in search of beautiful scenery and relaxation.

IR



Gujjars, the Gypsies of the Himalayas, form the most populous “Scheduled Tribe” in Jammu & Kashmir (as classified by the Indian government in 2001).



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www.ykcsa.com

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2253 1179



Kids & Education

THE ARTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN — WE ARE ALL BORN CREATIVE!

TEXT AND IMAGES PROVIDED BY AURORA

SIR KEN ROBINSON SAID, “We don’t grow into creativity, we grow out of it. Or rather, we get educated out of it.” The arts, sciences, humanities, physical education, languages and mathematics all have equal and central contributions to make to a student’s education.

So the primary goal of education should be to nurture human beings who have the capacity to create new things, new ideas, new methods, new theories, not simply to replicate what other generations have done before. Education is about growing people who are creative, inventive and discoverers.

Children see so much that we as adults have a tendency to miss. It is very easy as parents and teachers to be “looking out for the teachable moment” or “thinking about all the things we need to do.” How often do we value just “looking with” children? As teachers, with the ever-increasing pressures to “ready children for school” and “teach them concepts and skills or

how to read and write,” we so easily focus on who we want them to become with little recognition of the qualities and beauty they already possess and the capable and creative people they already are right now. Curtis and Carter (2000) remind us that if we are to overcome this tunnel vision we must start to notice and appreciate the remarkable point of view of a young child and the important work and contribution of childhood. Maybe now is the opportune time for all of us to take the time to stop, pause and listen to and observe some of the fundamental truths to life that our young children have to offer us when it come to becoming aware of the world around us. It is time for us to open our eyes to see the world more clearly.

With this in mind, teachers working with young children have an obligation to view children as the capable, competent, curious, and creative people that we know them to be. They are natural born researchers because they question what they see,



that have wonderful ability to hypothesize solutions, predict outcomes, experiment, and reflect on their discoveries. Children are not passive, empty vessels waiting to be filled with information; rather they are self-motivated learners actively seeking to understand the complex world in which they live. They are intrinsically motivated to learn and can be trusted as partners in their own curriculum development alongside with the teachers. Learning is therefore an ongoing, flexible, open-ended process wherein children construct their own understanding. Teaching is not telling; teaching is guiding discovery.

Children have an incredible desire to make sense of the world. The more we learn about child development, and the new implications of brain research, the more it is confirmed that childhood is a profoundly significant time of life. As we observe children pursuing an interest in their play and conversations, we have to recognize that these moments are the mortar and brick of a developing life cycle. Our lives are enriched and expanded when we pause to appreciate the experience of childhood.

This is where the importance of creative experiences for children in education become so essential. It is quite startling when you come to realise that the power of Art as a way of knowing and understanding has been repeatedly proven over the many centuries by a number of exemplars and approaches collected from many different cultures and historical contexts. We can all appreciate the prevalence of the arts in all cultures throughout the world, from the monumental and stunning beauty of Greek and Roman sculpture to the intricacies and spiritual magnitude of Aboriginal dot paintings, the integration of the Arts in world-renowned educational models such as those taught in Reggio Emilia Schools and those inclusive of the Reggio Emilia approach, the value placed upon Arts by educational philosophers such as John Dewey and the work in both Arts and science by practitioners such as Leonardo da Vinci.

If we view the Arts as a fundamental element of what it is to be human, that learning in and through the Arts is a profound

form of interacting with and communicating about the world by engaging with it's questions, formulating ideas and expanding knowledge, only then can we fully appreciate learning as an intricate process of being, seeing, doing, knowing and becoming (McDougall, Bevan and Semper 2011). If we support this view of the Arts, we come to realize that Arts is of equal importance in human development, cultural expression and evolution and social documentation. We then can see and come to know there is high importance in promoting and advocating for Arts in and through teaching and learning with young children.

Aurora International Preschool of the Arts (www.aurorareggio.com) and Spring Hill Education is a Reggio Emilia inspired preschool with an ambition to expand Arts inclusive environments for children by advocating for the importance of the Arts for our youngest citizens. Aurora is the first preschool of its kind in Ho Chi Minh City and represents the fulfillment of a dream shared by a local mother and international educators who had long envisioned a high quality early years education and care environment for young children with Arts immersion as a fundamental philosophical curriculum approach.

The preschool is exploring ways to build an Arts focus to nurture the understanding and appreciation of the Arts in the early years, to expand the Arts environment for children and to advocate for the importance of the Arts in Vietnamese early childhood contexts. Aurora also aims to build local and international partnerships with Art-based interest groups to create collaborative partnerships that advance the cause of arts inspired early childhood education in our community and further afield.

We are all born creative! ■

Aurora International Preschool of The Arts
13 Tran Ngoc Dien, Thao Dien street, District 2
84 083 744 2991
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FLIPPING THE CLASSROOM

The role of homework in student learning

TEXT BY CHRISTINE SCHOAPS IMAGES BY FREDRIK WISSINK



THERE HAS BEEN MUCH DISCUSSION lately about whether or not teachers should assign homework to their students. Many believe children should spend more time playing than doing homework. I agree that students should spend more time playing outside, but I also believe that homework can have a positive place in a child's life after they leave school for the day. Learning cannot stop once the school day is

over, it should continue at home also.

'Homework' comes in many forms. For the younger children in Early Education, or EE, homework is usually based around family life and the development of the whole child. Parents can work with their child to develop number sense and letter/sound recognition. Talk with your child and let them help while you make dinner or clean up the house. While you are cooking dinner, have your child

count the number of potatoes you have washed, or tell you the beginning sound of "soup." There are a number of educational opportunities, or 'teachable moments' that can arise in a short amount of time. It is also important that parents work with their younger children on general life skills, such as how to clean up after themselves, tying their shoes, general hygiene skills such as brushing their own hair and teeth, and more. These skills will be



Christine Schoaps is a Grade 3 teacher with a Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education and Masters of Mathematics Education at the International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP).

beneficial both at home and at school.

Homework for the primary grades is more content-based and is generally teacher-generated. Activities can vary based on what students are learning in the classroom and the preferences of the teacher. Homework should reflect what students learned during the regular school day. Students should not be expected to teach themselves the content without some guidance or instruction.

One of the most important homework assignments a teacher can assign is reading at home. Reading homework works best for students when they are able to choose their own reading materials. Teachers can choose to have students summarize their reading, write the main idea and supporting details, or discuss the characters, but the students should be able to choose their own stories or books. This will help foster a love of reading in a child and increase comprehension, fluency and vocabulary development. Parents can interact with their child by asking them questions about their reading, such as: Who is your favorite character? What was your favorite part? Does this remind you of something that has happened to you?

Math homework does not need to be extremely challenging. It should be a reflection of previous learning in

the classroom and should reinforce strategies practiced during regular class time. Problems should be challenging enough to allow students to showcase their content knowledge, but not too hard that they feel stressed or discouraged when trying to solve them.

So, how much homework is too much homework? According to the National Education Association and the National PTA in America, some general homework guidelines have been adopted. They stated that children in Grade 1 should be assigned between 10-20 minutes of homework each night. An additional 10 minutes of homework for each grade beyond that. By this guideline, my Grade 3 students are asked to complete between 30-40 minutes of homework each night. Students are asked to read any story or book for 20 minutes, complete 10 minutes of math homework based on the standard we have been working on in class, and 10 minutes of spelling homework based on the phonics lesson we have been working with during the week. These short assignments have allowed my teaching instruction to focus on specific areas of development in class.

NEW HOMEWORK APPROACHES

As an alternative to traditional

homework assignments, many schools have started using different ways to encourage student learning at home. A new approach to homework that has proven to be successful in my classroom is the idea of a “Flipped Classroom.” It is where students first learn about a topic at home before coming to class to practice the concept.

I create an instructional video where I am able to write, draw, insert pictures and use audio instruction. The video is uploaded to the school parent portal where students were able to view the video as many times as needed. They work through the video as many times as they need until they felt comfortable with the strategies presented. The next day at school, I find students understanding and engagement in their learning increased significantly.

Whether your child is assigned traditional homework, an alternative homework, or no homework at all, it is important that parents support their child’s learning at home in some respect. Learning should take place throughout the day—in and out of the classroom. And don’t forget, the most important thing you can do with your child is to read to them or let them read to you! ■



FOR SAIGON STAR INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL, Saturday, November 19, 2016, marked the ten-year anniversary of its inception. Having started life in a converted villa in the heart of District 1, the school now offers outstanding education to its pupils within a quiet residential area in District 2, having moved to a purpose-built facility in 2010.

For me, the celebrations raised thoughts of how much education has evolved during my teaching career thus far. Looking back over my time in education, two of the main changes I have seen are the addition of, and more value given to, 'international mindedness' and developing personal attitudes and dispositions that complement the academic learning children experience during their school lives. For me, the blend of all three provides learners with a far more balanced toolkit.

To understand why international mindedness is now such a vital ingredient of a modern curriculum, it is worth looking at some current trends in society.

Already, many more families now live and work away from their home countries. The rapid increase in international schools alone is a clear indicator of that. Currently, there are over 8,000 international schools worldwide, teaching over 4.3 million students, which, according to research from International School Consultancy, forecasts are expected to grow to 16,000 schools and 8.75 million students by 2026; this is due, in part, to the increasing numbers of international businesses and families living abroad.

Add to that the ongoing advances in technology, such as the further development of high-speed commercial flights and international travel is only likely to rise, people will travel

more, more businesses will develop international links, families will diversify and the whole world will become increasingly interdependent.

Even individuals who spend their entire lives living and working in their home towns are likely to have daily interactions with people from other countries, be it through work or in their home communities. Their lives will also be impacted upon in some way by choices made by others in other countries. Likewise, the choices they make in their own lives may well have implications for the lives of others around the world. Clearly then, the generation of today live in a very different world to that of a generation ago.

If education is about preparing children as well as possible for the world they live in, then it's fair to say that education needs to constantly adapt and evolve, and to ensure that the children of today are provided with a toolbox

that fully prepares them for the world they live in, both now and in the future.

As such—and more than ever—it is essential for schoolchildren to acquire levels of knowledge and understanding beyond their own nationality. They also need the knowledge, skills, understanding and mindset to be global citizens.

Understandably, terms such as 'global citizen' may have been difficult for parents to comprehend in the recent past, and far easier to ignore, yet it is now increasingly relevant for parents to know and understand terms such as these so that they, too, can help to prepare their children to be active engaged participants in an interconnected world.

Fast forward another decade, when today's 11-year-olds will be entering the jobs market, international mindedness will be an even more important factor than it is today. Interestingly, this is something that more and more

TEN YEARS OF EDUCATION

From humble beginnings to a truly international education

IMAGES BY VAN RAMBO



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



parents seem to be aware of, judging by the kinds of questions parents now ask when enrolling at our school.

To summarize, international education is generally taken to include: respect and concern for other cultures and peoples; familiarity with international and global issues; and developing skills to work effectively in global or cross-cultural environments.

Compared to the uni-national primary school that I attended as a boy, I often think how fortunate the students I now teach are in that they are being educated alongside children from 20 other countries. For them, showing an interest in, and respect for, each other's nationalities occurs naturally, but that alone is not enough.

International mindedness is much more than simply knowing the names of different countries and their flags, that's just geography. In early education, children begin to learn about, and

are often fascinated by, the similarities and differences between each other's home countries. As they grow older, they are then guided to not only see the value of those similarities and differences but to think deeply about how the lives of people in one country or group might be affected by the activities of other countries or groups.

With the IPC (International Primary Curriculum) being the very forward-thinking curriculum that it is, 'International' is a subject in its own right, like geography or history, and many of its lessons are directly geared towards helping children practise and develop skills that will be useful to them in the future.

As an example, I recently taught a Year 7 class how bacteria evolve and can (sometimes) become resistant to medicines. We then looked into how these 'superbugs' can very quickly become a global issue, despite originating from a

single human being in a single country. After that, my Year 7 students were asked to identify possible solutions and how countries might work together to stop the spread of resistant bacteria while new forms of immunization are being developed. They then had their very own G8 summit meeting where their ideas were shared, all of which were thoughtful, co-operative and workable solutions for a real-life problem that was of great interest to and highly engaging for the students.

As well as being a good example of how the world has changed in recent decades, it also demonstrates why international mindedness is now essential to a modern-day curriculum. Moreover, it indicates that parents need to be mindful of making sure that their children receive a comprehensive education that will fully prepare and equip them for the world they live in, and even make a positive contribution to society. ■

>>The List Education

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS



ABC International School (ABCIS)

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

Foundation & Early Primary Campus:

4, IE Street, KDC Trung Son, Binh Hung, Binh Chanh, HCMC

Primary & Secondary Campus:

2, IE Street, KDC Trung Son, Binh Hung, Binh Chanh, HCMC

5431 1833-34-35-36

office@theabcis.com

www.theabcis.com



EUROPEAN International School Ho Chi Minh City

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

730 Le Van Mien, Thao Dien, D2
www.eishcmc.com



International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP)

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

92 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh

+84 (8) 2222 7788/99

admissions@issp.edu.vn

www.issp.edu.vn



Saigon Star International School

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

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



The American School

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

177A, 172-180 Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien, D2
3519 2223 / 0903 952 223
admissions@tas.edu.vn
www.tas.edu.vn



The International School Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC)

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

28 Vo Truong Toan, D2
+84 (8) 3898 9100
admissions@ishcmc.edu.vn
www.ishcmc.com



Also...



**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@aavn.edu.vn
www.aavn.edu.vn



Australian International School (AIS)

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

British International School (BIS)

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

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

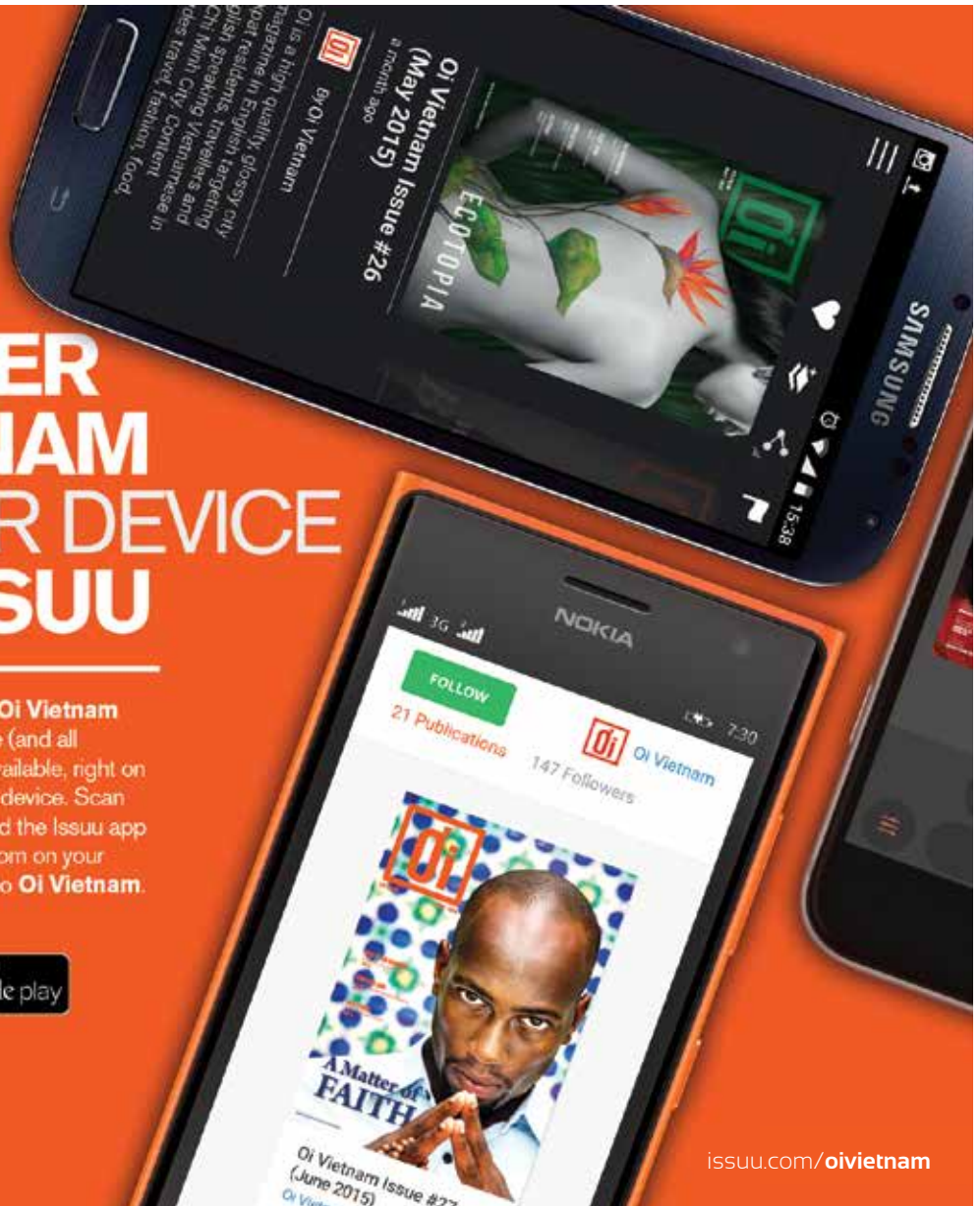
The Montessori International School of Vietnam

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



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AIS STUDENT TOPS THE WORLD



NGUYEN GIANG TIEN TRAN, A YEAR 12 STUDENT at the Australian International School (www.aisvietnam.com), HCMC, has gained a 2016 Outstanding Cambridge Learner Award for finishing first in the world in IGCSE Additional Mathematics. This means that Tien scored the highest mark in the world of all candidates who sat the June 2016 IGCSE examination in Additional Mathematics. This achievement is even more remarkable as Additional Mathematics is a subject focused solely on Pure Mathematics and is designed as an extension course to be studied by only the most able mathematicians.

In the June 2016 IGCSE examinations, Tien Tran achieved an A grade in Economics and A* grades in Chemistry, Physics and Additional Mathematics. To come top of the world in Additional Mathematics is a truly outstanding achievement.

Executive Principal of Australian International School, Dr Roderick Crouch said, **"We are very proud of Tien Tran. She is not only a very hard working student but also fully involved in all aspects of school life. She contributes greatly to our community service projects and reflects the wonderful spirit of the students at AIS. I am also very proud of**

the expert teaching staff who have supported her so well."

Tien shared a few tips about how to prepare for and do well in exams. **"It is very important to build up a solid relationship with your teachers. They are there to help you to do your best, so give them something to work with. Let them know how you are doing and ask how you can improve on your current position."**

Tien believes it is important to **"pay attention in class and ask questions to avoid last minute, indiscriminate cramming. And most important of all, especially for Mathematics, is to do practice papers. Then give it**

your best shot in the exams. You have worked very hard and the exam will be over in three hours. So keep calm and carry on!"

This year Tien is completing the first year of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program. She has set herself a demanding programme, studying Higher Level Mathematics, English A Literature, Chemistry and Economics, as well as Standard Level Physics and French Ab Initio. Ultimately it is Tien's desire to study Veterinary Science at the University of Sydney. AIS has an outstanding science program which enables students to care for animals.



Nguyen Giang Tien Tran with Executive Principal Dr Roderick Crouch and Deputy Head-Secondary Mr Mark Vella

CONTACT INFORMATION

AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

264 Mai Chi Tho, An Phu Ward,
District 2, HCMC

(08) 3742 4040

enrolments@aisvietnam.com

www.aisvietnam.com





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76 LE LAI STREET, DISTRICT 1, HO CHI MINH CITY
TEL: +84 8 3829 4000, EXT. 2128

saigon@newwordhotels.com

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