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VIETNAM

6-2017

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INSIDE LUXURY



NHÀ XUẤT BẢN THANH NIÊN
ẤN PHẨM CHUYÊN ĐỀ QUẢNG CÁO - MIỄN PHÍ
NHIỀU TÁC GIẢ, TẬP 3/2017

A photograph of a modern music studio. In the background, four students are performing: a boy on guitar, a girl singing into a microphone, a boy on drums, and a girl on guitar. The studio has large speakers, a mixing console in the foreground, and a computer monitor displaying audio software. The lighting is warm and focused on the performers.

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Photo: Image Provided by An Lam Retreats Ninh Van Bay

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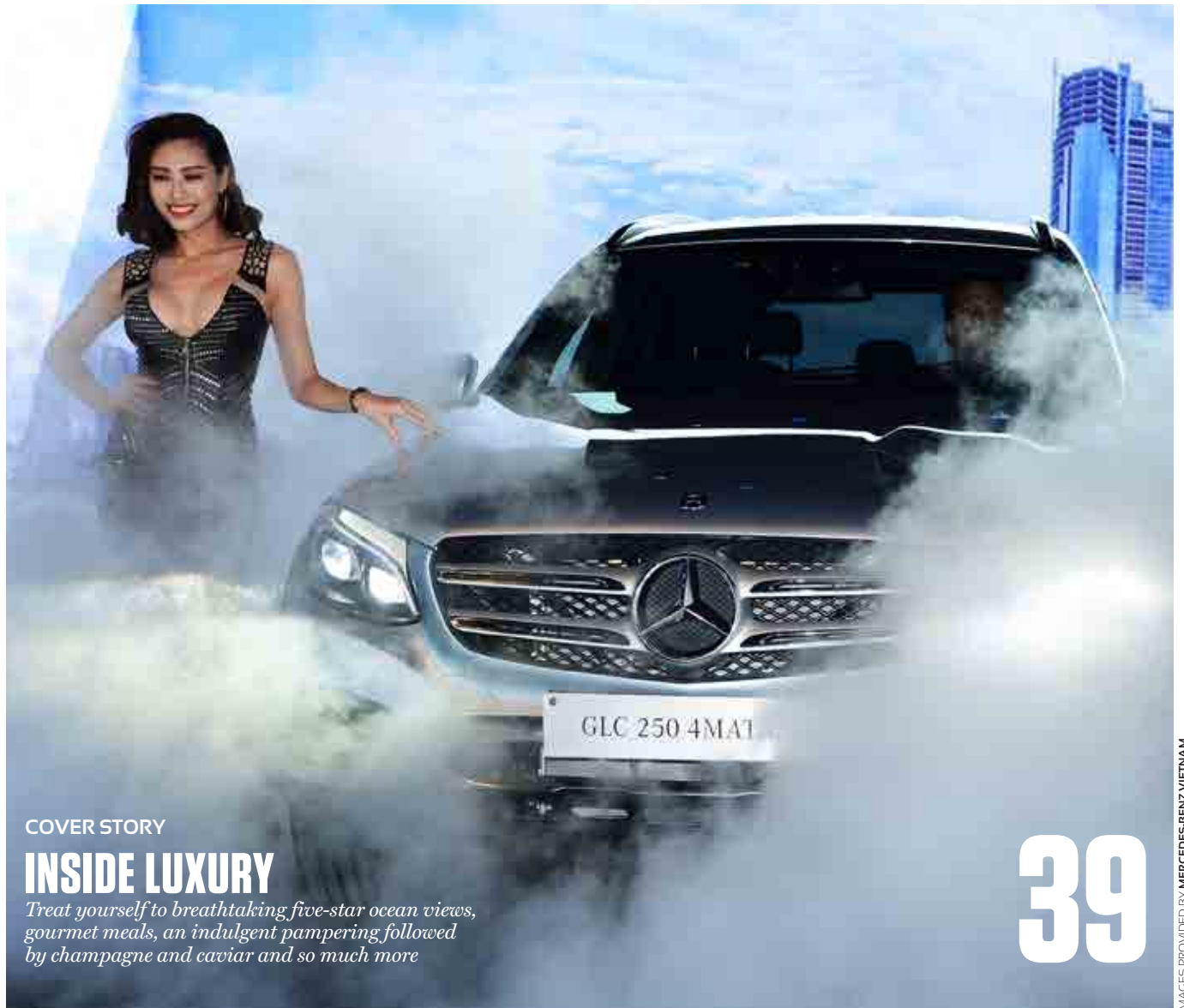
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Hong Kong Polytechnic University
The Hong Kong University of
Science and Technology

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Datebook

What's on this month...

JUNE 9

What: Managing Risk in the Education Sector in Vietnam
Where: Sofitel Saigon Plaza (17 Le Duan, D1); 8:30am-10:30am
About: Managing risk in our ever-changing world is an issue that becomes more and more complex and it is important that education establishments take the opportunity to address the myriad of risks faced. Jardine Lloyd Thompson has worked with schools globally to assist them better manage their risks. Over the last 10 years there has been a considerable shift in the issues that need to be addressed. Whereas before such issues as education capability, operational structure, competition and regulation were of gravest concern; now we are seeing such issues as technology, cyber-crime, access to healthcare in the event of an emergency, the availability of cost efficient medical insurance for staff, and exposure to litigation becoming more prevalent. This is of particular importance as technology becomes more pervasive in both your life, your children, and your students.

Contact: Visit www.eurochamvn.org for more info

JUNE 7-9

What: 3D Print Fiesta 2017

Where: Binh Duong Convention & Exhibition Centre

About: Much more than just a trade show, 3D Print Fiesta brings together key players from the entire 3D printing ecosystem. From engineers and product designers through to brands and makers, the exhibition and conference will explore how 3D printing is used, inviting future customers to interact directly with participants and exhibitors in one platform. To enhance your business in 3D print, the exhibition offers amazing sales opportunities and chances to network, collaborate and become part of the global 3D printing community in Vietnam and the Southeast Asia region, building inter-industry relationships to strengthen your business as it surges forward.

Contact: Visit vietnamindustrialfiesta.com/about-3d-print-fiesta for more info

JUNE 10-11

What: 2-Day Intensive Growth Hacking Bootcamp


Where: CirCO (9 Nguyen Trai, D1)

About: Growth hacking isn't just a buzzword, nor is it a single hack that's going to transform your startup into a unicorn overnight. It's a process, data and product-driven approach to marketing and growth. The bootcamp will introduce you to the real skills necessary to achieve sustainable long-term growth for your startup. You will learn: The 5 stages of the lean marketing funnel (acquisition, activation, retention, referral and revenue). Metrics and KPI setting to ensure you track your "health" metrics and avoid vanity metrics. What tools and techniques to apply at each stage. How to apply an experimentation based process to optimize each stage of the funnel. This is an intermediate level course and you must have an MVP or launched product to participate.

Contact: Email info@growthhackingvietnam.com for more info




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JUNE 15

What: Starting Up Saigon

Where: East West Brewing (185 Ly Tu Trong, D1); 1:30pm-8pm

About: Starting Up Saigon is an event for startups & SMEs in Vietnam featuring many experienced speakers from different industries who have all built up successful organizations in Vietnam. Attend one or more of the seminars, learn how to build the business of your dreams by learning how these entrepreneurs did it several times over. Let the experts show you how to apply the lessons they have learned into a business that intersects their passion with their skill for product innovation. Challenge yourself by listening to fresh ideas, hands-on tools, powerful insights and strategies that work. Plus, get in on the conversation with how-to sessions and workshops with professionals in their fields. Meet, network and collaborate with the entrepreneurial business community as you learn.

Contact: Visit www.eurochamvn.org for more info

JUNE 16 & 17

What: EuroSphere 2017- The European Art of Living Exhibition

Where: GEM Center (8 Nguyen Binh Khiem, D1); 8:30am-5:30pm

About: EuroSphere is an innovative exhibition dedicated to bringing the European art of living to Vietnam and the Southeast Asia region. The exhibition will host a wide range of sectors in gourmet food, wine & spirits, fashion, fashion accessories, jewelry, horology, perfumery, cosmetics, furniture, interior design and automotive—which all present the elegance, the sophistication and the harmonious living of European culture. The concept of EuroSphere is to create a lively flow of interactions among the exhibiting companies and visitors.

Contact: Email eurosphere@evbn.org or rebecca.bauden@evbn.org for more info

JUNE 28

What: TRG Talk: Talent - Behavioral Interview Questions

Where: PJ's Coffee Sala (145 – 147 Nguyen Co Thach, D2); free; 9am-10am

About: Job interviews are arguably the most beloved employee selection tool. They are so widely used that interviews are synonymous with the hiring process. However, most job interviews are unstructured and prove to be unreliable and ineffective. That is, they fail to predict actual employee performance. Many studies have shown that there is little relationship between candidates' performance in interviews and subsequent on-the-job performance simply because the interview questions are not the right ones.

Contact: Visit blog.trginternational.com for more info

JUNE 21-25

What: International Student Science Forum 2017

Where: Youth Development Science and Technology Center (1 Pham Ngoc Thach, D1)

About: The International Student Science Forum 2017 (ISSF 2017) is co-organized by Ho Chi Minh City Vietnamese Students' Association and Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City on the theme of "Industry 4.0 and Building the Smart City." ISSF is an international forum that aims to bring together undergraduates from ASEAN and other countries to engage in meaningful academic, cultural and social exchanges. At the conference, participants will explore the chosen theme of the year through presentations, site visits, breakout sessions and lecture series by industry experts from both the public, private and the people sectors.

Contact: Visit www.issf.vn for more info

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The Bulletin

Promotions and news in HCMC and beyond...

New European-style gallery opens in the Yellow City

Bridget March, an English painter and writer, who has been working in Vietnam for nearly five years, has opened a new gallery in Hoi An called March Gallery (www.marchgallery-hoian.com). Bridget's watercolors, drawings, etchings and paintings have been sold successfully at solo exhibitions throughout Vietnam and have featured in international exhibitions in Hong Kong and Singapore since she first moved to Asia in 2012. She is also the author of two books *A Week in Hoi An* and *A Summer in Sapa*. Her book about Saigon will follow soon.

Apart from Bridget's wide range of artwork, you will also find work by Dutch contemporary artist Marjon Barton and by internationally renowned Japanese lacquer artist Saeko Ando. The central display of inexpensive prints and books is on a 150-year-old family bed that belongs to the house. The gallery is in the heart of the old French Quarter in one of the old streets of Hoi An known as the 'Rue des Arts' because of the number of creative businesses that are gathering there.



Hanoi/Halong Cruise-and-Stay Aboard Heritage Line's Violet

This summer, Heritage Line is offering "A Bay Discovery" package including one night at the legendary Hanoi Sofitel Metropole, round-trip transfers to Halong Bay and three nights in a Junior Suite or Suite (ROH) for USD1,129 per person aboard the Violet, a graceful, luxurious junk that captures all the charms of old French Indochina. Cruising also means paying one price upfront and having all your entrance fees and taxes taken care of, and includes English-speaking guide, welcome cocktail, 9 meals, all-day free flow of soft drinks, mineral water, coffee, juice and free flow of local beer and house wine by the glass during lunch and dinner, 60-minute spa treatment per guest and cruise, one bottle of sparkling wine per cabin on arrival, and more! Spend your days cruising the gorgeous emerald waters of the Gulf of Tonkin and visiting islands, caves and fishing villages, while on the ship, enjoy cooking classes, Tai Chi, squid fishing and more. There are four sailings between the end of June and the end of August. To reserve, email: reservation@heritage-line.com.

Couleurs d'Asie Opens

Hoi An-based photographer Réhahn unveiled his gallery, Couleurs d'Asie by Réhahn – Saigon, this month on historic 151/7 Dong Khoi, D1. The space features some of Réhahn's most well-known pieces and is divided into two rooms: one with special focus on photographs from Vietnam, while the second presents his "Limited Edition" Fine Art photography and photographs from other countries such as Malaysia, India and Cuba, where he has visited it 12 times in the past 10 years. The gallery is open daily from 7:30 am to 10:30 pm and admission is free. For more, visit Facebook: [Couleurs.dAsie.Saigon](https://www.facebook.com/Couleurs.dAsie.Saigon).





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WHALE WASHES ASHORE IN CENTRAL

Vietnam. Hundreds of local residents from a tiny coastal village in the central province of Quang Ngai held a respectful burial ceremony for the large whale they had found on the beach. The whale, measuring more than 4m in length, was in critical condition and had sustained multiple injuries when fishermen discovered it. The villagers attempted to bring the whale, considered a 'sacred animal' by locals, back to the ocean, but their attempts were unsuccessful. After the whale had passed, they took the whale to a special area zoned for the burial. As per local custom, three years after its burial, the skeleton of the whale will be taken to a shrine, which fishermen will visit before they go to sea, in the hope that it will protect them against misfortune on the water.

4 kg

OF IVORY AND 3 SETS of leopard skin, amongst other animal parts, were confiscated at Ton Son Nhat International Airport from the luggage of a female passenger. All items were from endangered animals listed on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, according to airport customs. The confiscated parts included 4kgs of sliced ivory pieces, nine elephant tails, a range of claws and three sets of African leopard skin, estimated to be worth a total of over VND2 billion on the black market. They were

found stashed in the luggage of a 62-year-old Vietnamese woman who had traveled from Africa. The trafficked items have been seized as evidence while the woman is detained for further questioning.



USD 1.38 billion

IS SPENT ON CIGARETTES annually by Vietnamese, according to statistics released by Vietnam's Ministry of Health. A further VND23 trillion a year is spent on the cost of treatment for five groups of

diseases closely linked to smoking, as well as economic losses due to premature death and loss of labor caused by these diseases, the ministry said. At Vietnam National Cancer Hospital (K Hospital) in Hanoi, 97 percent of lung cancer patients are regular smokers. Vietnamese laws prohibit smoking in covered public areas, train stations and airports, though the regulation is often neglected and violators are rarely fined. The country also strictly forbids the advertising and sale promotion of cigarettes, and requires cigarette companies to print graphic images illustrating the harmful effects of smoking on their packages.

~20,000

CANCER PILLS DONATED TO A Ho Chi Minh City hospital have ended up in the bin as it took nine months to complete all the procedures needed to receive the medicines. In mid-July 2013, Novatis Pharma AG, a subsidiary of Swiss healthcare firm Novatis, sent a letter to the Ho Chi Minh City

Hospital of Hematology and Blood Transfusion, offering to give the clinic 304 boxes of Tasigna, consisting of a total of 34,608 pills.

The pricey Tasigna drug is used for patients of chronic myelogenous leukemia, an uncommon type of blood cancer. However, the donated pills would not arrive in Ho Chi Minh City until the drugs were only ten months away from expiration.

Consequently, the Ho Chi Minh City hospital could manage to use only 14,611 of the donated pills, with the remaining 19,997 tablets destroyed as they all had expired. The recipient, Hospital of Hematology and Blood Transfusion, alone wasted 4.5 months, as it knew of the donation in mid-July 2013 but only sought permission to receive the donation in late November the same year.





27-year-old

VIETNAMESE MAN SWINDLED multiple firms by impersonating leaders' voices. Phuong had defrauded business owners throughout the country out huge amounts of money by calling companies and impersonating local leaders asking to borrow money.

Phuong, who has a previous conviction for stealing assets, was nabbed while attempting to swindle a VND300 million SH scooter in the southern province of Long An. A C50 officer said even police were stunned by the voice impressionist's talent for mimicking the voice of almost anyone, young or old, after only hearing their voice once. Phuong used the voices of local leaders, celebrities, and religious leaders to target companies he knew already had business or personal relations with those figures. In the fraudulent phone calls, Phuong would tell the business owners that he was away on a business trip and one of his relatives had an accident and needed a huge amount of money.

1,500

'TOXIC' YOUTUBE VIDEOS WERE blocked by Google at Vietnam's request. The 'cleanup' came more than a month after the Authority of Broadcasting and Electric Information under Vietnam's Ministry of Information and Communications demanded that more than 2,200 videos whose content is either fake be removed from Google-owned YouTube. The removal of the harmful YouTube videos is result

of several working sessions between Vietnam and Google representatives, after which the internet giant has created a special mechanism allowing Vietnamese agencies to report numerous links with bad content at a time. YouTube has also provided additional tools to ensure that their commercials will not be placed alongside 'toxic' content on its platform. On top of working with Google to sweep 'toxic' videos off YouTube, Vietnam's information ministry has also reached agreement with Facebook to 'purify' content on the world's largest social network among local users.





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US PROGRAM (GRADES 1 - 12)

The US program is not only designed for students who are already fluent in English but also for those who are learning English. The curriculum and course books are quite similar to what students in the United States are studying and meet WASC standards.

At SNA, students will study from grade 1 to grade 8. From grade 9 to 12, students will study according to a credit system and be categorized by subjects. After accumulating 248 credits, which is equivalent to the number of credits required for high school graduation in

the United States, they will conclude the course and graduate. SNA equips students with good knowledge to be able to continue study in the United States as well as other countries.

The US Program at SNA abides by American standards and support students to keep up with the university foundation program. SNA also offers advanced math and natural sciences classes which enable students to accumulate college credits right from high school. Long-term accreditation by WASC is a testimony to the fact that SNA has met the United States standards to help students prepare for their future overseas study. One year before graduation, students will be trained for SAT certification, a prerequisite to enroll in US universities. SNA has a team of qualified teachers assisting the students to obtain knowledge and skills to become global citizens.

VIETNAMESE PROGRAM FROM PRESCHOOL TO GRADE 12

Teaching syllabuses in accordance with MOET standards, SNA has excellent teachers of which two professors have been honored with the "Excellent Teacher" Award by Viet Nam Prime Minister. Universities highly appreciate the Vietnamese curriculum at SNA as it both maintains its unique character and incorporates international



innovation. After graduating from SNA high school, students will confidently enroll in any top universities around the world.

The Vietnamese curriculum at SNA strictly follows Viet Nam MOET standards. As students continue with Vietnam curriculum, they will have the opportunity to take more challenging math and natural sciences subjects compared to the US program. This also helps students maintain and value Vietnamese identity.

With the aforementioned advantages, SNA will be a right choice for parents who want to properly invest in their children's future and for the latter to develop comprehensively when experiencing both USA and Viet Nam curricula.



Recently in Ho Chi Minh City, International School of North American (SNA), a Member of the education system of Nguyen Hoang Group has cooperated with Nam Huang Corporation to organize successfully CEO Kids. This is a special and highly educational event that encourage the children to show their talents through a serie of activities as an entrepreneur. At the same time, SNA also awarded each CEO Kids 1 billion VND scholarship during the event.



Saigon in Bloom

The precise art of Japanese Ikebana flower arranging



Text by **Rebecca Jones**

Images by **Ngoc Tran**

three elements into perfect balance is essential.

I began by choosing my container, or *suiban*—a shallow, round tray filled with just a centimeter of water that is a typical starting block for new students—I went for a red one. On Auralynn's advice I then chose delicate white lilies and a verdant bunch of fragrant oleander for my first Ikebana design.

The tallest sprig of oleander was for *shin*, which stands in the center of the arrangement leaning at just a slight 15-degree angle. Under Auralynn's watchful eye I sheared the stem of the plant underwater—as all Ikebana is cut in order to preserve the flowers for longer—to a height approximately twice the circumference of the container, plus an inch for the height (the dreaded math).

I then positioned my *shin* inside the *suiban* onto the *kenzan*, a heavy, fearful looking gray metal disk arrayed with small sharp spikes that holds this style of Ikebana arrangement in place. “As well as the foundation for Ikebana, this is also a neat, handbag sized weapon,” Auralynn quipped, perhaps sensing my fear at losing a finger in the creative process.

No Sentiment

Next came *soi*, for which I chose a stockier, more foliate piece of oleander and placed it to the left of *shin* at a strict 45-degree angle to the center of the *kenzan*.

However, my biggest challenge came in *hikae*, where I found myself deeply reluctant to cut an entire unopened lily from its stem in order to create the right balance for the piece.

To this, however, Auralynn was unsympathetic: “Ikebana involves a lot of sacrifices; you cannot have sentiment. You can't worry about cutting flowers because they're too pretty. If the flower is too pretty you can't do Ikebana. Ikebana is about what

STEPPING INTO AURALYNN

NGUYEN'S small studio in Tan Dinh on a rainy May day I felt immediately at ease. The cozy space consisted of just two dark wood side tables surrounded by the flowers and plants we would use for the day. On the wall above was a collection of items that Auralynn, an urban magpie, had collected from Saigon's streets and fashioned into unique pieces of sculpture.

These included fallen branches, nailed together to make a square, intersecting, raft-like object and a flower vase fashioned from plastic straws and nylon bands. The windows, fitted with ornate cast iron shutters of aptly floral design, let just enough light through to work by and, like the traditional Japanese *tokonoma*, or alcove, that her art form was designed to ornament, promoted a sense of quiet inspiration.

Auralynn began studying Sogetsu Ikebana—a modern incarnation of an ancient Japanese form of floral arrangement—just five years ago at the tender age of 20. She was inspired by a book on the subject that she happened upon in her hometown of Los Angeles, in the US.

“I began reading and realized it was very prophetic. I realized that Japanese art is very misunderstood in the West,” says Auralynn. She discovered that, contrary to what she feels is a common perception, Japanese flower design is highly academic, intricately precise and deeply meaningful.

Perfect Balance

This was evident from the very beginning of our lesson, when Auralynn introduced me to the first of five textbooks in the Sogetsu Ikebana literary canon. Book one, from which all students start, explains the basic techniques and principles of Ikebana, from how to handle the tools, the flowers and how to calculate the math. “Yes, there is a lot of math!,” Auralynn says through a giggle in response to my evident expression of horror, “but don't worry, it's very easy.”

Referring to the *kakei-zu*, or blueprint of the arrangement, we began with the basic upright Ikebana style, or *moribana*. This is based on three central pillars: *shin* (man), *soe* (heaven) and *hikae* (earth). As Auralynn explained, Ikebana is firmly rooted in Zen principles, and so putting these



you express right now,” she gently, but firmly insisted.

Auralynn explained that Ikebana was founded by Japanese samurais in the *Jomon* period around 1200BC and was intended as an offering to honor important visitors. The first designs were highly floral and natural, however, as the form developed over the centuries it has become more structural, culminating in the Sogetsu School.

Sogetsu Ikebana was founded in 1927 by Ikebana artist Sofu who, heavily influenced by modernist European sculptors like Dechamp, transformed Ikebana into a progressive form designed to express the personality and creativity of the artist. This is the spirit that Auralynn is trying to bring back into Ikebana today. “In the US, Ikebana has become something of a housewives art for middle aged women,” she says. “That’s why I wanted to come here to Saigon where there is no tradition of Sogetsu Ikebana so I could introduce it to young people.”

Gratifyingly, Auralynn reports that since she began giving lessons three months ago, most of her students so far have been aged between 22 and 25.

However, she is quick to add that Ikebana is for anyone. In Japan, the average age of an Ikebana tutor is around 80 and, as I could see from pictures of the teachers and their often highly conceptual, sometimes industrial style work, age is no barrier to creativity. “Ikebana keeps you young,” she jokes.

The Final Stroke

Emboldened, though not without regret, I cut the lily loose from its parent stem and, as stipulated in the *kakei-zu*, pared the stalk down to half the size of *soi*. Impaling the flower on the *kenzan*, I then placed it at a 75-degree angle to the right of center. All that was left to be done was to add *jushi* to the bottom of the arrangement to cover the *kenzan* and to create depth. With Auralynn’s guidance I chose some



Image by Auralynn



Auralynn

cuttings of oleander that I had sheared from *shin* and *soe*.

My arrangement completed, I immediately understood what Auralynn had said about sacrifice and harmony. By paring back these plants to their barest forms and arranging them at precise angles, I had created something of simple, yet refined beauty.

Quoting renowned Ikebanist Kawan Tatsunari, Auralynn summarized my feeling: “Ikebana is momentary art with spirituality.” I left feeling quiet, contemplative and not a little inspired.

For more info on Auralynn’s Sogetsu Ikebana, visit Facebook: “sogetsusaigon” or for some stunning examples of her work go to Instagram: “sogetsusaigon”. ■



The Future is Bright

Bright Solutions offers vulnerable women an opportunity to lift themselves out of poverty

Text by **Aliesha Duffin**
Images by **Ngoc Tran**

"IT WAS A CALL ON my heart to come to Vietnam," says Fiona Briers, founding director of NGO Bright Solutions (www.brightsolutionsvietnam.com). "[Vietnam] is progressing rapidly, and giving many young people brighter futures. Through access to higher level education, English acquisition, international studies and better business prospects, Vietnam is advancing. However, the majority of the population cannot access these options due to lack of or incomplete years of

schooling, limited skills and inability to train or retrain, missing gaps in their childhoods, and so on." She believes Bright Solutions can give access to these options and positively impact the lives of underprivileged women in Vietnam.

Fiona's passion for Vietnam and improving the lives of marginalized women here in Ho Chi Minh City is evident upon meeting her. In 2007, she came to the country for the first time as a tourist. She spent time talking to one

of the young tour guides who expressed the difficulties local women face trying to get good jobs to be able to support their families. "I felt clearly it was a country to which I could contribute," she says, when asked what inspired her to start Bright Solutions. "My heart and passion is to serve and empower the poor. To do what I can with the skills and experiences I have to enrich the lives of others. My belief is that the poverty cycle is often generational due to tragic or difficult circumstances and a lack of education."

Bright Solutions helps women to successfully manage their own futures and finances by training them in sewing and handicraft skills. The training consists of practical, management and life skills. The women are put through programs that help them to continually increase their skills and expertise and includes a strong emphasis on finance management.

Fiona's drive, coupled with her background in education and human management, helped to form Bright Solutions. "I created a vocational training program to invest in genuine relationships of encouragement and acceptance with all of my employees so that confidence and identity are restored to women who come from vulnerable backgrounds." Every potential employee is interviewed to see if they would be a suitable candidate for the program. They come with a social worker to meet Fiona and then after the meeting both women will decide whether or not Bright Solutions is the right fit. To begin



with, the woman will only need to commit to one month. She does not need any prior skills, she just needs to be willing to take the first step. This initial step is a crucial one; it forms the environment where they will be encouraged and nurtured towards independence.

Miss Independence

"I didn't know how to save or couldn't do so in the past but have now followed Bright Solutions training," says Nghia* who works at Bright Solutions.

For these women, Bright Solutions opens the door to formal work environments, with the flexibility to complete their work from home when necessary. For most, their time with Bright Solutions will be their first formal job. "Nga* didn't have money to pay school fees for her son on time. Once

working at Bright Solutions she could pay for her son at school on time so her son feels good now, he studies very well, he is so proud of his mother because his mother could work in an international environment," says Hanh, one of the women's social workers.

Most of the women employed at Bright Solutions are hired through referrals from Enfants et Développement (a French non-profit organization) working with and assisting the registered poor in District 8. "Networking with NGOs to source employees is a vital link as they are directly involved with those most in need," says Fiona.

Thu* has been with Bright Solutions for three-and-a-half years and during this time she has been transformed from a very nervous, submissive and shy young grandmother, fearful of not meeting expectations, into a bubbly skilled frontline manager. "I used to keep silent at home and in my previous job. Now I feel more comfortable to talk to coworkers. Nothing worries me as much as before,"

says Thu. Many of the women who work for Bright Solutions were unable to complete primary school because of difficult circumstances, but through the proficiency and confidence they have earned, some have continued their mainstream education at night school or sought new study options. Others are able to become employable by having a stable work history while reintegration into the community is achievable for some. Each woman that passes through Bright Solutions has their own goals that they are trying to achieve.

Fiona's ultimate goal for her company is to remain self-sustainable and run as a local Vietnamese entity, and to grow in size to embrace more and more women from disadvantaged backgrounds. "I would love those who know the vision of the company and who have come through Bright Solutions with training, management and experience to be the ones who ultimately become the leadership team. Hopefully this is not unreachable!"

*Names have been changed. ■

Same Same But Different

The difficult road to parenthood for same-sex couples



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. 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.

My partner and I are gay and we would like to be parents. My partner is Belgian and I am Malaysian. We believe Vietnam is our best option to look for a surrogacy mother. We have already found an egg donor here but we are looking for a woman who is willing to carry our baby. Do you think it is possible for gay parents to do it in Vietnam legally?

MY PARTNER AND I ARE gay and we would like to be parents. My partner is Belgian and I am Malaysian. We believe Vietnam is our best option to look for a surrogacy mother. We have already found an egg donor here but we are looking for a woman who is willing to carry our baby. Do you think it is possible for gay parents to do it in Vietnam legally?

Congratulations on your decision to be parents. As you know, having a child through surrogacy arrangements is not an easy thing for gay couples anywhere in the world. Unfortunately, Vietnam is not a feasible option to consider due to legal restrictions as explained further below. However, other options exist but will require strong determination.

In January 2015, the new Law on Marriage and Family entered into effect in Vietnam legalizing non commercial gestational surrogacy under strict conditions. This new law only allows surrogacy arrangements for heterosexual couples without a child, and when it has been certified that the wife is unable to give birth to a child herself. There are further restrictions with regards to the surrogate mother, who must have a family link to the husband or to the wife.

The Vietnamese National Assembly has legalized surrogacy arrangements in very limited and specific cases and, sadly, same-sex couples are not eligible to have a child in Vietnam via a surrogate mother under the current law.

We understand that there is a black market in surrogacy in Vietnam but we strongly advise you not to follow this path. The first obvious reason is because it is illegal and as a consequence you may face serious sanctions from the authorities.

Additionally, and more importantly, it could result in dramatic consequences for you and for your baby as well as for the surrogate mother (illegal surrogacy may be performed in poor sanitary

conditions.) Moreover, the surrogate mother will be recorded as the parent on the birth certificate causing numerous difficulties for you and the child throughout the child's life. For example, the surrogate mother could change her mind and decide to keep your baby or, as the legal parent, could request to have the child returned to her at a later date. You will not be the parent of the child, from a legal point of view, and your family will be exposed to uncertainty, insecurity and substantial risks.

Legislative changes in Vietnam are not expected in the next few years. Same-sex marriage is still not recognized in Vietnamese law. The full recognition of same-sex marriage will more than likely be a pre-requisite to any evolution of the legal regulation of surrogacy in Vietnam.

However, other options are available outside Vietnam to make your wish to be parents come true. You may consider traveling to a country where surrogacy for gay couples is legal and then apply for the recognition of your parent-child relationship in the country where you are from and/or where you live. Be advised that there are two different questions to answer: First, in which countries are surrogacy arrangements legal for gay couples? Second, once you have become parents through surrogacy, will your country of citizenship, and your country of residence, recognize the parent-child relationships between you and your child?

The answer to both questions varies widely depending on national regulations. Since your partner is Belgian, it might be possible for you to move to Belgium. However, we understand there is no clear legal framework for surrogacy in Belgium. It seems that only one Belgian hospital allows surrogacy for gay couples in theory, but it is not certain whether it has ever been performed in practice.

In any case, these arrangements are not officially recognized by the State of Belgium and you would probably have to follow a long subsequent procedure of adoption.

Other jurisdictions offer more certainty, such as some US and Canadian states where the law clearly states that foreign same-sex couples can become parents through surrogacy. As you may not be permitted to live in such states on a long-term basis, you can arrange to travel there during the process but you will then need to find a place where you can live permanently with your child. This leads to the second of the above-mentioned questions concerning recognition of the parent-child relationships.

The recognition of the parent-child relationship by your country of citizenship and/or by your country of residence is of paramount importance. Without it you and your child will face insecurity for life. Many countries prohibit surrogacy and do not recognize surrogacy arrangements concluded abroad even in countries where it is legal. One of the legal issues that you might face is the refusal of the consular authorities of your country of citizenship to register your child on your civil status registry. It means that your child cannot obtain your nationality. Moreover, you will not be recognized as the legal guardian of the child, thus causing numerous difficulties in your daily life.

Therefore, before performing any surrogacy abroad, you must contact the concerned administration in your country of citizenship and/or residence and make sure that your parent-child relationship will be recognized.

We strongly hope that you will find your path through this difficult journey. We would be happy to provide further guidance in navigating this difficult process after you discuss and consider your available options with your partner. ■

3 Days 2 Nights of A Perfect Vacation to Phu Quoc for All Sizes

Text and Images Provided by La Veranda



HOLIDAY SEASON MEANS A FRESH revamp of travel croisière, bonding activities, adventures, relaxation and wellness for all family members. So, gaze upon a chance to indulge in a 3 day-2 night trip at **La Veranda Resort Phu Quoc MGallery By Sofitel**—a luxurious destination of sun, sand, and sea this summer!

Day 1: Check in La Veranda and Take an Adventure to Vinpearl Safari

Surrounded by idyllic beaches and exotic tropical gardens, La Veranda Resort Phu Quoc boasts an unspoilt natural French-mansion-by-the-sea, where you will be welcomed with a personalized check-in at Le Bar by arriving here on the resort's free airport shuttle. While parents have their summer welcome-cocktails, kids can explore their own drinks and photos station at the red carpet.

After the relaxation, the whole family can spend the day taking an adventure into Phu Quoc's wild northwest coast at Vinpearl Safari Park, home to 400 species of plants and 2,000 wild animals representing 140 different species.

Add VND580,000 to your hotel package to enjoy a Safari day tour.

Day 2: Salute the Sun and Run Away to Bai Sao

Don't forget to indulge in the complimentary morning yoga, take a sunbath next to blue pastel beach umbrellas at La Veranda, pamper yourself with beach aromatherapy, and then have fun with the kids at the most pristine area on the strip of Bai Sao beach for half a day.

La Veranda's summer promotion includes a complimentary visit to Bai Sao and Paradiso Beach Club, plus the use of sun chairs (valued at USD50). After exploring marine sanctuaries, why not restore your balance and energy with an all-inclusive ESCAPE TO WELLNESS program in the afternoon?

Let all the stress and daily turbulence float away this summer holiday.

Day 3: Family Bonding Activities All-day All-round

Turn your kids' summer into the best experience ever with the V.I.K - Very Important Kid program, where kids under 12 can enjoy exclusive luxuries from arrival to farewell.

The family bonding activities will bring all members to Lawn & Beach Activities, Kid Club, crafted fun sessions like Little Scientist to make slime, and fight against mutants... Family Cooking Class will be filled with warm and laughter when all family members together visit the local market to choose the freshest ingredients, pick veggies from our organic garden and much more.

At the end of the day, let's say "good night" with some special delights: a personalized note from the General Manager and a teddy bear. ■



Whether it's family time or a wellness escape, La Veranda has you covered. Choose from our 3 Summer Offers with more than 35% savings. Our rate starts from USD150++/night including:

- Room & buffet breakfast
- Airport Transfer – WIFI
- Family bonding activities
- Gifts & amenities for kids; plus
- Daily yoga and meditation and many other wellness activities

Special Bonus: Free Bai Sao Excursion to Paradiso Beach Club worth USD50

Add: VND580,000 for Safari Tour

Visit www.laverandaresorts.com for more info

A Visit to the Vet

Oi Vietnam speaks to Dr. Thuy, from Animal Doctors International Vietnam, about the challenges and rewards of being a veterinarian in Saigon

Image by **Ngoc Tran**

What inspired you to become a vet?

I've loved animals since I was a tiny kid, especially my pets. They're not only pets, which are used for watching or hunting, they're also members of my family. At that time, it was a hard time for me and my family so taking care of our pets' health was impossible, when they got sick there was no one who knew how to treat them and sadly I had to see them die because I was not able to do anything, so I thought about being a veterinarian to save them, then a couple of years later I am finally a veterinarian.

Being a vet isn't a popular profession in Vietnam, why do you think that is?

Firstly, there aren't many universities in Vietnam that specializes in this subject. Second, most Vietnamese are not concerned about animal health care, only a part of the population in big cities with higher living standards are conscious of this. Thirdly, the number of pet hospitals in Vietnam is still small, therefore students can't see the opportunities in this job.

How did your parents react when you told them you wanted to be a vet?

Most Vietnamese parents always want their children to be doctors, teachers, engineers, or some kind of popular jobs, and my parents were the same, they wanted me to be a doctor. Frankly, they were not happy when I told them I wanted to be a vet, but they are also animal lovers, they love our pets so they were easily convinced to let me become what I wanted to be. And they are happy so far.

There's a general belief that Vietnamese vets are trained and educated in the same schools as farm husbandry (pigs and cows), that there are no actual veterinary schools? Is this true? Can you explain?

In my opinion, it is not true. I graduated as a veterinarian, not an animal husbandry engineer, that means there are actual universities that educate in veterinary in Vietnam, although not as popular as the other specialized schools.

Consuming dog and cat meat is part of Vietnamese culture, your thoughts on that as a Vietnamese person and as a vet?

As a Vietnamese person and a veterinarian, I strongly disagree with this action. I think the number of people who has the same thinking as me is not just a small number, but increasing day by day. Now that the living standard is improving, dogs and cats are becoming a part of the human family, and the number of people who eat dog or cat meat is decreasing. I believe that in the near future, there will be no one in Vietnam using dogs and cats for food.

What is the most challenging part of being a vet in Vietnam?

Veterinary is extremely hard work, especially in Vietnam, I have a lot of challenges and I often get stressed by them. The most challenging is handling a stressed pet owner. The pet owners you see at the pet clinic are not always at their best. It's the same as parents when they take their really sick children to the hospital, they can be a frazzled mass of nerves, consumed with worry. On occasion,

their stress may spur them to offer inappropriate advice in taking care of their pet, and they may even show misplaced anger towards you. My job is to stay calm, exercise tact and show compassion.

What is the most rewarding part of your job?

Seeing the animal getting better after fighting their sickness.

What advice can you give to new pet owners?

First, you have to make sure before you have pets that you truly want to have them and are able to raise and treat them as members of your family, never give them up even when they are sick or become old and ugly. Consider fostering and adopting, as there are so many strayed dogs and cats out there in need of new forever home, so why don't you adopt one instead of buying a puppy in the pet shop, which was born by the puppy mill industry.

Do you have any pets?

I've two dogs and nine cats, they all live with my parents, I love them very much. The cats are not so friendly to strangers but they are the most loyal cats I know. They are cheeky sometimes, always meowing around me when they want food or my attention. The dogs are very calm, they always recognize me, they can even hear my bike coming. They're very friendly to people, honestly I don't want them to be that friendly, they should be alert to strangers as they somehow can take them away and hurt them. Anyway, I love them so much, I always wish they can live long and healthy with my family. ■





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.

Saving Private Capital

Is private equity right for me?

I am a UK citizen who has been living in Saigon for about 10 years. I have substantial savings generated from working as a c-suite executive for many years. My wealth manager often recommends that we invest our savings in publicly traded equities and related assets. I have been satisfied with these suggestions to date, but I feel that the values of these assets could fall quite aggressively if the global economy does not continue growing as predicted. Are there any types of private investments that I could allocate a portion of my savings to that are uncorrelated to stock markets and will not necessarily be affected if stock prices fall?

FORTUNATELY, THE GLOBAL economic has integrated in such a way that literally hundreds of thousands of potential investment opportunities exist at any given time, which are accessible to anyone in the world. I believe an asset class that would be suitable for you is private equity. Basically, private equity gives investors the opportunity to invest in companies which are not listed on stock exchanges. Instead of buying a company's shares on a secondary market like a stock exchange, you will be buying shares directly from a company.

Simply put, there are two forms of private equity investments which you could undertake: venture capital, or "seed" funding, and conventional private equity. Venture capital involves investing in companies that are in their start-up phase, but have a big idea that they wish to pursue. These companies will usually be turned away by banks for loans as they do not have enough assets or revenue to qualify for loans, and therefore have to turn to private investors. The value-added for the investor and the investee company is as follows: the investee company obtains money to run their business and develop its product/service, and the investor gets the opportunity to share in profits once the company grows, or make a large capital gain if the company is bought out by a much larger competitor. These investments are quite risky as the future of the firm is largely speculative, but with the added risk comes potential higher returns. The first billionaires that came from the success of Facebook

and Google were the venture capital investors.

Conventional private equity deals involve investing in large companies which chose not to list on stock exchanges for various regions, but would like to obtain funds for new projects without taking on more debt, and thus solicit investment from outside investors. Though the opportunity for growth of your investment is still relatively high, it might not be as high as a venture capital investment as the company will have less implicit risk, usually has a stable stream of cash flows and might actually be quite profitable.

How would you gain access to these investments? The most direct way would be to purchase a share directly from a company. This would require you having a personal relationship with the owners of the business, and you would most likely need the assistance of a professional investor. The easiest method would be to buy shares in a venture capital or private equity fund. These are vehicles, which are managed by professional investors that allocate capital to a portfolio of private companies. They solve a number of problems for individual investors. 1) Your risk is diversified i.e. you are not putting all your eggs in one basket. By investing in multiple companies the fund reduces the risk of you not receiving all your money back because, if one of the companies does not perform well, the other companies held in the fund might perform very well and this would lead to a decent performance of your investment. If

you put all your money in a single company and the company fails, you would lose everything. 2) You are delegating selection of investments to professionals. Choosing which companies to invest in can be a painstaking process, and it often takes more than a year to research to make an investment decision because the investee company's information is not readily available. 3) Minimal value required to invest. If you had to invest in a private company directly you would often have to contribute millions of Dollars. By using a PE fund, you can gain access by purchasing a share of a fund, which is often only requires a minimum investment of a few thousand dollars. 4) Most importantly it solves potential liquidity problems for you i.e. your ability to turn your investments into cash. If you invest in a company directly you will often have to wait 10-12 years before receiving any of your returns. With a PE fund the manager will usually manage liquidity and you might be able to withdraw funds and realize returns by providing short notice (depending on the rules and structure of the fund).

Examples of PE funds in Vietnam would be funds managed by VinaCapital and Mekong Capital. There are very many options available internationally as well, investing in every industry in almost every country. Your wealth manager should be able to assist you with participating in these funds, but make sure that he/she performs adequate due-diligence and only allocates a minority of your portfolio to these assets, depending on what your liquidity needs are. ■



3 Must-Have Summer Breaks In Hoi An

Text and Images Provided by **Palm Garden Resort**

SUMMER BREAK IS AROUND THE corner and it's time to get ready for your getaway! Let's spend the holidays wandering around Hoi An Ancient Town, having the summer breeze on your face at Cua Dai beach, and finally finishing off with a tall glass of something cool in Palm Garden Resort. Check out the top 3 favorite breaks in Hoi An that everyone must have this summer.

1. Family Breaks - Embrace The Inner Eco Warrior

Palm Garden Resort, a green oasis between buzzing Hoi An Ancient Town and tranquil Cua Dai beach, offers a perfect luxurious 3-day getaway from VND5,999,000 ++ for a family with a touch of Hoi An's local culture, A-Z services, and five hectares of landscaped tropical gardens, where you and your kids can explore the wildlife, meadows and ancient woodlands. If the kids still have any energy left, why not get involved with some family fun activities such as table tennis, beach volleyball, soccer, water sports and much more?

2. Foodie Breaks - Sampling Hoi An's Dishes In Historic Town

Loosen the belt and get ready to indulge your taste buds and belly on a foodie break in Hoi An this summer, from browsing through local farmers' gardens at Tra Que village to dining in the Terrace restaurant facing the picturesque Cua Dai beach at Palm Garden Resort. Head to Hoi An Ancient Town—a UNESCO World Heritage Site—you will enjoy sampling top street food of Central Vietnam such as Cao Lau (Hoi An's secret noodles), Banh Mi, Quang noodles, Grilled pork wrapped in rice paper with vegetables, to name just a few.

3. Lover Breaks - Thrills And Chills At Romantic Cua Dai Beach

There's nothing better than a day of enjoying the sun on your face, sounds of the surf and the sand beneath your toes as you stroll along sandy beaches with your loved one. Add an extra VND990,000/ person to enjoy a 2-hour snorkeling tour at Cham islands with full transport and equipment.

Whether catching some sun at the beach or venturing into the tropical marine, don't forget to enjoy a selection of theme dinners with entertainment arrangements at the Court Yard. Or share thrills and relaxation with family at the Colibri Beach Restaurant by the beach or entertaining Contino Club Bar, where you can enjoy some of the best performances from a Filipino music band.



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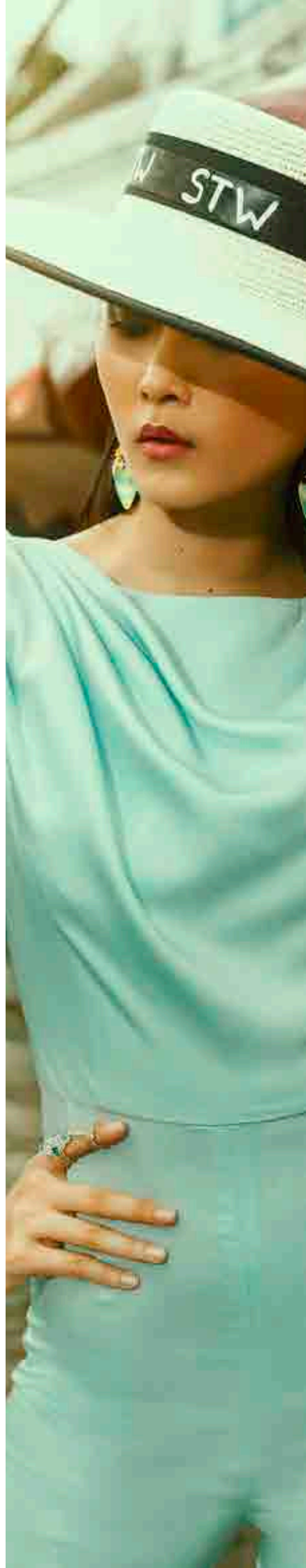
à La MODE

CAC LAM is a YOUNG VIETNAMESE AMERICAN DESIGNER BEHIND *cacdemode.com*. SHE IS A GRADUATE OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF DALLAS AND HAS WORKED IN MILAN, ITALY. LAM'S INSPIRATION DRAWS FROM THE MIX OF EASTERN AND WESTERN DESIGNS. HER DESIGN AESTHETIC COMBINES ROMANTICISM, FASHION FORWARD, AND ULTIMATELY EXPRESSES FEMININITY, INDIVIDUALITY AND CHOICE. CAC LAM IS CURRENTLY BASED IN HO CHI MINH CITY.











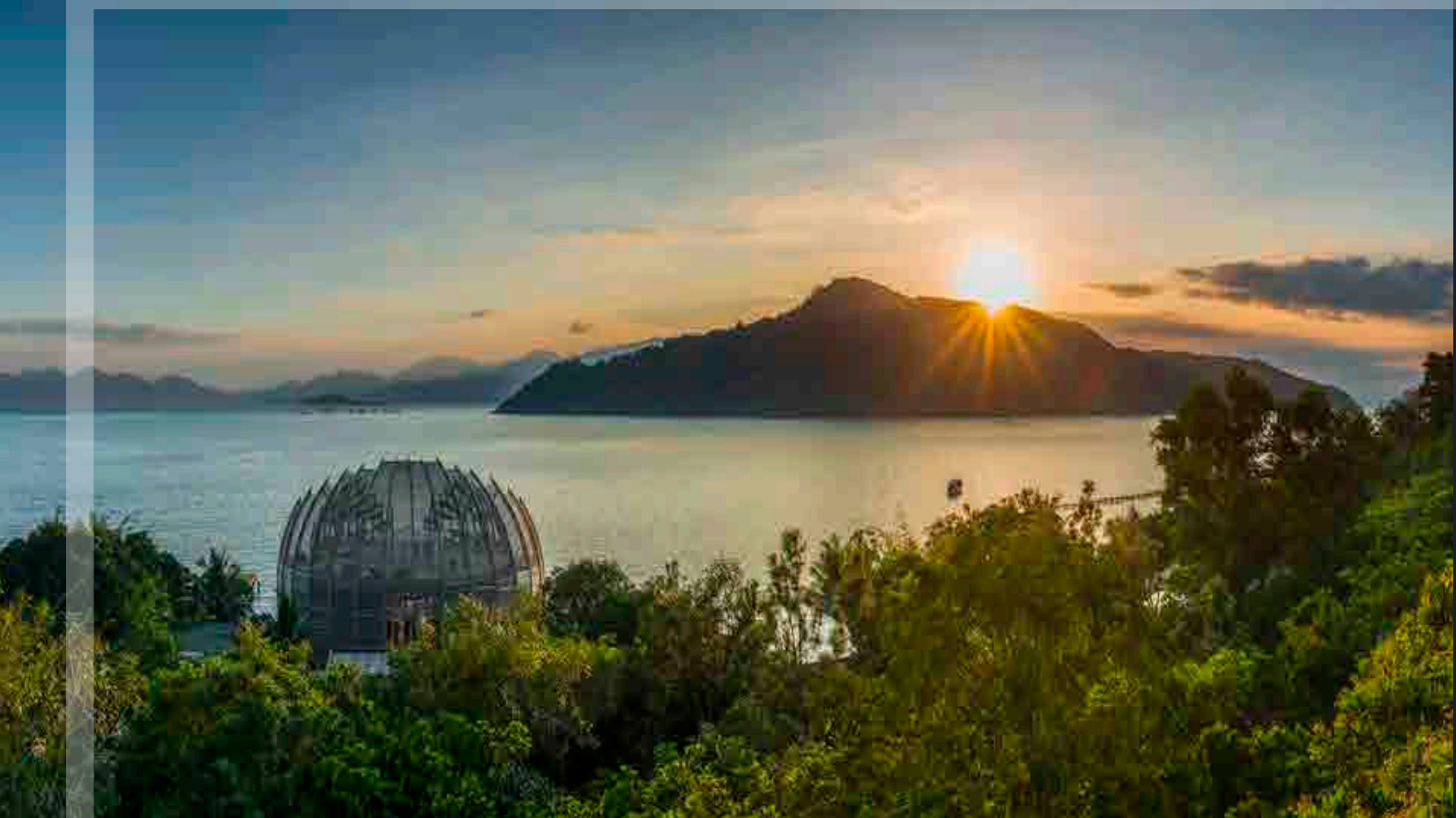
INSIDE LUXURY

A younger and more sophisticated generation of shoppers with markedly different tastes, aspirations and consumption habits is reshaping the landscape of luxury in Vietnam. Educated, well-traveled and tech-savvy, they are emerging as the new target market for luxury.

This issue is about elegance, opulence and wealth, or simply living the good life. The high-end lifestyle of those in love with five-star destinations, slow dinners with six course meals and new super wheels fresh from the launch.

Image by Ngoc Tran





In the Land of the Lotus Eaters

Finding paradise at An Lam Retreats Ninh Van Bay

Text by **James Pham**

Images Provided by **An Lam Retreats Ninh Van Bay**

IN HOMER'S *ODYSSEY*, the Greek hero Odysseus stumbles across the land of the Lotus Eaters, a place so completely blissful that everyone who sets foot there never wants to leave. For centuries, people have tried to find this mythical island without success. Perhaps until now.

Ahead of An Lam Retreats Ninh Van Bay's grand opening at the end of June, we set out to see if this land of legend really exists. Our own odyssey begins with a seamless airport pick-up, driving along Nha Trang's beautiful coastline 15km north of town to An Lam's private jetty. A completely enclosed tender boat takes us on a smooth 15-minute ride over glassy seas, a flock of swifts flitting in the spray of our wake, towards the peninsula on stunning Ninh Van Bay. As we draw closer, the only sign of the 34-villa retreat is a giant wooden sphere, a modern interpretation of a lotus flower, a sign that we've arrived to

the modern Land of the Lotus Eaters.

Staff are lined up at the jetty to welcome us to paradise, a place so idyllic, it makes every slick marketing slogan ever written sound insincere. I've often wondered how Adam and Eve might have lived in the Garden of Eden, another earthly paradise. Might they have lived in a tree house, Tarzan and Jane-style? Or simply slept under the stars, cuddled by Mother Nature on a dense carpet of grass? Walking along the woody path up to our Treetop Pool Villa, past brightly colored lizards and butterflies, I think I have the answer to my question.

Set 12m above the ground, up three flights of stairs, our 75sqm treehouse is jaw-droppingly stunning, as if Adam had a degree in Environmental Architecture and Eve majored in Interior Design. The largest of five villa types, the Treetop Pool Villa features two outdoor seating areas, a spacious

bedroom with incredible, sweeping views over the bay, and an equally large bathroom with wooden bathtub, his-and-her sinks and a glazed turquoise-tiled rain shower with a sliding door opening directly onto a private plunge pool, all accented with New Zealand pine, appropriately distressed for a beach chic vibe. Natural materials give the villas an aura of lightness and brightness with stone and wood floors, polished bamboo accessories and gauzy curtains naturally dyed and hand-woven in northern Vietnam.

While the uber luxurious nature of the villas themselves would fit right in to the pages of *Architectural Digest*, it's the designing hand of Mother Nature that sets An Lam Retreats apart from all pretenders. Instead of seeking to tame nature, the retreat embraces its wild beauty. Built to merge seamlessly into the landscape, practically hidden amongst towering trees and giant

boulders, each villa features ingenious sliding panels and windows which can be thrown open to allow the sea breezes in. The playlist to life in paradise is supplied by bird chirps, the hum of cicadas and the sound of water lapping against the crescent beach. The air is heavy with Mother Nature's perfume, an intoxicatingly woody scent with sweet notes provided by jasmine flowers and cashew fruits bursting with their sugary, tart juice, just some of the many fruit trees on the property.

The retreat is blessed with a natural mountain spring with its head some 10km up the mountain and double filtered for guest and resort use. One morning, we take a guided walk following the stream partway up the mountain, past the Jungle Gym, literally a state-of-the-art gym in the jungle, and the two private treatment salas of the Jungle Spa, recalling our earlier Swedish massage that took us further away from reality with every firm, tension-releasing stroke. We stroll along wooden walkways and scamper up large, smooth boulders into the jungle. Accessible only by boat, the peninsula is densely forested and largely uninhabited save for troops of langurs and other wildlife. We cool off in a swimming hole fed by the cool, clear stream, as panoramic views of the pristine bay unfold below us with Thi Island and its abandoned pagoda to the right, and Monkey Island closer to the mainland.

The retreat is similarly tranquil, with most of the other guests blissfully holed up in their villas, no doubt cooling off in the plunge pool, lounging on plush sofas or Instagramming with a #liveyourbestlife hashtag. Life at An Lam Retreats is all about privacy, and the staff, including dedicated butlers for each villa, know to be discreet, ringing a bell before delivering daily afternoon snacks and refreshments like passionfruit iced tea with a selection of petit fours to stave off the 4 o'clock nibbles. In fact, the rare times we see other guests are usually at the infinity pool, on the postcard-perfect beach fronting glassy, sea foam green water or at Sen Restaurant.

Built over water, the spectacular open-air restaurant features plush, overstuffed sofas on the outdoor deck and tables inside with a show grill in the center, surrounded by massive timber pillars. The restaurant showcases classic Vietnamese cuisine with a handful of Western favorites, immaculately presented. One lunch, we have the Australian Tenderloin, beautifully seared with an earthy mushroom sauce and served over a bed of mashed potatoes and steamed vegetables with a smear of sweet berry reduction balanced by the tartness of balsamic caramelized onions. However, it's in the treatment of fresh seafood where the restaurant truly shines. Thanks to carefully cultivated relationships with some of the nearby floating fish and lobster farms, the seafood on offer is second-to-none





and guests are even invited to visit the floating farms via 5-minute boat ride to select their own seafood.

One evening, after sundowners at the rooftop bar with 360-degree views of the bay and the hazy blue mountains beyond, we order the Nha Trang Seafood Platter with grilled sea bass, tiger prawns and squid served with a small heap of herbs and veggies from the retreat's own organic garden and a flavorful green chili dipping sauce. It's followed by Lobster with Garlic Butter, grilled to perfection, and a whole grilled pomfret, its firm meat ideal for rolling in rice paper with fresh veggies, all dipped in a thick, Vietnamese dipping sauce. With the lights of the mainland glittering like a string of Christmas lights in the distance and the gentle sound of waves lapping the shore, there's no place else we'd rather be.

It's appropriate that in this halcyon Land of the Lotus Eaters, An Lam Retreat's logo is a lotus flower in full bloom. It's subtly incorporated into the design of the resort—in drawer pulls and table tops and in the contemporary shape of Sen Restaurant. Iconic of Vietnam, An Lam's lotus proudly represents a homegrown Vietnamese brand achieving a level of luxury previously seen only at international-level properties, but here wholly Vietnamese owned, designed and operated.

As with Odysseus' men on the mythical island of the Lotus Eaters, we can barely tear ourselves away from An Lam when the time comes. Even as the boat idles on the jetty, we sip the last drop of our frothy Vietnamese iced coffee and freshly baked breads, a last nibble of the intoxicating lotus in this very real version of earthly paradise.

Doubles start at VND7.4 million per night including breakfast and round-trip boat transfers. See www.anlam.com for special summer rates. ■





Made in Vietnam

Inside Mercedes-Benz's dominance of the luxury car market in Vietnam

Text by **Wes Grover**
Images Provided by **Mercedes-Benz Vietnam**

FOR MANY VIETNAMESE consumers, it seems that locally made products are somehow confusing, due to a widely held belief that quality goods have to be made overseas. Try telling that to the brass at Mercedes-Benz Vietnam, and you will see the other side of the story.

Over the past two decades, the German automaker has more than dominated the luxury car sector here, currently holding roughly 65 percent of the market share, and they attribute much of this success to their manufacturing facility, located in Go Vap District. Recently, we visited the plant to learn more about Mercedes-Benz's presence in the country and why they are the definitive favorite among

wealthy Vietnamese consumers.

Making the journey across town, on a day of particularly congested streets, we arrive, we're afraid to say, a few minutes late, and it becomes immediately apparent as we clear a security checkpoint that this is a slice of German precision in the thick of Go Vap's chaos. On these grounds, things are not running on "Vietnamese time" and when Patrick Schwind, a German expatriate who is the Head of Operations & COO of Mercedes-Benz Vietnam, later speaks in his native tongue with his Vietnamese driver, one starts to think maybe they are taking this whole thing too far. As it turns out, the driver is in fact Viet Kieu from Germany, though perhaps that makes him more punctual than most.

A disciplined man with a piercing gaze, Patrick is exactly the sort you would expect to be running the show, and he's ready and waiting to talk production. Only one third of their output, he informs us, are CBU cars (completely built-up), and the rest are manufactured right here, assembled entirely by manpower. Seemingly an oddity in today's automated world, Patrick explains that while their production has been on an upward trajectory, it doesn't currently warrant transitioning to a machine-powered assembly line.

This means that every step, from the paint job to the installation of the dashboard's high resolution display screen, is done by hand. Even the act of moving the car down the line is done by pushing the vehicle along a series of rollers. We watch as one gloved man repeatedly opens and closes a door for a good minute, intensely taking note of the size of the gap between the door and



the car itself each time. As we work our way down the line, one can observe the transformation of a skeletal frame to an automobile that, depending on the model, can ultimately cost upwards of VND10 billion, a process that takes about two months from the moment assembly begins to the final evaluation of quality on their in-house test track.

"We set up this factory 22 years ago and, to this day, we're the only premium brand that has a manufacturing facility in Vietnam. Because of that, I believe we are in a very dominant position in this market," shares Choi Duk Jun, Managing Director, as he goes on to shed some light on just who it is that's purchasing these luxury rides. "Most of our customers are under 40 years old. The average is about 35, which is very young by most standards. I dare say, it may be 10 years younger than the global average."

Here, they prefer to see their product driven by the customers themselves, rather than a chauffeur, because, as Duk Jun puts it, "That's the best way to experience our cars and that's the way to tell the big difference between our cars and the others on the road. Not all cars are created equal." Generally speaking, their clientele agrees, as more and more are driving their automobiles themselves. However, the S-Class even takes over 80 percent of the luxury sedan market share in Vietnam, is an exception that's favored by those who are chauffeured.

A different trend being observed is the shift from sedans to SUVs, which holds true not just in Vietnam, but around the world. Today, SUVs account for roughly a third of the cars on the road and it explains the high demand for their GLC model, introduced last year with a starting price of VND1,879,000,000, according to Mercedes-Benz Vietnam's website.

Duk Jun shared "because it's not only the best-selling model within our product range at the moment, but also the best-selling premium car—not SUV—premium car." In their eyes, it's the perfect form of transportation in an urban environment prone to flooding

and variable road conditions, combined with a design that's neither masculine or feminine.

One of their most memorable sales was of a different SUV, however—the conspicuously luxurious and box-shaped G-63 AMG, or unofficially known to some as the G-Wagon. "There was a customer who was already an S-500 customer and he wanted to buy the G-63 AMG," Duk Jun recalls. "I can still remember he was so excited that when the car arrived, we still had to get it homologated, but he couldn't wait. He and his wife came here and we told them it wasn't ready for delivery, but he said 'I need to see it.' So, we brought the car up to the showroom and they were getting in it, touching it and smelling it. And I'd feel that way, too, buying the car of my dreams. You can't wait."

New Money

The demand for the ultra-luxe Maybach series is another strong representation of the enthusiasm that drivers hold for Mercedes-Benz here. Launched two years ago, within the first 18 months, they had sold 100 units of the Maybach S-600, a car that at the time was priced at roughly VND9.6 billion and has since gone up to VND14,169,000,000 due to the new special consumption tax adjustment in 2016. Depending on the engine displacement, the tax paid on a passenger car can now be as high as 60 percent, though they feel this is further tipping the scale in their favor.

"Coincidentally, headquarters has for years been downsizing the size of the engine, but maximizing the output, and I'm pretty sure they did it for Vietnam," Duk Jun jokes. "Last year, when the taxes were adjusted, we even benefitted because we have a lot of engines that are small, even two liters and below, with quite strong output and we were ready for that, whereas the competition was not ready."

Even the Maybach, with a particularly high engine displacement, continues to remain popular after the adjustment.

A month and a half ago, Mercedes-Benz Vietnam expanded their offerings to include the full range of the series, adding the Maybach S-400 and S-500. At the time of the launch, there were signed orders for more than 50 units.

Yet, despite their success across the market, brand building continues to be a point of emphasis. In Europe, where the three-pointed star logo is well-established, marketing efforts are focused on technology and innovation, while in Vietnam they want to further the awareness of what the emblem symbolizes. In doing so, one strategy has been to uniquely align themselves with the country's most desirable hotels.

"Basically, every four and five-star hotel and resort has a fleet of our cars," Duk Jun says. "We have a penetration of close to 90 percent in the country. That's something that is very unique to Vietnam. I'm not aware of any other country that has even 50 percent penetration. We are very happy, because they all want to have our cars right in front of their doorstep to demonstrate that they are also premium."

Celebrities, too, want a Mercedes-



Benz on their doorstep, as the managing director speculates that 70 to 80 percent of the country's top stars drive their cars, a list that includes singers like Le Quyen, and actress/model, as well as Miss Vietnam, Mai Phuong Thuy.

Looking at the broader scope of clientele, the luxury automaker believes demand for their product is really just beginning. Wealthy consumers are often categorized between old and new money, and in a developing country like Vietnam, the majority of high-net-worth individuals fall into the latter. Having not accumulated their affluence over time, the up-and-coming generation of self-made consumers is less likely to have access to the large amount of cash currently required to make a purchase of this magnitude.

"These are the people who are in the new economy," explains Duk Jun with an eye on the future. "That's why our demographic is younger. They are earning as they are progressing. When the financial environment is more liberalized here and people have easy access to leasing and other financial solutions, I believe there will be a lot more opportunity." ■



Heavenly dining

Indulge in decadent continental—with delicate touches of Thai flavors—cuisine in a picturesque colonial villa

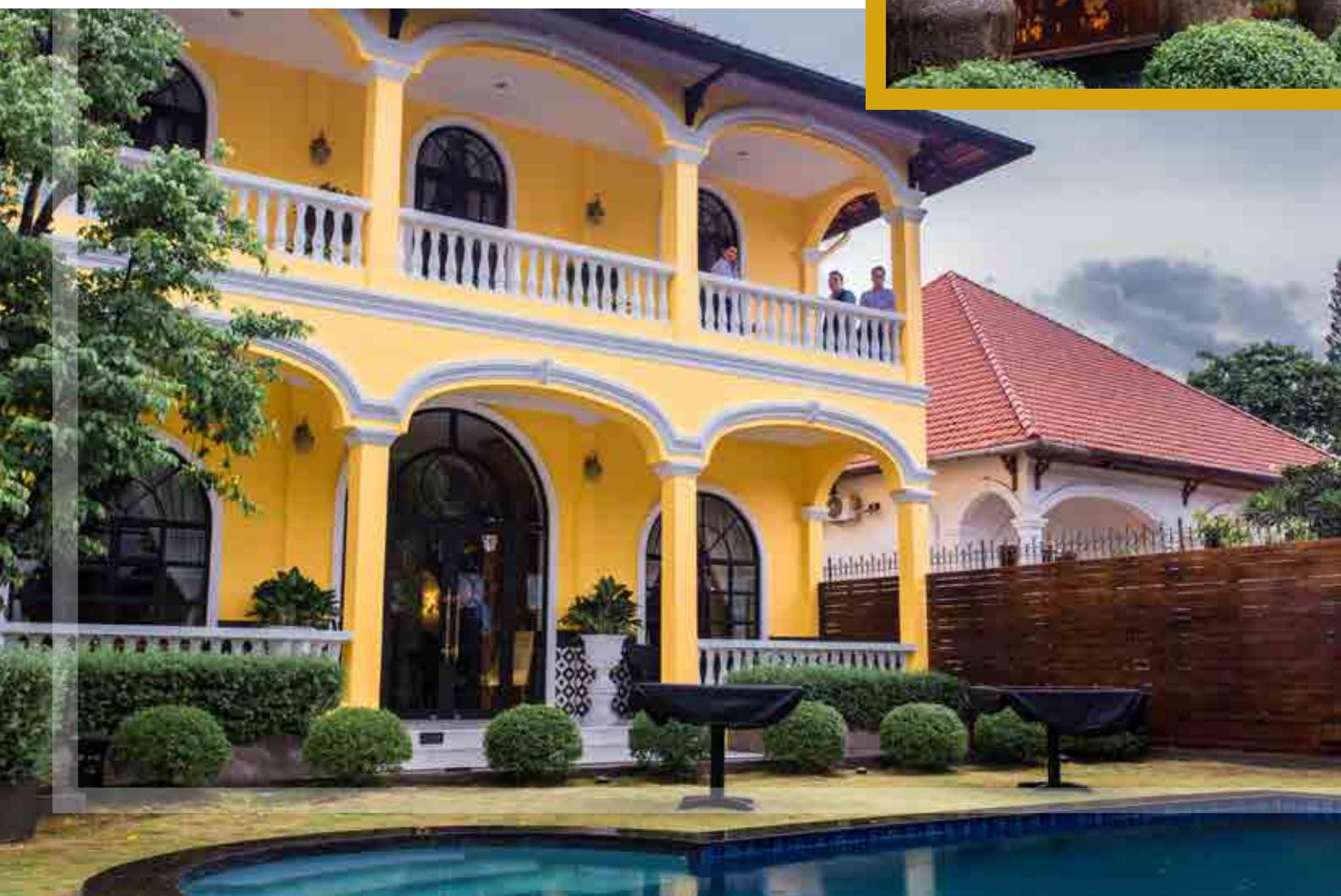
Text by **Michael Arnold**
Images by **Cuong Toc Do**

MANY RESTAURANTS IN THIS town have tried their hardest to put on the face of luxury; few have succeeded. Secluded in a quiet Thao Dien back street, **Stellar** (43 Tran Ngoc Dien, Thao Dien, D2) has done its best to attempt the opposite—set up a wordlessly beautiful venue where guests will feel both charmed and at home—and have surpassed themselves to the point that if this is casual dining, it's the finest of its kind in the city.

Stellar is jaw-droppingly impressive on two counts: firstly, the venue looks so much like a miniature five-star resort that I wasn't the first person to ask if there's an option to spend the night there. A perfectly-renovated villa, Stellar has no less than three water

features installed outside, an immaculate bathroom, and a dream kitchen in a separate red-brick structure that is so spacious and squeaky-clean that most people would be quite at ease taking dinner in there.

This last point relates directly to the second count: the quality of the cuisine. Stellar's executive chef, Mr. Ittipol Samran, is a prestigious name in Thailand, where he has served royalty, ministerial diners, corporate demigods, and all manner of other VIPs. The restaurant's Thai owners managed to secure this talent only by making this venue a chef's dream come true—the best kitchen, the best sous-chefs (a superstar mixologist specializing in craft cocktails is due to join the team this month), the





Snow fish, strawberry margarita

best of everything. Chef Ittipol personally flew to Finland to touch the ebony-black stone serving trays before the order was approved; he hand-selected the German cutlery and opaque glass plates. His personal garden grows the best of his preferred herb varieties—one gets the sense that the cheffing job at Stellar was an impossible gig to refuse.

Happy chef, happy diner. We reviewed a feast of Chef Ittipol's choicest creations, starting with his amuse-bouche of the day—a banana prawn skewer with mayonnaise—with prawn, cherry tomato, mango, and capsicum served on caviar. The chef has a new (free of charge) surprise for diners every night; ours was fresh and filling and a succinct introduction to this chef's innate sense of playfulness with his own cuisine.

We then embarked on a procession of absolute extravaganzas challenging the extremes of what could comfortably be described as “casual dining.” Opening with a mood-enhancing apple martini and fruity strawberry margarita (both VND150,000) that awakened all senses to what was to come, we moved on to the pork kurobuta salad (VND250,000), which came prepared with some herbs, apple strudel, and cherry tomatoes with a little sautéed wild mushroom and Dijon mustard sauce. Even the appetizer had its own story—the pork is from a rare Spanish/Japanese hybrid animal with a super-soft pork neck that grills nice and juicy and carries a mild, gentle umami.

Next came the foie gras peach pan-fried Toulouse duck liver, served with caramelized peach and peach sauce, alongside raspberries and rocket leaf. At VND490,000, this dish was firm and juicy rather than greasy, a difficult trick





to pull off with foie gras. Likewise the complex flavors of the lobster bisque (VND225,000), a Canadian lobster broth flamed with cognac, comes masterfully prepared with light cream so as to avoid the heaviness sometimes associated with French soups that are rarely preferred by Asian expat clientele.

Home in a palace

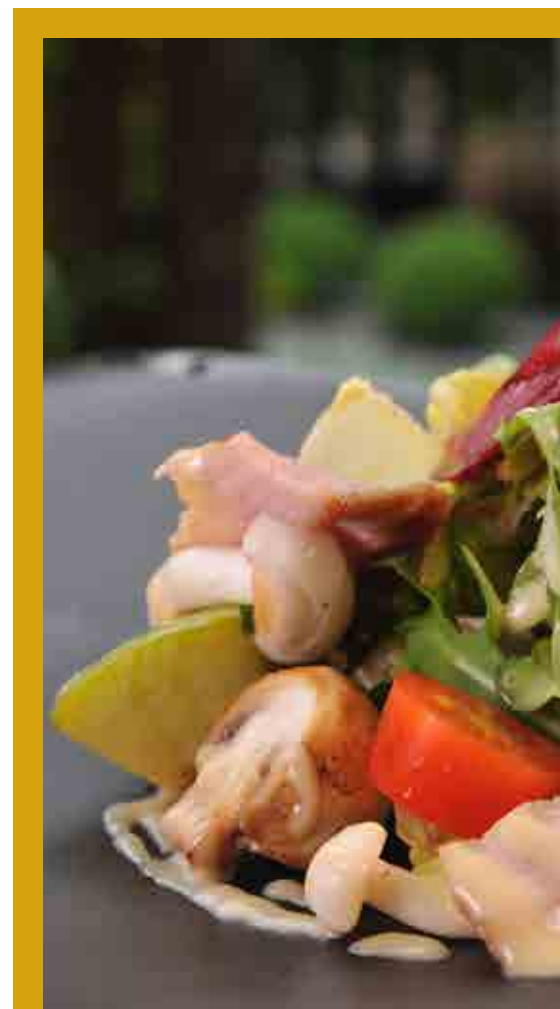
Stellar's menu is largely focused around Continental cuisine (Chef Ittipol spent two decades in France), but there are some touches of Thailand, as revealed in the spaghetti tom yum tiger prawns (VND450,000), a sautéed pasta that draws on kaffir lime, Thai basil and galangal elements to refocus the pungency of the seafood into that characteristic Thai intensity much loved in the broadly-popular national soup dish *tom yum goong*. This was followed by a palate-cleansing lemon sorbet served with fresh berries (VND150,000) that was well-balanced and cleared the way for the meal's second act.

We enjoyed two top-shelf category dishes that dialed the decadence up to 11—starting with a pan-roasted snow fish steak (VND650,000) served with sautéed spinach, cherry tomatoes confit and balsamic sauce. Snowfish usually makes for an oily steak; this serving is oven-cooked prior to roasting so as to deliver a melt-in-your-mouth consistency augmented by a heady port wine sauce and the texture of the side vegetables.

King of the night was the Australian lamb rack (VND520,000) roasted with crusted herbs and served with skewered vegetables and garlic rosemary sauce. While the quality of the meat was undeniable, the brilliance of the rosemary lay in its contrast with the mint sauces traditionally offered with lamb in many European countries—for those who grew up on it, this reboot on a

childhood favorite is both surprising and familiar. It was nicely paired with a glass of boutique Chilean cabernet sauvignon.

Stellar's desserts are exceptional also—unable to settle for one, we shared a “Soft Bitter” chocolate cake with raspberry sauce filled with a French 60%-dark fondant chocolate, topped with vanilla ice cream and fresh berries, no less. At VND250,000, this dessert could easily have been sweetened to over-excess, but the sugar balance was very controlled. By contrast, the banana panna cotta (VND180,000) served with fresh berries, almond biscotti with vanilla



Clockwise from top left: Lobster Bisque, Australian Lamb Rack, Spaghetti Tom Yum, Amuse Bouche, Lemon Sorbet, Soft Bitter, Apple Martini, Kurobuta Salad



sauce, stood out for its extremely intense yellow-banana taste, derived from its essence being handmade from the juice of crushed fresh banana, and including real Madagascan vanilla.

There's no getting around the fact that Stellar is far more the fine dining venue than the relaxed restaurant it aspires to be, but that needn't be any cause for concern. Come prepared for luxury treatment, but don't dress up for it—have a good time at Stellar and for the course of the evening you'll know what it is like to feel at home in a palace. Enjoy it. ■





In the Mood for Love

As it turns out, Belinda Carlisle was right: Heaven really is a place on earth. At least, that's how it feels about this spa

Text by **Sonia Gregor**
Images Provided by **The Reverie Saigon**

ENTER THE SPA AT The Reverie Saigon (22 - 36 Nguyen Hue, D1 & 57 - 69F Dong Khoi, D1) and you are transported to a world of nourishing opulence. As the only 6-star hotel in Vietnam, The Reverie Saigon name is synonymous with sophisticated luxury, however, what you might not know is that The Spa is dedicated to using as many natural products as possible. The treatments feature the British organic brand Ila, and Voya from Ireland. They go to great lengths to bring you the most therapeutic natural ingredients, be it wild Irish seaweed or rose essence distilled by farmers in the Himalayas. The Spa at The Reverie Saigon pairs their excellent treatments with gorgeous Italian décor and cutting-edge spa technology, creating an experience that is luxurious at every turn.

The best way to experience everything The Spa has to offer was for me to book their 3-hour Origin of Love package. It began with a limousine car arriving at my home. Before I was whisked off, The Spa Manager, Hoang, presented me with a large bouquet of roses and orchids. As we rode, she told me that the hotel's in-house florist has blooms flown in from other countries to craft the perfect bouquet. Even the car was decorated with a fresh orchid, next to the refreshing towels and water bottles.

Inside the spa reception area, the floral theme continued with a huge white flower on the ceiling. The carpet was another flower, but dusky pink. I sipped on a welcome drink, and filled out a thorough questionnaire on my massage preferences. Out the window, boats slipped by on the river.

The spa recommends you arrive 45 minutes before your treatment, so that you can make the most of their steam room and sauna. I started with the steam room, which is scented with purifying eucalyptus, and bathed in the soft glow of color therapy lights. The patented Air Steam System ensures that the heat and humidity are perfectly distributed. Next I entered the Salt Sauna. One wall is made of pink Himalayan salt, and the ions it gives off are said to boost circulation and aid the immune system. Afterwards, I rinsed off in the Experience Shower, which combines a rain shower, lights and scented oil. The Reverie Saigon pays absolute attention to detail. Everything was perfectly clean, and even the spa underwear was presented in a silk box. The spa occupies two floors, which are connected by a dramatic spiral staircase



Clockwise from top left: Reception, Private hair salon suite, Treatment Room, Women's Steam & Sauna.

covered in a mosaic of gold vines. The mosaic was designed by Sicis of Italy, whose work can also be seen in the Bellagio and the Burj Al Arab. The first floor contains the spa reception, and separate men's and women's steam and sauna facilities. The second floor has 10 private treatment rooms and a beauty salon.

In my private room, the bed was covered in candles and rose petals spelling out my name. Just as I considered running back for my phone to take a picture, my massage therapist offered to take a picture and send it to me. All the rooms have Bluetooth

connectivity so you can even listen to your own music.

After a relaxing foot soak, I lay down on the 400-thread count sheets for an herb-infused hot compress to relieve muscle tension. Next up was a body scrub using a natural blend of ingredients with ginger, honey and sugar. It smelled good enough to eat, and left my skin renewed. After a quick shower in the adjoining private bathroom, it was time for an amazing massage with a custom blend of aromatherapy oils. I chose the rose-scented Romance, because my spa package had me thinking

about love. Just as I felt like drifting away into a rosy reverie, the massage changed to a rejuvenating facial with Ila's organic products.

When I finally emerged, from the treatment room, it was to a table set with caviar, smoked salmon, fruit and chocolate. A bottle of champagne popped, and I settled into a regal chair to enjoy.

The Origin of Love (180 minutes) for one is VND8.8 million (VND10.9 million with limo pickup). The Origin of Love (180 minutes) for two is VND12 million (VND14.1 million with limo pickup). ■

Wine & Dine

PHO ONG TAY / IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN







Special pho with everything

Mr. Western Pho

For topnotch creative phos and pastas, head directly to Pho Ong Tay

Text by **Wes Grover**
Images by **Ngoc Tran**



Bruschetta with tomatoes and olive oil

IT MAY BE DIFFICULT TO find **Pho Ong Tay** (39 Vo Trung Toan, D2), located on the fringes of Thao Dien in District 2, but it's well worth the effort for an unconventional eatery that's decidedly delicious. The offerings are widespread—in addition to a thick menu, chalkboards adorn the walls with an assortment of specialty dishes, craft cocktails and fresh fruit juices. While you can stop by for pretty much anything from an English breakfast to an indulgent dessert of chocolate salami in vanilla sauce, the emphasis is on Italian pasta and, as one might expect, *pho*. Perhaps an unconventional combination, it turns out that these two culinary traditions can pair quite nicely when you have a chef who knows their stuff, and that's clearly the case here.

With plantings clinging to brick walls, an open air layout that invites

a breeze, and a well-stocked bar, Pho Ong Tay is a refreshingly unpretentious joint serving up breakfast in the early mornings, late night eats until 11pm, and everything in between six days a week (Tuesdays are off).

Starting with a round of beverages, we wetted our whistles with a Peroni (VND60,000) and freshly made apple juice (VND30,000) before jumping into a couple of appetizers that included tomato bruschetta toasted baguette slices topped with tomatoes and a drizzle of olive oil (VND40,000). A bite in and things were boding well with garden-fresh tomatoes and a quality baguette that had just the right amount of crunch on the outside and softness on the inside. A salmon salad (VND90,000), loaded with veggies, a hard-boiled egg, and salmon marinated in a balsamic sauce, rounded out our





Top to bottom: Tiramisu, Gnocchi and creamy pesto sauce with baby shrimp, Salmon salad



starters. Thinly sliced and full of flavor, the salmon was generously portioned in a salad that could hold its own as an entrée.

When it came to the main course, the decisions were simply too tough and we deferred to the engaging staff, who directed us toward the special *pho* with everything (VND60,000) and the homemade gnocchi (VND40,000), which the chef had just made that day, in a creamy pesto sauce with baby shrimp (VND90,000). At this point it's worth pointing out their system of allowing customers to choose their desired type of pasta and pair it with one of the sauces on a wide-ranging list, such as the duck ragout and vegetable sauce or the spicy arrabiata sauce.

Soft and fluffy, the gnocchi were simply exceptional. The light, little

pillows doused in a rich sauce made for a highlight dish that we will undoubtedly be devouring again. The special *pho*, flavored with an aromatic blend of herbs and spices, had a tasty, almost sweet, kick to it and came with five different cuts of beef. The quality of the meat in particular was what stood out here, as this was not your typical street-side soup. It's incredible what a difference it makes when a bowl of *pho* is prepared with tender, not chewy, beef.

Though we didn't have enough space to try them on this visit, there were a few creative *pho* twists on the menu that caught our eyes, specifically the Thai-inspired *tom yum pho* and the salmon *pho*. Come the next late night craving, we know where we're heading.

What we did, of course, have enough space for was dessert. Navigating a mouthwatering list that included a dark chocolate mousse served with spicy mango sauce, as well as a traditional lemon panna cotta in chocolate sauce, for this final round we opted for the classic tiramisu (VND60,000) and have absolutely no regrets. Served in a clay pot, the layered textures of custard and cake dipped in coffee and topped with cocoa powder provided us with just the right pick me up. At the chef's recommendation, we couldn't say no to pairing the tiramisu with a Budweiser Budvar Dark Lager (no, not the watery American beer, but rather a Czech Republic brew) that proved the perfect way to wash down the dessert with a crisp libation. In the end, it was a meal that left our stomachs happy, especially knowing that we had found a new haunt with quality cuisine in a friendly and casual atmosphere. ■



Fuel The Flames

From teppanyaki grilled steaks to burgers and pastas, Ember aims to please everyone

Text by **Michael Arnold**
Images by **Ngoc Tran**

THEY WARN YOU TO AVOID trying to be all things to all people, but there are some rare instances in which this not only works, it's also necessary. If you've ever dithered about where to take someone out to dinner for more than ten minutes, you'll appreciate the value in having a place you can go that's guaranteed to please absolutely anyone who might walk in the door—and **Ember** (Level1-07, Saigon Center, No. 65 Le Loi, D1) is just such a venue. It has one of the broadest possible menu profiles; the décor fits the bill for a classy night out just as much as it does for casual dining; and with a top-notch Japanese chef who has 20 years of experience in French cooking, there can be no cause for complaints about the quality of the cuisine.

Ember's choice to have something on the menu for almost every possible diner is a very conscious strategy, and it's really the restaurant's location in the

grand lobby of the flashy Takashimaya mall that makes this flexible approach key to its success. Ember's prominent position right next to a pair of high-profile cafés skirting the main entrance on Pasteur means that foot traffic is unusually high, and the shopping center setting means customers of any description could drop by at any time of the day or night for a coffee, snack, or several-course meal. Ember is deliberately purposed to accommodate all, and its relaxed, Bordeaux-vineyard vibe with plush leather seating and decorative styling heavy on the wine bottles manages to conjure up a dining space that successfully veils the muzak and fluorescent-tube exterior despite the open-plan interior design.

The restaurant's positioning is far from experimental or accidental, but backed up by experienced Japanese investment group Dineline—according to its General Director Mitsuhiro

Tomita, the parent company operates over 30 restaurants of all descriptions back in the home country, as well as a handful in Singapore—this is their first in Vietnam.

While selecting a steak for our review was a natural Western indulgence—made easier by the fact that the choice 200g American rib-eye, usually VND559,000, is currently discounted 25% until the end of June—it's actually worth going over what we *didn't* choose just to drive the point about Ember's broader appeal home. Its menu reads like a comfort food checklist for every possible Takashimaya customer—from Japanese teppanyaki rice through to home-made burgers and popcorn chicken. A full pasta selection includes Italian favorites as well as Japanese Naporitan spaghetti and Thai soft-shelled crab, while local clientele may settle for some *pho* or Vietnamese beef stew. There is a whole collection of



Clockwise from top left: USA rib eye steak with spinach, bacon & mushroom side, Vietnam Look cocktail, Banana & coconut French toast, Tiramisu French toast

different types of French fries, as well as a selection of French sandwiches and bakery items.

But steaks it was, and they were perfectly-done, served with custom-made sauces (we chose a mildly spicy black pepper for one and a mushroom demi-glace for the other) and sides—for the former, a health-conscious sautéed spinach salad, and the latter a more decadent crispy fries. The steaks paired well with a fine Argentinian cabernet sauvignon (Terrazas de los Andes ‘Altos del Plata’ at VND175,000/glass, a particularly concentrated, elegant wine) while being nicely offset by a frozen “Vietnam look” cocktail with lemongrass syrup & lime (VND98,000).

The broad menu allows for a suitably fabulous desserts section, and in our case the French toast offerings seemed far too compelling to pass up on. Ember’s servings are warm and soft, piled high with toppings—we shared plates of banana & coconut alongside a tiramisu, both priced at VND99,000. Like the mains, desserts were meticulously prepared, which, as a glance at other tables revealed, seems to be the norm at Ember—so whether you’re stopping by for coffee to take a break from your shopping, bringing the whole family along for a great meal, or trying your best to impress on a first date, you can be confident that there will be something on the menu for all, and that whatever you select will be made to perfection. ■





A Pizza the Action

Italian pizza—from Japan, take note—now in Saigon

Text by **Joel Zorrilla**
Images Provided by **Pizza Logic**

BOTH JAPANESE AND ITALIAN cuisine share common elements, most notably, an emphasis on seasonality and simplicity. Japanese-Italian food adds its characteristic attention to detail, and a light, delicate touch. Similar to the way French food has permeated Japanese cuisine, Italian food is both faithfully represented, and given Japanese accents. **Pizza Logic** (Lot L5-18, 5F Saigon Center Building 92-94 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D1), the newest contender to Saigon's culinary powerhouses, is at the helm of a forward fusion menu that combines Japanese and Italian flavors.

The success of Pizza Logic is its award-winning pizza master Junichi Shouji, winner of the coveted "Neapolitan Campionato Mondiale del Pizzaiuolo Trofeo Caputo" for the year 2012. Diners can watch Junichi working his magic beside a gigantic

wood-fired oven at the entrance of the restaurant throughout the day, producing award-worthy pizzas. Tucked away in the food court level of the mall, Pizza Logic's modern décor, with purple, gray and gold accents, complements the menu's Italian pizza and pasta classics alongside some not so conventional dishes like Logic's original Noce pizza with Vietnamese cashew nut paste, mozzarella, cashew nuts, prosciutto crude, mushroom and coriander (VND188,000). One of the stars of the Logic Pizza menu is a special Burrata topping (VND138,000) that can be added to any of the entrees. Burrata is a fresh Italian cheese made from mozzarella and cream. The outer shell is solid mozzarella, while the inside contains stracciatella and cream, and if that doesn't sound amazing, you need to reexamine your life. It's a most decadent, creamy, delicious

mound of cheese ever conceived as a pizza or pasta topping. I recommend putting it on anything and everything listed on Logic's savory menu. My companion and I ordered a big chunk of Burrata on the Bismark Pizza (VND160,000), which contains mozzarella, egg yolk, prosciutto and fresh basil. The saltiness of the prosciutto, the creaminess of the egg yolk and the decadence of the Burrata harmonized each other like a well-directed orchestra. It was absolutely phenomenal. But here I must backtrack a bit and mention the appetizers and house wine we started with: The first appetizer, under recommendation of the manager was the House made grilled *salsiccia* (Italian sausage with herbs and tomatoes, VND75,000), the sausage was beautifully spiced and the herbs and tomatoes were heavily infused with roast garlic—a grandiose



Clockwise: Margherita pizza, Heike crab with "granchio", Classic and matcha tiramisu

combination. The second appetizer was an Assortment of amazing Italian cheeses served with fresh honey and buttered garlic bread (VND145,000). The appetizers were served with glasses of house wine, the Canine Ronco Terre sicillane, a very flexible dry wine that complements most food. Together with the Bismark pizza we ordered the all-time Italian classic, the Margherita (VND185,000), simple yet incredibly delicious, just the right amount of acid from the tomato sauce, the perfect amount of salty from the mozzarella

and basil complemented by the perfectly fluffy crust.

Of course, a great Italian meal cannot be complete without a classic Italian dessert, the famous tiramisu. We chose both the classic Italian tiramisu and the matcha tiramisu (VND85,000 for both). Both were absolutely outstanding, soft and velvety and just enough sweet to accompany my espresso. Pizza Logic's menu of over 20 items is a wonderful mix of Italian classics and innovative Japanese-Italian fusion. Their pasta dishes,

which emphasizes seafood, shows creativity with dishes such as Heike crab with tomato sauce "granchio", which gives you an entire crab on your pasta for VND258,000. In combination with a selection of other pasta's and salads, this provides ample choice of dishes to enjoy with your partner, friends and family. They also offer a great lunch time combo: Pasta + french fries or salad + 1 drink for VND178,000 or conversely you can change the main to a pizza + french fries or salad + 1 drink for VND185,000. ■



Bo La Lot

BETEL PLANTS ORIGINATED

FROM Southeast Asia and has been cultivated for thousands of years. High in antioxidants, their uses have included, but are not limited to, medicinal healing, stimulants and even breath fresheners. In India, it's even consider an aphrodisiac. The betel plant is part of the pepper family and includes two varieties, piper sarmentosum and piper betle.

In Vietnamese culture, the piper betle is also called *trau* and is used to "begin the conversations," in other words, helps break the ice in awkward situations among adults as these were passed around as chewing gum. Of course, this was in the days of our grandparent's

generation and not so much any more today due to the unflattering staining of teeth black when chewing these leaves with the areca nut.

Betel leaves also have symbolic meaning in traditional Vietnamese weddings where the groom would offer betel leaves, among other gifts, to the bride's family. Hence, the Vietnamese phrase "*chuyen trau cau*" meaning "matters of betel and areca," is synonymous with marriage.

Aside from these cultural significance, the piper sarmentosum—also called *la lot* or wild betel leaves—are very popular in Vietnamese cuisine and they go great with cold beer or white wine.

Ingredients

- Beef tenderloin 300 g
- Lean pork 300 g
- Betel leaves 40
- Rice vermicelli 500
- Rice paper 30 pieces
- Herbs 200g
- Shallots 3
- Sesame oil 2 tbsp
- Salt, sugar, seasoning enough
- Cooking oil 2 tbsp

Dipping Sauce

- Peanut butter 5 tbsp
- Chopped ginger 1 tbsp
- Brown sugar 3 tbsp
- Chili sauce 2 tbsp
- Lime juice 2 tbsp
- Garlic 1 clove
- Water 2 tbsp
- Crushed roasted peanuts handful



1. Clean beef and pork.



2. Mince beef and pork finely, add chopped shallots, sesame oil, salt, sugar, seasoning.

4. Grill the parcels over charcoal for 20 minutes. You can also grill them in the oven at 250°C for 5 minutes. Then brush the parcels with some oil and grill for an additional 10 minutes.



Dipping Sauce

Mix peanut butter, chopped ginger, lime juice, brown sugar, garlic, chili and water together in a blender. Add crushed roasted peanuts on the top before serving.



3. Lay a betel leaf at on a plate. Place a spoonful of the marinated beef and pork mixture on top of the leaf. Roll the leaf up to a form small parcel.

5. Roll grilled beef in rice paper, adding rice noodles and herbs, and then dip in the sauce before eating.



With an eye for visual beauty as well as a discerning palate, Ngoc Tran has undertaken to collect and present *Easy To Cook: 40 Delicious Vietnamese Dishes As Listed By CNN*. Ngoc has personally traveled around her native Vietnam in search of the most outstanding variety of every recipe featured in her book. Find her book at all Phuong Nam bookstores (nhasachphuongnam.com) or on Kindle at Amazon





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.



Boring Wines

Life's too short to drink dull, unexciting wines

I KNOW THE TITLE IS likely to be controversial and upset some, if not many, but I am simply tired of seeing so much boring wine! And what do I mean when I say “boring wine”? Well, all the many wines, which are almost-factory produced in mass quantities, that have no personality, no interest (apart from the purpose of having a simple drink or getting drunk), are nothing special or, in other words, unexciting and boring.

If you walk into most of the wine shops in Vietnam, or if you have a look at the wine list of many hotels and restaurants in Vietnam, most if not all of the wines listed would qualify as boring, according to me of course, and there is a very strong reason for it, actually a few.

It all starts with the wineries (which should be called factories, as that is what they are); most of them used to produce decent quality wines, but at some point, and due to its popularity, either had to multiply their production and/or they were

bought by a monster company like Pernod Ricard or LVMH, and the factorization of wine started in order to produce cheap drinkable wine, which is not sold that cheaply because a lot of money is dedicated to publicity.

There lies the second problem: these ‘wineries’ become very attractive to importers because they give them a lot of marketing money. This budget is then transferred to the hotels and restaurants, hence we wine lovers have to suffer boring wines while paying full price, and this is sad.

It is actually very sad because there are thousands of boutique wineries out there producing inexpensive but amazing wines, which for various reasons, including not being able to afford marketing money, they never reach Vietnam or most of the wine lists in hotels and restaurants.

The third problem is that many of the hospitality professionals in town don’t know much about wine and/or they give priority to having a few free

bottles of crap wine than to having a product of which they can be proud of and that their customers will love, this decision is automatically linked to their sales of wine (and food): many wine lovers will not go very often to a restaurant whose list is full of commercial boring brands, why should we when for the same price we can enjoy a bottle of good wine.

I often get employed to design wine lists for restaurants, and sometimes I am close to screaming about the wines that were chosen before, sometimes because the distributor offered a free fridge, or sponsored a party or... which always ends in the customer paying for it indirectly.

Luckily some food and beverage professionals know what they are doing when building their wine lists, just to quote a few have a look at Skewers, Lubu, Corto, Ole, HCMC Cafe or Mach House. Isn’t it about time that we, wine drinkers and hospitality professionals, say no to boring wines? ■

Wine & Dine

ROOFTOP BARS

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Liquid Sky Bar

A casual destination to escape and unwind in the sun. In the evening, the space transforms into a rooftop lounge where guests and locals will come to socialize, dance or just let loose. On the mezzanine level, comfortable lounges and a flow of cocktails create a casual and fun atmosphere. It is the perfect spot to watch the sunset over the horizon.

21F - Renaissance Riverside Hotel Saigon
8-15 Ton Duc Thang, D1 / 3822 0033



Rex Hotel Rooftop Bar

Set on the fifth floor, Rex Hotel Rooftop Bar makes up for its modest height with breath-taking views of Vietnam's French colonial structures such as Saigon Opera House and People's Committee Hall. Rex Hotel Rooftop Bar is also fitted with an elevated stage and dancefloor, hosting live Latino bands and salsa performances at 20:00 onwards.

141 Nguyen Hue, D1



Thao Dien

Tropicana

Tropicana is the first and only rooftop bar in Thao Dien, District 2. The venue, with its sweeping views, looks over the Saigon River and Thao Dien, with an exciting selection of beverages, including signature cocktails, an extensive wine list and liqueurs. The bar is based on a Latin concept with live music and a Latin food menu.

Tuesday to Sundays: 5PM till late
41 Street 41, Thao Dien, District 2, Ho Chi Minh City
info@tropicanasaigon.com
Phone: (+84) 165 424 3972

SUNDAY BRUNCHES



Hotel Equatorial

Indulge in extravagance with the freshest seafood, roasted meats, international dishes, all-day breakfast favourites, and decadent desserts. A family brunch your kids will love. Complimentary for children below 6 years old. Prices: VND790,000 ++ per adult, VND395,000 ++ per child (12 years and under). VND990,000++ includes house wine, and beer VND1,390,000++ includes champagne, craft cocktails, wine, and beer

11.30am - 2.30pm
242 Tran Binh Trong, D5
3839 7777
www.hochiminhcity.equatorial.com



Indulgent Sundays @ Nineteen

A legendary buffet in the Heart of Saigon. Sensational cooking and an intimate, lively atmosphere are guaranteed. Authentic cuisine from around the globe, prepared by award-winning chefs, with fresh seafood as the highlight of the brunch. From noon to 3pm, with options from VND 890,000++ without drinks to VND 1,490,000++ with a free flow of Champagne, cocktails, house wine, and beer.

19-23 Lam Son Square, D1
hotel@caravellehotel.com / 3823 4999



Le Meridien

Centered around three distinctive dining venues - Latest Recipe, Bamboo Chic and Latitude 10 - Le Meridien offers three brunch packages, prices range from VND1,500,000 to VND2,500,000 and include Oriental and International cuisine.

3C Ton Duc Thang, D1
6263 6688 - ext.6930
www.lemeridiensaigon.com

BARs & CRAFT BEER BREWERIES



Acoustic Bar

A 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.

E1 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3



Aperitivo

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.



BiaCraft

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

CHINESE

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FEST



Dragon Court

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

11-13 Lam Son Square, D1
3827 2566



Dynasty

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

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



Kabin

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

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



Li Bai

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

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



Ming Court

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

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



San Fu Lou – Cantonese Kitchen

San Fu Lou combines tradition with our Chinese kitchen and sophisticated contemporary Oriental ambience. San Fu Lou exudes colors and cozy feel of a traditional Chinese "house". Our open kitchen, which is a first in Vietnam for a Chinese restaurant, allows diners to take in a visual feast before the food is served.

SAN FU LOU 1
Ground floor, AB Tower, 76A Le Lai St., Dist 1, HCMC
(+848) 38239513
SAN FU LOU 2
195-197 Phan Xich Long St., Phu Nhuan Dist, HCMC
(+848) 35176168
SAN FU LOU 3
24 Ba Thang Hai St., Dist 10, HCMC
(+848) 38620920



SAN FU LOU
CANTONESE KITCHEN

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



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, Café 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



Chat

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

85 Nguyen Truong To, D4



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.

Opening time: 7AM- 10PM.

Sunday closed.

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





Le Terroir

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

30 Thai Van Lung, D1



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.

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

Fest.vn
call 1900636997

FEST



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



TÊ TÊ CÓ CÒN PHÊ?

Thousands of pangolins are killed every year although there is no scientific evidence that pangolins can cure diseases.
Help us stop the poaching!
[#savethepangolin](#)

Hàng ngàn con tê tê bị giết mỗi năm dù chưa có nghiên cứu khoa học nào cho thấy tê tê chữa được bệnh.
Hãy ngăn chặn sự tàn sát vô lý này!
[#cuttete](#)

WHEN THE BUYING STOPS - THE KILLING CAN TOO






Ciao Bella

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

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

Ciao Bella



La 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



Portofino

Great place for pizza's, pasta's and interesting main dishes in a cozy setting.

15 Dong Du, D1
+84 8 3823 3597
info@portofinovieta.com
http://www.portofinovieta.com/



NO.1 Pizza In The World

"Pizza is not meant to be tasted, but to be eaten". We aim to make pizza a more familiar dish in Vietnam. Come try our specialties, pizzas cooked in wood-fired oven, roasted chicken prepared in rotisserie oven, mouth-watering beef, or pasta dish for crab lovers.

Happy Hour 17:00 -19:00 (Mon - Fri): Discount 50% for drinks (not including wine)
Lot L5-18, 5F Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi St., Dist.1, HCMC
(08) 3821 8319
pizzalogic.hcm@gmail.com
http://pizzalogic-hcm.com/index-vn.html
Fest.vn or call 1900636997



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

Carpaccio

Often unfairly mistaken as a purely tourist dining destination, Carpaccio 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





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



Ichiban Sushi

Ichiban Sushi Vietnam serves fine sushi and signature drinks/cocktails in a lounge setting. Featuring one of the most eclectic Japanese menus in the city. The current Japanese venue to see and be seen in – everyone who's anyone is there.

204 Le Lai, D1
www.ichibansushi.vn



Kesera Bar & Restaurant

An Ideal place for your city escape and enjoying Japanese fusion foods. We have the best bagels in town, fine wine and cigars in a custom cabinet and is a must-do for anyone visiting the city.

26/3 Le Thanh Ton, Ben Nghe Ward, Dist 1
0838 270 443



SORAE Sushi Sake Lounge

"Sorae". Up in the sky, is one of the most spectacular Japanese restaurant and a "must go" destination at the heart of the bustling busy district of Saigon.

Located in the heart of District 1, on the 24th floor of AB Tower, it has a gorgeous 360 degree overview over to the city. Sorae can accommodate up to 368 people in a spacious 1,000 sqm elegant setting including a bar with hundreds of varieties of beverages and the finest cigar club in town. Besides offering delicious Japanese cuisine, Sorae delights its guests with great entertainment and DJ.

Level 24, AB Tower, 76A Le Lai St., Dist 1, HCMC

08 3827 2372

<http://www.soraesushi.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Soraesushi/>

Weekend Brunch at only VND 680,000

Fest.vn or call 1900636997



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

Chisana 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

Fest.vn
call 1900636997

FEST



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



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

Thai Street

Authentic Thai Food in a fun street-food setting. All the favorites of Thailand - Tom Yum Goong, Red and Green Curries, Som Tum - prepared by their Thai chef.

26 Thao Dien Road, Thao Dien, D2
0866549525

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

Fest.vn
call 1900636997

FEST



B3 STEAKHOUSE & CRAFT BEER

Large selection of fresh New Zealand Grass-fed Beef cuts and Local Craft Beers. Decoration style is a mix of retro and contemporary street art that results in a friendly and cozy atmosphere. The restaurant is conveniently located on Nguyen Hue street, making it very suitable for after-business dinner, group hangouts or romantic date night on the terrace.

3pm-11pm
Level 1, 90 Nguyen Hue, Dist.1, HCMC
Reservation: 0166 519 9846



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



Noss Steakhouse

A stylish restaurant featuring Italian cuisine and Western steaks with a wide selection of imported steaks from Australian and the US. Noss 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



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




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

Open 11am to 11pm
North & South Indian food

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"Baba brings India to Vietnam"



wok n'roll American Chinese Food
Full Menu
www.woknroll.vn

0122-690-8881

Scanned QR code for full menu



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 DI. 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**



Nhà Hàng Di Mai

Every family has a unique recipe which is handed down from generations and perfected to create that hearty comfort food. Our customers can relive having home-cooked food experience as our signature recipes are crafted with passion and tradition. Every meal is a delight in Di Mai. Explore the culinary journey of traditional authentic Vietnamese flavors set in an open kitchen, modern contemporary design.

**136 - 138 Le Thi Hong Gam St., Dist. 1, HCMC
08 3821 7786
nhahangdimai.com/
https://www.facebook.com/nhahangdimai/**



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**



Red Door

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

**400/8 Le Van Sy, D3
012 0880 5905
Facebook: Reddoorrestaurant**



The Hue House

Located on the 10th floor roof of the Master Building, The Hue House opens up to a breezy space with views over the city. The décor is simple yet elegant – bird cages repurposed into lamps, bonsai centerpieces in pretty ceramic bowls and lots of greenery. The menu highlight unique ingredients only found in Hue, like the Va tron fig salad with shrimp and pork, assorted platter of rice cakes meant to be shared, the sate-marinated ribs come with a plate of crunchy greens and mixed rice, originally grown by minority groups in the Central Highlands, and many more.

**Rooftop Master Building
41-43 Tran Cao Van, D3
Opening time 10am-10pm.
0909 246 156 / 0906 870 102**



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 Sach 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**

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**

INTERNATIONAL

Fest.vn
call 1900636997

FEST



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
For restaurant promotions go to fest.vn or Call 1900636997



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



Noir: Dining in the Dark

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

178/180D Hai Ba Trung, D1



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
For restaurant promotions go to fest.vn or Call 1900636997



Panam - The Backroom

Panam is a cozy restaurant and pub with a friendly and chilled ambiance. If you're searching for a place to meet up for happy hours after work, Panam is the perfect choice. Come and enjoy great food like falafels and kebabs with homemade sauces, cold craft beers, cocktails and board games.

12pm-1am / Tel: 0122 733 0235

91 Pasteur, D1

(in a side alley behind Cuba la Casa del Mojito)



Poke Saigon

Poke is a traditional Hawaiian dish made with fresh, cubed raw fish and toppings. Poke Saigon is the first poke restaurant in HCMC where diners create their own bowl. Located on the second floor of an apartment building, the dining space reflects the menu: fresh, fun, creative and healthy. There are many different options for your poké bowl with bases that include sushi or brown rice, including mix-in sauces like wasabi mayo and gomaes sesame and toppings such as wakame seaweed salad, crab salad and poke options: ahi tuna, salmon, shrimp and more. We are available for delivery.

Tue-Sun 110am-8pm

2nd Floor, 42 Nguyen Hue, D1

0902474388

<https://www.facebook.com/pokesaigon/>



Stellar Restaurant

Occupies a refurbished villa within the upscale District 2. The restaurant serves a menu of familiar European cuisine. Lunch and Dinner at Stellar can expect well-executed renditions of Italian and French cuisines combining traditional technique with some Asian influences.

9:00am-10:30pm

43 Tran Ngoc Dien, Thao Dien, D2, HCMC.

0837445115

reservation@stellar.com.vn



twenty21one

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

21 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3



Villa Royale Downtown Antiques & Tea Room

Villa Royale Downtown is nestled in a charming French Colonial Villa on Ho Tung Mau Street.

Whilst browsing the vast array of collectible pieces you can sample a delicious menu of freshly prepared meals and delectable desserts.

Tea enthusiasts will delight in the 40+ flavours available from TWG.

Opening Hours 10am -10pm everyday

A Level 1, 25 Ho Tung Mau street, District 1, HCMC

Phone (84) 3821 0088

www.villaroyaledowntown.com



Travel & Leisure

A tropical beach scene featuring a large, dark tree trunk in the foreground, a thatched umbrella on the sand, and a wooden boat in the background. The sky is blue with some clouds, and the ocean is visible in the distance. The foreground is filled with green foliage.

CHAM VILLAS, MUINE

IMAGE BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY



Boutique Luxury by the Sea

Cham Villas shows why it's still on top of its game

Text by **James Pham**
Images by **Quinn Ryan Mattingly**

WHILE NEWER PROPERTIES have opened up on the Phan Thiet-Mui Ne stretch in recent years, the luxury boutique Cham Villas proudly traces its roots to before this millennium, when a German-Vietnamese couple purchased a one hectare plot of land on the then untouched, undeveloped seaside as a retirement investment. When local authorities asked owners to develop the land for tourism a few years later, Cham Villas was born.

Since opening in 2004 with 12 villas, the property has grown only slightly to its current 18 villas (6 Beach Front and 12 Garden), eschewing the trend of packing rooms on top of rooms, and instead opting for the luxury of space. After visiting the Cham Museum in Danang, the owners were smitten with the Cham civilization which once ruled Vietnam's central coast, including Mui Ne/Phan Thiet. Noticing the sculptures were similar to ones they had seen while vacationing in Bali, the concept came together of creating a small, boutique hotel set in lush gardens.

It doesn't take a botanophile to be impressed by the stunning gardens, the result of more than a decade of tireless work by the six-man groundskeeping team. From the main road all the way to the beach, the landscaping is immaculate, starting with grass so fine as to be perfectly at home at any world-class golf course. The eye is then drawn upwards, starting with low, ornamental bushes and grasses with pops of bright red from ginger flowers, on up to giant bougainvillea trellises and hanging berries and flowers, and culminating in majestic betel nut and coconut palm trees. The grounds are so lush, even the plants have plants – orchids blooming out of coconut shells deftly attached to tree trunks. With over a hundred species of plants, the resort could practically charge admission. Lush greenery also surrounds the gorgeous pool, tiled in shades of avocado and surrounded by beautiful traveller's palms and other leafy trees, providing both shade and privacy.

The luxury of space and privacy extends to the villas themselves, each comprised of a spacious bedroom, sizable

outdoor terrace with seating area, and lovely bathroom with sunken stone bathtub and rainfall shower with a large picture window looking out to an enclosed sculpture garden, bringing the outdoors in.

Another perk of staking a claim early in the game is Cham Villa's idyllic stretch of powdery white sand beach, as wide as it is long. We could've easily spent the entire day on the immaculately combed beach,



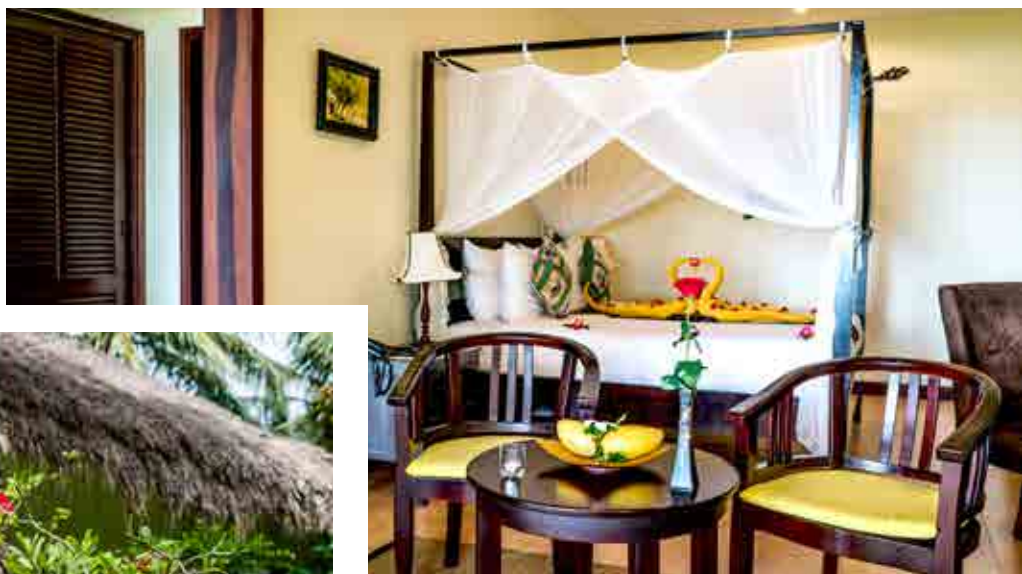
watching colorful kite surfers taking advantage of the afternoon winds.

Cham Villas' subtle touch of luxury is evidenced in its high staff ratio (more than four staff to every villa) who have matured along with the property, having mastered the art of knowing when to be proactively helpful and when to fade into the background. We saw it time and again during our stay—in the beach staff who came by with chilled face towels, in the turndown service where premium chocolates were left on the bedside table, and in the wait staff at Cham Garden Restaurant, the resort's casual-chic restaurant. With relaxing vibes provided by jazzy mood music and views



of the garden and pool, Cham Garden showcases Vietnamese and Vietnamese fusion cuisine along with a selection of international favorites. One evening, we tried the scrumptious Beef Duo, one sautéed with zucchini in oyster sauce and the other with mango in a smooth curry sauce, both stylishly presented in rice paper boats. Fusion dishes include the Chicken Hoi Sin with tomato and mango concasse, exotic yet familiar for Western guests.

Cham Villas also owns the German restaurant, Ratinger Löwe, next door, for an authentic, upscale slice of Deutschland. The European ambiance is set by warm brick walls, dark wood furnishings,



waitresses in barmaid uniforms, all centered around a working replica of the Benz Patent Motorwagen, the world's first automobile. Wagon wheel chandeliers are inspired by the coat of arms from the German town of Ratingen, the restaurant's namesake who approved its use. It feels surreal to be sitting on the Vietnamese coast, enjoying homemade German sausages with sauerkraut and red cabbage and the *Geschmorter Rehrücken*, a thick steak of roasted venison with wild mushrooms in a creamy white wine sauce and pillowy potato dumplings, all served with a boat of extra juniper gravy. *Apfelstrudel mit Vanillesosse*, wonderfully thin slices of apple layered with pastry

and sliced almonds in a warm vanilla sauce ends our trip to the Fatherland in sweet, sweet style. A perk of a Cham Villas stay is enjoying both kitchens, combining to turn out exquisite pastries, sausages and cold cuts on site, as well as divine breads including grey, dark, rye and sesame.

While decidedly low-key, the boutique Cham Villas with its luxurious trifecta of spacious grounds, excellent cuisine and private villas continues to show why it's consistently one of the top-rated hotels in the area.

For more, visit www.chamvillas.com. The summer promotion price starts at VND2,770,000, including breakfast. ■





SOUL OF THE DELTA

Chau Doc is a timeless region that straddles both Khmer and Vietnamese cultures

Text by **Tayne Ephraim**
Images by **Ngoc Tran**

THE MEKONG IS TO VIETNAM perhaps something like what the prairies are to America, or the Red Centre is to Australia. There is something vital in this vast watery landscape of rice paddies and linked canals that is distinct to the essence of Vietnam. Something like a soul.

However, it's a region without a distinct locus, stretching from the outskirts of Saigon down to the tip of Vietnam in Ca Mau. I've forayed to various parts of the Delta over the years, but finding something like a 'heart' to the region proves no easy task. But I feel as if I may have found it at last.

Chau Doc, which straddles the border between Cambodia and Vietnam under the pointy shadow of Sam Mountain, marks the cultural frontier between the two lands, back to the time of the Nguyen Lords. It's a timeless region, where the Mekong Delta slowly melds with the lowlands of Cambodia, just a stone's throw away. And for much of this land's history, the two cultures were one, back to the misty pasts of the ancient kingdom of Funan and beyond.

Chau Doc itself as a city is fairly unremarkable as far as Vietnam's interchangeable provincial cities go. Few vestiges of colonial heritage remain, hinted at only in the odd remaining French villa crouched between pastel-shaded shop houses. However, the city, with its uncrowded small-town atmosphere, is not without its charms.

The inhabitants are endlessly friendly, curious, and quick to laughter.

After a simple and hardy bowl of *bun ca Chau Doc* for breakfast and *ca phe da* to wash it down, we rent a scooter and hit the road before the full glare of Mekong sun takes ahold. First stop is Sam Mountain, a bearded outcrop of volcanic rock jutting up from the plain a few kilometers out of town like a scruffy Buddha. Somewhat like Black Lady Mountain near the city of Tay Ninh, it's a little hard to miss, being the only substantial rise in landmass within sight. In ancient times a shrine believed to have belonged to the Oc Eo culture, a civilization which once traded with the Romans but is now all but lost to time, existed at the mountain top, home to a stone idol, which may have been an interpretation of the Indian god Shiva. Rediscovered in the 1820s by local farmers near the mountain base, the idol has since become the locus of a popular cult, drawing pilgrims from all over the region and far beyond. Whatever the true origins, nowadays the icon has found new life as Lady Xu. The Lady, who resides in her eponymous temple, an artisanal structure of wooden beams and sloping green roofs, is a feisty deity of the paddies, responsive to her faithful, vindictive to those who cross her. Folk legend has her striking dead an attendant who dared bathe her five minutes early during her festival, and in a deliciously brutal twist, breaking the

arms of mischievous children. You've been warned.

We struggle up the steep incline of the narrow road, which snakes its way up the mountain, past intricate shrines and hermetic abodes, and the numerous temples dotting the way to the summit. From the top, Cambodia stretches away into the haze, and a little chain of Mekong mountains becomes visible, rising up from the pancake-flat expanse of paddies and marching westward to the sea. We find a maroon-colored temple with a pond of koi fish and meditative wind chimes, and walk barefoot through the corridors, past monks swishing quietly in their robes. Beyond, on the horizon, fingers of smoke waggle up behind the lines of coconut palms from the burning of dry straw at harvest season's end.

With plenty of gas left in the tank and a sky full of sun, we strike out next for the nearby hamlet of Ba Chuc, a picaresque village ringed around the base of two tiny mountains that holds a dark secret. This site was witness to a largely forgotten atrocity during the reign of the Khmer Rouge, when their wayward soldiers would frequently cross over into Vietnam and launch surprise attacks on unsuspecting villages. These raids were common occurrences across the porous Vietnam-Cambodia border region, from the Mekong up as far north as the southern highlands. But, by far, the most horrific occurred here



in Ba Phuc, where in 1978 a force of Khmer irregulars armed with knives and cudgels fell upon the village and massacred its inhabitants in ways that are scarcely conceivable, an event that may have sparked Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in reprisal. Today a stark memorial stands witness to the horrors committed there. More than 3,000 were killed, including an inordinate number of women and children, and their skulls and bones are displayed in a white, lotus-shaped ossuary reminiscent of the Choeung Ek killing fields in Phnom Penh. On the grounds is a temple where more than 300





villagers were brutally slaughtered. Their dried blood still stains the walls to this day. The all-to-graphic black and white photos in the memorial are immensely disturbing, and certainly not for the faint of heart.

CHAM CHARM

With the shadows beginning to draw

long over the paddies and dykes and the golden hour fast approaching, we leave death and its attendant horrors behind and strike out for the water world of Tra Su bird sanctuary. The drive is an idyllic one, trailing the banks of ancient canals still bearing Cambodian names, and under copses of trees, which arch over the road. We pass stilt houses, Khmer

temples, and canals trafficked with colorful barges with painted eyes. It's a backwater wonderland of networked waterways, playing Cham children, and basking water buffalo: a world bursting with green and life on the tail end of rainy season. If anywhere carries the soul of the Mekong Delta region in all its startling vibrancy and diversity, then surely it's here.

The road becomes increasingly greener as we turn off for the bird sanctuary, with clouds of birdlife coming back to roost as evening draws close. Tra Su started off as a rubber plantation, its trees planted in rows with clear paths cut between, though now the whole forest is flooded and transformed into a magical floating paradise and sanctuary for the region's endangered herons and other birdlife. Formations of them come gliding in V formations, and the whole forest is clamoring with bird life. It's a truly ethereal place, and there is no better way to see it than by boat, and no time more magical than the day's end with the sun melting into the paddies.

We nab tickets onto the last boat of the day and clamber aboard at the tiny landing. The pilot fires up the outboard motor and within moments we're skimming across a carpet of green algae and water lilies and into the flooded forest, transported into a world of green. Though it's only a short distance in before we're switched over along with another small group of stragglers into rowboats, and silently float our way into the intimate heart of the sanctuary. It's surely one of the most otherworldly

experiences Vietnam has to offer, like a scene from *Apocalypse Now*, floating silently past nesting herons barely an arm's reach away down the tunnels created by the over-arching trees.

But there's one final surprise in store for us yet. The next morning we set off in search of the relatively unknown Cham villages, crossing the lethargic Bassac River by ferry. The Chams were a maritime civilization who once thrived along the coasts of Central Vietnam, nemesis of the Angkorians, and architects of the temples of My Son and other relics, a Hindu culture now all but extinct save but a few villages, a large concentration of which are located around Chau Doc. Those which remain have converted to Islam, and what a surreal experience it is to see teal-blue mosques and village girls in *hijab*, and hear the call to prayer in the midst of the Mekong. The minorities of ethnic Chams and Khmers living in this border region give it a uniquely exotic taste, and its thrilling to get lost in it on the back of a scooter. Cham ladies, skillful artisans, sit in front of their stilt houses weaving scarves, sarongs, and shawls as they have for generations. Some of their looms have been in continuous use for over a century. Their villages have become renowned for this craft of late and, as a result, a trickle of much-needed tourism has started to flow,

most of whom take boat tours out from Chau Doc, where the villages are able to share some of their unique culture.

It's an area bursting with variation and vibrancy, and little-visited beyond those crossing into or out of Cambodia. If there's any one place in the Delta which serves as a microcosm for the whole, surely this is that place. ■



Macau in 48 Hours

The former Portuguese colony is the Las Vegas of the East, but you can bet that's not all the territory offers

Text by **Andrea Walker**



Cotai Strip

MACAU, DESPITE ITS RELATIVELY SMALL geographical size, is without a doubt one of the most fascinating places to visit in China. Known as the gambling capital of Asia, Macau is, after all, home to some of the biggest and most lavish casinos in the world. Believe it or not, this buzzing city has overtaken Sin City – Las Vegas – as the highest revenue gambling destination in the world in 2008. And even if you play cards, slots and dices, Macau's casinos can still delight your

senses with its glamorous designs, sweet scents and world-class restaurants.

But, make no mistake about it – there's more to Macau than its ritzy gambling dens. As the Orient's oldest European settlement, the city boasts awesome touches and glimpses of Mediterranean Europe with its majestic churches, narrow cobblestone streets and pastel-colored colonial buildings. Furthermore, some of the top casinos in Macau have breath-snatching replicas of some of

Europe's most beloved landmarks, such as the renowned Eiffel Tower and the Venetian lagoon. To top it all off, it has a mouthwatering cuisine that fuses Chinese flavors with Portuguese influences.

Headed to Hong Kong's wondrous neighbor? Looking for incredible things to do in Macau in 48 hours or less? We've listed some of the best Macau tourist spots and other travel tips, to help you experience this exciting Chinese hub in a couple of days or less. Whether you're



Historic Center



Wine Museum



Milk egg tart

a gambling junkie or a typical sightseer, you'll love the tip-offs and suggestions shared in this Macau travel guide.

Day 1: Arrive in Macau early

The city is well connected to other hubs and cities in China. What's more, getting a visa is as easy as ABC for most travelers. As a matter of fact, it is visa-free to foreign nationals in the European Union member states as well as in other countries, like the United States, Thailand, Taiwan, Philippines, Singapore, and many more.

For the most part, visitors arrive in this Chinese hub through its neighbor Hong Kong, where there are tons of ferries that depart from the Macau Ferry Terminal. Convenient and lovely, this boat ride only takes an hour or less from "Asia's World City". Alternatively, there are regional low-cost carriers that offer flights to Macau International Airport, linking the city nationally and internationally.

Tips:

- *Make sure to get in the city before 10:30am.*
- *For the first day, you'll be spending most of your time on the Macau peninsula—the part of the city where its main ferry port is nestled.*

Hit the Macau Wine Museum

A great way to start your trip in Macau on the right foot is to pay a visit to the Macau Wine Museum—one of the city's most underrated gems. Not only does it feature a showcase of premium wines, but it will also let you learn more about the wine production's history as well as the

techniques for picking the best varieties. Permanent exhibits aside, there are over a thousand vintage wine brands that are up for grabs in this museum, too. Of course, a visit here will offer you a chance to sample plenty of wines as well.

Tips:

- *To get there, take bus 32, 10B, 3 or 1A, upon arriving at the Macau Ferry Terminal. If, however, you're not carrying a lot of stuff, you may also take a quick 15-minute walk to the museum.*
- *Spend at least an hour here.*

Eat lunch

Having a grumbling stomach? Treat your palate to a wide array of tasty culinary specialties, including the Portuguese-style chicken (*galinha à portuguesa*), *minchi* and crab stir-fried with curry.

A Dose of History at Monte Fort

After enjoying a hearty and tasty meal, head to the historic Monte Fort and take a walk down memory lane. Drenched in history, the fort not only houses old real-life cannons, but it also has fantastic overlooking views of the harbor. Plus, it is home to the well-preserved Museum of Macau, which houses a medley of insightful displays, including home relics, toys as well as information about the city's old marriage customs and history.

Tip:

- *Spend two hours in this military fort.*

Hit the Must-See Sights in Macau

Make your way to the Historic Center and get a glimpse of one of the island's

most photographed spots—the ruins of Saint Paul's Church. Afterwards, move your feet to Macau's historical center—Senado Square. One of the island's most visited spots, the Senado Square dazzles with colorful colonial Victorian buildings that will remind you of the cities in Europe. Furthermore, it is one of the top spots in the city to get your shopping fix, offering great finds and amazing bargains.

Eat Dinner at Largo de Senado

Largo do Senado is a bustling street lined with dozens of boutiques, shops, restaurants and snacks stalls serving treats that will appease your cravings. You can easily spend hours exploring the area, and eating tasty goodies. A must-try here is the iconic and luscious milk egg tart.

Hit the Cotai Strip

Not a big fan of gambling? Gambling junkie or not, the Cotai Strip is an electric place that you can't afford to miss in Macau. Even if you don't splurge or gamble, you can still have a blast at the Cotai Strip thanks to the fabulous landmarks and shows offered by big hotels like the Galaxy Macau, City of Dreams Macau and the newly-opened Parisian. Not to mention, it is the location of the world-renowned Venetian Macau, where you can meander the canals as if you were in Italy's ultimate romantic honeymoon destination—Venice.

Tip:

• Buses N3, 26A and 21A run every 15 minutes or so from the near corner of Rua Mercadores (Almeida Ribeiro), three blocks from Senado Square. The bus ride takes around 40 minutes, and you may get off at the casino that you want to see first.

Day 2 in Macau

Visit Mandarin's House

Once you've finished your breakfast, swing by Mandarin's House—the old mansion of the Qing Dynasty's Zheng Guanying. Deemed as one of the most underrated tourist spots in Macau, this family mansion has been restored wonderfully, and flaunts a fine mix of Western architectural designs and traditional Chinese building techniques. With over 50 spacious rooms, the mansion is home to a ton of exhibits and artifacts, including clothing from the bygone era, tablets with manuscripts and ancient furniture.

Tip:

• Spend an hour exploring the area.

Pray at A-Ma Temple

From there, take a quick five-minute walk down to the sacred A-Ma Temple. Light a few incense sticks, offer flowers and fresh fruits, and pray for good fortune and luck.

Drop By Macau Maritime Museum

Take another five-minute walk, via Rue de Sao Tiago da Barra, and make a stopover at the Macau Maritime Museum. Once there, admire the displays and features that epitomize the maritime history and

culture of Macau. Trust me, it's one of the best ways to learn more about Chinese and Portuguese maritime history.

Eat Pork Chop Buns

In mainland China and Hong Kong, you'll very often find white and sweet buns stuffed with a variety of vegetables and meat. But in Macau, this flavorsome treat comes with a twist—it's formed like a quintessential sandwich. Inspired by the Portuguese, this unique delicacy is truly a tasty fusion of Oriental flavors and Western customs. Stuffed with piping hot chops of pork, Macau's variety comes with crispy and golden bread that adds more flavor to this gastronomic treat.

There are a lot of places in the city to enjoy this Chinese treat, but our best bet is the renowned Tai Lei Kok Kei restaurant in Taipa. To get there, you may hop on bus MT4, from Macau Maritime Museum (travel time is 45 minutes or less). Then, get off at Avenida Cidade Nova, and head inside the gleaming Venetian Casino and Hotel.

Another great place to eat in this part of Asia is Rua da Cunha, which has tons of stalls offering tasty snacks like peanut candies, eggroll biscuits, seaweed wafers and almond cakes. As for the location, it's just a 15-minute walk north from Avenida Cidade Nova.

Explore Taipa

Delve deeper into the history of the island with a visit to the Museum of Taipa and Coloane History. A former public administration building, this small treasure trove now houses archaeological artifacts from the Colane Island excavations from 1973 to 2006. With a visit to this museum, you'll get to know a bit more about the island in prehistoric times, as well as catch intriguing exhibits that depict the life and culture in Macau during the 20th century.

With the Museum of Taipa and Coloane History in the books, walk a few blocks and drop by the Municipal Garden, also known as Jardim Da Cidade Das Flores.





Clockwise from top: Ruins of St. Paul's, Guia Lighthouse, Mandarin's House, A-Ma temple

Epitomizing a stunning classic Chinese garden, Jardim Da Cidade Das Flores is complete with lovely bridges, small pavilions and a large pond.

Take a Final Look of Macau from a Bird's Perspective

What's the best way to end a perfect trip in Macau? As far as I'm concerned, there's no better way to end your trip on a high note in this Chinese destination than a visit to Guia Lighthouse. Not only is the place serene, but it also houses a church adorned with elegant vintage murals. Furthermore, the sunsets here are nothing short of amazing, making it an ideal place to visit in Macau for photography connoisseurs.

And as one of the highest points on the island, it also offers awe-inspiring overlooking views of Macau.

Tip:

• To get there, make your way back to Museum of Taipa and Coloane History and take bus 25x or 25 (travel time is 35 minutes). ■

I'VE TRAVELED SOLO WHILE

working full-time for ten-plus months, across more than 15 countries. It's one of the most fun and rewarding things I've ever done. My work breaks over the past year have included things like scuba diving in Belize, polo lessons in Buenos Aires, music festivals in Hungary, and more.

Working full-time while on the road is not easy, but it's definitely a skill that can be mastered over time. For those interested in the nuts and bolts of how to travel while working, there are already several great articles out there explaining how it's done. If you're not familiar, I recommend starting with Toptal COO Breanden Beneschott's guide.

In terms of logistics and planning, pulling off a full-time work schedule while on the road is much easier and cheaper than you probably think (at least in my experience), and the infrastructure for doing so continues to grow rapidly. However, the following problem is far more difficult to solve, especially when traveling solo: Can you fully enjoy your travels while not sacrificing the quality of your work?

STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE

Can you navigate travel logistics, work full-time and take care of yourself physically and mentally, all while setting aside enough time to explore the places you're visiting, find fun things to do and meet new people?

Since you won't have much of a support system when you're alone in a foreign country and (usually) don't speak the language, finding the right balance is critical. Your routine has to be sustainable in the long-run, and if you aren't careful, things can go downhill in a hurry.

As I've been traveling, I've gotten a lot of questions from friends and colleagues about the psychology of this lifestyle, including everything from how to avoid loneliness to how to maximize productivity. It's not for everyone, but this lifestyle can be both incredibly fun and extremely productive, provided you figure out how to do it in a way that works for you. As I've traveled, I've noticed some key habits, mindsets, and tricks that are important for anyone who is considering working and traveling to keep in mind, regardless of their occupation or interests.

GO TO X TO DO Y

When you have the option of living anywhere, it can be difficult to choose a destination, and going to places to see/do touristy things can get old fast. I'm a big fan of going to places to do specific (non-touristy) activities, as opposed to just going to places that sound interesting on paper.

In the past months, I've gone to:

- Portugal to learn how to surf.
- Berlin and Zurich for conferences.
- The UK to take a trip through Wales.
- Santorini to join friends who were on vacation.
- Israel to visit family and work on my Hebrew.

WORK FULL-TIME,

The road to ultimate productivity when working remotely



- Belize to learn how to scuba dive.
- Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina for the Toptal Roadtrip.

Working full-time and traveling the world might be easier than you think, especially when you're traveling for a purpose. I've found that having a purpose to your travels leads to a few great outcomes:

- It's a lot easier to structure your time and priorities.
- It's easier to meet fascinating people with shared interests.
- You learn amazing new skills that you've always wanted to learn.
- When you're traveling solo and devoting a lot of time to work, it's important to limit the extent to which you're "re-solving" the same problems on a daily basis. What I mean by that is, you don't want to find yourself waking up every morning without any plans for where you're going to work, what you're going to work on, where you're going to eat, who you're going to meet, what non-work things you're going to do, and so on.

Not only is it easy to waste a lot of time and energy answering the same questions over and over again, but it will also quickly make you feel like you're swimming in circles without accomplishing much. To be clear, I am just as strongly against doing anything that's "too organized" while traveling. I'm pretty averse to resorts, guided tours, and so on.

As a good friend of mine likes to say: "I always love seeing big cruise ships. The more I see of them, the fewer people there will be wherever I am." The adventure and uncertainty of traveling is half the fun, and it's important not to lose sight of that by planning too much.

In short, don't just go to Thailand. Go

to Thailand to motorbike from Bangkok to Chiang Mai. Go to Brazil because you've always wanted to experience Carnival. Go to Nepal because you dream of hiking the Annapurna trail. The possibilities are endless, and it's when you go somewhere with a goal in mind that things begin to take off.

SET ASIDE TIME EVERY DAY FOR LEARNING

When you're working at a startup, there are always a million different tasks that need to be accomplished, and you're constantly in a race against time. You can easily spend all of your waking hours knocking things off of your to-do list, and with so much that needs to get done, it can be hard to justify investing time in anything that's not the task at hand, or at least directly related to the task.

Being on the road is no excuse for complacency. You can work, play, and master new skills, just as you would from home. However, taking time each day for the explicit purpose of improving your skills and learning new things has a profound and positive impact in several important ways:

You become much better at your job. Whether it's taking a data science course, reading case studies on hyper-growth companies, or learning SEO best practices, investing in developing a strong cross-functional skillset will invariably make you more effective at your job in the long run. Every time I read or watch something just because I want to learn about it, I always come away with a bundle of new ideas, even if that thing was only tangentially related to my job.

You'll be happier. If you're like me and enjoy picking up new skills and being productive, you'll be a more outgoing, adventurous and happy person when

TRAVEL SOLO, HAVE FUN

while traveling the world

Text by **Dror Liebenthal**



you're learning new things. I usually feel pretty great after spending a few hours reading in a café or getting a machine learning crash course by the beach. But after binge-watching movies? Not so much.

It's easier to meet people with shared interests. The more diverse interests you have, the more likely you are to have something in common with a stranger. More importantly, when you're interested in learning something (especially if it's related to tech or startups), you can almost always find groups on Meetup.com or elsewhere that are full of people who organize events centered around the topic. This is a great way to meet and learn from people who share your interests.

Much like the "Go To X To Do Y" strategy, setting aside time every day for learning is all about feeling like you're moving forward. By carving out time to pick up new skills, I work more effectively, stay happier, and enjoy my travels much more.

PACK LIGHT, STAY MOBILE, AND MAKE LOGISTICS EASY

It's no fun when an airline loses your luggage. It's even worse when an airline loses your luggage and you're alone in a foreign country, don't speak the language, have no contacts, and have a long list of unread work messages that you desperately need to check.

You're traveling solo, so you can maintain an amazing level of flexibility. You won't end up using at least half of what you were originally going to pack, so ditch the suitcase, put that extra sweater you'll never wear back in your closet, and go carry-on instead.

I fit all of my belongings into one Deuter 65L travel pack and 25L Marmot backpack. There's plenty of space for



everything I need, and I can carry everything comfortably on my back without trouble. Stay lean with your luggage and dozens of roadblocks that would've become huge pains will never happen in the first place.

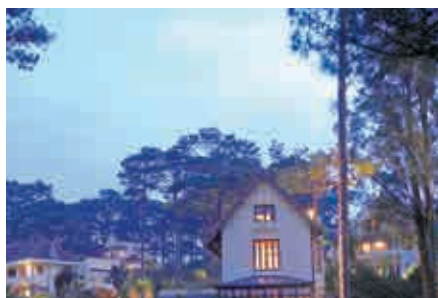
Road warrior essentials: Hardware, travel packs and SIM cards. Don't get carried away. Pack light, but pack smart.

The final thing I'll add here is that travel logistics are way, way easier than you probably think, especially once you get a prepaid SIM card. These usually only cost USD15-USD20 for a few GB of data, and getting one is pretty much the first thing I do when moving to a new place (it's also absolutely essential for working from the road). If possible, make sure you get a SIM card that allows tethering. For bonus points, you can also look into getting dual-SIM smartphones or 3G/4G routers.

With a working phone and the rapid global rise of Airbnb and Uber, not only can you typically find a nice, reasonably inexpensive place to stay within a few hours and get a ride there within a few minutes, but you can do all of this from your phone, without ever taking your wallet out of your pocket. Sidenote: It pays off to do a little research on Airbnb hosts; if you're in a country where you don't speak the language, finding a host who does (and who might share some of your interests) can make a big difference.

These solutions, coupled with the steady decrease in flight costs, mean that many of the pains associated with travel are quickly disappearing. You can decide to jump halfway across the world tomorrow and have everything planned out just a few minutes later without breaking the bank. ■

>>The List Travel



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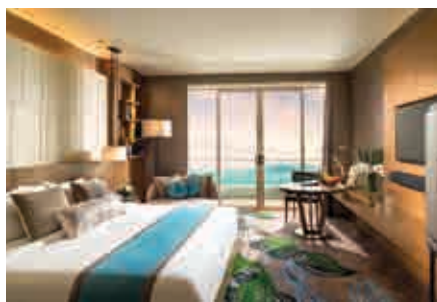
32 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, Phan Thiet
+84 62 3741 234
www.chamvillas.com



Ratinger Löwe - German Brauhaus

This authentic German restaurant with its own butchery and micro brewery belongs to Cham Villas and is located right next door to the resort entrance. If you crave for a schnitzel, roast, sausage or German beer, look no further. You can enjoy open air seating on the patio or the rustic atmosphere inside.

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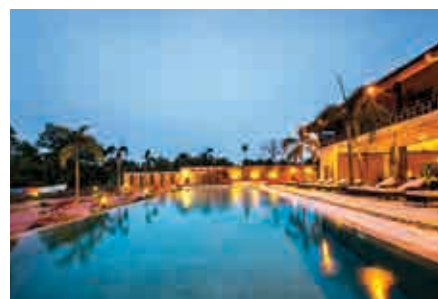
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Kids & Education



Catch The Activity Bug

Whether or not you reckon you might be raising the next Picasso or David Beckham, there's no doubting the pluses of afterschool activities

Text by **Sarah Spencer**

“FINALLY!” I SIGH AND PUT my pen down. It has taken me three full weeks to research, plan and finalize the activities for my children to do this summer. It sounds easy but it isn't so. I had to find a perfect combination of their interests, abilities, balancing their needs with the classes offered, also taking into consideration feedback about the classes from other moms, their locations and the timings. I wanted to have a good balance of creative, mental and physical activities for both my boys, so as to give them a good outlet to burn their energy as well as incorporate some mental fun. I thought about their likes but also wanted to include their ‘areas of concern’. That done, the forms were filled, checks were mailed out and confirmations received. We were set... or so I thought.

Two days into the activity week and already came the “why do we have to go for creative writing every day?” from my

younger son, moaning. I stopped what I was doing. I take these statements very seriously. Now my son loves writing his own stories. He would take sheets from our printer, make me bind them together and spends a good amount of time setting his creative juices flowing into a fiction write up that he proudly displays to everyone. So, wouldn't a course on creative writing guide him on good grammar, focus on spelling and punctuation, help him produce a better quality work and, what's more, a real book because they even publish the books at the end of the week? But no, he wasn't happy. There goes my elder son, all dressed in his football kit finery. Thankfully he does like his football class except when they make them do a lot of drills, which “gets boring” or tiring, or when he loses a match, or when the referee isn't fair, then he hates it. Then it becomes “I don't like this football coach/

class?” And again, I take it seriously. I mean first of all what is it with these kids nowadays, they never seem to be satisfied with anything in life. And secondly, why do I have to take my job so seriously?

Today's generation, doesn't have half the pressure of school as we did in my time. Everything is about fun and play. Math is fun, so is English and the rest of the subjects are non-existent as they study the IB way, where learning is centered around units of inquiry. So instead of copying copious notes from the board or listening to the monotonous drone of the teacher like we did, they get to think, research, analyze and form their own opinions. Sounds good but aren't we empowering them too much, too soon? After school, instead of the endless homework and preparation for exams like we did, they get to go to afterschool activities. Sports, music, art – they have a plethora of choices as eager parents sign them up even before the term begins to ensure they get a seat. Everyone wants their child to be a superstar in their own right and don't think twice before spending their precious resources or time in doing so. And what do we get at the end of day? “I don't want to do it. It's so boring!” Really?

One might say that they would like to rest and relax after a hard day at school. They would like to do their own thing. Sure I say! Read a book, play a board game, get your Lego set out, but no. It's only technology that seems to smooth their frazzled nerves, bring peace to their tired bodies as their fingers are itching to touch the tablet or fiddle with the Xbox controller. Refuse them these and watch them have a Mortal Kombat fight with each other with pushes, punches and good hard kicks till I am ready to pull my hair out or put the plug in for that PS3 game! Since when did parenting get so difficult?

Life Was Simple

No wonder afterschool activities are getting so popular. I used to laugh at moms pushing their kids to do afterschool activities. There was no difference between weekdays and weekends with the kids running around blindly from one activity to another. Now I've been bitten by the ‘activity bug.’





It's an annoying bug that keeps buzzing behind my ear, asking me to do things that others are doing, challenging me, asking me if my children are as smart as others, as capable as others and as competitive as others. Somebody's kids are doing intensive piano lessons, some kids are doing 'tennis for fun' for whole three weeks and to beat it all some children are sitting in China doing a Mandarin immersion program for all six weeks of their summer! Now tell me, do my kids stand a chance against these brilliantly coached kids who would be facing them one day either in a struggle for places at university or vying for that coveted position in a corporate office where dual language is a must? Wouldn't my kids then wish that their mother should've equipped them more, sent them for more classes to hone their skills while they still had the time and resources? Am I doing enough for them as their mom?

I remember summer holidays just a few years ago when I would make a list of fun things to do in the city, merrily ticking off each one as we explored

museums, parks, cafes, bicycling, scooting just for fun. They would happily trail behind me, ice cream in hand, excited about the bus ride that they were about to take! Was life so simple just a few years ago or was this stage just inevitable, waiting to happen at the 'right' time.

Sitting here in this coffee shop, I am waiting for them to finish their drama class so that I can take them home and drag them for their swim class after that, lunch meant to be eaten in the car. It may sound cruel and honestly I am not a big fan of sending kids for activities, especially during the holidays when they do need a change from routine. But if it's activities vs technology, activities vs sibling fights, activities vs lethargy, then activities it is!

But what one tends to overlook and maybe need to draw a line at is deciding how many activities are too many? While it's nice to keep the kids busy, it is equally important to give them time to play, experiment and rest by 'not overdoing' it. If by the middle of the week they are still not liking drama class that means

that they really don't like to put up an act or standing on stage. If after doing piano lessons for a year they are still complaining about having to practice that means that they just do not have an ear for music and are not going to give those recitals that you dreamt of one fine day. Each child is different and every parent must be ready to understand that and help them find their true passion and equip them with the ability to do it. Observe, talk and use your instinct to find out what works and what doesn't. Sometimes changing a class or teacher helps, sometimes giving up that activity is the best decision.

I think we have had a reasonably good mix of activities this summer. First three weeks of holidaying in Canada, followed by a week of additional holiday with grandparents visiting us, and then two weeks of planned activities like football, swimming, etc. Now we are going to have the last week absolutely free. I am going to be as ready to go to the playground or go bicycling, as I would be to settle into my arm chair and read a book at home doing nothing. Leaving this last week's planning to my children and see what they come up with jointly, hopefully, and without the punches. And yes, I am going to continue taking my job very seriously, no doubt about that!

Ah motherhood! Weren't the nappy changing days so much easier? ■



Rubén Maíz Baños is a teacher of Modern Foreign Languages and English Literature at Saigon Star International School.

Xin Chao! Hallo! Bonjour! Hola!

Why not learn a modern foreign language?

THERE ARE CURRENTLY 7,099 world languages, of which 2,294 are spoken in Asia, according to the prestigious Web-based publication *Ethnologue: Languages of the World, 2017*. Therefore, why not learn some of those languages? As far as I am concerned, studying foreign languages has many advantages, since not only does it improve your communication skills and creativity, but also your memory. Furthermore, the study of foreign languages makes you more flexible and tolerant because it provides you with a better understanding of other cultures. Moreover, let us not forget the importance of foreign languages to enjoy better career opportunities. For these reasons, I believe it is positive to learn foreign languages.

A language is divided into four skills, which are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Those skills are classified as receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive skills (writing and speaking). According to SIL International, 1999, a non-profit organization devoted to studying, developing and documenting languages, those skills are related, as in mode of communication (oral or written) and direction of communication (receiving or producing the message). Consequently, working on your speaking and listening skills will definitely improve your communication skills. Research shows that foreign language learners retain 90 percent of what they learn by using it immediately or teaching it to someone else. This is because learners make mistakes and hence they are forced to correct those mistakes. As a teacher of a modern foreign language, I would point out the relevance of attending meet-ups

with native speakers and singing songs, as well as watching and listening to all kind of videos of interest, as some of the most efficient ways to boost your communication skills. Similarly, writing short stories, poems or scripts will help you to develop your writing skills, as creativity plays a major role. Teachers of modern foreign languages usually discourage learners from translating literally from their mother tongue to the language they are learning, the target language, because it might not be grammatically correct or natural. Last but not least, you can enhance your reading skills and memory by reading out loud. As I see it, reading daily for about 10 to 20 minutes is good practice.

Barbara Jordan, a lawyer, educator and American politician, once said, "One thing is clear to me: we, as human beings, must be willing to accept people who are different from ourselves." I could not agree more with that statement. As a matter of fact, studying a language is not only about learning sounds, grammar and vocabulary, it also concerns learning about other cultures. Modern foreign language learners are, then, expected to develop their cultural competence, which is the ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people across cultures. As a consequence, learners will acquire intercultural communication skills, broaden their minds, have a better understanding of the world and develop tolerance and respect towards other cultures. An example of empowering cultural competence is that of Saigon Star International School, where all the staff try their best to instil in learners values such as international-mindedness, respect, cooperation, communication and

adaptability, amongst others, by telling learners about International Primary Curriculum-concepts such as home country, host country and adoptive country.

The 21st century is characterized by a global economy in a globalized world, where the ability to speak additional modern foreign languages certainly makes a difference when it comes to getting a job. Knowledge of one or more additional languages will make your CV look more interesting to employers, who highly appreciate employees who can speak several languages. Some of the fields where polyglots—people who know several languages—have more chances include transportation and tourism, translation and interpreting, teaching, sales and marketing, public relations and government. Another advantage of mastering a modern foreign language is that you can work abroad, which will contribute to both your professional and human development. As for wages, according to Euro London, a recruitment agency, employees who know additional modern foreign languages can increase their salaries by around 10–15 percent.

As a teacher of a modern foreign language, I strongly recommend learning another language, because you will benefit from it. It will make you more confident when expressing your thoughts. It will also make you more creative when writing or speaking. Apart from that, you will keep your brain active. Also, you will develop a more positive attitude towards cultural difference. Plus, your understanding of the world will be different. Last but not least, you will have the opportunity to apply for more rewarding jobs. Therefore, all your efforts will pay off! ■



Currently Deputy Head of School at Renaissance International School Saigon, **Richard Fluit** has extensive experience teaching in and leading and managing international schools. He joined RISS 3 years ago as their Head of Secondary after years working at a British international school in Cuba. Originally from the Netherlands, Richard is well-known in the international media for contributing poignant, thought provoking articles on different contemporary issues in education.

Homeschool vs Private School

Is homeschooling better than international private schools' education?

MANY PARENTS TRY TO FIND the best possible education for their child by comparing learning in a homeschooling setting or at a private international school. It is important to be well informed about what the best option is for your child. Below I will outline the pros and cons of homeschooling and of private schools.

Homeschooling will provide your child with individual attention, a curriculum suited to the child's interests and the pace of learning adjusted to your child's need. Parents can focus the education on their beliefs, their values and their vision of academic success for their child. The child will feel the specialized attention he/she gets from his/her parents and family. Likely your child will become much more independent as he/she will have to learn to be self-directed. It can be very cost effective. Lastly, learning at home avoids the traveling to and from a school.

However, as a contrast, homeschooling makes it more difficult to build friendships with peers; there is less opportunity for social connections outside the family. Parents need knowledge and skills to research and deliver the best schooling for their child. They need the time to invest in their child's education, taking time away from their own potential academic and career progression. As homeschooling is done by one or two parents, the child is not exposed to a range of different teaching styles, learning styles and skilled teachers in different subject areas. Schools have libraries,

science labs, computer rooms, sports fields that homeschooling cannot provide. Schools also have a variety of afterschool programs and clubs that will be difficult to duplicate at home. Some children might find it smothering to be with family 24 hours a day and they may feel they are missing out on experiences that others have. Lastly, tertiary education providers might have limited understanding of the curriculum and type of learning experienced by homeschooled applicants.

International private schools offer curriculums such as the IB, IGCSE, A-level and AP; they provide choice in the programs parents want their children to receive. These programs are well recognized by most universities and colleges all over the world. Often, international schools have small class sizes with highly qualified and experienced teachers. The schools welcome parent input and involvement. Many schools offer values education through profiles, philosophy, the type of discipline they offer and special programs like Round Square. Schools can provide huge variety in the resources, facilities, subject choices and expertise of the staff employed. International private schools have options in their subjects, especially at Secondary level, providing a more individual type of education. They also provide services for students who need more time, for very fast learners, for gifted and talented students and for students with learning challenges. International schools provide global citizenship opportunities and social

interaction with people from other nationalities and cultures. Learning interactions with peers may enable your child to develop socially, make academic connections and reach conceptual understanding better than through homeschooled explanations.

However, as a contrast, private education is expensive. Often the fees are not the end of the costs either; field trips, residentials, exams, resources like laptops and graphical calculators will need to be paid for as well. Private schools seek parent involvement and communication between parents—teacher—students. This is time that many parents do not have. Every school has rules and regulations that your child will have to adhere to, even if you do not agree to one or more of those. Academic learning might not be as fast as homeschooling as lessons are pitched at mid-learning level with differentiation for more advanced learners. Lastly, your child will have to learn subjects he or she might not have any interest in.

As an educator in an international school, I believe that it is important for children to be with their peers. Parents can 'buy' excellent education at an international school, that will provide an outstanding curriculum with highly qualified teachers, the resources needed, individual attention, values education and a variety of choices in and outside the written curriculum. This avoids the huge investment parents would need to make in time, expertise, attention and organization in a homeschooling situation. ■

Autism: A Lonely World

There are so many misconceptions about autism, and so many things that have been blamed for causing it, from vaccinations to poor parenting. But what is it, and what is the real cause?



A CHILD WITH AUTISM HAS difficulty learning social and communication skills. Such a child will have trouble understanding and developing language, will not be interested in communicating with other children or adults, and won't be seeking their attention or even pay attention to them. The child will have difficulty interpreting gestures, body language, expressions, and emotions. Autistic children are not mentally retarded—in fact, many of them exhibit higher intelligence than average, and some have extraordinary capabilities in different fields, such as memory, mathematics, the arts, and physics.

Today in the US, the prevalence of autism is estimated to be 30 times higher than it was 40 years ago. In part, this is because our understanding and definitions of autism have changed over the years. Children who were wrongly considered mentally retarded in the past are now recognized as being autistic. Children who were thought to be “very shy and introverted” in the past actually had mild symptoms of autism. But this still doesn't explain the exponential rise in the condition.

Over recent years, science has shown that autism has a genetic basis. We also know that environmental factors make a significant impact on the stability and quality of our genes—advanced paternal age, air pollution, Vitamin D deficiency, heavy metals, and exposure to certain infections during pregnancy have all been related to a higher risk of autism. But even these factors do not explain why the

incidence of autism has risen so much over the last decades. So what is it in our environment that can explain this rise? What do we have now so abundantly, that we didn't have 40 years ago?

Exposure to electromagnetic radiation through mobile phones, Wi-Fi routers, cellular networks, radio and TV antennas—and even high voltage electricity lines—has rapidly increased over the past four decades. Today it is all around us, in our pockets, in our homes, on the streets, in shopping malls, cafés and restaurants. You can't escape it. Open your Wi-Fi app on your phone and see how many routers are currently transmitting to you. You can be in a remote village in the countryside and still be surrounded by this radiation. Even if you never use a cellular phone in your life, you will still be heavily exposed.

Proving that EM radiation is a direct cause of autism is very difficult. It's impossible to quantify exposure, and to eliminate the influence of other factors such as different types of environmental pollution that definitely could be contributing to the rise in autism. But the circumstantial evidence is accumulating: Increases in RF exposure rates and autism rates have closely correlated over the years; cellular examinations and behavioral studies on rats have suggested negative effects from EM radiation exposure; some studies indicate that carrying mobile phones affects the quality of sperm; while others link early cellular phone use with the development of



Dr. Jonathan Halevy received his degree from the Sackler School of Medicine of Tel Aviv University, and then underwent his residency in the Pediatric Department of the Wolfson Medical Center in Israel, earning his certification as a specialist in pediatrics. He is Head of Pediatrics at Family Medical Practice, HCMC.



brain tumors later on in life. Pediatric neurologist Professor Martha Herbert has published several articles showing the connection between EM radiation and autism.

I am certain that in the near future, more studies will reveal more evidence of the effects of EM radiation on our health. The question is, what can we do about it? Unfortunately, at the moment, no one has a good answer.

Autism should be detected at an early age to allow for early intervention, which is very important for both autistic children and their parents. Teaching and raising a child with autism is very different from raising an ordinary child—these parents need to learn a new way of teaching their children, showing them how to behave and how to cope in different situations.

Red flags for autism include:

- A baby who doesn't have a "social smile" by the age of two to three months (such as smiling back at a parent).
- A baby who avoids long eye contact.

By the age of two to three months, most babies should be able to gaze at their parents and even try to imitate facial expressions.

- A baby who doesn't show interest in his or her environment within six months. Most babies at this age will try to reach for new objects and explore them, manipulate them, turn them around, pass them from hand to hand, and so on.
- No babbling back to parent or communicative expressions by nine months.
- No "separation anxiety" or fear of strangers by nine months. Children with autism will not show anxiety when their parents leave them alone or with a stranger.
- No understanding of nonverbal communication (such as gestures) after one year—blowing a kiss, waving bye-bye, or pointing at objects of interest to get the parent to notice them. Babies with autism will rather draw the parent by the hand toward the object, or stare at the toy and grunt.
- Not saying a word by 16 months.

- No imaginative play at 18 months (e.g. pretending to talk on the phone, pretending to feed a doll).

- No meaningful two-word sentence by two years old (not just repeating words).
- Restricted behavior (doing the same activity over and over again—for example, walking around in circles or flapping the hands repeatedly).
- Restricted interest (showing interest in only certain objects and neglecting others).
- Unusual play (e.g. continuously banging cars together instead of "driving" them).
- Showing no interest in other children by 18 months old.
- Any loss of previously acquired social or communicative skills.

If your child shows any of these red flags, this does not automatically mean that he is autistic—hearing loss is another possible cause of these behaviors. In any case, he should certainly be evaluated by his pediatrician, as early diagnosis and early intervention will result in a much better outcome. ■



Warren is the Year 1 teacher at Saigon Star International School.

A Friend In Need

Students become role models and leaders when they help those in need

AS HEAD OF OUR SCHOOL

Council, it's my duty to regularly meet with a small group of children and discuss ways in which we, as a school, can improve and get better. With a representative from each class, we share ideas and make realistic suggestions, which I then relay to our leadership team. As members of the School Council, our children feel compelled to help others, raise standards throughout our school and represent themselves and us in the best way possible. This responsibility brings maturity to our students, who strive to be role models for their peers.

Our school recently aligned itself with Friends for Street Children (FFSC), a non-profit organization based here in Ho Chi Minh City. The charity strives to help homeless and displaced children gain a better education, access to health care and social integration. In supporting Friends for Street Children, our children have gained a sense of charity and a better understanding of how we can help those in need. In the classroom, we consistently focus on personal learning goals during our International Primary Curriculum lessons, goals such as respect, integrity and resilience. In fund raising and donating to charity, this venture has given us an opportunity to demonstrate these values in the wider world.

At the beginning of April, our school held an event called the Saigon Roller Dash. Putting a spin on our more traditional family fun/open days, we advertised for families to attend our school and bring along any form of wheeled transport that they



might have. Bicycles, rollerblades and skateboards were all present and we used our school grounds to provide live music, games, food stalls and refreshments. The sales from tickets and stalls generated a fantastic amount of just over VND45 million—the entire amount went to FFSC.

In the following weeks, the School Council then met to consider how we thought the money could be used. The children displayed an incredible maturity and thoughtfulness during the process, enquiring about tuition fees, clothing, educational toys and books, before then coming up with a range of ideas on how we could raise even more money and continue to support the charity in the future. We also met with Ms. An, a representative from FFSC. After introducing the charity to the whole

school through an assembly and presentation, Ms. An then helped the School Council gain a better understanding of the work that the charity does on a day-to-day basis and how it helps individuals in need. Before leaving, members of our School Council presented Ms. An with a check for the money we had raised. We were thrilled to then learn that the money will go towards supporting 10 children on their scholarship integration to Grade 6 program and the remainder towards the charity's school building project.

Looking forward, we are keen to maintain this relationship and continue to raise money through different fund raising events and initiatives, and establish our link with and support for Friends for Street Children. ■



Carolyn French is Grade 2 teacher with a B.A (Hons) BA from the University of Southern California and an M.A Elementary Education from the University of Missouri at the International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP).

I Second That Emotion

Emotional intelligence is critical to success in school and life

READING. WRITING.

'RITHMATIC. These “three R’s” of education have been embraced as the pillars of education programs around the world. Often overlooked, however, is the necessity for a strong foundation of social-emotional learning that supports a child as he or she works work to excel academically. As a child’s emotional intelligence develops, so do skills including making responsible decisions, self-management, and building relationships. From that foundation, the child can achieve success in school, future careers, and in life.

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize, manage and understand our own emotions and the emotions of others. In recent years, several organizations have developed research-based best practices for teachers who want to implement social-emotional learning in their classroom. These organizations include the RULER program from the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, the *Responsive Classroom* approach developed by the Center for Responsive Schools, and the Kimochi’s *Educators Toolkit*.

In my years in classrooms, I have incorporated a variety of ideas from those organizations that help my students develop emotional intelligence. One component of social-emotional learning is helping students understand the importance of functioning as members of a community. Creating a class charter is one idea from the RULER program that can help lead to this sense of community. The charter is a document that is created by the students and the teacher that outlines how the students and the teacher want to treat each other, how they want to feel at school, and what they will do to help achieve these desired feelings. My students last year, for example, said they wanted to feel “proud” and “loved” then came up with a list of ways they could help each

other feel that way. After the charter is completed, everyone signs it. That way everyone, including the teacher, is accountable. Naming specific feelings and the actions that will lead to those feelings helps students develop the self-awareness needed to recognize how actions and feelings are connected. The charter can be referenced throughout the year to remind students that we are a classroom community working together.

Another strategy to build a sense of community and help with communication skills is setting aside time each day for a community meeting. During the community meeting, students should practice greeting each other, share information about an important part of their life, and possibly participate in a short activity designed to practice social and academic skills. Dedicating time for students to share with each other helps develop a sense of belonging as well as improve their speaking and listening skills. Community meetings also are a great time to review the charter.

Self-management is another emotional intelligence skill that can be developed in the classroom. In my classroom, I have a clip chart that helps students monitor individual behavior. Every student has a clip with their name on it. Students move their clips up and down the chart based on the choices they make. Having this clip chart visible to students helps them monitor their choices throughout the day. I also use Class Dojo, which is an app where teachers can give or take away points for specific actions or traits, such as “responsibility” or “teamwork.” For example, a student could earn a point for “teamwork” by helping a peer with a problem they do not understand. Earning this point helps the student understand the positive impact of that choice and provides them with the satisfaction of being recognized for a positive

behavior. No matter which system a teacher uses, it is important that the students understand the *why* behind any reward or consequence. Brief affirmations such as, “You are doing an excellent job reading quietly. This helps everyone focus on their reading,” help students understand how and why to choose actions that help them learn, stay safe, and respect others.

Another important aspect of emotional intelligence is personal responsibility. Children have to learn how to solve problems on their own instead of always relying on a teacher or adult. In my classroom, we use the 4B’s, which is an acronym that encourages students to use “Book, Brain, Board, or Buddy” before they ask a teacher for assistance. Parents can support personal responsibility at home by giving their child specific tasks, such as packing their own lunch, that they are expected to complete on their own. Ideally, students will develop intrinsic motivation, so the focus shouldn’t be on any reward they can earn. Instead, children should learn that they are responsible for completing certain tasks on their own without requiring reminders or assistance. For older students, student-led parent teacher conferences are a good opportunity for students to demonstrate their personal responsibility. By giving the responsibility of leading the conference to the student, students are empowered to take ownership over their goals and progress.

In my classroom, it is not enough for my students to simply learn academic content. I place a high premium on modeling ways for them to dig deeper, develop a passion for learning, and become good human beings. This can be a hefty task, but I believe that developing strong emotional intelligence in my students is a key factor to helping them achieve their goals. ■

>>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



Anne Hill International School

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

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

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"Learning is a journey, not a race."

33 Giang Van Minh, An Phu Ward, HCMC

School ages: 18 months to 6 years old

Website: annehill.school

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

info@annehill.school



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



Kinder Academy

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093 878 00 76



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 International School Ho Chi Minh City – American Academy

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

16 Vo Truong Toan, D2

+84 (8) 3898 9100

admissions@aavn.edu.vn

www.aavn.edu.vn





The International School Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC)

ISHCMC is a leading school in HCMC with a rich history, yet is always innovating. Students from over 50 nationalities are taught in modern learning environments by trained IB educators specializing in inquiry-led teaching. This, paired with international-standard safeguarding policies ensures that all children are safe and supported to reach their potential. ISHCMC students develop a life-long passion for asking questions and searching beyond what is asked in the classroom, ultimately becoming true 21st century citizens equipped for the future. The 2017/18 academic school year will see the new Secondary Campus open and the continued refurbishment in the Primary Campus.

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



Also...

Australian International School (AIS)

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



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
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