



VIETNAM

APRIL 2013

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Vietnamese funerals

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1 MAN, 365 MEALS

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The Luxury Issue

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ƠI VIỆT NAM

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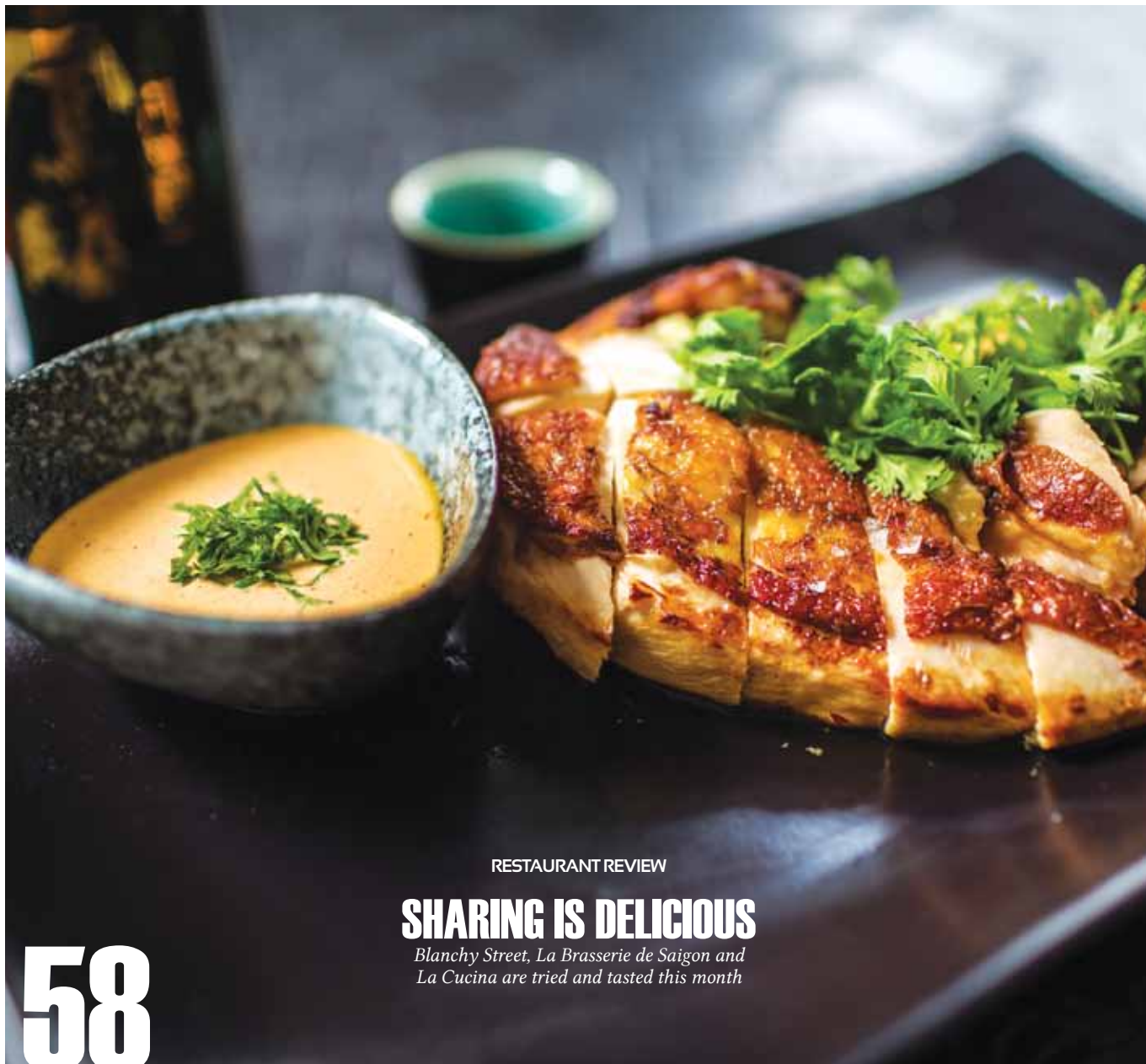


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ISSUE NO. 2
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READER FEEDBACK

"Congratulations on a job well done! I just read the online version of your magazine and was thrilled to see everything on offer. Having lived in Ho Chi Minh City for just six months, I consider your magazine a little treasure. My notepad is out...my days are filling up with what promises to be new and exciting adventures. Thank you!"

— JEANNE H.
Binh Thanh District

"When I came home yesterday, I found the first edition of *Oi Vietnam* on my kitchen table. It must have been a free copy from the residence we are staying in. Thank you very much - I really like the style of the magazine including great pictures, short articles and some useful information about HCMC. My husband and I just recently moved here from Germany (both working here), so it is always great to get some (local) news."

— JANA

"I just downloaded Oi mag online... oh wowie... It's so great for me, being so passionate about Vietnam!"

— JEAN

"Congratulations on your new publication. It is handsome and very readable, and I wish you and your staff the best success!"

— H.M.

Champagne Wishes & Caviar Dreams

WHEN PEOPLE THINK 'luxury,' cities like Dubai, Paris and Monaco immediately spring to mind, with images of fast cars, fine food and pampered living. In fact, our Dubai-based writer talks about the excesses, past and present, of this city in the sand with its man-made islands, the world's tallest building and rumors of refrigerated sand. In comparison, it's also understandable, how in most people's minds, Ho Chi Minh City likely wouldn't make the list of glittering cities of the world.

But walking down Dong Khoi, one of my favorite streets in the whole city, I stroll past shiny stores which only need one name like Prada, Gucci and Hermes. What is it about luxury, affordable or otherwise, that makes us feel like we're part of an exclusive club? The topic of luxury is relevant, especially here in Vietnam, where status is everything - who you know, what you wear, where you live. Of course, we all know that what we own doesn't define us as people, but it's undeniably nice to give in to the temptations of what money can buy, at least once in a while. So, in this issue, we're uncovering la dolce vita in all its 24 carat glory - the sweeter side of life here in Saigon.

What kind of phone do you buy or what kind of car do you drive when money is no object? Jonathan Rebourts highlights the best that money can buy in *The Luxe List*. We also dispatched our resident travel writer to find the most amazing places to staycation - taking a holiday close to home - where it's so

convenient to lose yourself in a world of spa treatments, lazy afternoons of fishing or lounging by your very own plunge pool. We also get a glimpse behind the luxury industry, at *Joe the Mechanic*, who routinely takes care of cars worth a cool half a million dollars.

However, it's also true that "you can't take it with you." Our issue takes a sobering look at death, both for Vietnamese and for expats, through special coverage of the customs, beliefs and logistics of funerals.

In this issue, we also celebrate the quirkier side of Saigon. Before this issue, I had never even heard of flying yoga, physical fitness literally taken to another level, but I'm happy that I live in a city which is always showing me something new. And even though I've lived in Ho Chi Minh City nearly nine years now, I love that artists like Bridget March are showing me sides of the city I've never seen, or have been too busy to notice.

I hope you'll join me in raising a glass of champagne (or whatever beverage you might be drinking) to toast wonderful, quirky, swanky Saigon as you read through the pages of our *Luxury Issue*. ■

CHRISTINE VAN

Managing Editor

C A P T I O N WINNER



Congratulations to Oi reader Kayne with last month's winning caption, "**Never trust a grinning Vietnamese man holding a chicken. Especially if you're the chicken.**" Enjoy your Oi goodie bag!

Honorable mention goes to reader HuyOui with "Classic example of frenemies. Or is it henemies?"

Datebook

Fill up your calendar with these exciting events

APRIL
6



What: International Pillow Fight Day

Where: 3pm in 23/9 Park just west of De Tham on Pham Ngu Lao

About: Wake Up Saigon brings you HCMC's participation in this worldwide event for the second year in a row. Join them and other pillow warriors in over 120 cities around the world. Bring your own pillow or purchase one from a pillow vendor on site. They will congregate afterwards at a local bar for drinks and food.

Contact: For more info, check out www.facebook.com/WakeUpSaigon or email info@wakeupsaigon.com

APRIL
25



What: Action Painting

Where: VinGallery, 4 Le Van Mien, D2

About: A freedom in painting experiment where participants are encouraged to dribble and splash paint onto the canvas. They will combine music with painting in order to give freedom to your feelings. You can paint either with the canvas placed on the floor or on an easel. A brief introduction about Action Painting in Art History will be given as well as examples of former practitioners of this type of painting such as Jackson Pollock.

Contact: www.vingallery.com

APRIL 20



What: Everlasting French Songs, Second Edition

Where: 7pm at the Ben Thanh Theater, 6 Mac Dinh Chi, D1

About: In honor of the "France-Vietnam year," the 40th anniversary of the installation of the diplomatic relationship between the two countries, TDT Event is organizing a night of classic French hits from the 1950s covered by well-known Vietnamese singers like Elvis Phuong, Quang Vinh and Trang Phap.

Contact: Buy tickets online at www.vntic.vn, email info@tdt-event.com or phone 090 899 2615

UNTIL APRIL 25



What: 'Space / Limit'

Where: San Art, 3 Me Linh, Binh Thanh District

About: 'Space / Limit' is an exhibition concerned with the social habits, expectations and desires of contemporary society. From K-Pop in our televised lounge rooms, to the family expectations of marriage, to our desire for leisure as luxury brand consumption - how do such behaviors become regulated, marketed and thus stereotyped in our world? For Phan Quang, an artist who is drawn to the resilience, knowledge and skills of the working class, it is through the medium and use of mum, a kind of bamboo, that he finds a metaphorical and historical tool of artistic reference.

Contact: Please contact hello@san-art.org

APRIL 27 TO
MAY 5



What: Second Saigon Tango Blitz Festival

Where: At four and five star hotels yet to be determined

About: For those who love this sexy Argentine dance, Ta. Tango will be organizing a festival for the feet with five artists, 12 workshops and private lessons, six Milongas, and international DJs. Celebrated dancers Pablo and Noelia Giorgini, Guillermo Claure, and world tango champion in Asia Park Jiwon and Ink will be headlining. For US\$95 per person or US\$180 per couple, you'll receive workshops specially designed for beginners, one grand Milonga with tango performances, buffet and a glass of wine.

Contact: Email tatango.vietnam@gmail.com or visit www.ta-tango.blogspot.com

MAY
4



What: Champions League

Where: Cua Can Stadium in Phu Quoc,

About: Hosted by Mango Bay Phu Quoc, this sixth annual football tournament will see eight to 12 expat teams compete for the coveted football title. The registration fee per team is US\$35 per player which includes tournament inscription fee and a BBQ buffet at Mango Bay Beach Bar. Same as the previous year, the tournament will take place for a whole day, with group matches in the morning to identify winner and loser groups, ready for final afternoon matches.

Contact: For more info, email Ronan directly at gm@mangobayphuquoc.com



APRIL 26-27

What: Questacon

Where: RMIT Saigon South Campus, D7, free

About: Questacon – Australia's National Science and Technology Centre will tour an interactive science program to Vietnam as one of Australian activities to celebrate the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The Fascinating Science on the Move program includes a hands-on traveling exhibition plus science shows and demonstrations presented by Questacon's dynamic science communicators. The program features a broad range of scientific themes from human biology, physical phenomena and simple engineering and mechanical concepts. It is aimed at children aged 10 -14 and their families.

Contact: Australian consulate event organizer Thuy Vu at 3521 8100 (ext. 134)

MAY 11

What: Second Annual Phu Quoc Half Marathon

Where: Phu Quoc Island

About: Participants will race down the southern half of Phu Quoc Island. Three events are scheduled – the main race of 21km, plus the shorter 10km run and a 5km fun run, finishing inside the grounds of Long Beach Resort Phu Quoc, where athletes are welcome to run straight into the refreshing ocean. Athletes will be given access to the resort's facilities to encourage athletes to relax and enjoy the beauty of the island.

Contact: Register at www.pqmarathon.com with participation fees starting at US\$28 per person

MAY 31 - JUNE 9

What: Jungle Marathon Vietnam

Where: Quang Binh Province

About: Organizers of the Jungle Marathon Brazil have created a race through narrow forest trails, swims across rivers and caves and an overnight stage of an undisclosed distance. The marathon will cover a distance of more than 240km over six stages. Participants can race as individuals or group of three.

Contact: www.junglemarathon.com

Troi Oi

The city by the numbers

VND250,000 – VND350,000

is how much the minimum wage will increase per month at local and foreign firms in Vietnam, upping the total minimum salary to VND1.65 million - VND2.35 million a month. Wages vary among regions, with urban areas paying higher salaries.

VND50,000 – VND150,000

the road use fee that motorbike drivers will have to pay annually at their local people's committee while car and truck drivers have to pay between VND1.56 million – VND12.48 million a year.

1-3

months suspension, or even permanently, will be issued to SMS and email advertisers who violate new regulations that requires them to give the owners of phone numbers and email addresses an option to refuse further solicitations or information from them.

They have to stop sending junk messages and emails to the receivers immediately after receiving the latter's rejection. They are also required to send back confirmation of receipt of such refusal messages.

Even when people do not send refusal messages, advertisers are not allowed to send one message or email with the same content to one phone number or one email address more than once within a 24 hour period.



4G

mobile services will not be licensed in Vietnam until 2015 or later, news website *Saigon Times* has said in a report. On 4G, multimedia transmission is faster than on 3G, which Vietnam still uses.

Deputy communications minister Le Nam Thang told the news website that the decision is aimed at helping mobile services providers fully benefit from 3G services which operate at just 10 percent of capacity. 4G has yet to become popular globally and few mobile phones can operate on it, said Mr. Thang.

It permitted several companies, including the military-run Viettel and FPT Telecom, to pilot 4G services two years ago in major cities like Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi. It was these companies that reported back to the ministry that the industry is not ready yet for 4G services.

10%

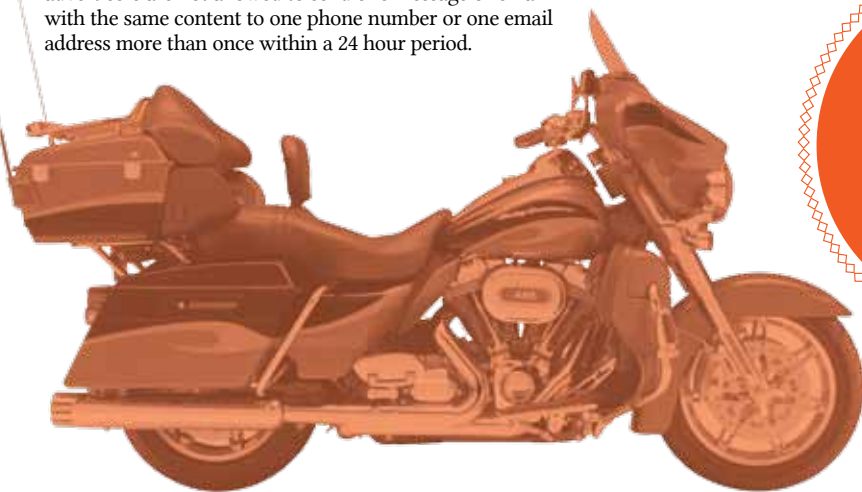
is the limited total number of Vietnamese students that can be enrolled at foreign-invested primary and secondary schools; raised to 20 percent for high schools. Under the decree, for which the Ministry of Education and Training has recently introduced implementation guidelines, foreign kindergartens

are not allowed to admit Vietnamese students.

The decree has been questioned by several experts as going against the objectives of having more Vietnamese students learn foreign languages, but officials say the primary aim should be to protect the Vietnamese language and culture.

Dr. Ho Thieu Hung, former director of Ho Chi Minh City's education department, said he was "puzzled" about the purpose of the restrictions. "Every foreign academic program in Vietnam has already been vetted, why the restrictions and bans then?"

If Vietnamese children study at such schools, they will very likely speak foreign languages instead of their mother tongue, explains Nguyen Thanh Huyen, deputy chief of the education ministry's International Cooperation Department.



US\$30,000

Harley Davidson goes up in flames in Go Vap. The motorcycle was severely damaged in a fire ignited by leaked gasoline at a gas station after Truong Xuan Viet, 29, refuelled. Some of the gas spilled over the bike's tank and reached the bike's engine as Viet was moving it. A fire flared as high as five meters when he started the engine and also destroyed the gas station's signboard before being extinguished.

HOT

What's Hot & What's Not

NOT

HOT: Darned if we know why, but polo shirts with the number 3 on the sleeve. They're everywhere in Asia, not just Ho Chi Minh City. Both real and copied. But why?



NOT: T-shirts with crude derivations of famous brand names, including Starbucks, Nike, McDonald's and Coke. Seriously folks, those jokes turned stale years ago.

HOT: Live piano in the Park Lounge at the Park Hyatt lounge bar. One of the most restful places to escape the chaos of downtown.



NOT: Piped Christmas music in March in stores and malls. It's bad enough having to endure it all December, but for four whole months?!

HOT: Jody Thompson and Cali Ressler who created the Results Only Work Environment (ROWE) policy that allowed employees to work from anywhere they wanted, as long as they got the job done.



NOT: Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer's decision to make her remote employees come into the office — or quit.

HOT: Internet-connected devices are expanding our minds. With digital assistants already in place like Apple's Siri and Evernote Hello, an app that stores photos of people's faces and records of where and when you met them along with their contact information, mobile technology has the potential to make us smarter than we've ever been before.



NOT: Over the course of an average person's life, we'll spend almost four years of it looking at our phones. A recent survey of 2,314 phone owners asking them how much time they spent each day sending texts, using apps or doing anything else on their phones led to some surprising numbers: 90 minutes per day or 22.8 days a year or 3.9 years per lifetime.

Stranger than Fiction?

100 Percent Condom

The HCMC People's Committee has agreed to expand the "100 percent condom program" in all hotels to increase the availability of condoms and to prevent HIV transmission through sexual contact.

Earlier, the HCMC Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism was committed to promoting the propaganda program on HIV/AIDS prevention and supply condoms to more than 1,500 hotels and motels that serve tourists, managed by the Department. However, representatives of these hotels and motels worried to be fined if they publicly provide its customers with condoms.

Mr. Quy said that the police will only impose fine if the locations are related to sex rings or conceal prostitution.

The HCMC AIDS Prevention Committee has confirmed that the purpose of the 100 percent condom program is making condoms available for the prevention of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases rather than encouraging social evils.

The Bra on Drugs

The central province of Quang Ngai has become the latest locality to have detected unidentified pills inside Chinese bras sold in the province. Police are still investigating to find out the origin of the shipment and what the pills are.

You Cheat, You Pay

Vietnam will hike fines imposed on people engaging in extramarital relationships, according to a draft decree recently announced by the Vietnamese Ministry of Justice, the fine increase to VND1 million. The directive adds that single people who get married or cohabit with those they know to be married will be subject to the same fines. The pecuniary punishment will also be imposed on same-sex marriages and matrimony between blood relatives, parents and adoptees, parents and their former adopted children, parents-in-law and children-in-law, and step-parents and step-children. These people will be required to end their relationships after paying the fine.

Grab & Snatch

At about 5.30pm on a Monday, Hoang Thuy was showing her two-year-old son how to play a game on an iPad in their living room that's near the front door. Before going to the kitchen to cook, Thuy handed the device to the boy.

About 10 minutes later, two young men stopped their motorbike in front of the house. One of them rushed into the room and snatched the iPad from the boy's hands. The boy cried loudly and Thuy rushed to the room but the two robbers had already escaped on their motorbike. ■

The Bulletin

New in HCMC...



DUNKIN' DONUTS PLANS ENTRY IN VIETNAM

The Wall Street Journal has reported that Dunkin's Brands Group, the owner of Dunkin's Donuts brand, has signed an agreement on a franchising deal to Vietnam Food & Beverage Company to develop a Dunkin's Donuts chain in Vietnam. It is expected that the first shop bearing the brand would be opened in HCMC. Baskin-Robbins, an ice cream brand also belonging to Dunkin's Brands, has been present in Vietnam since January 2012 with 13 shops here.



New Theatre in the Park

The government has agreed to use 1.2 hectares in September 23 Park (Ton That Tung, Le Lai and Pham Ngu Lao) in District 1 to develop a theater for symphony, opera and ballet performances, with two additional 1,700 seat auditoriums. German-based Busmann+Haberer, Muller, Inros Lackner company will be in charge of providing designs. The theater is scheduled for completion in late 2015.



Lucky 13 & Delicious Duck

Beijing's most famous dish, The Peking Duck, is back at InterContinental Asiana Saigon with an unbeatable priced at VND410,000++ per whole Peking duck, which reflects a 50 percent discount from the original price. Available 6pm - 10pm daily from now until 30 April.

While the number 13 is believed to be an unlucky one, the hotel thinks differently with these lucky 13 promotions. Market 39 - Buffet dinner priced at VND513,000++ per person including house wine, Tiger draught beer and soft drinks. Yu Chu - Enjoy as many delectable dim sum as you want at only VND313,000++ per person excluding beverage. Basilico - Select any type of pizza priced at only VND113,000++ for one pizza. Purple Jade - Savor world class cocktails for only VND113000++ per drink, starts from 7pm - midnight. These offers are valid on April 13 only, applicable for all visitors as well as groups of 10 people maximum and cannot be used in conjunction with any other promotion. Advanced bookings are recommended at dine@icasianasaigon.com.



L'essentiel Debuts

New to the Gaelic culinary scene is **L'essentiel** (98 Ho Tung Mau, D1; Tel: 094 841 5646). At the helm of the kitchen is Chef Vanessa and describes their food as classical French cuisine. The restaurant has three rooms comprising of an open room patio and a non-smoking room.

The menu rotates weekly with such dishes as fresh tuna tartare (VND175,000), pan-roasted duck with orange sauce (VND285,000) and grilled beef on skewers (VND305,000); a glass of French wine starts at VND50,000.

They open from Monday to Saturday, 11am - 2.30pm and 6pm - 10.30pm.



New Workspace Opens

The Aspire Office (466/4 Le Quang Dinh, Binh Thanh District) building is ideal for small businesses, satellite offices, or up-and-coming entrepreneurs to work. Aspire has a green rooftop BBQ and café area, fully equipped conference room and included cleaning services, and only 15 minutes from downtown and the airport.

For those interested in renting office space, visit www.aspireoffice.vn.



Sailing Saturdays

Arrive at the marina (opposite Cat Lai Port) at 1.15pm and board the Blue Motor Yacht for the Dong Nai tributary. Within the tributary the High Tide crew will have already pre-rigged your boats and you will be transferred to one of the sailboats by a small speedboat. From there, it's sailing time. Around 5pm time to tie up at points designated by the High Tide crew and transfer back to the large Blue Motor Yacht.

Advanced booking is a must to ensure everyone has a pre-rigged boat to sail on the day. The sailing fee is US\$40/adult and US\$25 for a child aged eight to 12 (children must be accompanied by a competent and experienced sailor)

For details contact Noelle at 090 818 6550, noelleiles@hightidesailing.vn or visit www.hightidesailing.vn.

Heaven Bar Opens

This new event/bar/lounge space recently opened on the first floor of 8 Le Quy Don in District 3, offering Saigonites more options to party.

Taxi App for an Easier Ride

Tappxi is an app designed to make life easier for those taking taxis in Vietnam. Some of its features are:

Live Route: Allows the user to compare an estimated route with the actual route followed by the taxi

Price comparisons: Based on the estimation of the route, the user can compare the price of different companies

List of companies in each city: User can make direct calls with an easy to use interface.

Panic: If there are problems with the taxi, users can fill out a form with the option of sending an email to *Tuoi Tre* newspaper reporting it.

Tappxi is available for Android and soon for iOS and BB. Download it now from Google Play in the following link, <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.vnapps.taxiapp>



Clothes for a Cause

After 12 days of donation for the "Brighten Up A Woman's Future" campaign, The Body Shop received 6,038 items, including t-shirts, shirts, jeans, jacket, pants and other working clothes. The clothing will be delivered to women working for NGO Mekong Plus in the central and Mekong Delta provinces of Vietnam. For more info on the project, visit www.thebodyshop.com.vn.

Viewfinder

We speak to Lens Strap inventor, Kevin German, about how he's taking smartphone cameras a step further in photography

TEXT BY **LOLITA GUEVARRA**







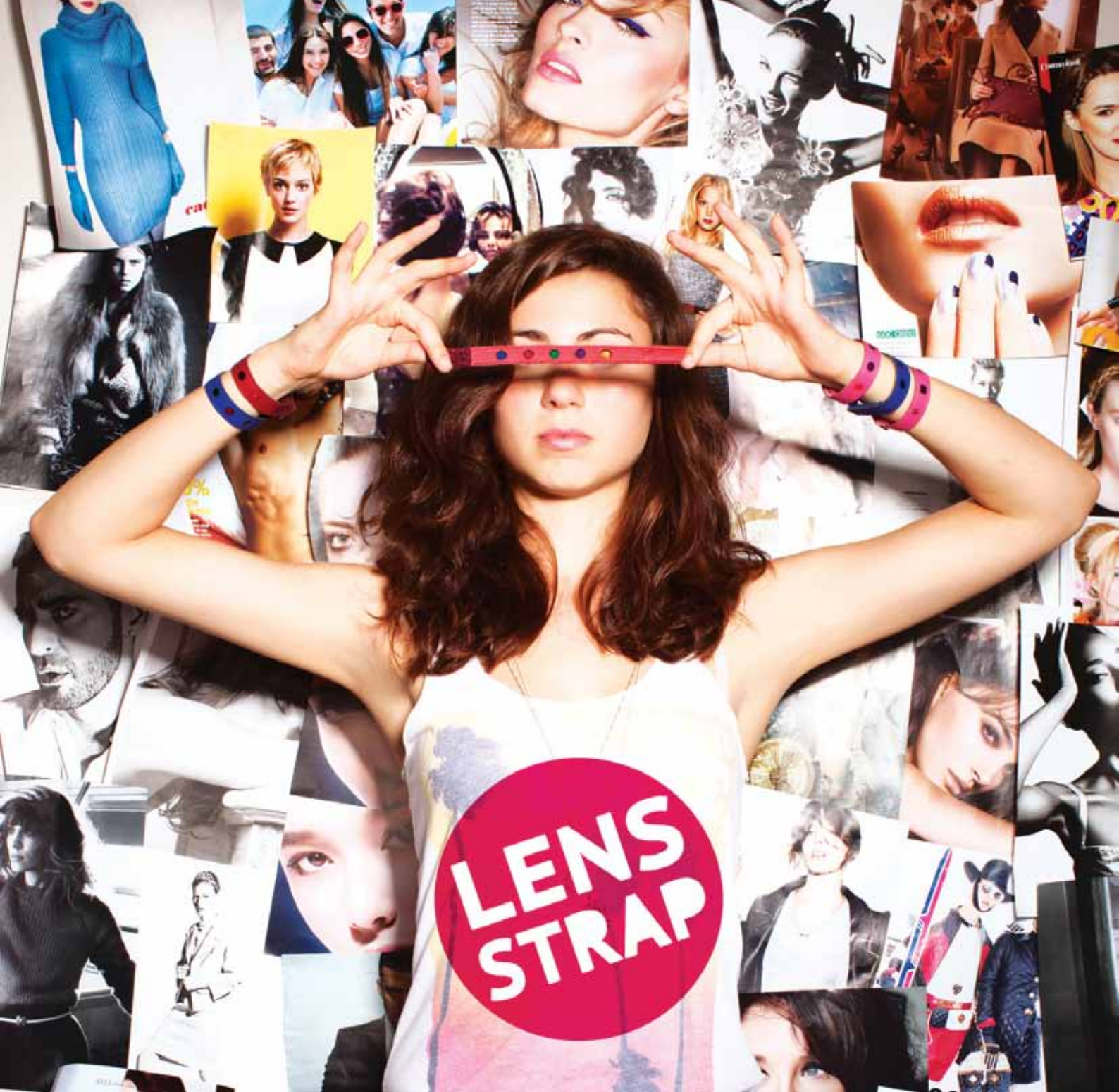
STEVE JOBS ONCE said: "Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn't really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while. That's because they were able to connect experiences they've had and synthesize new things. And the reason they were able to do that was that they've had more experiences or they have thought more about their experiences than other people."

No truer words could be said in regards to American photographer Kevin German and his product Lens Strap. In homage to his profession, German goes back to the basics by introducing an attachable analog color filter that doubles as a bracelet for smartphone cameras. Trigger happy enthusiasts can snap away saturating images in four colors and four borders.

Sounds a bit kitschy, superfluous even. Why would anyone spend money on something that's already provided digitally?

"There are no apps that allow you to color shift," German says. "When you have an app and you apply the filter to the app, there's an algorithm to it. There are only a finite number of options it's going to do. The pictures are all going to look the same. In photography, you're taking a picture of the light. The subject reflects off the light, that's what you're taking a picture of. When you put this [Lens Strap] over the





camera, the light is always changing, the result is always changing.”

Having sewed his prototype together himself, German boasts of his latest design where the filter tucks into a thicker strap for a swank cuffed look. He’s also developing additional visual effects including pinhole and blurred edge features. For anyone interested in tipping their own hat to analog nostalgia, they’ll have to go online as Lens Strap is based and sold in the US but with international delivery.

German is a traditionalist at heart, but innovative in spirit. “All this digital manipulation is trying things after the picture is taken. When shooting film, people were exploring all the time. They tested and tried. I wanted to create something more pure to give people the choice, to be more creative.”

For more info on it, visit www.lensstrap.com. ■

The Mask Maker

We speak to possibly the last artisan of his kind and find him as enigmatic as the faces he creates...

TEXT BY BENNETT DAVIDSON IMAGE BY NAM QUAN

CHU BAY (UNCLE BAY) is a curious looking character with a mane of shiny black hair, prickly mustache, dirty glasses with the price tag still on them, and shaggy, paint-splattered clothes. His hands and feet are sometimes white with plaster, and his favorite accessory is a cigarette dangling loosely from his mouth. But beneath this unkempt appearance lie the meticulous skills of an artist, one who can carve and mold rough materials into beautiful, colorful emotive masks.

"I love the tradition of *hat boi* theater and my masks are inspired by it," he explains while pointing to each one hanging on a wooden square board. "Every one of them is different because I let my imagination run wild sometimes. All of my drawings contain my love for my hometown, my love of imagination and my childhood."

For Chu Bay, who experienced many *hat boi* performances as a child, authenticity is essential. *Hat boi* is a traditional dramatic art form that first appeared in Vietnam during the Tran Dynasty in the 14th century. The performances feature an array of stock characters acting, singing and dancing, who promote moral values while showcasing a story relating to a historical event. Since they portray a wide array of emotions, they often wear make-up or masks to accentuate their facial expressions.

As the story goes, a famous Chinese actor named Ly Nguyen Cat was imprisoned by Vietnamese soldiers in the war against the Mongol Yuan Dynasty in the 14th century. Wealthy Vietnamese aristocrats became aware of the actor's talents and asked him to teach their children how to act, sing, and dance. From these humble beginnings, the art form developed over time to become an integral part of Vietnam's cultural history.

A Passionate Cycle

In a tiny house-cum-studio with a cozy loft

space hanging over his kitchen and bedroom, *Chu Bay* crouches on his hands and knees over a half finished mask, making sure every detail is precise and dramatic. As he paints, molds masks with plaster, or mixes rock powder, he flips through books detailing the design and history of *hat boi* to study and find inspiration.

"The only way you can have a career like mine is if you are passionate about your art form, and I am very passionate. I definitely haven't followed any type of traditional career, but I've made this lifestyle work for me," he says.

Every morning *Chu Bay* gets up and rides his bicycle, with his mobile gallery attached, into District 1 or District 3. He waits patiently for sales and chats with people on the street. Then in the afternoon he returns home to make more masks.

"It's a never ending cycle," he declares. "I can't imagine doing anything else, and I haven't tried for over 20 years."

Catch Him If You Can

Chu Bay's business model is as antiquated as the art form he makes his living off. He has neither an internet presence nor a consistent

location where he sells: you've got to find him if you want a mask.

"My locations will change based on how I feel and where I want to ride. I do tend to frequent Dien Bien Phu, Nguyen Dien Chu, Truong Dinh, and Nam Ky Khoi Nghia."

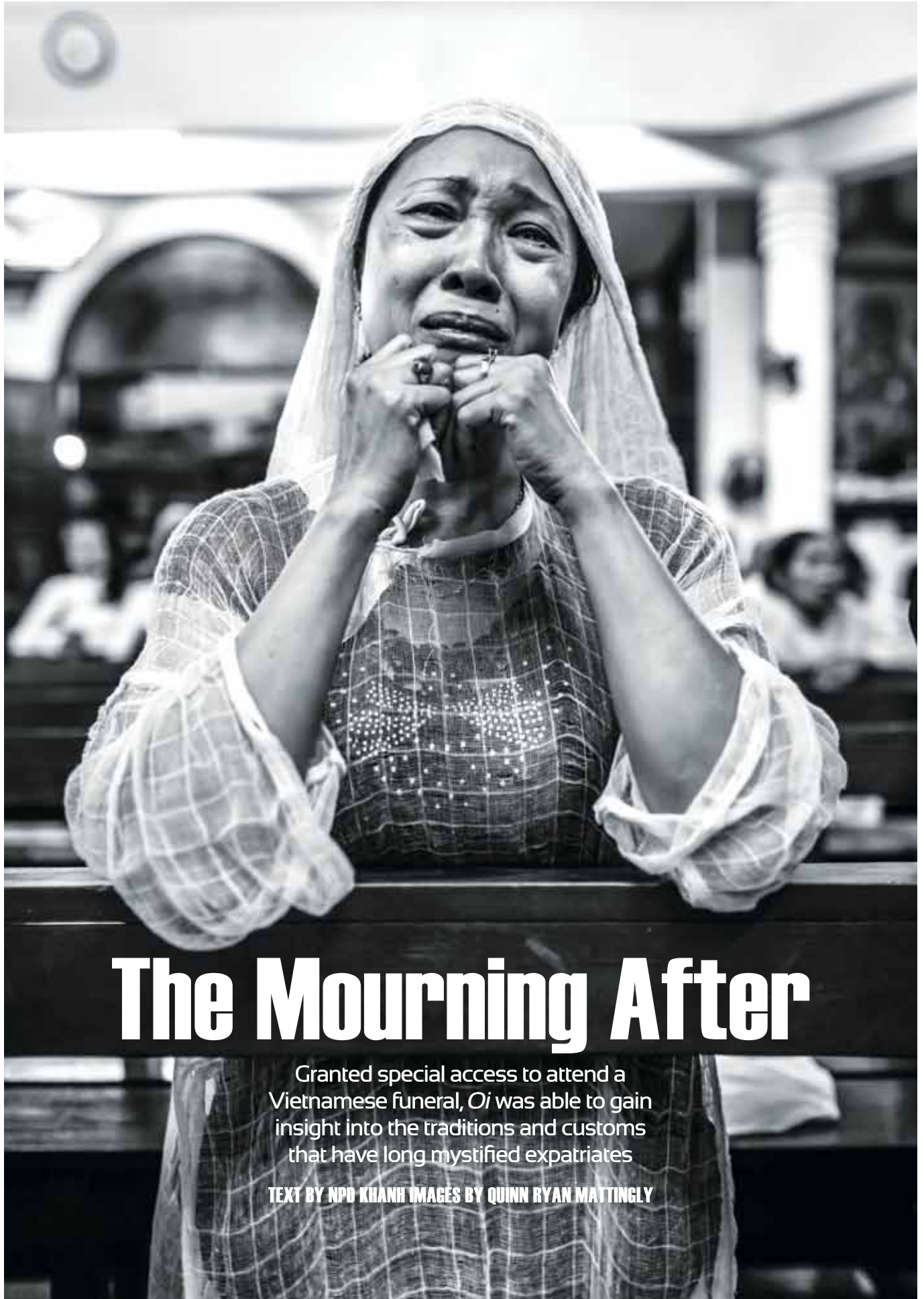
Even though he is difficult to pin down, *Chu Bay* is well-known amongst the locals and has found a large client base among *Viet Kieus* who live in the US or Canada. "Sometimes people will come to me from other countries to order 1,000 masks or more at a time to sell abroad. When that happens, I rarely leave my studio for a month straight."

His works have attracted the attention of local television stations and numerous Vietnamese publications, and he credits this to the dying art of *hat boi*.

"No young people are making these kinds of masks anymore," emphasizes *Chu Bay*. "When I was growing up, I was the only one in my hometown who was continuing the tradition, and I learned how to make them myself. As far as I know, no one from the upcoming generation is doing what I'm doing. I'm the only one." (Masks range from VND80,000 - VND300,000) ■

"The only way you can have a career like mine is if you are passionate about your art form, and I am very passionate. I definitely haven't followed any type of traditional career, but I've made this lifestyle work for me"





The Mourning After

Granted special access to attend a Vietnamese funeral, *Oi* was able to gain insight into the traditions and customs that have long mystified expatriates

TEXT BY NPD KHANH IMAGES BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY



THE FUNERAL RITE of Dominico Le Van Thuong, father of four, grandfather of 10, and great grandfather of many more, started with the first rite on Tuesday, March 10, 2013, at precisely 10am. The family laid the dead man out on a cot in a room with open windows and the door open onto the street. A crowd had gathered beyond that door, mostly neighbors.

One of his sons hung the funeral flags bearing Catholic crosses on the second floor balcony to signify the start of the funeral. The whole house was decked out with funeral drapes all bearing crosses, pictures of Jesus, and funeral verses. The candles were supplied by the church. If this were a Buddhist funeral, the draperies, altar, and parts of the process would be changed accordingly.

Although the heart and framework of the Vietnamese funeral dates back thousands of years, religion has always been a vital part of the funeral rite. A Vietnamese funeral is a description of the deceased person, and his or her faith is simply one among many details.

Five minutes after 10, the priest came in and everyone started singing – both the crowd of neighbors and the family. The songs were Catholic, and because the dead man had lived a long and fulfilling life, dying at the ripe old age of 91, they sang of love, of a life well spent, and the promise of heaven after death. In a Buddhist funeral, the singing would be replaced by sutra chanting.

The priest led the singing. In between songs, he read out prayers for the dead man. “*Dominico Le Van Thuong*,” he stressed, using Thuong’s saint name. (If Thuong were a Buddhist, it would have been a post-death name chosen merely hours before his death, and it would have been spoken by a Buddhist monk.) “We pray he is received by our merciful Father in heaven. As our father accompanies us in life, so shall He accompany us in death. It is our belief that life does not truly end, and that death has no true power over us.” He anointed Thuong, just before leaving for midday mass.

The first rite, as is always the case, lasted little over an hour. As the crowd cleared

out, the hired pallbearers entered. The coffin had already been brought into the room, so the pallbearers wrapped the corpse in linen shrouds, put Thuong inside the coffin, and filled the gaps with dried leaves. A plastic cover was placed on top in place of the lid, and a white cloth draped over it. One of his sons couldn’t make it to the funeral. The white cloth was meant to take his place. The coffin was left half-open. The lid would be closed two days later in the last rite ceremony, just before the mass.

With that, the first rite ended. Thuong was now officially dead in the eyes of the community.

The Beginning of the Last

In the nights leading up to the last rite, family members took turns guarding the coffin.

What followed in the next two days was a period of farewell. From morning to night, the family, dressed in white funeral garb, received guests who came to share their condolences and say their goodbyes to Thuong. Their clothes were rented from the undertaking





"The Vietnamese have a saying that the gesture for the dead is the greatest gesture, for it is the last one. And it is this saying that is behind the loud music and flashy parade dress - a big gesture from the family in their last walk with a loved one"



company, and there were no less than five deviations from the truly traditional clothes, but that was fine, as far as Huong, the eldest daughter of the dead man, was concerned.

"We live in a crowded city," she said as she adjusted her great granddaughter's headwear. The headband was supposed to be yellow, denoting the girl's relationship to the deceased person, but from the start of the funeral the family, all 30 of them, had received 30 identical white headbands. The religion or origin of Thuong was not an issue here. The dress code was pure Vietnamese. In the 18th century, a decree from the king made white the mandatory color for all Vietnamese, regardless of status.

"We need not be fussy about the small things. Traditions too need to change to fit the modern world," Huong added. "If we followed tradition to the letter, we'd bankrupt ourselves, and cause all the working children to lose their jobs. My father would understand. He's a good father. He knows it's a tough time his children live in."

In a city such as Saigon, many people share her opinion. The old Vietnamese code of funeral garbs is notoriously complex. The rite of funeral itself has close to 50 variations depending on the religion, social status, wealth, and origin of the deceased person. Over time, the rite has been simplified to fit the pace of urban life.

The undertaking service cost VND20 million for the pall bearers, the ashwood coffin, the parade, and the rented clothes.

Huong, additionally, hired a speaker to entertain the guests for the two days. It turned out to be money well-spent. Over the two days, friends and longtime acquaintances of Thuong came in droves to say farewell. Some had traveled thousands of miles to stand before his coffin, bow, and sprinkle holy water on him with a white daisy. Some touched the coffin in hope that the deceased man would take their bad luck with him to the afterlife. They sang songs, had drinks, and talked of their time with Thuong. The songs grew livelier as the night wore on.

There was a lot of laughter, and little crying. Dominico Thuong had had a fulfilling life. He went as he slept, surrounded by his

family. To the Vietnamese, there is no better death than that. Subsequently, there was little cause for mourning, and the atmosphere of those two days reflected this.

As the Saints Go Marching On

On Thursday morning, the last rite began. Catholic funerals start much earlier than the Buddhist variant, beginning at 5am. In the twilight of dawn, the procession started with the bang of drums, clarinets, cymbals, and trumpets. The funeral band played up a ruckus as they marched, the noise tolerated by sleepy neighbors.

The Vietnamese have a saying that the gesture for the dead is the greatest one, for it is the last. And it is this saying that is behind the loud music and flashy parade dress - a big gesture from the family in their last walk with a loved one.

On the way out, past the door, they smashed a clay pot on the ground, a signal for Thuong's soul not to linger in this world and to start his journey to the afterlife.

The coffin was borne by 10 pallbearers. The eldest son led the procession. The family and funeral guests trailed behind. In the old days, Huong and the rest of the family would have had to walk barefoot all the way to the church and to the cremation house. Thankfully, modern tradition is far more lenient.

At six, the last mass began. The mass was an hour long, during which Huong's 10-year-old granddaughter slept with her head on her grandmother's lap.

It was a short ride from the church to the cremation house. "Burial is too expensive," Huong explained. "A lot in the local church graveyard costs two ounces of gold. There's also a maintenance fee. We are not a rich family. Saigon is simply too crowded. There's not even enough land for the living, let alone the dead."

By then, the funeral crowd had dwindled down to family and closest friends. The rest had left at the church gate. They tore out flowers from the funeral wreaths and threw them into the cremation chamber along with the coffin. A last farewell gift.

"It is done," she said as the coffin flamed. "Our duty now is to carry on living." ■

The Journey Home

Faced with a sudden death, a son navigates a labyrinth of paperwork to repatriate his mother's body back to New Zealand

TEXT BY **NPD KHANH** IMAGES BY **QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY**

SIX MONTHS AGO, New Zealand and Vietnamese news carriers covered a tragic accident that took the life of a New Zealand woman and sent her four-day-old grandson into critical condition. Julie Ferne, who had come to Vietnam to share in the happiness of the birth of her new grandson, slipped on the stairs while holding the baby.

Phil Preston is the father of the child, and the son of the deceased.

The impact of the tragedy is slowly healing. "It's been six months," he says. "It's OK." By this stage, he is even starting to see the lighter side of the complex procedure he had to go through to repatriate his mother's remains.

The process began when the death was confirmed. On Sunday, three days after the incident, Preston met up with the New Zealand chancellor, the Vietnamese undertaker, and then had the insurance company on the phone to figure out how to proceed from there. Preston decided that it was important to send his mother's remains back to her home country and that the process would be dealt with from this side by the Vietnamese undertaker, who had seen a body sent back to New Zealand just two and a half weeks before Preston came in. The whole process cost US\$15,000 and involved the hospital, the local police, the undertaker's office, and the Vietnamese customs department.

"That was the key to it all, to sit down with all three parties and figure out what needed to be done," he explains.

Ticking Off Forms

A death certificate was sent out for three people to sign, including the doctor overseeing Preston's mother, the undertaker of the morgue, and the coroner. The signing process alone took four days, during which the morgue prepared his mother for the journey home.

A New Zealand embassy staff member walked Preston through the process. "She was very good, super helpful. Said I could ring her anytime if I had questions." Without her, Preston says, he wouldn't have been able to get through it. "This form and that form (declaration of death certificate, final police report, final death certificate, among others),

it was a bureaucratic minefield, going back and forth with forms and trying to get people to tick them off. There were just so many parties involved".

There was trouble with the size of the coffin too. "It was a huge coffin. Western standards here are very large. For some reason we couldn't find something smaller." This would turn out to be a problem later on.

Preston held a quasi-Vietnamese funeral for his mother in the bay of the morgue where acquaintances, friends, and family members could come in, say goodbye to Mrs. Ferne, and pay their respects.

**"It was a
bureaucratic
minefield, going back
and forth with forms
and trying to get
people to tick them
off. There were just
so many parties
involved"**

"People were coming in and out, singing songs and music, having drinks, and saying goodbye to her. Someone brought flowers. It was humbling seeing so many people coming in to say goodbye to her," Preston recalls.

There was even a beggar. "The morgue door was open and anybody could walk in. It was an all open area. There were two funerals the same day as ours. We were in this bay and there was this Chinese person in the bay next to us. No separation except for the pillars and the roof. People spilled out the front and into

the common area".

A Happy Funeral

The boxing process had to be witnessed by a state officer to ensure that nothing aside from the coffin was in the shipping box. A guard was required at all times.

"If it gets tampered with, then the process starts all over again, and we'd have missed the flight. Apparently this has happened before - smugglers opening it up and putting in drugs or whatever inside," he explains.

Preston's older brother, Stefan, and a New Zealand undertaker took over once the coffin landed in New Zealand. The first problem they had was not paperwork but the coffin's size.

"The coffin was so big it didn't fit into the hearse," says Preston, laughing about it now. "They had to put it in at an angle, and put a seat forward."

Mrs. Fern's funeral in Auckland was organized three weeks after the incident, much later than the normal New Zealand standard. "We had to make a date for the funeral, but we didn't know how long it was going to take. But it was good timing. It made for a relaxed event. People had time to prepare themselves. It was a happy funeral. My mum was a loved member of the community."

Preston's advice to expats who go through the same experience is to be prepared for the culture shock since nothing was the same: "You can't look at everything and expect there to be Western standards. Everything was different, even the way they prepared the body. You are in Vietnam, do as the Vietnamese do".

He also advises to have a translator available at all times. "It's difficult, especially if you don't have anyone who can translate for you. None of the officials in Vietnam can speak English. You need a translator with you to do it. You are bound to make mistakes. It's just impossible otherwise."

During the grueling week when most of the repatriation process took place, Hien, Preston's Vietnamese friend and translator, stayed with him throughout.

"I think mum would have liked it," he concludes. "It's got flare, style. What a way to go." ■

remains.

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deceased

arrangement

deceased



Japanese Bridge

A Brush with Vietnam

In the days of Instagram, Tumblr and Twitter, where just about anyone can quickly share a photo and a few lines of laconic comments, Bridget March is keeping it old school

TEXT BY **JAMES PHAM** ILLUSTRATIONS BY **BRIDGET MARCH**



ON ANY GIVEN day, you might find a silver-haired British woman leaning against her bicycle on one of Vietnam's back alleys, a point-and-shoot and a set of watercolors tucked into her bag, feverishly sketching in her Japanese Moleskin notebook a scene of a Chinese shopfront in Cho Lon or a woman preparing jackfruit in a market in Hoi An.

"I love urban landscapes, especially old architectural elements. There are so many buildings that people walk by without noticing because they're not pagodas. But they have a lovely feeling of colonial architecture. Some of the shopfronts take you back to the merchants who built their properties along streets that used to be canals in Old Saigon. From one window they could see the port and from the other window, the market. They could literally see their entire empire operating. Even now, you can see the old merchant houses between the big hotels. You can feel the history," says Bridget.

That sense of history and discovery brought Bridget to Vietnam last year, putting her houseboat up for sale and giving up a lecturing position at an independent art college in Leeds. With a background in 3-D design and 20 years' experience as a freelance product designer, Bridget's artwork is a marriage of mechanics and creativity, seen through the



A sampling of merchant houses

details in the rows of symmetrical tiles of Hoi An's Japanese Bridge and the precise arrangement of holes in a simple basket of fish.

"Design is much different now than what it used to be. A lot is done with computers. But in the end, unless you can draw, you can't communicate your ideas. You have to be able to sit in front of a client and sketch so they can visualize what you're thinking. Nowadays, concept drawings are so slick and realistic; it confuses clients because they think they're looking at a finished product. But drawing clearly represents a concept."

A Dying Art

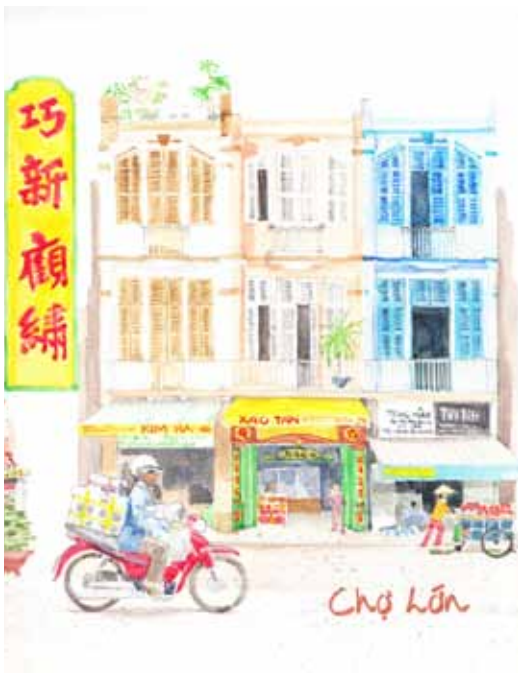
Bridget's first art memory was of her engineer father. "Kids just stop everything

to watch a grownup draw a cat or a dog. My father would draw horses for me. I would just be mesmerized." Bridget also remembers an aunt who she describes as "quite a romantic character who never married and worked in a mission in Africa. She had a lot of artistic friends and when she died, her friends created a book with their drawings and poetry. I thought that was magical. It was so intimate."

Three years ago, she began doing the market circuit, once a month setting up a retro travel-themed stall at crafts markets and country fairs. "I'd stand there in the rain, in the snow, with my stall all laid out with a vintage suitcase and shells and bits of driftwood. I sold a lot but couldn't make the transition of giving up the day job while still

Clockwise from top: Woman preparing jackfruit, Bridget March, Cho Lon

“Design is much different now than what it used to be. A lot is done with computers. But in the end, unless you can draw, you can’t communicate your ideas”



hoping to make ends meet. So you basically become a creative laborer, having to pack up a car, set up a stall, and whatever. You lose a day each time you go to market. In the UK, you’ve got to work so hard to pay incredibly high bills. So people have to prioritize how they spend their money. As a result, the art market has died. Becoming a professional artist, stopping everything just to paint, is just not viable, unless you’re already established.”

Life in Pictures

After a trip around Vietnam and Cambodia, a friend asked why she didn’t just stay to pursue her art career here. Taking all of two days to decide, she finished out the academic year and made the permanent move last

September. The last few months have been a whirlwind of travel, exploration and working with a graphic designer to turn her unique paintings and text about Hoi An into a book. She also teaches a drawing class for small groups centered around the theme, “I Can Teach Anybody to Draw.”

A future project will likely feature Cho Lon. “I just love the colors that the Vietnamese use in their homes. There’s a mix of beautiful periwinkle blue, almost like in Provence, with the ubiquitous pale yellow ochre and terra cotta. With the Chinese, you get these bold colors, lucky colors. What I’d like to do for Saigon is to tell the story. The average tourist coming to Vietnam wants more than they’re getting. Some of the

museums are housed in fabulous buildings, but what’s inside are mainly pictures and pots in glass cases and crusty old books which no one wants to pick up,” she explains.

“My first visit to Hoi An was tailors, tailors, a boat trip and food, and sadly, the only cultural thing I remembered was the Japanese Bridge. But there’s so much history there. The average tourist will get very little information about the real Hoi An and even less about Cho Lon. For starters, I want to bring these places to life in pictures along with what I learned. I want to concentrate on producing exciting work for people.”

For more on Bridget’s art classes, see this month’s Oi Marketplace in the back of Oi for exclusive deals. ■

Two Tongue Tied

Expat parents discuss raising their children up bilingual in Vietnam

TEXT BY MICHAEL ARNOLD IMAGES BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY

FOR THOSE OF us struggling with the difficult tones, marks, and diphthongs of the Vietnamese language, there's a certain sense of envy at watching a foreign seven-year-old making the effortless leaps of the tongue as if it were no trouble at all. Language seems to settle easy on kids and it passes between them like viruses – and children's mastery of a second language tends to be so remarkable that there's little to distinguish them from truly native speakers.

For a parent, however, there are some tough decisions that need to be made. While it's all very well to encourage your child to mix with the locals and absorb their culture, it sometimes backfires – some parents have experienced a certain alienation from their children after introducing the cultural divide, and if you're an expat, it can be hard work making sure your bilingual kids are as fluent in your own language as they are in the local dialect. Is there really something to gain in raising a preschool polyglot, or are you just asking for the onset of an adolescent identity crisis?

For expat mother Jennifer Foster, whose son Tai is part Vietnamese, the choice couldn't be clearer. "He's different from other foreign kids who don't have a connection here. He does have roots."

"Many parents don't make a big effort to help their kids learn Vietnamese if they're not here long-term. I realize Vietnamese may not be very useful outside of Vietnam, but since Tai was born here and has Vietnamese family, it's possible he may want to spend time here as an adult. In that case, I think speaking Vietnamese would be advantageous," says Jennifer.

Tai takes weekly lessons in Vietnamese, although the amount of time spent on the subject at his international school is minimal. "It's just an hour a week – a language and culture class. They tell you ahead of time that it's not meant for fluency."

The results, however, have been positive. "Tai loves to learn Vietnamese, and fancies himself a natural. We use Vietnamese when we're out and about around town, and he loves to help me with vocabulary at the market and elsewhere. He also gives great directions to taxi drivers! Vietnamese people have treated him so wonderfully since the day he was born, so if he speaks Vietnamese, they are that much more pleased. He gets a great response, and I'm sure that's encouraging."

"He would be very happy to be fluent, as would I," she adds.

The Mother Tongue

Vietnamese, of course, is hardly a widely-spoken language outside of this country, and for some expats it's not necessary at all to speak it even if they're based here permanently. The sheer size of Ho Chi Minh City's Korean community, for example, makes it far less imperative for resident Koreans to



Tai

acquire a working knowledge of Vietnamese than it is for other foreigners.

For locally-based businessman Kang Minjoo, becoming a father while being posted in Vietnam wasn't part of the original plan – but after marrying his long-term partner Mijung, little Yijoon, (now four-years-old) was unlikely to have any trouble accessing a normal Korean education here. Still, Kang sees growing up bilingual as being a definite strength.

"I believe it's important to focus on your mother tongue first. Many Korean parents here want their children to learn English very early, from the age of about three. But I think learning English as a second language should come later.

"There are a lot of Korean kids here

who can't understand Korean deeply or communicate easily after studying in English. They can't go back to Korea to get a job or go to school there. If they take an exam, they can't even understand the questions," he continues.

There is, however, a difference between learning a second language and acquiring it naturally. With both parents working, Yijoon's extensive contact hours with her local nannies has seen her independently develop a sound understanding of Vietnamese. The acquisition wasn't without its difficulties, however – Yijoon's first Vietnamese caregiver was strict and overly critical, and this, in combination with her naturally quiet and artistic nature, has made her reluctant to speak the language.

"Children have to be confident to speak out

their opinions. Parents should always listen to what their kids have to say even if it's not clear. Our first babysitter didn't do that. I think she might want to talk more with the current babysitter. She's about 19 or 20. Yijoon calls her 'sister,'" says Kang.

Kang Minjoo is entirely positive about encouraging his daughter to learn Vietnamese, despite its limitations in terms of usefulness outside of Vietnam. "She was born here and lives here, so it's a good chance for her to acquire Vietnamese. It could be a good background for her in the future or a strong point in her career. If she learns Vietnamese fluently, I think she'll have the ability to learn other languages more easily. I still believe that she can speak Vietnamese. I see her writing Vietnamese words sometimes at home. One day, if she needs it, I'll arrange for formal lessons. But the mother language comes first."

Adding: "If she has Vietnamese and Korean as two mother languages, that's all right for me."

Pure Talking

Parenting bilingual children can be challenging, and with the expat lifestyle, things rarely go according to plan. Coming from a complex multilingual society already, Filipino parents Melvin and Nix Juban had very clear ideas about their firstborn daughter Ashley's exposure to language.

"It was a conscious decision," says Nix.

"When we moved to Malaysia, Ashley was only one, and we were worried about her picking up Malay English. In the Philippines, speaking English is associated with having a good social status. You have to be fluent to get ahead. There are many local dialects too, and it can be embarrassing when they mix.

"Even before leaving we were already convinced that we would use English as a primary language for our daughter, but that if we had to speak in Tagalog it should be fluent and not mixed up. We told our nannies, whatever you speak, it should be pure. Don't confuse the child."

This strategy went out the window fairly quickly when the family shifted to Israel and discovered that Ashley would need to study Hebrew. Young Ashley, already a seasoned world traveler at four, took it in her stride.

"She let go of my hand and didn't look back. She's very comfortable with change. We always break her in, talk to her like an adult. She was really fluent after three months," recalls Nix. "She became my translator. I was learning, but struggling with it. I could read, and so when we went shopping, I would read out the labels, and Ashley would tell me what the words meant."

Hebrew is a strongly expressive language, and when the family returned to the Philippines, they noticed big changes in Ashley's behaviour. Both mother and daughter had become more assertive, and they were

both accused of being "less Filipino".

"It's not just the culture you bring back," says Nix. "There's culture in the language. It's the same with the whole 'anh' and 'chi' thing in Vietnamese – to get on well in my work here, I have to position myself in terms of social status, which bothers me."

Melvin and Nix now have a five-year-old son, Adam, and when they arrived in Vietnam, they considered enrolling him in a local school for a purely Vietnamese education.

"My Filipino colleagues were really surprised at our openness to letting our son study in Vietnamese. But after Ashley's experience, we realized it would only make him stronger. Unfortunately, the schools refused us, saying it would be too much effort to teach Adam and that their teachers couldn't speak English. We eventually had to enrol him in an international school."

Adam has had a good deal of exposure to Vietnamese, however, and is taking the weekly culture and language classes at school, which he enjoys immensely. Ashley, too, is making frighteningly good progress with her Vietnamese, and her parents have no hesitation about letting her explore the language and culture of their new home.

"We're investing in relationships with the people here. It's not just about hello and bye-bye. That's just not how you interact with people," says Nix. ■

"Children have to be confident to speak out their opinions. Parents should always listen to what their kids have to say even if it's not clear"



Nix, Adam, Ashley & Melvin Juban



Arrow Heads

Beyond just a bar game, darts offers a platform for different cultures to connect and share a common interest

TEXT BY **BENNETT DAVIDSON** IMAGES BY **NAM QUAN**

IN THE SMOKY interior of Ice Blue bar on Dong Khoi, Jesse Gold squares himself in front of the board. By day he's an English teacher, but at night the assembled crowd sees him in a different light - the reigning darts champion of Saigon. Though the music grooves in the background, onlookers remain silent and still as Jesse lines himself up and stares at the tiny red sliver underneath the number 20 at the top of the board. Standing perpendicular to his target, he sharply inhales before releasing the dart with a smooth, swift movement below the elbow, his body otherwise motionless. The dart arcs toward the board before landing squarely in the center of the sliver, denoting a score of 60 - the highest score you can achieve with a single dart. He confidently proceeds to throw his remaining two darts into the same tiny space, as the previously breathless crowd erupts into cheers.

In 1995, Vietnam opened its borders to foreigners, forever changing its cultural landscape. As the social scene began to blossom, expats congregated in a handful

of bars which served as central meeting places for the newcomers. Seeking common ground, they turned to a traditional bar game that is accessible, yet involves skill and competition.

"We had a little group of expats back then and we'd get together and say 'tonight we'll play at Ice Blue [one of the first darts venues], and next week we'll play at Gecko.' It wasn't a darts league yet, we were just a bunch of friends who liked to drink and play darts," explains Lee Duntan, chairman of the Saigon International Darts League (SIDL).

"You're in Vietnam. You're an expat. You speak a different language, the food is different, and the weather is different. It makes sense that you would join a group of people and do something that you all like doing," he adds.

As the city began to expand and welcome more foreigners, the darts scene gained traction with increasing participation from expats and locals, and in 2002 the league was formed with six teams and eight locations. A lot has changed in the last decade - the league has grown to include corporate sponsorships, charities, and plans for major future expansion.

Diddle for the Middle

Darts is a deceptively simple game. The two most popular iterations of darts are Cricket and 501. In Cricket, players strive to eliminate the numbers 15-20 by placing three darts in each number, as well as hitting several other



categories. 501 is all about points - opponents race each other to score 501 points, but they have to end the round by hitting a double - a tiny space on the outer rim of the board. These games can be rather competitive amongst serious players, but the rules can be adjusted to give handicaps to beginners. In order to become proficient in darts, a player must be able to place three consecutive darts in a tiny space - a task that is harder than it sounds.

"I'm sure many people think of darts as just another bar game," says Zach Moody, the treasurer of SIDL. "But for many of our darters, it's a decidedly more serious endeavor. It's a little bit like golf: you're always pushing yourself to get better, but you never feel that you've mastered the game. Even the world's most skilled darters know that they have room to improve."

SIDL has turned Tuesday night into a weekly event in Ho Chi Minh City. Now with over 300 members, 28 teams, and 20 bars serving as darts venues, SIDL has become the largest regular gathering of expats in the city.

"Right now we have over 30 countries represented in the league," explains Lee. "We have players from Russia, United Arab Emirates, Canada, India, Pakistan, Chile, America, and the United Kingdom. You name a country and we have a darts player for you."

The league is not only international in its composition; SIDL sends its top players

to compete in international tournaments in Thailand, Singapore, and China. There are even tournaments where players form teams to represent their home country and pit their skills against an array of international opponents. Although the league is comprised of expats from around the world, they are eager to promote darts amongst the Vietnamese as well.

"Vietnam has the second highest number of people of any country in the league, just behind the Philippines," says Lee. "Last year we began hosting the first ever Vietnam National Darts tournament with divisions for both men and women. We really want to bring darts to this country, it's important that we get the Vietnamese involved."

Triple In, Triple Out

The SIDL has even ventured out of the bar in order to engage in charity work. They work directly with Sister Trish Franklin, the well-known Australian nun who drinks beer and loves Australian football, who runs Loreto Schools in Ho Chi Minh City for disabled and disadvantaged youth.

"We host a fundraising event two times a year and get local businesses and bars to donate products for an auction. We have a lot of support for these events and all the money goes to Loreto Schools," says Bob Wittenbach, secretary of the league.

They are serious about charity work, but

their primary objective is to have fun. Both Bob and Lee play for a team called Alayah, which stands for "As Long As You Are Happy." There are other unique team names, like The African Spear Chuckers, Mad House, Those Guys, and a group of Vietnamese women who call themselves ACDC (Asian Crazy Darts Chicks). Although the atmosphere is competitive, it's always fun and welcoming to newcomers.

Bob explains: "All you need to do to get involved is to go to darts night on Tuesday nights at any of the locations we play at. Also, feel free to check out our website [thesidl.com] for information about news, teams, locations, and events."

This space is dedicated to featuring various special interest groups around the city, some traditional and others not as much so. Would your club like to be featured in Oi? Email us at jpham@oivietnam.com. ■

"Right now we have over 30 countries represented in the league."



A Home Run

An American import becomes a major hit in Ho Chi Minh City

TEXT BY JONATHAN REBOURS IMAGES BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY



TO A YOUNG BRITISH man like myself the word softball evokes scenes of Middle America from 90s coming-of-age family movies. But to many, especially in Asia, it's a sport that has a dedicated following.

For those unfamiliar with the sport, softball takes the premise of baseball and brings it down to a more fun and manageable size. It uses a larger ball, one extra outfield player, taking a team size up to 10 players and the pitcher can only throw underhand. Bases are shortened to 60 feet and the rules encourage the batter to hit the ball, rather than employ the time-consuming strike out tactics of baseball.

"Being able to play the game that many of us in the league spent our youth participating in and still love is what has made the league solid," says Jeff Thrash, the commissioner for the Saigon International Softball League (SISL).

The SISL was inaugurated in October 2009 to meet a clear demand. Starting from "a group of guys that would show up and just kind of play around" to having at one point eight regular teams playing, the league is a popular fixture. The season runs from October to April and even in the in-between months players still meet up at their home at the Taiwanese school in District 7 to play.

Treated as a fun get together of 100 or so players each Sunday match day, the standard

is evidently good. The first season saw a team of Vietnamese compete amongst the expat teams, mainly Western, with one team of Japanese and one team of Taiwanese competing in this current season. However, Jeff adds "these [Vietnamese] players are now on the Vietnamese national baseball team".

Such a diverse group of teams playing regular matches certainly makes for good sporting anecdotes. Kevin Siegmann, formerly of the Spirits, remembers, "One guy, out of nowhere, hits a huge ball that clears the 15 foot fence and the trees at the bottom of the field and is on a collision course with a Honda Wave flying down the road." Luckily the shocked driver was able to swerve out the way and the team accepted their grand slam with high fives and pats on the back.

The SISL also sends teams to tournaments in Bangkok, Jakarta and Manila. The tournaments are highly competitive with teams from across Asia descending on a playing field for a weekend of competition and socializing.

"These tournaments are a total blast. Everyone plays hard on and off the field and great friendships are formed. They become kind of addictive," says Jeff.

Field of Dreams

They have also hosted an international

tournament which he hopes will become an annual fixture. Last year they hosted eight away teams, including those from as far afield as Tokyo and Jakarta. RMIT South has been booked for the second tournament on the last weekend in August so is sure to be a hub of activity, fun and of course, intense competition with hopefully 12 teams competing for Saigon glory.

Jeff's vision for the future is for "the league to continue to provide a fun, competitive outlet for the league members and continue to attract new players." The players and teams are the life blood of the league and with international acknowledgement from the visiting teams it is sure to grow and grow.

Finishing in April they are already on the lookout to attract new players during the summer months.

If you want to grab a piece of the action or simply take in the spectacle of 100 plus ballplayers then head down to the bleachers at the Taiwanese school to find this welcoming crowd every Sunday from around 9am - 4pm. Failing participation in the daytime activities you'll be sure to find them in the evening discussing match day events in the Banana Bar in District 7.

SISL - Taiwanese School, Lo S3 Khu A Do Thi Moi, Nam Thanh Pho, D7 ■



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I wanted to be a doctor!

Don't let
traffic accidents
ruin our
children's future

 **CHILDREN ALSO NEED A HELMET.**

 Bộ Giáo Dục & Đào Tạo  

THE MYTH:

I've lived here for some odd years and have never once seen a helicopter anywhere close to the helicopter pad at Bitexco Financial Tower. I was told that helicopters are banned from the skies over downtown HCMC. If this is true, why did Bitexco Financial Tower outfit its flagship building with a helicopter pad that will never be used? And why does Diamond Plaza have a helipad on its roof? Is the ban a myth or not?



THIS IS HALF-TRUE

ON PAPER, THINGS are clear. Vietnamese commercial aviation law number 66/2006/QH11, chapter five on flight activities, clause 85 on no-flight and restricted flight zones clearly states that all non-government aircraft, including helicopters, are forbidden from entering military and government administrative zones. HCMC has several of those zones dotting the city map in jigsaw pieces and congregating in District 1, the home of government offices and foreign embassies. The military half of those no-flight zones are leftovers from before 1975 and remains military zone only in name, but that hasn't stopped anyone from slapping a 'no-flight' warning over them in the city flight map. The rest of that map, however, is fair game.

On paper, a helicopter can go anywhere above the city as long as it doesn't enter army or government territories.

In real world practices, things are a little muddier. Theoretically, any helicopter company, with a bit of research and preparation, can legally operate a helicopter service inside the city. However,

there are two major reasons why this proves impractical:

1. As aviation law requires, commercial flight corps need to register their flight paths for approval beforehand. This is not usually an issue outside of Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, but within these two cities, this one procedure can drag on for months due to the honeycomb layout of residential, military and administrative facilities. This prevents impromptu flights some travelers expect from helicopter services.
2. The majority of Vietnamese (and a fair amount of expats) see helicopters as a luxury reserved for the ultra rich and not a real transportation choice. Not hard to understand given an hour's ride on a helicopter costs approximately VND100 million. This makes for a very niche market in which the largest customer base is oil companies needing the helicopter service for offshore inspection. Sporadic city bound expats in need of a short ride, as far as helicopter corps are concerned, really

aren't worth the effort.

The good news is, things are about to change. In late 2012, a helicopter was hired by a Vietnamese family to transport an ill family member from a remote town to a central Hanoi hospital. This helicopter trip was a mere blip in the daily log of the company whose helicopter made the run, but it brought back into public attention the viability of helicopters as a tool for emergency transportation, not just a toy for the ultra rich to flaunt their wealth. Since then, the helicopter market has increased, with several private companies making the jump into commercial helicopter tourism. Coupled with increasingly relaxed regulation from the government, a reduced price range due to growing customer base, the day that a privately rented helicopter touches down on Bitexco Financial Tower helipad may not be too far off... *By NPD Khanh*

Do you have a myth you want us to investigate? Email us at saigonmythbusters@oivietnam.com. ■



*The
Luxury
Issue*





Tiny Dragon

WE FIND OUT HOW LOCAL DEMAND FOR LUXURY BRANDS
IS TURNING VIETNAM INTO A POWERHOUSE MARKET

TEXT BY OI IMAGES BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY

NAMED BY GOLDMAN Sachs as one of the 11 countries having the highest potential of becoming the world's largest economies in the 21st century, Vietnam is quickly outgrowing its "Tiny Dragon of Asia" moniker. Experts predict that Vietnam's economic growth rate will exceed that of its Southeast Asian neighbors by as early as 2016. With this newfound prosperity comes the inevitable

appetite for luxury goods.

That was the subject of the 2012 Asia Luxury Summit, organized by luxury lifestyle magazine, *Robb Report Vietnam*. Its publisher, Michael von Schlippe, observed that Vietnam is well on its way to "following in the footsteps of China" whose own luxury market is described as robust after seven years of vigorous growth. The summit also advised brands "to speak to consumers

in their language" taking local mentality into consideration when marketing their products in Vietnam. Experts concluded that while Vietnamese consumers have high brand awareness, they have little brand loyalty, instead focusing on a label's "amiability" and image.

In truth, the luxury goods market is relatively new in Vietnam, with Mercedes Benz being one of the first brands to launch



in 1995, followed by Louis Vuitton in 1997, both early investors in the growing potential many were only beginning to suspect would emerge. These luxury giants opened the door for other brands to establish a presence in Vietnam such as Chanel, Givenchy, Bulgari and BMW.

In 2013 the industry continues to grow, a developed and lucrative business consisting of five to six major distributors in the retail sector alone, supporting sought after names like Marc by Marc Jacobs, Emporio Armani, Bally and Gucci. As our *Luxe List* shows, there is a market out there for US\$114,000 diamond and gold phones and US\$35,000 motorcycles. But a mid-day trip to Vincom Center A, the mecca of eye candy in Ho Chi Minh City, where salespeople seemingly outnumber customers three to one, might have people wondering exactly who's buying (or buying into) these ultra-luxe products?

Paul Nguyen, Dealer Principal of Vietnam Star Automobile, one of three licensed distributors of Mercedes Benz in Vietnam, talks about a unique market comprised of a growing number of young wealthy Vietnamese, with the average Mercedes client aged 37, compared to 45-46 years of age in the US.

A Drop in Standards

The Guardian quoted Jean-François Palus, Managing Director of the French luxury group that owns YSL, Bottega Veneta and Gucci, as saying that even if China consumption slows down, "rapid growth in [new] countries [like Vietnam] will fuel growth for a long time." In fact, the latest figures available show that the Asia Pacific region has actually overtaken Europe as the single largest market for luxury goods companies.

Industry insiders point to consumers of luxury goods as being more financially insulated than the average customer, which explains why the luxury sector bounced back more quickly after the world economic recession in comparison to many average retailers.

Paul has also found that despite an expected dip in sales in the last financial year due to factors including an industry-wide slowdown and the standard 200 per cent tax bill for getting the vehicles into the country, business is good with an estimated 3,000 passenger models and a further 2,000 commercial vehicles already on the road, as well as 13 Mercedes Benz sold during a recent event.

An intangible but very real draw of luxury

goods is the implied standard of quality behind the names. Tuan Anh, Fashion Editor of *Dep* magazine, notes that distributors of luxury fashion labels must often work with one foot in Vietnam and the other in their brand's country of origin in order to uphold the long tradition of quality these brands have taken a lifetime to build. In other words, a customer's experience of buying a Hermes belt in Vincom Center A should be no different to strolling into one of their boutiques in Paris. Paul cites similar strict standards, saying that Mercedes Benz Vietnam inspectors will even go as far as measuring the height of the waiting room tables and chairs and ensuring the correct number of computer terminals for customers to browse at while sipping cappuccino. After all, he explains, "a drop in standards out here in Vietnam can have far reaching implications back on Wall Street."

With an estimated (and growing) 17 million available consumers who can afford branded products, out of which roughly 1.3 million can truly afford high end goods, it seems as Asia's Tiny Dragon is now proudly sporting a Hermes scarf, Prada shoes and clutching an LV bag. ■



Joe The Mechanic

WHEN LEAVING YOUR US\$500,000 CAR TO JUST ANYONE WON'T DO, IT'S TIME TO CALL DR. JOE

TEXT BY JONATHAN REBOURS IMAGES BY NAM QUAN

What is your background?

Joe: For many years I worked as a professional engineer designing, testing and developing cars while enjoying the global experience that comes with the car giants. I also worked in the aerospace industry. It was a truly wonderful career.

How did you become involved in the luxury automobile industry here?

J: About six years ago the luxury car market was booming and I didn't know anybody in the business locally. I rode my motorbike all over HCMC to explore the luxury car market and sensed the need for specialist service advice and high-end tuning. Sometime later, I gathered the courage to open my first garage using my own brand name and in time clients approached me with serious problems with their luxury cars. The business grew from there with hard work

and determination.

When did you first take an interest in luxury models?

J: When I was young my uncle took me cruising in his vintage cars; he had a fleet of them including Rolls Royce, Bentley, Studebaker, Cadillac and Mercedes Benz. My other uncle took me for rides in his super cars like Ferrari and Lamborghini. I watched F1 GP with my Dad since I was about five years old. The passion came early in life and I was always dreaming about how to make a car.

Is there a stand out job in your career that you will always remember? What about Vietnam? What has been a highlight since starting here?

J: I really enjoyed testing race cars at Phillip

Island circuit in Australia. This was a dream job professionally and an adrenalin rush on the track while doing insane speeds with a laptop in hand. In Vietnam last year, I installed a twin turbo system on an Audi R8 and this was a technical delight and I also enjoyed doing a full body kit on a Mercedes Benz G55 for a client in Hanoi.

What is your favorite thing about your job? Is there anything else you'd rather be doing?

J: The favorite thing about my job is making my clients feel happy and seeing them come back again. I also enjoy spending time developing the professional careers of my employees; it's all about people. And yes, I do get to drive some of the most exotic cars in the world - for test purposes of course. Otherwise I'd rather be a barista with a specialty coffee house making



clients feel happy with espressos - quick smiles.

Where do you find your mechanics? Do they need any additional training?

J: I have three engineers - Dien, Bao and Cuong - who all joined my company during the early days; they were fresh and so was my company. We went through the good and bad times together and tried to respect each other along the way. Last year a young mechanic named Hai walked into my garage looking for a job and I offered him a position immediately and he turned out to be a wonderful employee. I like to give people a chance; it's all about finding the right character and the rest will follow.

What is the competition like in Vietnam? You seem to be at the forefront of the market, do you think there will be more competition in the future?

J: The independent garage scene in Vietnam will always be competitive because it is a referral type business and clients hunt for referrals both privately and through public forums. All garage players need time in the market to establish a reputation; it's not like the old days when big money and face can easily attract clients.

What is it about Vietnam that you enjoy living and working in the most?

J: I enjoy Vietnam because it offers a street lifestyle filled with young people striving for

success. It is the feeling of prosperity that I like most.

How has the luxury market changed since you began?

J: In the past it was the successful businessmen playing with luxury cars and now the new, younger, richer generations that are joining in - the *nouveau riche*. They are well informed and these days want to enjoy the creative process of personalizing their cars. They splash the cash and want to feel special and most importantly the product must enhance their status publicly. A different looking car does this nicely.

Is there a typical client you provide service for?

J: Dr. Joe Garage offers service, repair and tuning from entry level right up to the serious level. The key point is that *all* my clients are looking for trust and this is the position my business strives for every day in the market. It is not necessarily a luxury experience they are seeking by way of marble floors and a clinical showroom, although they do expect to see some good equipment and luxury cars in my garage. My clients expect me to solve the most difficult technical problems which means they demand competent technical knowledge at a reasonable price.

What problems do you find at work?

J: The *nouveau riche* want to experience and

try everything new, which means they tend to swap and change luxury cars very quickly and as a result, the service and maintenance history becomes convoluted. First time owners love the status that a luxury car brings but don't consider the running costs and if [it becomes] too much, they will try to sell and pass it on to the next owner. Brand loyalty is hard to find in the market because clients try anything new and interestingly the multiple brand experience in itself becomes a topic of status.

Where do you think the luxury market will go in the future?

J: The luxury market is young from the perspective of service staff in retail shops, who often don't know anything about the history of the brand and how to incorporate this into a sales experience to create brand loyalty. So I think luxury retailers will improve staff training in the future as brands become more entrenched in the market and develop a local history. From the client's perspective, they are educated and will become more demanding for a personalized individual service. Clients will ask retailers more detailed questions about the product and service they seek, rather than just buying for status value. I am hoping Vietnam will create its own reputable luxury brands just like other Asian markets are achieving now.

Got a Bentley or Maybach that needs tuning? Head over to Dr. Joe Creazzo's Professional Car Tuner at C13/QV 50 Nguyen Van Linh, Binh Chanh District. ■



A Perfect Day

FANCY A BIT OF ROLE PLAYING ON YOUR ROMANTIC GETAWAY?
THEN BOARD THE SPEEDBOAT AND BE WHISKED AWAY 007 STYLE

TEXT BY JAMES PHAM IMAGES BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY

NESTLED IN BINH Duong, just 15km north of downtown Ho Chi Minh City, An Lam Saigon River might as well be a world away. Firmly ensconced at the number 1 spot on Tripadvisor for Specialty Lodging despite being open for just over a year, An Lam Saigon River was built as a private residence five years ago, reflecting the owner's vision of hospitality based on four elements that are increasingly rare in today's frenetic world - space, nature, privacy and openness.

3:00pm – We meet the speedboat at the Bach Dang Pier for the 15 minute ride up the Saigon River to An Lam. Guests have described the experience as James Bond-like and I begin to understand why as Tran, my personal butler for the stay, uncorks a bottle of sparkling wine and produces two

champagne flutes. The boat neatly dodges clumps of water hyacinth and with each passing bridge, high rises and motorbikes are replaced with mangrove palms and the occasional bouy.

3:20pm – We pull up to the hotel's private jetty and out of habit, I look around for a reception area, only to find there is none. Guests here are served instead by personal butlers who act as reception desk, concierge and waiter, ever ready to satisfy every request, from a cup of coffee to booking a spa session. Constant Wormser, who at 24 is one of the youngest general managers in Asia, comes over to greet us personally and over drinks the impeccably stylish Swiss talks of the hotel's dedication to meet every request, large or small. He tells of a butler

who ran out to get a small gift of wood for a couple's five year anniversary, and in the same breath, securing a private helicopter for a businessman who had to make an afternoon meeting in Nha Trang.

3:50pm – We check into our room, the Saigon Villa, one of four villas and 11 rooms on the property, most with their own plunge pool. The beauty of An Lam is its location directly on the Saigon River, minutes away from town but really and truly a world apart. The only sound we hear is the rustling of the wind through the tall bamboo and the lapping of the river against our private wooden deck. We spend the afternoon lazing in our own private world within the walls of our villa, only briefly venturing out to see the sunset over the river, the sky streaks of orange and purples.



KING & QUEEN FOR A DAY

THE AN LAM REGULARLY ORGANIZES EVENTS FOR THOSE WANTING TO GET AWAY JUST FOR A FEW HOURS. THE AMERICAN BBQ (A TRADITIONAL COOKOUT OF HOTDOGS, HAMBURGERS AND BUDWEISER) ON SELECT SUNDAYS ARE POPULAR, AS ARE DAY USE PACKAGES, CUSTOMIZED TO INCLUDE ITEMS SUCH AS SPARKLING WINE FOR THE BOAT TRIP, COUPLES SPA TREATMENTS AND LUNCH. ROOMS CAN BE HAD FOR THE DAY FOR ROUGHLY 40-50 PERCENT OFF OVERNIGHT RATES. THE RESORT ALSO MAKES A CONVENIENT BASE FOR GOLFING AT THE NEARBY TWIN DOVES COURSE



7:20pm – With sundowners taken care of, we meander over to dinner. Tonight, we choose the cool vibes of the Luc Binh restaurant overhanging the river with its soft jazz and silk cushions, rather than the elegant, more formal Tram dining room attached to the main house. The menu is separated into Vietnamese and Western cuisine. Chef Vinh brings his Vietnamese-Australian roots and French-Italian training to the menu, creating his brand of clean, simple food, highlighting classic cooking techniques. In order to avoid “fusion confusion”, there is little tinkering with traditional Vietnamese dishes, perhaps simply substituting Australian beef for local in the beef *luc lac* (VND450,000). On this evening, we share a starter of tuna *carpaccio* (VND250,000) followed by mains of swordfish crusted with white four spice set on a bed of braised banana blossom with a creamy vermouth and pea sauce (VND410,000) and the lamb shank with truffle oil mash and steamed carrots

(VND450,000), a version so good that it has been adopted by Bobby Chinn.

9:00pm – Popular with couples, An Lam is practically synonymous with romance. Earlier, we spotted an in-villa bath option on the spa menu and when we come back from dinner, the Cleopatra awaits us, a bath of fresh milk, honey, almond oil and rose petals (VND1,900,000). It just so happens that the Saigon Villa has a tub set right in the bedroom, surrounded by floor to ceiling windows which look out onto the private deck and landscaped garden, bringing a sense of nature indoors.

8:30am – Today promises to be a lazy one. After a breakfast of Eggs Benedict with freshly baked breads and croissants, we lounge by the hotel pool, play a few games of petanque and simply find a secluded spot to read. With only 15 rooms, we barely see any of the other guests around, the perfect marriage of privacy and the open concept of the hotel. While some families do stay at the

hotel, only those with well-behaved children need apply. After all, the watchword for this property is serenity.

2:00pm – After a lunch of pan-seared scallops with pickled cucumber, beetroot relish and fennel purée (VND290,000), we schedule a couples’ Love Spell spa treatment (VND2,728,000) before reluctantly packing our bags for the return boat ride to hectic Ho Chi Minh City. It really has been the perfect day, the perfect stay.

Exclusive discounts on rates below when mentioning “Oi Vietnam” at booking:

An Lam Deluxe: US\$400+/-/night

An Lam Executive with private

pool: US\$500+/-/night

Garden Villa: US\$850+/-/night

Saigon Villa: US\$950+/-/night (riverfront)

Song Villa: US\$980+/-/night (riverfront)

Sunset Villa: US\$1030+/-/night (riverfront)

Room rate is inclusive of breakfast.

Contact www.anlam.com ■





The Suite Life

WE TRAVEL TO THANH DA PENINSULA
TO SEE IF THE GRASS IS GREENER OVER
ON THIS SIDE OF THE CITY

TEXT BY JAMES PHAM IMAGES BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY

THERE'S SOMETHING TO be said for rocking out a suite while on holiday. Other than the obvious surge in space, the luxury is all in the small things - grabbing a beer from a full-sized fridge instead of a minibar, playing cards around a dinner table instead of a dinky side one and lounging on a sofa that's meant to be lounged on. It just feels like home. That is, if your home were a five bedroom apartment overlooking an aquamarine pool surrounded by lush bougainvillea with 360° views of the Saigon River from your private jacuzzi.

Opened in 2001 and a member of the Prestige Hotels group, Saigon Domaine Luxury Residences is 45 units of one to five bedroom apartments situated on the Thanh Da peninsula, just 15 minutes from downtown Ho Chi Minh City. While billed as a high-end residence for long-term tenants, about half of the units are available for hire as hotel suites meant for shorter stays, featuring gorgeous wood floors, marble bathrooms and a separate kitchen with dishwasher and washing machine, all dressed up in an eclectic Asian chic decor. These are the kind of suites Lindsay Lohan would be proud to be banned from.

City residents know Thanh Da as one of the last green spaces in the city proper, a slice of country living right within the city, highlighted by the ever kitschy but fun Binh Quoi Tourist Villages with their popular weekend buffets. City resident, Luyen, says of Thanh Da, "It feels like a small town. There aren't any big houses. People still plant rice or raise ducks. It's totally undeveloped and green which is why everyone likes to go there for a change of scenery or to get together with friends at one of the chill seafood restaurants."

Country Cruising

This may all be changing, though, with reported government plans for a controversial major expansion, aiming to turn Thanh Da into an urban commercial center with high rises and guest houses while ostensibly maintaining its status as "the green lung" of Ho Chi Minh City. Despite a failed expansion plan in 2007, some feel that change is inevitable with two bridges in the works to connect Thao Dien and Rach Chiec in D2 to the peninsula. Until that happens, though, Saigon Domaine guests can take advantage of the surprisingly quiet riverside location by lazily spending the day fishing from the jetty or bicycling to explore the peninsula's interior.

The interesting pairing of apartments and

hotel suites has pluses and minuses. The feeling of being at home is seen from the fact that no units are numbered, but named after ships instead. The nautical theme is carried throughout in the form of brass railings, fixtures and model ships, as well as in the design of the green central atrium, creating the feeling of being aboard a very exclusive cruise liner. Also like a cruise ship, the facilities are compactly arranged, including a fitness center, outdoor pools and mini-shop. However, apartment living means there is no spa or dedicated space for a traditional restaurant. Instead, guests can have meals delivered as room service, or taken out to the floating terrace where a handful of tables are set up.

A staycation at Saigon Domaine has something for everyone. One bedroom units can be a quiet romantic get-away, while the four-bedroom units with a huge terrace and private jacuzzi would make the perfect spot for a cocktail party for 20 of your closest friends, with space to sleep off the night's revelries.

A one bedroom suite starts at US\$169 per night; a four-bedroom suite is US\$349, all suites include breakfast. Stays of three nights or more receive a discounted rate. Contact www.saigondomaine.com. ■

THE BEST VALUE BUFFET IN TOWN

WHILE FEW OUTSIDE GUESTS EVER MAKE IT OUT TO ENJOY A DRINK AT THE HOTEL'S CLUB BAR OR A MEAL ON THE FLOATING TERRACE, SUNDAY LUNCH SHOULD BE AN EXCEPTION. HANDS DOWN, THE BEST VALUE BBQ BUFFET IN TOWN, THE VND275,000++ WEEKLY LUNCH FEATURES AUSTRALIAN RIB-EYE AND KING PRAWNS (AND SOMETIMES SALMON) MARINATED IN YOUR CHOICE OF SAUCES, AND A REVOLVING ASSORTMENT OF COLD SALADS, HOT FOODS AND DESSERTS LIKE CHEESECAKE AND APPLE TART. VALUE PRICED FOR GUESTS AT THE PROPERTY BUT OPEN TO ANYONE, THE BBQ BUFFET ISN'T ADVERTISED ANYWHERE OUTSIDE OF THE HOTEL, AND WITH AN INCLUDED BEER, SOFT DRINK OR GLASS OF WINE, THIS RELAXED LUNCH SERVED ON THE BANKS OF THE SAIGON RIVER IS A STEAL OF A MEAL. WITH ONLY A FEW TABLES SET OUT ON THE FLOATING TERRACE AND AROUND THE POOL, RESERVATIONS ARE HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.



Escape the City, Within the City

WHEN THE THOUGHT OF A SIX HOUR BUS RIDE TO A RESORT SOUNDS TOO LONG, THEN IT'S TIME TO CUT THE TRAVELING TIME TO 15 MINUTES AND GET THERE SOONER

TEXT BY JAMES PHAM IMAGES BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY

THAO DIEN VILLAGE is a study in incongruity. Tucked away in An Phu, the streets leading up to it are lined with vegetarian cafes and trendy furniture stores, looking like they could've been plucked directly from Anytown, USA. Round the corner in the leafy, sleepy suburban neighborhood, and the ordinary, albeit monied surrounds, surprisingly opens up into expansive views of the Saigon River.

Opened five years ago, Thao Dien Village originally comprised of a distinctive white manor house with two dozen hotel rooms, an Italian restaurant and a premier spa all set on a large swath of land along the Saigon River. Last year, the property was divided in two, with the manor house going to a separate property opening later this year. The rejuvenated Thao Dien Village, occupying 10,000sqm, reopened in October 2012 with a newly constructed hotel (the Thao Dien Boutique Hotel) and an Event House. Owned by the husband and wife team which also owns the Quan Ngon chain of restaurants and the travel agency, Indochina Ventures, Thao Dien Village is truly a get away from the city, within the city.

"What sets us apart is that we're literally a 15 minute shuttle ride from the city center," explains Tuan, the Events Manager. "It's the perfect location for those who have had enough of the city but still want the full range of services."

Family Fun

While most guests are Japanese and European tourists, Thao Dien Village bills itself as a restful staycation destination for local families. There is a small kids' pool directly in front of the Art Suite and children are welcome in the spa. Therapist Nguyet says, "I've had clients as young as seven who come in for a treatment along with their parents. The Swedish massage or aromatherapy treatment is great for kids who just want a gentle touch". For children who would rather play than be pampered,





there is a large sandy playground tucked away on the spacious grounds.

Diverse Dining

For a property with only 20 rooms, Thao Dien Village's dining options are ambitious to say the least. The Nha Hang Ngon restaurant serves up refined Vietnamese cuisine, with dishes not on the regular Quan Ngon menu, while the Event House doubles as a meeting room by day and an upscale restaurant by night, featuring classic Italian and Thai cuisine, with all venues smartly capitalizing on the 5-star river view. Head Chef of the Italian restaurant, Alessandro Giacinti, completely reinvented the menu with the hotel's re-opening. Born in Rome, Alex brings international experience, having worked in England and France, and opened kitchens here in Vietnam like Figaro, ZanZbar and Sofitel Metropole, to the menu which leans heavily towards Italian and Mediterranean flavors.

"The Vietnamese are starting to

understand a lot more about international food, especially Italian cuisine," he says. "They are really loving what we're doing with veal and pastas like squid ink with Japanese scallops." Menu items are surprisingly reasonable with mainstays like spaghetti carbonara (VND125,000) and the tender rib eye with roast potatoes, pan seared goose liver in amarone sauce (VND310,000).

Sensational Spa

Blessed with gorgeous views and a prime city-but-not-city location, the crown of the resort is still its spa, Authentic. "We're Ho Chi Minh City's only spa resort," says Tuan. "It meets international luxury standards, both in quality and in size. At other luxury properties, the spas are nice, but the treatment rooms are dark and closed off." The Spa Authentic boasts a men's and women's area, each with a sauna, four double rooms and five single rooms. "We're also lucky in that we've had trainers come directly

from Thailand and Sweden to teach us the proper techniques," adds Thi, the spa's supervisor. In addition to the standbys of hot stone, aromatherapy and traditional Thai, the extensive menu features more exotic treatments like the Body Wrap by Chocolate and the Volcanic Eifelfango.

While the newly re-launched Thao Dien Village is working through the inevitable growing pains, most notably weak plumbing ("Please do not throw tissue into the toilet"), intermittent Wi-Fi and most glaringly, the lack of a web presence, the property itself is truly a city retreat. While the decor in the common areas leans towards plantation chic, the spacious rooms are tastefully minimalist, with clean lines and monochromatic color schemes based on muted browns, grays and blacks, creating a peaceful retreat just minutes from the city center.

There are 18 rooms and 2 suites; doubles start at US\$120 nett, suites are US\$200 nett; all rooms include breakfast. Contact info@thaodienvillage.com. ■





Playing Hooky

WHEN THE CITY GETS TO BE TOO MUCH,
IT'S TIME TO LOOK TO THE SKY FOR SOME RELIEF

TEXT BY **JULIAN AJELLO** IMAGES BY **QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY**

LIVING IN HO Chi Minh City comes with its share of blessings - however, peace and quiet are not among them. As any big city dweller knows, every once in a while you need to take a break from the hectic pace to decompress and recharge the batteries. Unfortunately, not everyone can always get away when they need to. And the hassle of traveling chews up precious leisure time and only adds to the effort needed to relax. Thankfully, this big city offers options for people in such situations.

One can find serenity in Ho Chi Minh City by looking up... 20 floors up. That's where the Sofitel's new rooms and suites collection resides. Grabbing the opportunity to 'get out of town,' my girlfriend and I stuffed a change of clothes, some essentials, and our bathing suits into a backpack to make a quick escape. Arriving promptly at noon we were greeted with friendly smiles and ushered to the

exclusive Sofitel Club Lounge for a private check in and sparkling water while we relaxed on a sofa waiting for sign in to be complete.

We were led to the top floor, which has restricted access, and to our suite. Upon entering, we felt immediately transported to a faraway retreat. Wood floors are a vacation for the feet after padding around on hard tiles daily. The cavernous bathroom, enclosed in glass, with the toilet and shower separated, provides all the comforts and toiletries one could wish for, including a stand-alone tub. Long couches to lounge upon, pleasing color schemes, and ample light and desk space provide finishing touches. After exploring the suite we checked to make sure the king size bed was soft and comfortable - it was. The mattress was soft beyond words. It swallows a person whole by matching the contours of one's

body and has pillows to match.

Down on the 18th floor was a sparkling oasis. We had to strain to hear the din of the street. Quiet and calm, the pool was as inviting as it was refreshing. Attendants supplied us with clean towels and complimentary Granny Smith apples - my favorite - which is one of those little touches that make great service stellar. A leisurely swim in the pool was energizing. Alas, wrinkled digits trumpet that pool time is over and lounging in the sun time has begun. The breeze became wind, signaling the end of fun in the sun time.

In the morning we grudgingly packed up our clothes and proceeded downstairs to check out, skipping breakfast because we opted to sleep longer in the blissfully soft bed. The next time I feel the city beating down on me with no escape possible, I have the perfect plan and place to play hooky. ■

The Luxe List

WHEN MONEY IS NO OBJECT

TEXT BY JONATHAN REBOURS

Phonetic Virtue

No longer are diamonds confined to the neck and fingers, and the concierge confined to the hotel reception. Vertu has combined the two at the touch of a button on the most breathtaking handsets ever created - the **Signature Precious** (pictured).

Beautifully arranged from 18ct. yellow gold, black ceramic, the finest leather, full pave diamond bezel and even a glistening baguette diamond keypad, this is a handset for the people who do not try to be noticed, they just are. With a price tag of around US\$114,000 it is an entry pass into the most exclusive phone club in the world. For the first two years after purchase the complimentary concierge service will arrange flights, dinner reservations, VIP passes and anything else you desire, picking up on your preferences along the way. iPhone has Siri but the Signature Precious has the real deal and more.

Vertu, Rex Arcade, 141 Nguyen Hue, D1

Petite Couture

Runway is a multi-brand luxury store that caters to all aspects of life with adult fashion, home wares, jewelry and junior clothes. This is where the posh modern family shops for the finest international brands. Adding to its impressive roster of names like Marc Jacobs and Jil Sander is Lanvin Paris' collection for children. This refined brand matches the creativity of its adult collection with a more fun appeal for juniors. The Lanvin Paris Jupe a Volant black skirt (VND25,907,000) for girls is a must have for any petite fashionista.

Runway, Vincom Center, Level M - 6, 70-72 Le Thanh Ton, D1



Travel in Style

With an ever-increasing number of five star properties and new golf courses being designed by the world's best developers, Vietnam is a prime location for the luxury tour market. Jean Wethmer of Cape Lux Travel provides "a customer focused travel service for distinguished travelers and special interest groups" accompanied by a 24/7 concierge or even a personal shopper.

From food and cuisine touring, pilates/tai chi tours, sketching with an artist, French colonial décor enthusiasts to textile and crafts groups, photography... the list really does go on as special itineraries can be created for groups from two to twenty.

In September the Feast for the Senses tour will venture through Vietnam and Cambodia accompanied by acclaimed author Kim Fay - 13 dinners, 7 lunches, cookery classes, five star accommodation and all top class travel included for US\$4,350 - a trip your stomach will be eternally thankful for.

Cape Lux Travels www.thecapeclub.com.
Contact Jean Wethmar at jean@thecapeclub.com.

King of the Road

Italian designed Ducati motorcycles are renowned for performance, design and style. Imagine doing the seminal journey from Ho Chi Minh City to Hanoi astride 162 break horse power emitting from the **Ducati Diavel Cromo** (pictured below), the height of Ducati's touring arsenal of performance bikes.

If the irresistible specifications - 3 riding modes, lightweight 207kgs, 127.5Nm of torque - don't get the motor oil coursing through your veins racing then maybe the chrome finish will seduce you. A brilliant looking motorcycle, available for VND726,800,000. Hanoi Highway will never be the same after this beast graces its tarmac.

Ducati Showroom, 29 Ton Duc Thang, D1



Deluxe Dining

The most opulent in home dining is surely to have a world class chef preparing the finest wild Canadian lobster right in your kitchen. The people behind www.tomhumonline.com are doing their part to make this a reality by importing only the best, live Canadian lobsters from the cool waters of the Atlantic Ocean straight to Vietnam. The key here is *live* lobsters, nothing frozen.

With Chef Thierry at La Villa, Chef Richard of Ty Coz and Chef Tony from Ciao Bella (three of Ho Chi Minh City's finest restaurants) all using these crustaceans in their restaurants, you just know that the quality is second to none. Then, being able to order their signature dishes, prepared by the chefs themselves, and have them delivered to your door is definitely a memorable way to dine. The chefs' signature dishes sell at VND1.6 million/kg, with Canadian Lobsters being known to have grown in excess of 20kgs. Unprepared lobster sells for VND870,000/kg.



Right of Way

In Ho Chi Minh City it's no longer uncommon to see Bentleys, Mercedes and Rolls Royces on the streets, and Porsche is keeping them company with a flagship showroom in District 7. Currently awaiting the arrival of the **Porsche 911 GT3** (pictured), the city really does have a powerhouse heading its way. A top speed of 315km/h and reaching 100km/h in 3.5 seconds is all that needs to be said about its performance. With other models into the VND10 billion bracket it's a cert that the 911 GT3 will set you back a pretty penny, but also set you miles apart from the pack.

Porsche Centre Saigon, 802 Nguyen Van Linh, D7



For Coffee Connoisseurs

Most people in this city will be at least aware of Kopai Luwak, if not by that name. The more commonly named civet or weasel coffee refers to beans that have been eaten and excreted by the Asian Palm Civet. This process produces what is widely acknowledged to be the best coffee brew money can buy.

The best brews can be found at Trung Nguyen Online which offers a wide range of Kopai Luwak in whole bean packages sourced from the finest producers in Indonesia and the Philippines. Most of the civets producing these beans come from organic parks and farms and feast on the purest Arabica, Liberica and Robusta beans. Such a delicate process, however, commands a high price tag and with 7oz (200g) packets of whole beans around the US\$100 mark, your morning wake up has never tasted so good.

Philippines Kopi Luwak (Coffee Alamid) - Classic Civet Coffee 100g US\$59.95 from Trung Nguyen Online www.trung-nguyen-online.com.

Calibrated Perfection

A combination of suave Italian design and Swiss precision engineering means that Bulgari are at the apex of the luxury watch market. The subtle elegance of geometric patterns is what signifies its latest offering, the refined masterpiece, the **Bulgari Octo** (pictured right). Circles and squares define the pure design of the Octo.

Crafted for beauty and functionality the case is made from 18ct pink gold (a steel model is also available) with 110 different facets, finished by hand to give an effect both brushed and polished. Using a unique layered lacquer finish the dial exudes sheer excellence, highlighting the unmistakable Bulgari logo. And with the Bulgari Octo Pink Gold retailing at VND671,000,000, this is a timepiece that's timeless.

Bulgari, Rex Arcade, 4-6 Le Loi, D1 ■



Wine & Dine

IMAGE BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY





Pho Bo



Roasted Crickets

1 Man, 365 Meals

An airline pilot turned accidental foodie undertakes an epic gastronomic adventure and survives to tell his tale

TEXT BY JAKE RUSSACK IMAGES BY NAM QUAN

"SO WHAT'S THE food like over there?" This simple question from friends and family firmly entrenched in our Western world of steaks and pizza back home in the United States always leads to a not so simple explanation. In fact, their constant queries into my diet ultimately pushed me into a 12 month quest of grazing my way across Vietnam in search of an answer.

I set out to find a different meal every day for a year, and in theory, this goal seemed so elementary since, after all, we must eat.

How hard could this be? About three dozen days in, I had my answer as I confided in my friend Brandon, "I may have bitten off more than I can chew! I've still got 330 meals to go."

Discovering Vietnam's bustling cities on foot would become my main avenue of answering that nagging daily question of, "What's for dinner tonight?" Input from friends helped as well, and even airplane and fast foods would appear on the rare times when my motivation succumbed to laziness or a rainy season deluge. Sure, a few meals made more than one appearance but not for a lack of 365 different foods. Sometimes an uninspired experience at a local watering hole would warrant a second bite.

But let's back up a few meals here to better understand why this project-cum-food blog would become such a monumental, and all consuming, chapter of my life. Early in 2010, I

had secured a year's leave from my airline in the United States to fly the friendly skies over Vietnam. One year turned into two and two quickly melded into three. Not knowing how long I'd remain in Vietnam, I realized a lasting souvenir such as writing about my experiences here could forever keep me tied to this amazing country no matter where my future landed me.

Several stops along the way stand out as personally defining moments providing full-on immersion into all things Vietnamese, often well removed from the beaten path.

Pho Bo (Beef Noodle Soup)

– 1 of 365

That my food adventure kicked off with such a commonplace pairing of rice noodles and chewy beef was more a testament to my own finicky food habits and fears than the sheer abundance of soup parlors dotting the streetscape.

Trust me when I say I would have rather dived head first into more exotic offerings such as curry frog legs or grilled boar, but my taste buds had not yet caught up with my ambitions. As I stared 365 future meals in the face, I had already succumbed to apprehension for anything beyond the Western friendly Vietnamese foods I had been sampling in earnest my first two years living in Vietnam. I was just not ready to venture very far.

Pho seems to fuel this country for breakfast, lunch, dinner and all times in between, so I rationalized that Pho Bac Hai Ha Noi (36 Pham Van Bach, Tan Binh) restaurant was indeed a proper kick off for my upcoming year-long food endeavors.

As I slurped the final remnants of lunch that steamy afternoon, I realized stepping up my game was in order if I expected anyone to follow this food blog with any sort of interest. I decided then and there I would use this opportunity not only to provide the world with a window into the sheer variety of Vietnamese foods but also as a vehicle fostering my own personal growth by pushing myself well beyond my comfort zone.

Cha Ngan Nuong (Grilled Goose and Fermented Shrimp)

– 77 of 365

My friend Phuc's dinnertime invitation sent us via motorbike in search of something beyond the mainstream in Hanoi. The wet and dreary streets finally deposited us in front of Pho Cuon Huong Mai at 25 Ngu Xa Street in the Truc Bach Lake neighborhood. The open front restaurant's bedraggled authenticity, basking in its fluorescent lit glory, quickly collided with my Western sensibilities.

Succulently grilled morsels of goose atop a bed of sautéed onions and herbs exceeded all



Grilled Innards



Jake Russack

my expectations and made up for any ambient shortcomings. Phuc encouraged me to try the purple dipping sauce wafting its malodorous air across our metal table. He seasoned the thick paste with searing hot chilies and a splash of citrus. Though I cannot honestly say this fermented shrimp concoction packing a pungent punch is my favorite condiment, the tender poultry grilled to perfection surely left a lasting impression of Hanoi.

Roasted Crickets – 94 of 365

This meal channeled childhood tribulations of my younger self refusing to eat a single green bean and a chunk of well-done steak. Fast forward several decades and here we have a bowl of crickets inducing angst in this grown man. Yes, crickets. Small, black crunchy crickets.

My friends Thuy and Evelyn joined me at Highway 4 restaurant in Saigon's District 3 to lend moral support for my first foray into adventure eating. This mainstream eatery has that one eyebrow raising menu column listing the more "exotic" choices.

Now I am not one to normally send a mealtime prayer heavenward, but I will admit to now begging for strength to ingest these grilled critters. Down the hatch the cricket went... eventually. And who would have known? They were quite good. We even discovered mint and coriander leaves add depth and sophistication to the dish.

Pha Lau Nuong (Grilled Innards)

– 193 of 365

The journey to and from the alley side table proved as interesting as this meal itself. My friends Richie and Mimi enjoy street food as much as I and definitely unlocked a whole new hidden side of Saigon. They held the keys to this entire meal of animal innards as well as the motorbike I borrowed to make my maiden self-driven cross town voyage.

Perhaps every rule of the road known to man succumbed to my two wheeled fury as I manipulated that motorbike to District 5's alley

565 off Nguyen Trai Street.

Wooden skewers of hearts, lungs and kidneys paired with a deliciously spiced dipping sauce left me working up the courage to commence eating. Richie explained these most interesting bite-size morsels known as *pha lau nuong* roughly translate as grilled innards. Though that evening the food and I would not properly connect, I felt replete nonetheless by becoming integrated with the culture surrounding us.

Phao Cau Ga (Bankruptcy Chicken Questions) – 272 of 365

Black and white letters splashed across Anh Tuyet's menu in Binh Thanh District aligned to spell out "bankruptcy chicken questions." Sometimes these priceless translations alone beg the hungry to give the food a try. Brandon and I settled onto squat stools outdoors in the sultry air to ascertain just how exactly a cooked chicken files for bankruptcy.

As I lifted the skewer towards my mouth in search of an answer, weakness suddenly washed over me. The warm meat met the plastic plate with a dull thud as Brandon exerted copious amounts of peer pressure on me to try it. I timidly popped one in my mouth only to bite into probably the fattiest orb complete with subtle crunch I've ever experienced in my life.

I prayed my stomach would fail to rebel against the bologna tasting contents now being forced into it. Each bite unleashed a greasy liquid, and I just couldn't move much beyond the awful fact, in my opinion at least, that this was some sort of offal. My coworkers would later tell me I had eaten chicken anus. I later joked with Brandon that if a menu fails to properly translate an item into English, chances are a Westerner would probably never find the dish back home.

Pho Bo (Beef Noodle Soup) Again

– 365 of 365

A bittersweet sense of relief enveloped me as I washed down this final meal with a warm *bia* Saigon. Several hours of my day would no longer

be consumed with finding yet another new food. On the other hand, such a huge chapter in my life was now drawing to a rapid close, and I was saddened as I realized that meal number 366 would not grace my blog the next day.

I had debated wrapping up this journey with a bang by unearthing a food no one back home would dare touch but at the last minute decided to chart a familiar course by revisiting one last time my trusted old friend, *pho bo*. Once again I found myself walking back down the street near my apartment to that rundown *pho* parlor where it all commenced.

To be sure, *pho* is probably the most common of Vietnamese foods in America where I would soon be headed, and I wanted these authentic and proper flavors fresh in my mind when I sampled their North American cousins. I savored every last drop of that beef infused broth while marveling at how far 12 months of exploring Vietnam well beyond the normal tourist and expat trails had brought me.

Just as with finally working up the courage to embrace a diet far beyond my norm, food would become an apt metaphor for my personal growth in Vietnam.

This vivid land can seem so overwhelming, chaotic and intense to the newly arrived. The same holds true for food. The veritable street buffet simmering in pots and searing over glowing coals at first intimidates and taunts. Eating my way across Vietnam has taught me first and foremost that food is such a wonderful medium bridging language barriers and cultural gaps. I quickly discovered that even though the words to properly communicate in Vietnamese would never quite roll off my tongue, my neighbors and I could always share a smile and laugh over a meal. Finding a perch atop a tiny plastic squat stool on a sidewalk simmering in the humid air is a most inexpensive ticket granting the hungry admission into this fascinating culinary kingdom.

To read about all 365 meals, visit Jake's blog at www.getoffthetrail.com. ■



Sharing is Delicious

Blanchy Street is a unique Japanese fusion restaurant where the best experiences are to be had from sharing

TEXT BY **ROBERT STOCKDILL** IMAGES BY **QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY**

OPEN 15 MONTHS, it's possibly the city's best kept dining secret - until last November it was hidden away above Blanchy's Tash bar and nightclub on Hai Ba Trung. As executive chef, Australian Martin Brito, explains, "No one knew it was there. They didn't think of Blanchy's Tash as a place to eat, but as a place to drink. But we always got positive feedback about the food."

So last year the decision was made to move the restaurant to a stand-alone location and Blanchy Street was born in a converted office building just inside the entrance to Ho Chi Minh City's eatery courtyard. Now, thanks to a unique menu and high profile location, it's beginning to flourish, with patronage rising by the month as word spreads.

Brito has been cooking Asian food for 10



years. His career began under Peter Doyle, who owns seafood restaurants bearing his name that every Sydneysider knows by reputation. More recently he spent seven years with world renowned Japanese restaurant Nobu in London. It is Nobu that inspired Blanchy Street.

"I'm not Japanese. So I worked in a very good Japanese restaurant for a long time. I also did Thai food for a long time. I like to mix and match flavors the way I like to eat and I like to make the menu so it's something for everybody – Westerners, Vietnamese and Japanese," explains Brito. "We are not authentic Japanese, we are Japanese with a twist - with my take on it. A few dishes on there are traditional Japanese, the rest are a mixture."

Our Meal

It's hard to imagine a more welcoming atmosphere than walking through the gates to Blanchy Street. One first passes through an outdoor courtyard – the only part of the restaurant where smoking is allowed – then past the sushi counter where sushi chef Yogo Oba, also ex-Nobu, leads a team creating fresh fish delicacies in front of a wall featuring a myriad of sake varieties.

We chose to dine upstairs for its more intimate atmosphere and were sat at a table flanked by oversized Japanese vases under the watchful eyes of beautifully-painted Asian women staring down on us from white walls. The upstairs dining area feels warm and even intimate, like a modern designer apartment – the tables are not too close together, and the half walls remaining from the conversion from office to restaurant mean you enjoy some privacy.

We asked the waitress for recommendations from the menu and selected three of her four choices. Green chili tempura Blanchy style (VND65,000), strictly speaking more of a Vietnamese dish than a

Japanese one, comprised delicious fresh green chilies lightly dipped in tempura batter and shock fried, served with Shichimi pepper and fresh lime - they were crunchy on the outside, moist in the middle, but don't eat the top tenth unless you love spice – that's where those tiny seeds lie in wait to torture your tongue.

Beef gyoza (VND280,000) was next up. Ordering fried gyoza can be a lottery – some Japanese restaurants store it too long then fry it too long, and the result is a chewy shell filled with lumpy beef you have to douse liberally with soy sauce to get any flavor. This is not one of them. We hit the jackpot here, the gyoza soft and moist in the middle, the minced imported beef full of flavor. The texture of the wrap was lightly crispy and fragile, doused in a piquant sauce and sesame oil. Since our meal, Brito has refined the dish, adding *foie gras* to the beef for additional flavor (the price above is for the new version).

The Norwegian salmon with yellow and red *anticucho* sauce (VND380,000) was fresh, moist and tasty, a generously-sized fillet silky smooth on the tongue. It is slow cooked skin-side-down to a crisp and served with fresh lime. And our fourth dish, Blanchy Street's most-ordered, the chicken Blanchy style (VND330,000), a half bird. This is Brito's signature dish, completely original, a rarity in this age.

"That's my baby, my dish I created from scratch," he explains a week later when we reveal that his restaurant has been reviewed for *Oi*. "It took me years of playing around with it. Basically I marinate the chicken for three or four days then pan roast it to keep the moisture in. That's our biggest seller by far."

We washed this delicious meal down with a bottle of Zonin Classici Fruili D'Aquileia Pinot Grigio (VND920,000), which turned out to be a perfect accompaniment to three of the four dishes.

Brito's business partner Yves Dubos, (who manages The Refinery across the courtyard) says Blanchy Street is focusing more on its extensive range of sakes than wine. Brito says most of his dishes are best matched with sake or white than red, although they stock a generous range of all to satisfy all comers' tastes – and try to differentiate the wine list from those of neighboring eateries.

While Blanchy Street offers a superb destination for a romantic dinner, it is best enjoyed in a group. A new menu introduced in March tries to encourage diners away from the Western fixation with ordering starters and mains: instead food is grouped into categories.

The food tends to arrive close together, served in the center of the table, to encourage people to share them and mix the flavors. In our case, we were so enamored with the chicken we let the salmon get cold – and without prompting, the waitress took it away to reheat it for us, without any loss of flavor or moisture.

Blanchy Street represents modern dining at its best in the heart of downtown, a truly international dining experience in a trendy, modern and friendly setting. We simply could not fault our food, the venue or the service. ■

BLANCHY STREET

74 Hai Ba Trung, DI

3823 8793

Lunch from 11.30am - 2pm
Dinner from 6pm - 10pm



French Flair

Our diner discovers a brasserie evoking memories of bygone times

TEXT BY MICHAEL ARNOLD IMAGES BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY

NOTHING SPEAKS FRENCH cuisine quite like the brasserie, that generous collision of the laid-back and the high-class that has become an institution on the streets of Paris. All smart, playful grandeur set off by a dash of *art nouveau*, the brasserie both captures and celebrates the joyous, heady spirit of Paris from the earliest days of the 20th century.

La Brasserie de Saigon's (38 Dong Du, D1) passionate homage to one of the most representative restaurants of its genre – brasserie Bofinger on the rue de la Bastille, where manager Séverine Jelineu was formerly employed – is as close to authentic as it gets in this town. Climbing the narrow spiral staircase up to the intimately-lit second floor with all its grand mirrors, wood paneling, and plush furnishings is to go a century back in time on the other side of the globe – everything from the frenetic jazz and the art to the Paris Metro font on the bill of fare speaks of a certain French optimism that stretches across the class divide – just as it was before the Second World War.

La Brasserie's menu takes full advantage of this region's access to fresh seafood, and the *fruits de mer* preside over the dishes on offer. While we opted for a taste of the sea in our

choices of hors d'oeuvres – a classic *bisque* (VND130,000) and *bouchée* (VND200,000) – for mains we decided on a less obvious route to assess the strength of the chef's range in the menu's corners, opting for a chunky *Joue de Boeuf Bourguignone* (VND300,000) and a rack of lamb with eggplant caviar (VND450,000).

The *Bisque de la Brasserie* nicely avoided giving over supremacy to the hunks of fresh crustacean meat that can occasionally overpower this traditional creamy broth from the French coast, maintaining a strong, consistent blend of savory tastes. Our *Bouchée à la Reine Façon Marée*, a seaside-style *vol-au-vent* with a creamy mushroom and seafood filling, was the lightest dish on the menu, and being able to taste clearly the simpler ingredients of the pastry shell was an unexpected delight in a city where Asian variants are generally chewy and bland.

French *haute* cuisine is typically heavy and rich, and our mains were hefty and filling. This is tough-going food in a climate like Vietnam's, but an essential treat for lovers of the fare. Pair selections from La Brasserie's *Viandes* menu with strong red wines, and take the time to savor the chemistry of the sauces



and marinades. Our lamb rack was choice and mild, ideally enhanced by the smokiness of the eggplant and the creamy potato gratin, while the beef was exceptionally soft and moist in contrast with the firm rustic-style root vegetables that shared its deep gravy of red wine.

La Brasserie de Saigon guarantees as many theatrics as possible in the dining room, and this is particularly the case with their signature dessert – the *Crêpe Suzette*, flamed dramatically in the dining room in front of guests. We'd been tempted enough by the sizzling butter and the whiff of citrus from the Grand Marnier liquor flambé, but the taste of oranges and light, fluffy vanilla ice cream that soaked into the cakes were a fitting last act in a fine culinary performance. ■



IMAGE BY NAM QUAN

Having lived off and on in Vietnam since 2007, **Barbara Adam** now works online as a corporate communication consultant while blogging about food and other things at TheDropoutDiaries.com, and runs street food tours through **Saigon Street Eats** along with her Vietnamese husband

The Soup of Love

Discover the five elements of a balanced dish



THIS DELECTABLE DISH from central Vietnam sustained me through those fuzzy sleep-deprived mornings that newborns have such a knack for creating.

Darling Man (my husband) had found a mì Quảng seller near our house in Binh Thanh District and every time we had a particularly horrendous night with the baby he would slip out before work and buy a takeaway serving of it for me to eat at my leisure for breakfast. Or for lunch, or even sometimes for afternoon tea if it was one of those kinds of days.

Before the baby was born I had never tasted mì Quảng. It was a revelation, unlike any other Vietnamese dish I'd tried. It's halfway between a soup and a noodle dish (because traditionally there was only enough broth to wet the noodles) and it has fresh mint in it, a flavor I'd rarely sampled in Vietnamese cuisine.

I like to think that Arab traders (used to mint-flavored savory dishes) may have had an influence on this dish, coming as it does

from Quang Nam province, home of the ancient port of Hoi An, one of the stops on the spice route between Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

The other ingredients are easier to explain - pork, prawns, pork sausage, roasted peanuts, noodles and bean sprouts - all common ingredients in Vietnamese dishes. However, the dish deviates from the norm in its use of bright yellow noodles, colored and slightly flavored with turmeric.

The dish often features duck or fish cake, and always includes a bunch of greenery - usually shredded lettuce, banana blossom, mint, holy basil and bean sprouts. It's then garnished with giant slabs of black sesame crackers, which give the soup some extra crunch.

The broth is also slightly different to other soups. It's a peppery pork bone and dried shrimp broth, with an amazing orange undertone from the use of annatto seed oil.

In Vietnam, mì Quảng is considered a celebratory dish, often served at family

reunions. It's considered a 'balanced' dish, made in accordance with the principal of the five elements. When it comes to cooking (and eating) those five are spicy (metal), sour (wood), bitter (fire), salty (water) and sweet (Earth).

Dishes are also supposed to appeal to the five senses and mì Quảng does just that - pleasing the eye, the tongue, the nose and even the ears (all that noisy crunching from the bean sprouts and the rice crackers). The sense of touch doesn't miss out either with all the different textures in the dish, from silky noodles to melt-in-the-mouth pork. ■

WHERE TO TRY MI QUANG IN HCMC

Sen Viet Quan Restaurant

(118 Trương Công Định, Tân Bình)

A local favorite run by four brothers and sisters from Hoi An features six versions of mì Quang with short ribs, shrimp or crab cakes (VND27,000- VND45,000). The noodles are fresh and specially made for them with ingredients from Quang Nam Province. The staff and cook speak English. Oi readers receive 15 percent off the total invoice in April.

Quan Mon Hue 777

(165 Trần Náo, D2) does an authentic version with yellow noodles and sensational peppery broth.

Mi Quang Pho Thi

(50A Đinh Tiên Hoàng, D1 and 110 Cách Mạng Tháng Tám, D3) does a tasty mellow-but-not-yellow version of mì Quang. Try the *mì Quang suon non tom thit* (Quang noodles with pork rib and prawn) for VND42,000.

Mi Quang My Son

(38B Đinh Tiên Hoàng, D1 and 262 Phan Xích Long, Phú Nhuận) does a spicy version of mì Quang that's heavy on the oil. Try the *mì Quang tom thit* (Quang noodles with prawn and pork) for VND42,000.

>>The List

Wine & Dine

bakeries

Bread Talk

With a mission to revitalize the once-stale business of bread, Singaporean BreadTalk now has outlets throughout Asia and has established itself in several HCMC locations. A brand partnership with Gloria Jeans has seen a wide range of bakery goods available in the cafés, with both brands sharing the premises at this location.

106 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D3
3930 3181

Brodard Bakery

Brodard Bakery has been operating in Saigon for over 30 years. It provides finely crafted cakes for all occasions in addition to ice cream, pastries, chocolate and tarts.

95 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 2416
6am - 10pm

Cakewalk Cupcakes

Small boutique cupcake shop offers cupcakes with panache. Traditional cupcakes as well as new, creative flavors are sure to satisfy everyone who is compelled to bend to the will of their sweet tooth.

84 Nguyen Cong Tru, D1
6295 9087
10am - 9pm

Givral

The cakes and tradition of this unique cake shop have captivated generations of Vietnamese customers. With many outlets throughout the city, this particular store was reopened in 2010 on its original site at Vincom A, built on the old Eden complex.

171 Dong Khoi, D1
3822 8659
www.saigongivral.com
6am - 10pm

Gourmand Shop

A traditional delicatessen shop featuring freshly baked baguettes, croissants, chocolate breads, charcuteries, pastries, finest macaroons and other French delicacies prepared daily. Special products imported from France are also available such as French oysters, Damman Freres luxury tea, and a range of authentic products.

Ground floor, Sofitel Saigon Plaza
17 Le Duan, D1
3824 1555

Harvest Baking

Harvest Baking offers a delivery-based bakery service with a charitable focus, teaching young Vietnamese hopefuls how to bake delicious breads and cakes through their food training program.

30 Lam Son, Tan Binh
3547 0577
harvestbaking@yahoo.com
harvestbaking.net
7am - 5pm Monday-Saturday

Kinh Do Bakery

Kinh Do Bakery makes reasonably priced baked goods to-go, such as cakes and cupcakes, tarts, sandwiches, Vietnamese "banh bao", Western-style hamburgers and mini-pizzas and gelatin-based

desserts.

128A Hai Ba Trung, D1
3829 6552
kinhdobakery.vn
6am - 10.30pm

La Doree

Providing patrons with over 50 varieties of cakes, along with a rich sandwich menu from luxurious French-designed premises. La Doree is the best place in town for macaroons.

216 Ly Tu Trong, D1
3822 1718
www.ladoree.com
7am - 9.30pm

Nhu Lan Bakery

One of the most famous and prestigious local brands of bakeries in the city, Nhu Lan Bakery supplies bakery products, cakes, bread, ham, sausage, poultry, roasted pork, and dried foods.

50 Ham Nghi, D1
3829 2970
www.nhulan.vn
4am - 12am

Pacey Cupcakes

This cozy little bakery features elegant décor and offers 12 kinds of cupcakes daily, located near the cathedral in a hip, modern setting.

53G Nguyen Du, D1
3823 3223
nguyen.tran@paceycupcakes.com
www.paceycupcakes.com
9am - 10pm

Pat'a Chou

French-style bakery with charming décor. Specializing in baguettes, fresh croissants of various varieties, small quiches, and cakes for every occasion.

74B Hai Ba Trung, D1
3824 8179
nglivan@gmail.com
www.pat-achou.com
5am - 10pm

Savoure Bakery

Shops have a wide selection of cookies, sweet and savory breads and cakes including cashew chocolate, taro and orange. Custom cakes can be ordered for weddings and holidays.

Unit E3, 1st Floor, Saigon Tax Trade Centre,
135 Nguyen Hue, D1
3914 3773
www.savourebakery.com

Schneider's Cafe & Tea Corner

The bakers at Schneider's offer fresh, healthy, delicious breads, cakes, and pastries, introducing Ho Chi Minh City to eight centuries of German baking tradition.

27 Han Thuyen, D1
2229 6910
www.schneiders-finest.com
9.30am - 9pm

Tous Les Jours

A Korean owned French-style bakery franchise serving fresh baked bread and popular pastries, all baked on-site.

180 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3823 8302
6am - 11pm

offers a wide range of beers, shakes, spirits cocktails and food throughout the day.

187 Pham Ngu Lao, D1
6291 5424
allezboo@hcm.fpt.vn
24 hours

Alto Heli Bar

From the 52nd floor of the Bitexco, you can enjoy sweeping panoramic views of the city's skyline. Try the tapas tasting platters, sip on French Champagne, or choose from the selection of fine wines, local and international beers available.

Level 52 Bitexco Financial Tower, 2 Hai
Trieu, D1
6291 8752
info@altosaigon.com
www.cirussaigon.com

Bernie's Bar & Grill

An Irish bar and restaurant serving international cuisine like pizza, burgers, pasta and more. Celebrates happy hour from 5 to 7pm, and frequently provides live music.

19 Thai Van Lung, D1
3822 1720
www.berniesbar.com.vn
7.30am - 11pm

Blue Gecko

Blue Gecko provides a classic bar

experience complete with a pool table, darts board, cold beer and friendly staff. Guests can watch live sports and relax in the comfortable ambience of the bar.

31 Ly Tu Trong, D1
3824 3483
simon@hcm.vnn.vn
www.bluegeckosaigon.com
4.30pm - 12am

Bootleg DJ Café

Modern, moody, and minimalist cafe bar with reasonable prices by day, chic lounge with DJs playing by night. Has a limited menu of sandwiches and other health-conscious Italian fare.

9 Le Thanh Ton, D1
090 760 9202
dortutdose@gmail.com
9.30am - 1am

Boston Sports Bar

Located in the heart of the backpacker area, Boston Sports Bar is open 24 hours and provides guests with a modern bar-going experience. The bar boasts a pool table, live sports on LCD TVs, and western food.

28/4 Bui Vien, D1
6656 6338
bostonpizzavn@gmail.com
24 hours

Carmen Bar

Carmen Bar features a small cavern-like



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entrance with rough rock walls decorated with ambient lighting. With an exclusive range of drinks and cocktails, guests can relax while enjoying tunes from an excellent Flamenco band.

8 Ly Tu Trong, DI
3829 7699
5pm - 11.30pm

Charm Bar

Unassuming expat bar in the central city with table soccer and an upstairs floor for private functions. Charm holds an understated air of class within the expat bar district, and is the favorite of its series of regular patrons.

58 Huynh Thuc Khang, DI
3915 3826
thecharmsg@yahoo.com

Boudoir Lounge

Designed to look like a lived-in yet immaculately styled Parisien home with plush leather sofas, silk cushions and velvet armchairs, Boudoir Lounge serves up everything from afternoon tea to evening cocktails along with signature dishes for any occasion from informal meals and business lunches to gourmet canapés accompanying evening drinks.

Ground floor, Saigon Sofitel Plaza
17 Le Duan, DI
3824 1555

Brotzeit German Bier Bar & Restaurant

This boisterous establishment is a franchise that originated in Singapore back in 2006, which now operates in several Asian destinations. The HCMC venue is in the flashy Kumho complex on the edge of the central district, and features a wide 24-meter restaurant frontage on the mezzanine level and a contemporary and chic setting with German-inspired wooden benches and a long wooden bar counter. Serving authentic Bavarian cuisines and premium beers, Brotzeit is a high-profile restaurant that has fast become a favourite amongst the expat community for this category.

39 Le Duan, DI
9822 4206
enquiry@brotzeit.vn
brotzeit.co/kumholink

Chilli Pub Saigon

A fun place to unwind, with cold drinks, good music (customers can choose the music) friendly staff, light pub food, weekly quiz night (Mondays), darts and televised sport. Try a challenge shot from the big Chilli on the bartop.

104 Ho Tung Mau, DI
09 8376 3372
hñ291182@yahoo.com
4pm-4am

Chu Bar

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

158 Dong Khoi, DI
3822 3907
7am - Midnight

Cloud 9 Rooftop Lounge

Located near Turtle Lake, this stunning bar offers panoramic views of Saigon. Guests can peruse an extensive international wine list or choose from an array of creative cocktails and international beers.

Level 667, Hai Nam Building, 2 Bis Cong
Trung Quoc, D3
090 944 5544
12pm - Late

The Drunken Duck

One of Saigon's most notorious inner-city expat bars proper, Drunken Duck is the favourite den of many of the city's barflies,

if for no other reason than being better-lit and slightly larger than other venues of its ilk. Ranking rather favourably on the seediness scale from whichever point of view required, Duck has two floors, the upstairs lounge area with a large pull-down projector screen a pleasant addition to the more ubiquitous downstairs pool tables and long bar for the waitresses to lean on.

58 Ton That Thiep, DI
3915 2835
ducksaiigon.com

Ginger 60

A low-key expat bar with an extensive drink menu and live music in a friendly atmosphere.

60 Ton That Thiep, DI
093 772 1011
4pm - 12am

Go2

Go2 is a popular nightspot in the backpackers area. This two level bar offers dancing, shisha, and a street-side view with comfortable seating. The bar also has a pool table and extensive western food menu.

187 De Tham, DI
3836 9575
9am - 5am

Hard Rock Café

Memorabilia from Hard Rock's iconic collection adorns the walls of Hard Rock Café Ho Chi Minh City and there is live music most nights. Located in the Kumho Plaza complex.

39 Le Duan, DI
6291 7595
www.hardrockcafe.vn
11.30am - 2am

Ice Blue

A small, atmospheric, emphatically English-style pub, Ice Blue is a popular meeting place for Ho Chi Minh City's expats with reasonably priced drinks, friendly staff and a cozy atmosphere. Great place to play darts.

54 Dong Khoi, DI
3822 2664
icebluepub@yahoo.com
3pm - 1am

Kim's Tavern

An expat bar on the edge of the downtown shopping district renowned for friendly, attractive staff, cold beer, and a relaxed 'local pub' environment.

20 Huynh Thuc Khang, DI
090 777 5141
4pm - 1am

Last Call

A fine hole-in-the-wall cocktail bar in the centre of town opposite the Sheraton Hotel, Last Call is a 70's themed lounge with a permanent neon glow. Now one of the most popular expat/hip local late evening bars, with a small deck from which to overlook the nightlife set on Dung Du.

59 Dong Du, DI
3823 3122
lastcallsaigon@gmail.com
facebook.com/lastcallsaigon

Le Pub

In a brawny Australian snub to the effete vestiges of French Colonialism that pervade in Saigon, Le Pub is a hearty Oz-styled pub proudly located in a small alleyway between Pham Ngu Lao and Bui Vien st, Opposite the Chua Au lac arch, where it is a magnet for backpackers and blokey expats. The manager and staff are friendly enough too, I suppose.

175/22 Pham Ngu Lao, DI
3837 7679
www.lepub.org

Lindo

Cozy sports bar with big screen TVs and restaurant quality meals. The Sunday afternoon "Sausage Sizzle" and other weeknight events make this an appealing venue for expats any day of the week.

149 Ton That Dam, DI
3915 3149
4pm - 11pm

Long Phi

One of the staples in the backpacker district, Long Phi is a no-frills bar that doubles as a cheap diner serving some fairly decent French and European cuisine.

207 Bui Vien, DI
3837 2704
6pm to very late, Tuesday - Sunday

Lush

Another of Saigon's more infamous night venues, this have-to-go/love-to-hate club is still as popular as ever, attracting a pumping Vietnamese and foreign crowd on a nightly basis – if the reports from local events websites are to be believed. Lush has a highly distinctive, modern look, with different areas catering to different needs, including a VIP space with plush couches for chatting with hot new friends.

2 Ly Tu Trong, DI
www.lush.com.vn

M52 Bar

A bar catering primarily to foreigners. Offers a simple setting for a night of drinking in the company of friends.

34 Ton That Thiep, DI
3821 0151
5pm - 12am

Number Five Bar

Number Five Bar has become notorious for its "all you can drink" draught tiger beer offer. Attractive waitresses are always enthusiastic contestants on the billiards table.

44 Pasteur, DI
3915 3150
heinzvn@gmail.com
3pm - 1am

O'Brien's

Two-storey Irish-themed bar & restaurant furnished to high standard. O'Brien's promotes a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere. Known for its excellent food menu, this is a fun place to socialize while shooting pool, playing darts, or chatting with the friendly staff.

74/A3 Hai Ba Trung, DI
3829 3198
www.irish-barsaigon.com
11am - 1am; Sundays 4pm - 1am

Olive Bar

Spanish-influenced restobar specializing in cocktails, wine, tapas and finger food. Modern, stylish decor and fusion-influenced menu make this a trendy destination for young business executives and fashion-conscious tourists alike.

17A6 Le Thanh Ton, DI
090 973 3304
pierehanh20@yahoo.com

Phatty's

A sports bar offering a selection of ice-cold local and imported beers as well as a complete range of tasty pub food. Central features are the TVs, connected to an extensive sports channel network.

46-48 Ton That Thiep, DI
3821 0796
info@phattysbar.com
www.phattysbar.com
9am to midnight

Qing

Qing is a great place to relax and imbibe. Upstairs guests can enjoy an ethereal spa experience and then head downstairs for a unique, classy place to drink.

110 Pasteur, DI
3915 2979
francrqing@yahoo.com

Red Bar & Restaurant

Popular nightspot and networking event venue near Bitexco Tower. Serves Aussie pub food and hosts a live Filipino band.

3rd Floor, 70-72 Ngo Duc Ke, DI
2229 7017
8am - 2am

Saigon Saigon Bar

In wartime Saigon, the rooftop of the Caravelle hotel was one of the most popular drinking holes in the city for foreign journalists and expat embassy staff – and it remains one of the most sought-out casual tourist attractions in the city today. Panoramic views of Saigon can still be obtained on the garden terrace despite all the construction, and efforts have been made to preserve the original character of the venue with its multiple remnant fans, subdued decor, and quietly romantic atmosphere with oil candles on the table tops.

19 Lam Son Square, DI
3823 4999
www.caravellehotel.com/en/1/15/325/products.aspx

Saigon Retro

One of the newest expat bars on the block, offering home-cooked western fare upstairs and friendly bar service downstairs. Live sport on screen, including English Premier League.

113 Ho Tung Mau, DI
6278 2349
4pm - 2am

Sheridan's Irish Pub

Offering traditional Irish food like biscuits and sausage, along with British dishes like fish and chips or bangers and mash and even local menu items.

29 Ngo Van Nam, DI
3823 0793
8am to midnight

Slate

Slate takes its name from the dark grey slate tiling that covers the floor of the entire establishment. A modern, relaxing spot for an after-dinner drink with an extensive martini list and delicious BBQ menu. A tad difficult to find above a BMW dealership, but accessible from the hotel it is worth the effort.

3rd Floor, Moevenpick Hotel, 253 Nguyen Van Troi, Phu Nhuan
3844 9222
5pm - 11pm

Spotted Cow

Hearty breakfasts, great pub grub, cheap drinks and the latest sport on TV make this an appealing destination for tourists of all budgets. Located in the heart of the backpacker district.

111 Bui Vien, DI
3920 7670
spottedcow@alfrescosgroup.com
11am - 12pm

Storm P

Storm P restaurant and bar is named after the famous Danish cartoonist Robert Storm Petersen, and it's the only Danish restaurant in Vietnam.

5B Nguyen Sieu, DI
3827 4738
Storm-saigonvn@yahoo.com
www.stormp.vn
10am - late

Vasco's

Stylish bar, restaurant and cocktail lounge in a converted colonial style house. European and Asian fare downstairs with extensive wine list and cocktails. DJs perform upstairs at night.

74/7D Hai Ba Trung, DI
3824 2888
www.vascosgroup.com

cafés

Aisha Lounge

Secreted away in a small alleyway on Pasteur, Aisha lounge is a fascinating Turkish-style coffee shop designed with an Arabic architectural theme. The ground floor is washed in a Mediterranean blue tone, and seating is on plush cushions of the kind you'd expect to spend the evening lounging around on in a haze with an exotic pipe. Rather incongruously, however, Aisha offers a menu studded with various Vietnamese drinks and food – although the belly dance show does evoke the spirit of the interior design. **63/1 Pasteur, DI**
6660 9040
aishalounge@aishalounge.com
www.aishalounge.com

AMI Café

A dimly-lit atmospheric venue hosting live music and with a fully-stocked bar. **133 Hai Ba Trung, DI**

Angel-in-us Coffee

A sophisticated and classy coffee franchise with exemplary attention to detail, Angel-in-us has a pretty angel wing motif and a quality coffee menu. **145 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, DI**
3827 8588
facebook.com/angelinuscoffeevn

AQ Coffee

Beautiful café situated in one of the city's oldest French mansions, serving coffee made with traditionally-roasted coffee beans. **32 Pham Ngoc Thach, D3**
3829 8344
7.30am - 11.30pm

Bobby Brewer's

A contemporary cafe in the backpacker area set over three floors, the cafe features a large free cinema, a great place for couples. **45 Bui Vien, DI**
3920 4090
www.bobbybrewers.com
6.30am - 11pm

Boulevard Cafe

This Parisian-style cafe has a fine, white tone and a warm ambiance that attempts a look of luxury with its plush sofas and chandeliers. Effectively, this makes it one of the more international-looking Vietnamese cafes and a very pleasant venue in an area away from the city centre. **98 Phan Xich Long, Phu Nhuan**
3995 9876 / 09 0909 0052

Café Ban Sonate

Café Ban Sonate is a peaceful haven, tucked away from the boisterous noise of the city. This cafe offers elegant decor along with indoor and outdoor seating options. **53 Dang Dung, DI**
3290 6004

Caffe Fresco

A new player on the scene currently battling for supremacy in the coffee chain market, Fresco offers a wide range of espresso and local coffees, juices and smoothies. **121 Le Loi, DI**
3821 1009
info@fresco.com.vn
www.fresco.com.vn
6am - 12am Monday through Saturday

Café Terrace

Café Terrace is a popular modern cafe/restaurant in the chic Saigon Center. This cozy, dimly lit cafe offers customers a long outdoor terrace with views of the bustling

pedestrian and traffic scene. A second cafe is located on the first floor amongst fashion stores. **Ground Floor & First Floor, Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, DI**
3821 4958
8am - 10pm

Cafe Vuon Kieng

Cafe Vuon Kieng is a quiet, casual cafe near the banks of the Saigon River, boasting relaxing views and refreshing breezes. This riverside cafe offers jasmine tea, coffee, ice cream, beer, even cocktails. **10B Ton Duc Thang, DI**
3823 3279
7.30am - 11pm

Chi's Cafe

Chi's Café is a restaurant serving both Western and Vietnamese food in the backpacker area. The menu is extensive, with everything from sandwiches and pizzas to their popular baked potatoes with filling. **40/31 Bui Vien, DI**
3836 7622
9am - 10pm

Ciao Cafe

An icon in downtown HCMC, Ciao cafe features two floors serving simple food, coffee, smoothies and ice cream – and an opulent lounge bar on the top floor. Antique tiles mix with velvet curtains and stylish paintings to make this a memorable chill out environment. **74-76 Nguyen Hue, DI**
40 Ngo Duc Ke, DI
38231130
ciaocafe.vn/en/brand/1-ciao.html
7am - 11pm

The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf

Offering over 22 varieties of coffee and 20 kinds of tea, The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf has been serving the best coffees and teas from around the world for more than 40 years in its cozy, handcrafted oak paneled stores. **39 Le Duan, DI**
3824 4903
www.coffeebean.com.vn
7am - 11pm

Cosmo Lounge

Cosmo Lounge is a popular location for stylish and trendy locals and expats alike. Chill out in a bold blue and white environment with local and European cafe food and a broad selection of coffees and drinks. **86 Bis Le Thanh Ton, DI**
3823 5848
8am - 9pm

Cooku's Nest

Cooku's nest has a clean, artsy vibe offering drinks and snacks. **13 Tu Xuong, D3**
2241 2043
cookucan@yahoo.com
8am - 10.30pm

Crêperie & Café

Inexpensive Western fare targeted mainly at locals, delivering some fairly decent low-cost sandwiches. **Galaxy Co, 5 Han Thuyen, DI**
7am - 10.30pm

Elle Cafe

Keeping in line with the sense of style that comes along with the Elle fashion label brand, the menu and décor of Elle Cafe sets it apart from the competition. **Ground Floor, Bitexco Financial Tower, 45 Ngo Duc Ke, DI**
6291 8766
7am - 11pm

Geisha's Coffee and Tea House

Experience a funky, relaxed atmosphere with a refreshing drinks & delicious snack at Geisha Coffee and Tea House. A retreat away from the hustle and bustle of the streets of Saigon. **85 Pasteur, DI**
3829 4004
enquiry@geishacafe.com
www.geishacafe.com
8am - 10pm



Hatvala
This tea house, coffee shop and restaurant offers selected, quality Vietnamese tea and coffee to drink or to buy as leaves and beans. They also have a delightful all day casual dining area in their stylish bistro. **44 Nguyen Hue, DI**
3824 1534
8am - 11pm
hatvalavietnam@gmail.com
www.hatvala.com
www.facebook.com/hatvala

Hi-End Coffee

Located near the leafy Tao Dan Park, Hi-End Coffee is one of a few venues serving up just as much music as caffeine. **126 Suong Nguyet Anh, DI**
3824 1004
Open to 10pm

Gloria Jeans

Australia's most popular coffee franchise now has a solid presence in Ho Chi Minh City with multiple locations in the inner city. While the favourite Dong Khoi address has now been given over to a Sony store, new venues in Vincom A and at CMT8 prove this favourite brand with locals and expats alike is steadily growing in Vietnam. **2 bis Cong Truong Quoc Te, D3**
3825 6045
www.gloriajeanscoffees.com/vn

Hi-End Coffee

Located out in the more relaxed quadrants of DI just past Tao Dan park, Hi-End Coffee Suong Nguyet Anh is one of a few venues under this brand serving up just as much music as it does caffeine. The drawcard here is the glorious sound-system – an enormous collection of speakers and audio equipment designed to pump the room full of quality tunes. Visiting here is less for quiet chatting and more for the audio feast, unless you're not a fan of what happens to be on the playlist. **126 Suong Nguyet Anh, DI**
3824 1004

Highlands Coffee

With over 50 cafes in Vietnam, Highlands Coffee serves up international and traditional Vietnamese blends. Coffee lovers can also find Highlands premium quality blends in selected hotels and supermarkets. **Saigon Center, 65 Le Loi, DI**

I-Box Cafe

I-Box cafe is a unique, cafe with aristocratic decor. This decorative cafe specializes

in red wine, Asian dishes and spaghetti. They also offer an extensive selection of ice cream creations. **135 Hai Ba Trung, DI**
3825 6718
8am - 10pm

ID Café

Separated from the bustle of nearby Ben Thanh Market by a tiny alleyway, ID is a retro café opening a door to an earlier Saigon. **34D Thu Khoa Huan, DI**
7.30am - 11pm

Kesera

A cozy and friendly café/bar serving coffee, beer, wines, freshly-baked homemade cakes and delicious Western food. **26/1 Le Thanh Ton, DI**
3827 0443
cafebarkesera@gmail.com
keserakesera.com
6am - 11pm Monday through Friday; 7.30am - 11pm Saturday

Kita Coffee

This three-storey establishment provides patrons with Lavazza coffee along with a unique Mediterranean menu. **39-41 Nguyen Hue, DI**
3914 0683
kitacoffee@gmail.com
7.30am - 10pm

Kopi Beans

Kopi Beans Cafe is a favorite among high school kids. It's a small takeaway coffee shop with cheap espresso and iced coffees. **206 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D3**
6684 4788
kopibeans@yahoo.com
www.kopibeans.com.vn
8am - 10pm

L'Anmien Dining Cafe

Linked to the luxurious Mui Ne hotel of the same name, this internationally-styled sidewalk café is a place to relax and enjoy the cool air and watch the busy inner-city traffic from a more refined vantage. **76A Le Lai, DI**
38212718
7am - 10pm

L'Usine

L'Usine is a retail, café and gallery space occupying two locations in the center of DI. Its retail space is dedicated to Vietnamese designers and more established brands from abroad as well as stocking a wide range of stationary and home ware items. The café in both locations serves international fare and a range of pastries and the ever popular Sweet & Sour Cupcakes. **151/1 Dong Khoi, DI**
70B Le Loi, DI
info@lusinespace.com | www.lusinespace.tumblr.com
9am - 9pm

The Living Room

The Living Room has two floors providing a laid-back atmosphere for meet-ups or after-work relaxation over drinks and Western and Vietnamese food. **40-42 Dong Du, DI**
3822 0377
robert.clark@thelivingroom.com.vn
10am - 3am

L'Usine

Proof that international, independent retail is possible in Ho Chi Minh City, l'Usine serves top-quality espresso coffee and great European café food. Guests can also peruse clothing and art deco items. **First Floor, 151 Dong Khoi, DI**
6674 3565

info@lusinespace.com
www.lusinespace.com
9am - 9pm

Le Tokyo Baum

Popular Japanese cake cafe with quiet seating area, specializing in orange cakes.

46 Nguyen Van Trang, D1
3926 0388
8am - 10pm

NYDC

NYDC offers a modest selection of wholesome western dishes and desserts - steaks, burgers, fish and chips - and gourmet caffeine addicts will cue up for the enormous elephaccino.

Ground Floor, Metropolitan,
235 Dong Khoi, D1
3822 7955
marketing@nydc.com.vn
www.nydc.com.vn
7am - 11pm

Many Different Tastes Coffee

MDT's place in the coffee wars has been backed by earnest investment and a rapid roll-out of stores. Serving Italian-style espresso and Vietnamese-style phin beverages, the cafe walks a fine line between international and local tastes.

90 Mac Thi Bui, D1
6299 0966
info@mdtcafe.com
www.mdtcafe.com

May Coffee

A superb, friendly, and inexpensive little cafe most notable for its perfect view of the Cathedral tower bells and close proximity to the post office.

1 Cong Xa Paris, D1
3827 7099
www.maycoffee.com
7.30am - 11.30pm

Paris Deli

A French style cafe serving some of the best pastries in Saigon, this cheerful spot is a real slice of Parisian life. Many European drinks and dishes.

Ground Floor, Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, D1
3821 6127
9am - 10pm

Passio Coffee to Go

Passio Coffee offers its guests fine Italian style coffee made from the finest ingredients. Since Passio's inception in 2006, this enthusiastic team of coffee brewers has become recognized by international coffee drinkers.

112 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D3
3930 0100
093 346 8007
hdd310@gmail.com
www.passiocoffee.com
6.30am - 11pm

Princess and the Pea

A fairytale-themed venue for the dreamers of Ho Chi Minh City, hidden away in a tiny alleyway off Pasteur. Discover it if you can.

63/18 Pasteur, D1
093 635 3179
princess.and.the.pea.pasteur@gmail.com
8am - 10.30pm

Regina Coffee

A popular hangout for hip, young Vietnamese around Nguyen Du, serving western coffee in a vintage, artsy environment.

84 Nguyen Du, D1
3824 4204
www.facebook.com/coffeeregina/info
7am - 11pm

Soho Coffee

Two level local cafe chain serving light meals, coffee and local chilled drinks.

185 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3839 5038
gopy@soho.vn
www.soho.vn
7am - 11pm

Starbucks Coffee

This Seattle-based coffee chain recently opened in Feb 2013 with a large, open ground floor space with ample seating in booths and tables, and a smaller space upstairs with views out on the busy Nga 6 Phu Dong roundabout. Also has outdoor seating. Expect to pay Western prices.

76 Le Lai, D1

Stella Restaurant & Cafe

Providing authentic Italian and Vietnamese food using fresh imported and local premium-quality ingredients. Where else can you find such good coffee/cuisine at such reasonable prices?

119-121 Bui Vien, D1
3836 9220
www.stellacafe.com
7am - 11.30pm

Trung Nguyen Cafe

One of the most ubiquitous coffee brands in Vietnam. With a burgeoning presence throughout the city, it's hard to go anywhere without tripping over a Trung Nguyen cafe - serving gourmet Vietnamese street coffee.

26B-C Le Loi, D1
3825 1270
office@trungnguyen.com.vn
www.trungnguyen.com.vn
7am - 10.30pm

The Serenata Cafe

The Serenata Cafe is a peaceful, relaxing oasis in a French Colonial house. This cafe embraces nature with plants, fishponds, and small fountains, and offers music in the evenings.

6D Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3
3930 7436
7am - 11pm

Windows

A highly fashionable cafe near the cathedral. For many years, this eye-catching venue has remained a place to see and be seen, often frequented by the famous, the well-to-do, and the ne'er do well.

12 Alexandre De Rhodes, D1
38238408
7am - 12am

Zoom Cafe

This distinctive Vespa-themed Cafe has been a popular fixture in D1 for ten years. Today, the cafe serves as the place for Vespa enthusiasts and tour veterans to swap stories over ice-cold beers and what many claim is the best selection of mouth-watering burgers, paninis, and baguette sandwiches in town.

169A Bui Vien, D1
3920 3897
vscooterguy@yahoo.com

chinese

Dragon Court

Dragon Court is a large restaurant opposite the Opera House in Saigon's bustling District 1. Enjoy Chinese dishes from many regions with dishes like glass noodles, hot pot, and a large dim sum collection.

11-13 Lam Son Square, D1
3827 2566
10am - 2.30pm; 5pm - 2am; Sundays from 8am.

Dynasty

New World hotel's in-house Chinese

restaurant is certainly a venue of fine contemporary Chinese dining. The chef offers a variety of authentic Cantonese dishes along with classic dim sum under a high lantern/chandelier-lit ceiling, in a broad dining room decorated in classic Chinese style. VIP guests can dine in one of four semi-private or three totally private rooms.

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

Hung Ky Mi Gia

Hung Ky Mi Gia is a famous and long-standing restaurant with more than 13 years of operation. It serves traditional Chinese cuisine with authentic dishes such as roasted chicken, duck, and pork.

20 Le Anh Xuan, D1
3822 2673
8am - 1am

Kabin

Kabin is a Cantonese restaurant specializing in exotic dishes such as baked duck tongue, grouper cutlet, and lobster soup. Located in the five star Renaissance Riverside Hotel, this restaurant offers a wide variety of dim sum.

Renaissance Riverside Hotel,
8-15 Ton Duc Thang, D1
3822 0033
www.marriott.com
12pm - 2.30pm, 6pm - 10pm

Li Bai Chinese Restaurant

Located in the Sheraton Hotel, Li Bai offers a selection of over 50 dim sum dishes as well as traditional Chinese and Cantonese specialties. Diners will enjoy the relaxed, upscale ambiance provided by the wood paneling and oriental art.

Level 2, 88 Dong Khoi, D1
3827 2828

www.libaisaigon.com
11am - 2.30pm; 6.30pm - 10pm

Ming Court

Since the Nikko Hotel graced the Saigon skyline, the venue has managed to set the standard for classy, five-star dining with its bold grey modern decor and Japanese-style efficiency. Ming Court, on the hotel's third floor, is a large Chinese restaurant with all the expected graces of the Orient belonging to the exotic fantasy of the dynastic era.

3rd floor, Nikko Saigon Hotel
235 Nguyen Van Cu, D1
3925 7777
hotelnikkosaigon.com.vn

Seven Wonders (Bay Ky Quan)

It's worth traipsing out to D6 for this one. Not only are the Dim Sum, Peking Duck, and pan-China home-style cuisine exemplary, but the venue design, with its architectural flourishes from the seven wonders of the world (including the Great Wall, the Taj Mahal, and the pyramids) makes for a highly distinctive dining experience.

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

Shang Palace Restaurant

The slightly off-centre, high-class Norfolk Mansion Hotel on Ly Tu Trong is home to one of Saigon's most well-respected Chinese restaurants outside of Chinatown. Located on the 1st floor, Shang's dark intricate wooden tables and chairs with white linen and deep red carpeting make for an atmosphere of moody opulence; there is seating for over 300 guests, and private rooms are available.

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

Shi-Fu Dim sum



Shifu Dim Sum House is a restaurant specializing in dim sum, with modern Chinese décor and over 68 dim sum dishes.

139A Nguyen Trai, D1
3925 1111
info@shifu.vn
www.dimsunhouse.vn
7am - 12am

french

Alibi Restaurant and Bar



Centrally located a stone's-throw from the Opera House in downtown D1, this is a warm, appealing lounge environment with modest prices.

5 Nguyen Sieu, D1
3825 6257
ask@alibi.vn
www.alibi.vn
10am - late daily

Au Manoir de Khai



Au Manoir de Khai is an authentic, first class French restaurant. Guests can enjoy traditional French cuisine in this classic 100 year old villa. Their menu is extensive and features dishes like Kobe beef, foie gras, red grouper, and truffle mushrooms.

251 Dien Bien Phu, D3
3930 3394
aumanoir@khaisilkcorp.com
www.aumanoirdekhai.com
9am - 10pm

Bon Appetit



A small French-Vietnamese fusion bistro on Pham Ngoc Thach with a simplistic charm enhanced by a fine selection of old-style French music.

78 Pham Ngoc Thach, D3
090 789 8345
9am - 2.30pm; 5pm - 10pm

Bonjour Restaurant



Bonjour serves up international dishes with a French flair. The large menu of main courses feature roast duck, salmon, lamb and steak with specialties being ostrich and venison.

150/26 Nguyen Trai, D1
3926 0699
bonjourresto.com
7am - 10pm

Cordon Blue



A unique French venue decorated with blue and green shades serving high-quality French cuisine on the outskirts of the inner city.

38 Mac Dinh Chi, D1
3822 5216
info@cordonblue.vn
www.cordonblue.vn
10am - 2pm; 5pm - 10pm

La Brasserie de Saigon



Set in a trendy space featuring art nouveau décor and intricate iron spiral staircases, La Brasserie de Saigon presents authentic French cuisine with a modern twist under the eye of Iron Chef Vietnam David Thai.

38 Dong Du, D1
012 046 99154
contact@labrasseriadesaigon.com
11.30pm - 2.30pm; 6pm - 12am

La Camargue



Known for its high food quality, reasonable prices and a fine selection of wine, the long running La Camargue serves up home-style French cuisine in an open plan 1st-floor terrace.

74/17 Hai Ba Trung, D1
11am - 2pm; 6pm - 10.30pm

La Creperie



La Creperie serves up typical food from the Brittany region like savory galettes, crepes, ciders and fresh oysters, in a relaxed atmosphere.

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

La Cuisine



This ultra-fine little bistro is an exercise in minimalism with its twenty seats and bare, chic-rustic interior of wooden furnishings and black & white photographs on whitewashed walls. Its warm lighting and clean atmosphere belies a certain sophistication, however, and the price of the fare is significantly damaging enough to make this a rare treat for those not in the restaurant's fabulously wealthy target market.

48 Le Thanh Ton, D1
2229 8882
info@lacuisine.com.vn
www.lacuisine.com.vn

La Doree

La Doree provides its patrons with over 50 varieties of cakes, as well as a rich sandwich menu. They are located in the heart of District 1 in a building with a luxurious French design. In addition to sweets and snacks, this eatery also serves coffee, cocktails, and their specialty: green tea tiramisu.

216 Ly Tu Trong, D1
08 3822 1718
www.ladoree.com

La Fourchette



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

9 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
3829 8143
www.lafourchette.com.vn
12pm - 2.30pm, 6pm - 10pm

La Nicoise



A small, friendly French bistro with about a dozen tables, La Nicoise serves up typical French dishes under the watchful eye of its French-Vietnamese owners.

56 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
3821 3056
7am - 9pm, closed Sunday evenings

Le Bordeaux



Set in a French colonial-style mansion, Le Bordeaux serves southwestern French cuisine in a beautiful setting. Known for its foie gras and large selection of wines, Le Bordeaux is worth the trip to Binh Thanh district.

72 D2 Street, Binh Thanh
3899 9831
090 393 6633
bordeaux@hcm.vnn.vn
restaurant-lebordeaux.com.vn
11.30am - 1.30pm; 6.30am - 9.30pm

Le Bouchon De Saigon



Red and white checked tablecloths and closely set tables make Le Bouchon de Saigon the place to go for a casual, classic French bistro experience.

40 Thai Van Lung, D1
3829 9263
contact@lebouchonsesaigon.com
www.lebouchonsesaigon.com
11am - 2.30pm; 5.30pm - 10pm

Le Jardin

A restaurant that effectively shuts out the Asian hubbub outside, Le Jardin is a gorgeous enclosed garden space that

allows eaters to follow the example of the French colonists a century ago and pretend they're actually in Paris. Whether dining outside under the shaded terrace or within the old, warmly-lit villa, the cuisine, decor, and general mood of the place is like a Stargate direct to France.

31D Thai Van Lung, D1
3825 8465

L'Olivier



L'Olivier is a restaurant serving authentic Mediterranean cuisines, located on the 2nd floor of the Hotel Sofitel.

Sofitel Saigon Plaza, 17 Le Duan, D1
3824 1555
www.sofitel.com
11.30am - 2pm; 6pm - 10pm

Minh Kha Café (K Café)

Located in the bustling backpacker's area of Saigon, K cafe caters to expatriates offering a wide range of western foods.

28 Do Quang Dau, D1
9765 52042
paolo@kcafevietnam.com
www.kcafevietnam.com/En/index.php
10am - 10.30pm

Ty Coz



An unpretentious venue focused only on serving great cuisine. Ty Coz provides a fine balcony view of the cathedral, intimate atmosphere, and affordable prices.

178/4 Pasteur, D1
3822 2457
ty.coz.saigon@me.com
www.tycozsaigon.com
11am - 2pm; 6pm - 9.30pm Tuesday through Saturday

indian

Baba's Kitchen



Baba's Kitchen, also known as the best Indian restaurant on Bui Vien, is familiar among expats and locals alike, rating 4.5 out of five stars on Trip Advisor.

164 Bui Vien, D1
3838 6661
www.babaskitchen.in
11am - 11pm

Bombay Indian Restaurant

Located in D1 opposite the local mosque serving Indian & Halal cuisine. The ambiance is relaxed thanks to Bombay's easy-going, family kitchen vibe.

35 Dong Du, D1
090 386 3114
bombayrestaurantsaigon.com
9am - 10.30pm

Ganesh



Ganesh serves authentic northern Indian tandooris & rotis along with the hottest curries, dandas, and vada from the southern region.

15B4 Le Thanh Ton, D1
8223 0173
www.ganeshindianrestaurant.com
11am - 2.15pm; 6pm - 10.15pm

Indus Indian



Indus Indian is a relatively new Indian restaurant in Saigon providing all the classic Indian favorites. Operated by a dedicated husband/wife duo, this restaurant specializes in Halal food.

2G Thi Sach, D1
3521 0324
indusindian_saigon@gmail.com
9am - 2pm; 5pm - 10pm

Mumtaz



With bona-fide Indian owners and chefs, authenticity at Mumtaz is guaranteed. While the service and setting is relatively basic, the food is amongst the best of its type in the city in terms of taste alone. The brand has a second branch in Da Nang city if you're ever on holiday and missing

your curries.

226 Bui Vien, D1
3837 1767
muntazvn@gmail.com
11am - 11pm

The Punjabi



Authentic North Indian cuisine prepared in a home-made tandoori oven makes Punjabi a popular spot for budget conscious eaters who crave Indian standbys like spinach naan and chicken tandoori.

40/3 Bui Vien, D1
3508 3777
11am - 11pm daily

The Refinery



This Parisian bistro hidden away in its enclave on Hai Ba Trung is an exceptional venue, making for an elegant repatriation of the sins of the past. It was here in French Colonial days that opium was manufactured, bringing ruin to the people of Asia; it is here that a far softer side of the French culture now exercises its influence over present-day Saigon, serving modern European cuisine in its tastefully decorated dining area and airy outdoor patio.

74 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3825 7667
www.facebook.com/refinery.saigon
www.therefinerysaigon.com

Vatel Saigon Restaurant



Great concept, good restaurant. Vatel Saigon is the practical arm of the Vatel International Business School in Hotel & Tourism Management, run by students as a part of their training. Even so, nothing is left to chance – this is a fine, well-managed, and even luxurious dining venue serving authentic French cuisine in a Franco-Viet design space. There's red carpet along the entrance way, gallery-standard art on the walls, and an overall atmosphere of refinement and good service.

120 bis Suong Nguyet Anh, D1
08 5404 2220
vatsaigon.com

italian

Basilico Restaurant



Trattoria-style Italian eatery Basilico specializes in homespun recipes. Contemporary décor, casual ambience, and casual yet attentive Bistro-style service makes it a relaxing dinner venue. Ground floor, on the Corner of Nguyen Du & Le Van Huu, D1
3520 9099
6.30am - 10.30pm

Capricciosa



Despite its being a chain restaurant, Capricciosa's special touch is that the restaurant decor tries to capture something of the Italian home – not exactly authentic, but better. You'll find the standards here – pizza, pasta, soups, salads, with a few special dishes such as calamari and onion in squid ink sauce. They're all prepared according to strict Japanese standards, and the result is actually really good. Booth B3-03A, Level B3
Vincin Tower, 70 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3993 9786
info@redsun-iti.com
www.capricciosa.com.vn

Casa Italia



Italian owned & run, Casa Italia's menu ranges from home-style cooking that includes steaks, seafood, a large variety of homemade pastas, jumbo salads, appetizers and the best pizzas. 86 Le Loi, D1
3824 4286

www.casaitalia.com.vn
10am - 11pm

Ciao Bella ✓ Oi's Pick

Hearty home-style Italian food served with flair and excellent service ensures this is one of downtown Ho Chi Minh City's most popular restaurants. An extensive permanent menu is complemented with daily blackboard specials and frequent wine promotions. Arriving guests are greeted with a complimentary glass of Prosecco to set the mood. Diners sit in a cosy setting upstairs or down under the watchful gaze of famous film stars whose portraits line the walls. Groups are advised to book as this restaurant often has to turn diners away.

11 Dong Du, DI
3822 3329
info@saigonrestaurantgroup.com
www.saigonrestaurantgroup.com/ciao

Good Morning Vietnam

Italian restaurant with a unique menu including traditional Italian dishes. The restaurant is conveniently located in a beautiful old house in the heart of Saigon, well integrated in the local architecture.

197 De Tham, DI
3837 1894
www.thegoodmorningvietnam.com
9am - 12am

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, DI
3823 1080
www.lahostaria.com

Lucca ✓ Oi's Pick

A Brooklyn-style Italian eatery upstairs with an adjoining bar. Downstairs is a relaxing cafe offering generous breakfasts, simple cafe fare for lunch and some of the best espresso coffee you'll find in the city.

88 Ho Tung Mau, DI
3915 3692
8am - 11pm

Margherita

Well-reviewed overseas, Margherita is a familiar place to tourists trawling the nooks of Ho Chi Minh City. This is partly a result of its agreeable price, sumptuous Western-style pizzas, English-speaking staff, and more than average customer service – and for some, Margherita doubles as an unofficial expat rendezvous, great if you can swat away the hawkers.

175/1 Pham Ngu Lao, DI
3837 0760

Opera Restaurant

A contemporary, casual trattoria-style Italian restaurant overlooking the Opera House, Opera is located within Park Hyatt Saigon specializing in authentic pizza baked in a wood-fired oven, pasta and homemade Italian dishes.

1st floor Park Hyatt Hotel,
2 Lam Son Square, DI
3824 1234
www.saigon.park.hyatt.com
6am - 11pm

Pizza 4P's

A little treasure hidden away at the top of an out-of-the-way alley off Le Thanh Ton, this Japanese pizzeria is a major hit with those in the know. Highly attractive premises and some extraordinary toppings catering to all tastes make this an unmissable pizza experience.

8/15 Le Thanh Ton, DI

012 0789 4444
info@pizza4ps.com
www.pizza4ps.com
11am - 11pm

Pomodoro

In this family-style, simply-decorated trattoria restaurant with an arched ceiling and an all-brick interior, a fine Italian menu pleases diners with 12 different pizzas along with pasta dishes, parma ham with a spicy tomato chutney, and a highly-recommended French onion soup. Ideal option for a simple, reliable, and thoroughly pleasant night out with no complications.

79 Hai Ba Trung, DI
3823 8998
www.pomodoro-vietnam.com

Sarpino's Pizzeria

Sarpino's Pizzeria provides authentic Italian pizzas made from gourmet ingredients.

125 Ho Tung Mau, DI
3821 6677
yvonne.trinh@sarpinos.vn
www.sarpinos.vn

Japanese

Aka Taiyo

A fine Japanese restaurant featuring wooden furnishings, tatami mats, bamboo-lined corridors, sliding doors, and all the other intoxicating graces of the land of the rising sun, Aka Taiyo serves traditional and exotic Japanese cuisine with an extensive menu featuring more than 200 dishes. Also stocks a surprisingly comprehensive range of Japanese alcoholic beverages.

74B Hai Ba Trung, DI
3824 4295
contact@akataiyo.com
www.akataiyo.com

Ajisen Ramen

One of the more authentic Japanese venues in the area with ingredients imported from Japan, this restaurant is best-known for its tasty "white" soups. The restaurant serves at least 250 traditional dishes.

120 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, DI
3822 0522
info@ajisen.com.vn
www.facebook.com/Ajisen.Vietnam
10am - 10pm

Aki Japanese Restaurant

A small Japanese restaurant with a cozy and comfortable atmosphere, Aki serves over 100 authentic Japanese dishes.

15/9 Le Thanh Ton, DI
3827 9083
11.30am - 2pm; 4.30pm - 11pm

Blanchy Street ✓ Oi's Pick

Once hidden upstairs at the Blanchy's Tash bar, Blanchy Street now has its own location in the courtyard of eateries on Hai Ba Trung, offering authentic Japanese food mixed with fusion cuisine and the occasional additional Southeast Asian dish. Run by an ex Nobu (London) chef with his own signature dishes, it has wide appeal. Food is designed to be shared and is backed by an extensive list of sakes and wines.

74/3 Hai Ba Trung, DI
3823 8793
blanchystreet@gmail.com
www.blanchystreet.com
* Reviewed by Oi in April 2013 edition

Blanchy's Tash

The mix of Japan's tradition of raw, fresh seafood with the spices and staples of Amazonia (tubers, maize, chilli and tomatoes) gives rise to a nicely subtle and

filling light cuisine in this extraordinary venue. The upstairs dining area is refined and modern, and provides a refuge from the wonderful chaos of the nightlife downstairs – which is Blanchy's intriguing dark side, with its movement, smoke, frenetic crowds and the constant pulse of modern electronic dance shuffling people insistently about the floor.

95 Hai Ba Trung, DI
090 724 2757
events@blanchystash.com
www.blanchystash.com

Cam On Restaurant

Cam On specializes in Japanese health food, with a dedication to helping men and women maintain their beauty and health by providing quality cuisine with natural ingredients.

30 Thai Van Lung, DI
3823 3955
www.cam-on.asia
11am - 2pm; 5pm - 10pm

Dragon Hotpot

Dragon Hotpot blends fine taste with the healthy ingredients of Japanese cuisine. Drinks include Japanese favorites along with fine international wines.

122-124 Ho Tung Mau, DI
3825 8842
info@dragonhotpot.vn
dragonhotpot.vn
11am - Late

Dragon Noodle

A rather small but pretty restaurant with warm tones and a nice series of murals depicting old Saigon, Dragon Noodle focuses on the Japanese staple – ramen noodle soups – although their version is a little less spicy than is traditionally served, increasing perhaps the international appeal of the dish. There are a total of four

soup bases to accompany the noodles.

29 Dong Du, DI
3521 0008
info@rame.com
www.ramen.vn

Dragon Steak

A striking Japanese restaurant tucked away off Saigon's central street, Dragon steak specialises in thick wagyu cuts and tenderloin that could well have been cut off a beast the size of a dragon. They're so enormous that the restaurant once ran a cheeky competition – guests who finished one within half an hour dined free.

138 Ton That Dam, DI
3821 0288
info@steak.vn
www.steak.vn

Ebisu

Ebisu serves neither sushi nor sashimi – instead, the menu focuses on a range of wholesome charcoal-grilled meals and on thick, white Japanese udon noodles – made from imported udon powder from Australia – and presenting an overall rustic cuisine with a variety of good sakes.

35bis Mac Dinh Chi, DI
3822 6971
ductm@incubation-vn.com
ebisu-vn.asia

Fuji Restaurant

It helps enormously that Fuji is located in Saigon's newest swanky hotel, with its fine modernist Japanese décor, right on the ground floor of the Nikko. It's all luxury – the interior achieving a subtle balance between the more efficient elegance outside in the hotel lobby and the more effete traditional styling within. The cuisine is exceptional – fresh seafood and vegetables flown in direct from Japan and Dalat. A preferred venue for those staying at the hotel, and worth trying if



Baba's Kitchen
164 Bui Vien, District 1
Phone: 083-838-6661 & 083-838-6662
Open 11am to 11pm
North & South Indian food
Halal & vegetarian dishes
Of course we can cater!
order online at vietnammm.com & eat.vn
"Baba brings India to Vietnam"

you're living local.

Ground Floor, Nihko Hotel Saigon
235 Nguyen Van Cu, D1
3830 8123

Hanayuki



A Japanese-style restaurant on Ton Duc Thang with a sushi bar on the ground floor and a fine mezzanine level, Hanayuki serves more than 200 exquisite Japanese dishes with more than 30 kinds of sushi and sashimi. Private, traditional Japanese VIP rooms are available on the top level.

21C Ton Duc Thang, D1
3824 2754
hanayuki@yahoo.com

Inaho Restaurant



This unique venue specializes in traditional sushi & sashimi as well as hot pot dishes. Couples can retreat to the upstairs area; it's far more private than the downstairs bar.

4 Chu Manh Trinh, D1
3829 0326
11am - 2pm, 5.30pm - 10pm

Kabuto Tokyo



One of the more exuberant Japanese venues in this city, Kabuto Tokyo on Mac Thi Bui specializes in both traditional and fusion fresh Japanese seafood cuisine. It's a vibrant venue with its manga murals, carp lanterns, giant samurai warrior, and large aquarium – and in the evening it becomes a respectable upmarket bar. For a quirky beverage there, try a sake served in a bamboo tube.

45 Mac Thi Bui, D1
3822 2351
kabuto.com.vn

K Cafe



K Cafe Sushi is a large Japanese restaurant; an ideal place to gather for a business lunch or for a social dinner.

74A4 Hai Ba Trung, D1
38245355
090 391 2522
K-cafe@hcm.vnn.com
www.yakatabune-saigon.com
11am - 2pm, 5pm - 11pm

Kissho Restaurant



With the largest capacity of any Japanese restaurant in the city, this extremely central, eye-catching, modern restaurant with a cutting-edge interior is owned by a well-known cartel of restaurateurs with successful franchises around the city, and is thus very well-run. Located right beside the new Times Square Project, Kissho (pronounced "ree-sho" meaning "good luck") features an open kitchen and 9 VIP rooms, and is definitely one of those places to be seen in.

14 Nguyen Hue, D1
3823 2223
info@kisshorestaurant.com
www.kissho.wmctvietnam.com

La Fenetre Soleil



The perennially popular La Fenetre Soleil is one of the inner city's most distinctive character venues, with its exposed-brick and antique-furniture vibe, chandeliers and fur cushions. Glass tables with mosaic tiles and wooden floors set off large comfy sofas and high ceilings, and diners can look out over the busy Ly Tu Trong though 11 large French windows. Its sense of personality attracts artistically-inclined expats to return often, and many of these profess it as their favourite hangout in Saigon. Cuisine is Japanese-Vietnamese fusion.

44 Ly Tu Trong, D1
3824 5994

Mus Mus



This is a particularly bright and simple Japanese health food bistro where the

cuisine is based on straightforward hotpot recipes. Customers choose a total of twelve ingredients from the selection on offer, which are then added to a bowl of boiling broth on the tabletop. Flavours are essentially Japanese seafood.

117 Vo Van Tan, D3
3930 9185
info@musmus.net
www.musmus.net

Osaka Ramen



Traditional Japanese noodle restaurant offering traditional Ramen dishes as well as Japanese/Vietnamese fusion cuisine.

67 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D1

10am - 10pm

Sakura Vietnamese-Japanese Restaurant



Cozy, friendly and modern Japanese restaurant near all of the attractions in the city center.

99 Suong Nguyet Anh, D1
6291 1036
info@sakurasaku.vn
sakurasaku.vn
11am - 2pm; 5pm - 11pm

Sumo BBQ



Sumo BBQ is a rising star amongst Japanese venues in Saigon, offering smokeless table BBQ and a unique buffet/a la carte concept: get whatever you want from the menu, as much as you like. Free birthday beer specials on arrangement.

300 Le Van Sy, Tan Binh
3991 4757
sumobbq.com.vn
10.30am - 10.30pm

Sushi Bar



Of several Sushi Bar outlets in Saigon, this is the favourite by a long shot, right at the crown of the Little Tokyo area on Le Thanh Ton. Brightly-lit with dark, traditional furnishings, the restaurant is somewhat Borgesque in that there always seems to be another dining level up the stairs. There are plenty of dining spaces – large and small rooms, floor-level Japanese dining on tatami mats, private areas, and the eponymous large sushi bar on the ground level.

2 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3823 8042
www.sushibar.vn.com

Sushi Dining Aoi



Douglas Adams called Japanese food the best in the world – fresh, delicious, and essentially healthy, it is one of the most perfect cuisines that exists. More than this, however, is the accompanying graceful culture that the best Japanese venues manage to convey in their spotless, highly-styled dining areas.

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

Sushi World



The Japanese presence in HCMC has ensured a wealth of sushi for both themselves and the rest of us here, Sushi World being one specialty venue with a more casual atmosphere that's also a comfortable place to eat for local diners. A four-storey restaurant in a Japanese-style, the first and second floors feature an open sushi bar, while the upper levels contain 15 VIP rooms decorated in a traditional Japanese style with tatami matting.

28 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1

3911 0147
www.sushiworld.com.vn

Tokyo Deli



Tokyo Deli's menu consists of a wide range of distinctive and delicious meals, prepared by specialists to create pure Japanese flavor. The menu is always being changed and improved.

240 Le Thanh Ton, D1
5404 2244
info@tokyodeli.com.vn
tokyodeli.com.vn
11am - 11pm

Uraetel BBQ Restaurant



Fine barbecue restaurant located in Saigon's "Little Tokyo", with traditional styling and a unique menu. Unusual amongst the many Japanese venues in this part of town, Uraetel serves yakiniku grill, a variant of the popular Korean dish bulgogi. The restaurant itself is attractively done, with a nod to feng shui in its selective placement of ponds and rocky pathways outside, while the interior achieves a modern Japanese minimalism, rooms with traditional low-lying dining tables contrasting with plush sofas.

2A Ngo Van Nam, D1
6673 9373

Vicki's Teppanyaki & BBQ



It provides a fusion of Asian cuisines with dishes from Japan, Singapore, and Vietnam. Their menu is interesting and diverse, with many delectable seafood options.

42 Le Anh Xuan, D1
3823 3232
vickis.com.vn
10.30am - 3pm; 5pm - 10pm

Yoshino



The five-star Legend Hotel on Saigon's waterfront is one of the most popular accommodation options in the city with Japanese visitors, and for this reason the Yoshino restaurant on the second floor is a particularly authentic themed dining venue. 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
www.legendisaigon.com/en/dining.html

Yuki



Yukie is a popular Japanese restaurant located in the backpacker area of District 1. Offering authentic Japanese cuisine at affordable prices.

99 Nguyen Thai Hoc, D1
3824 2754
yoshio440yso@gmail.com
yukirestaurant.mysite.vn
10am - 2pm; 4pm - 10pm

korean

Dae Jang Gum

All the theatrics of a traditional Korean experience are part of the service at Dae Jang Gum, named after an historic figure, but more pertinently after a wildly popular Korean drama focusing on her life – photos from the series appear throughout the venue. From waitresses in hanboks to vast plates of kimchi, this is the most authentic introduction to the cuisine available outside of District 7.

1st Floor, Kumho Asiana Plaza

39 Le Duan, D1

3825 7974

www.daejanggum.vn

11am - 10pm

Hana Restaurant



Japanese-Korean fusion in the heart of D1. Hana has contemporary decor with a private, open feel. Its broad menu includes both cooked and raw fish in addition to traditional hot pot with fish eggs, rice and vegetables.

8 Cao Ba Quat, D1
3829 5588
9am - 10pm

Kimsine



A place to enjoy Korean style dishes in the city center. Kimsine's menu is extensive; offering everything from instant noodles to chicken's feet.

8A/5D2 Thai Van Lung, D1
7306 4045
094 467 2281
jymimil1@hanmail.net
10am - 3am

Mi Han Quoc



This franchise has gained popularity in Ho Chi Minh City for having successfully adapted the spiciness of Korean cuisine to the local Vietnamese palate, serving perfectly balanced noodle dishes.

92 Ham Nghi, D1
3914 1565
info@mihanquoc.vn
www.mihanquocvn.com
8am - 11pm

Mr. BBQ – Korean Chicken & Hof



This unusual Korean import famous for extraordinarily spicy chicken is an odd phenomenon on the HCMC culinary landscape, serving up a version of KFC that's actually painful. Lovers of spicy food rejoice. The restaurant itself is clean and modern in design, and there are another 50 Korean dishes on offer beyond the signature dish, including some tasty bibimbap mixed rice dishes.

20 Ho Huan Nghiep, D1
3823 9000
9am-11pm

Seoul House



Seoul House is a well-known two-story Korean restaurant with a simple, cozy atmosphere. Its menu contains Korean favorites like Banchan, hotpots, grilled meat, clay pot mixed rice, and kim chi tofu soup.

33 Mac Thi Bui, D1
3829 4297
091 979 5033
seoul.house@yahoo.com.br
7am - 10pm

steakhouses

Corso Steakhouse and Bar



Corso Steakhouse and Bar operates under an open kitchen concept, bringing together an exciting menu of Asian and European dishes with a focus on grilling. Guests can choose from a wide variety of wines and spirits.

117 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3829 5368
www.norfolkhotel.com.vn
6pm - 11pm

Dragon Steak



Specializing in generous portions of Wagyu cuts; they're so enormous that the restaurant runs a cheeky competition - finish one within half an hour, and it's free.

138 Ton That Dam, D1
3821 0288
info@steak.vn
www.steak.vn
11am - late

El Gaucho Oi's Pick

Serves great Argentinean steaks, hamburgers and more. A great place to entertain clients or friends from

overseas. With outlets in Hanoi and Bangkok too.

5D Nguyen Sieu, D1
38251879
www.elgauchoa.sia

New York Steakhouse



While situated in a fairly laid-back area, 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
3823 7373
contact@steakhouse.com.vn
www.steakhouse.com.vn

Pho 99



Not a traditional steakhouse per se, but Pho 99 is known for its excellent filet mignon steaks made out of Cu Chi beef. Also serves great pho.

139 Nguyen Trai, D1
3925 2791
6am - 2.30am

Samba Brazilian Steakhouse



This is certainly Saigon's most visible and colourful restaurant serving the popular Brazilian buffet style, where enormous skewers of meat are circulated around the tables for diners to enjoy as much of as they can swallow. While the cuisine is likely to be a heavy night out – they'll be able to make actual sausages out of your intestines after dining here – the vibrant atmosphere and sheer variety on the menu will ensure a positive experience right up until that moment where you decide you can't ignore your body's "tummy's full: stop" signals any longer.

10C Thai Van Lung, D1
3822 0079
www.samba.vnnhahang.com

Wild Horse Salon



Cowboy-themed western steakhouse with an impressive exterior on trendy Thai Van Lung, Wild Horse serves high-quality Tex Mex/American cuisine with enormous servings.

8A/1D1 Thai Van Lung, D1
3825 1901
10am - 2pm; 4pm - 11.30pm

35190038
5pm - 9.30pm Tue-Sun

Koh Thai



Stunning Thai-chic decor and unique Siam cuisine make Koh Thai one of Saigon's most authentic and memorable Thai restaurants. Located in the Intercontinental complex, Koh Thai serves Asian inspired cocktails in a trendy lounge environment with chill music.

1st floor, 39 Le Duan, D1
3823 4423
091 233 9138
www.kohthai.com.vn
11am - 10pm Daily

Lac Thai



Lac Thai is a large, three-floor restaurant offering a wide range of Thai cuisine with signature dishes like Pad Thai, Tom Yum Koong, Chicken Satay and many others.

71/2 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3823 7506
lacthai@hotmail.com
9am - 9pm

Mai Thai



Mai Thai is a Thai restaurant offering an extensive menu with many Thai favorites. This two-storey restaurant features traditional decorations and friendly service.

13 Ton That Thiep, D1
3821 2920
11am - 2pm, 5pm - 10pm

Malee Thai



A cute, central Thai venue decked out in royal purple decor, Malee is an intimate restaurant serving a wide range of consistently tasty dishes, although without the full effect of Thai cuisine's signature burn.

37 Dong Du, D1
3829 3029
dthimphung2003@yahoo.com
11am - 2pm; 5pm - 11pm

Spice



Spice Thai restaurant has been a favorite among the locals in Saigon since 2003. This multicultural eatery offers Thai food & seafood in a décor fusing Oriental & Mediterranean artifacts.

27C Le Quy Don, D3
3930 7873
thaifood@spicevn.com
www.spicevn.com
11am - 2pm; 5.30pm - 10pm

Thai Express



Thai Express is the world's largest Thai restaurant chain. Enjoy fantastically authentic Thai cuisine at reasonable prices in a relaxed, contemporary atmosphere.

8A Le Thanh Ton, D1
6299 1338
www.thaiaexpress.com.vn
10.30am - 10pm

vietnamese

3T Quan Nuong



While you won't see the locals standing in their back yards over the barbie in their shorts with an egg slice in hand, there are venues in the city where you can get more or less the same experience right at your dining table – this being one of them. With hanging oil lamps and wooden statues lining the stairs, this venue above the Temple Bar has a touch more atmosphere than most of its kind, but the otherwise simple décor with bamboo tables and chairs are fitting enough. The broad barbecue grill menu features classics of its kind.

Top Floor, 29 Ton That Hiep, D1
3821 1631

An Khue Quan



This pleasant little establishment out by the New World hotel is simply decorated with plain wooden furnishings and minimal, albeit tasteful, decorations. This is appropriate for the restaurant's style, serving a well-selected series of dishes from both northern and southern regions of Vietnam in an area where international diners are likely to be in abundance – and therefore well attuned to the foreign palate.

92B Le Lai, D1
3925 9583
info@ankhue.com
www.ankhuequan.com/eng

An Vietnamese Bistro



An Restaurant offers exquisite dishes from the North, Central, and South of Vietnam, served by well-trained waiters and waitresses dressed in traditional Southern clothing.

71/5-6 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3825 8275
11am - 10pm

Banh Xeo 46A



Although known for a wide range of Vietnamese specialties, the local pancake stuffed with herbs and prawns is its tastiest dish.

46A Dinh Cong Trang, D1
3824 1110
10am - 9pm

Banh Xeo An La Ghien



This franchise emphasises ethnic Vietnamese traditions with the rustic decor of the countryside, featuring thatched roofing and red tiles, bamboo chairs, and an open, natural ambience. The fare on offer is traditional Vietnamese, specialising in the Banh Xeo filled egg pancake, a favourite with foreigners with its light crispy shell and fragrant herbs and meats inside the pancake pocket.

74 Suong Nguyet Anh, D1
3833 0534
support@anlaghien.com.vn
www.banhxeoanlaghien.com.vn/en

Barbecue Garden



This well-known outdoor restaurant is a favourite among long-term residents and visitors alike. The venue features all open-air dining and the atmosphere is distinctly festival-like, relaxing, and casual, becoming congenially boisterous in the evenings. The restaurant specializes in Western-Vietnamese fusion dishes such as beef with cheese, 5-spices beef, squid with satay sauce, and shrimp kebabs.

135A Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D1
3823 3340
www.barbecuegarden.com

Beefsteak Nam Son

This local steak restaurant specialises in Vietnamese-style iron-plate meat dishes rather than the American steaks often popular with expats – but while these two varieties have their differences, the local version of the dish has a fresh, light character and is served with some good, delicate Vietnamese sauces.

188 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D3
3930 3917
www.namsonsteak.com

Bo Ne Le Hong



Bo Ne Le Hong is a popular Vietnamese restaurant specializing in beefsteak. It has a rich, diverse menu, and also offer fresh fruit juices.

489/27/39 Huynh Van Banh, Phu Nhuan
3990 5106
11.30am - 22.30pm

Bun Sai Gon



This franchise positions itself firmly in

the local market with the slogan 'the bun noodles of the Vietnamese people' – indicating a concerted dedication to the authenticity of its noodle soup staples. In reality, the flavour comes at a compromise between the hygiene standards of a franchise operation and the hearty but far riskier varieties you'll find on the street – this is not a bad thing, as for those members of the foreign element about town, it provides a nicely mediated experience while staying true to the spirit of the local cuisine.

73 Ly Tu Trong, D1
6276 2609
www.bunsaigon.com.vn

Cha Ca La Vong

This venue only serves Cha Ca, a traditional Hanoian dish. Cha Ca is a salad made out of pieces of fish and spring onion stir-fried in a hotpot.

36 Ton That Thiep, D1
3915 3343
7.30am - 10pm

Crazy Buffalo

There's one very important reason why this raucous nightclub is so popular – its proximity to the backpacker district, ensuring an endless supply of fresh young faces eager to drink and be generally irresponsible. This in turn makes it a fascinating venue for curious young Vietnamese. Local expats tend to select from the less obvious venues according to taste, but with the guaranteed crowds at Buffalo, there's still much fun to be had. Expect a soundtrack of rock, pop, soul, hip hop, and house - and ladies' night comes around every Friday.

212 De Tham, D1
3836 9946

Cuc Gach Quan

Fine cuisine with a rustic touch hidden away in the extreme reaches of the inner city. Set inside a restored French colonial mansion with antique wooden furniture and a central staircase, this Vietnamese venue serves traditional, country-style foods, a mixture of street food dishes made with fine ingredients together with a selection of more contemporary options.

10 Dang Tat, D1
3848 0144
Ganh



Situated in an alley off Pham Ngoc Thach, this is a simply-decorated home-style two-storey restaurant attempting a touch of the countryside in the city. The actual effect achieved, however, is something more classy. With green suspended lanterns, simple and elegant furnishings, all touched off with bamboo baskets of fruit, flowers, and reed grass, the atmosphere is just as smooth and well-defined as a more modern-styled venue.

58/4 Pham Ngoc Thach, D3
3829 5243
www.nemnuongganh.com

Gold Fish



A private enclave of quiet in the fast-developing central Saigon district – a hiding place in the centre of Vietnam's emerging financial power for those overwhelmed with the gathering surge of energy. In the midst of all that commercialism outdoors, Gold Fish offers a slice of authentic Vietnam with a genuinely rural cuisine.

73 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3822 5229
www.goldfish.vn

Highway 4



A relative newcomer serving specially-crafted Vietnamese cuisine on premises decorated in the traditional French Colonial style, with its subtle yellow and brown tones. Upstairs, dine Asian-style at tables that stretch the length of the room while seated on cushions. The menu reflects the ambience of the north and wider Vietnam, although dishes

are carefully selected to meet a more universal palate.

101 Vo Van Tan, D3
3602 2069
101vtt@highway4.com
www.highway4.com

Hoa Tuc



Set in what used to be Saigon's opium refinery, Hoa Tuc serves up contemporary Vietnamese cuisine in a Parisian, art-deco atmosphere.

74 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3825 1676
hoatuc@gmail.com
www.hoatuc.com
10.30am - 10.30pm daily

Hoi An Restaurant



Elegant restaurant in the style of the ancient town of Hoi An, specializing in the cuisine of that area.

11 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3823 1049
hoian@orientalstarsgroup.com
www.orientalsaigon.com.vn/hoian
11.30am - 2pm; 5.30pm - 10.45pm

Lemongrass



This relatively unassuming restaurant – perhaps because of its name, its location, or its quaint store-front – is actually very well-known amongst visitors to Vietnam and it is frequently reviewed. The vibe aims at a harmony between modern styling and the Vietnamese traditional arts, and the dining room with its tile floors and wooded wainscoting effects a comforting natural environment.

4 Nguyen Thiep, D1
3822 0496
info@lemongrasssaigon.com

Luong Son



Exotic beer garden style eatery famous for its barbecue beef. Luong Son also serves fear factor items such as scorpions, grubs, ostrich meat and crickets.

31 Ly Tu Trong, D1
3825 1330
lsq.reservation@gmail.com
www.facebook.com/LuongSonQuan
10am - 10pm

Mandarine



Mandarine is an elegant Vietnamese restaurant serving predominantly foreign clientele in a quiet, centrally-located side street. Its award-winning menu is influenced by French and Vietnamese cuisine.

11A Ngo Van Nam, D1
3822 9783
mandarin@orientalstarsgroup.com
www.orientalsaigon.com.vn/mandarine
11.30am - 2pm; 5.30pm - 10.45pm

Marina Saigon



Marina Saigon is one of the leading seafood restaurants in Ho Chi Minh City. This restaurant provides a luxurious environment with French/Vietnamese fusion cuisine.

172 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D3
3930 2379
marinaseafood@ngocsuong.com.vn
ngocsuong.com.vn
10am - 11pm

Maxim's Nam An



Large and lavishly decorated, Maxim's Nam An restaurant serves Vietnamese cuisine in style. The carved wooden booths, completed with silk curtains, are a romantic hideaway for couples or small groups.

13-15 17 Dong Khoi, D1
3829 6676
10am - 10pm

Nam Phan

This 4-storey villa retains the structural

integrity of its original colonial-era construction, and is a delightful venue with exquisite furnishing and décor, refined lighting, and a serene classical music soundtrack. The restaurant serves authentic Vietnamese cuisine, mixing well-known dishes from the various regions around the country, and boasts an extensive international wine list.

34 Vo Van Tan, D3
3933 3636
vithanh@khaissilkcorp.com
www.khaissilkcorp.com

Nghi Xuan



Lost down one of the less noticeable alleyways of the inner city, if you do happen to chance upon Nghi Xuan, the sheer grace of the venue will come as something of a surprise. Decorated as a high-class traditional Vietnamese mansion, Nghi Xuan is perfectly fitting for a venue serving the finest of Vietnam's classical cuisine – the imperial dishes of Hue. Service is courteous, fast, and quintessentially elegant.

5/9 Nguyen Sieu, D1
3823 0699
dining@nghixuanrestaurant.com
nghixuanrestaurant.com

Nha Hang Ngon



Famous restaurant serving easy Vietnamese cuisine to foreigners and tourists with more than 400 traditional dishes.

160 Pasteur, D1
3827 7131
quananngon@hcm.vnn.vn
www.quananngon.com.vn
8am - 10pm

Papaya Restaurant



A petite, clean, and brightly-coloured Vietnamese restaurant with simple décor serving a light, healthy, northern-style cuisine. There's no fuss in the layout here – green walls with black & white artworks, brown wooden furnishings, and lanterns above every table make for a very pleasant atmosphere – and it's casual without being messy, and refined without any trace of pretentiousness.

68 Pham Viet Chanh, Binh Thanh
6258 1508
papaya@chi-nghia.com
www.chi-nghia.com

Pho 2000

Pho 2000's Ben Thanh Market branch was famously visited by former US President Bill Clinton in 2000. The chain serves up variations on pho as well as noodle and rice dishes.

4 Phan Chu Trinh, D1
3822 2788
pho2000.com.vn
6am - 10pm

Pho 24



PHO24 is a popular Vietnamese noodle restaurant chain with 70 outlets across Vietnam and throughout Southeast Asia.

71-73 Dong Khoi, D1
3825 7505
info@pho24.com.vn
www.pho24.com.vn
7am - 11pm

Quan Nam Giao



Le Thanh Ton is one of the inner-city's restaurant meccas, and this unassuming traditional Hue-style venue is one of the quieter and more interesting in the area. Even the decor is evocative of the graces of the former Vietnamese imperial capital – while there are many other low-key Hue venues throughout the city, Quan Nam Giao is worth a visit for tourists looking for something special or for a taste of elegance for long-term expatriates.

13/15 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3825 0261

www.namgiao.com

Royal Revolving Restaurant



The Royal Revolving Restaurant is a unique restaurant experience. Experience stunning views of the city while you spin around in the sky. The restaurant offers more than 50 Hong Kong inspired dishes and a bar that serves coffee and cocktails.

3823 2232

nhahanghoanggia@yahoo.com

6am - 10am; 11am - 2pm; 5pm - 11pm

Saigon Vegan



Saigon Vegan is located in a casual and inviting space with high ceilings, dark wood tables, and lots of natural light. Guests can choose from over 100 vegan dishes, all of which are either soy or vegetable based.

378/3 Vo Van Tan, D3
3834 4473
8.30am - 2pm; 4pm - 10pm

SH Garden restaurant



Established in the 1930s, the Terrace restaurant is located at the corner of two of the oldest boulevards of Saigon, Nguyen Hue and Le Loi, where romantic memories of Saigon float around. This restaurant offers a variety of delicious traditional Vietnamese dishes.

4th floor, 98 Nguyen Hue, D1
6680 0188
shgarden@gmail.com
shgarden.com.vn
10am - 11pm

Song Ngu



A particularly elegant and highly-lauded Vietnamese seafood restaurant based in a twin villa with a large garden. There are eight different rooms capable of seating a total of 350-400 guests, each warmly-lit with dark wooden furnishings. On a small stage, a traditional chamber orchestra with ladies wearing classical Ao dai costumes perform Vietnamese music on genuine old instruments. The restaurant's website is quick to point out its awards in seafood categories consistently awarded since 2005.

70 Suong Nguyet Anh, D1
3832 5017
lthrang@songngu.com

Temple Club



Usually regarded as one of central Saigon's most authentically Vietnamese venues, this historic and good-looking features classic Indochinese decor, broadly interpreted as a blend of the old French colonial style with pan-Asian graces that appeal more to Asian exoticism than reflect actual Vietnamese styles. With antique furnishings and ceiling fans, the atmosphere is certainly pretty.

29-31 Ton That Thiep, D1
3829 9244
templeclub.com.vn

Thanh Nien Restaurant



This Vietnamese staple behind Diamond Plaza has been popular for a long time with foreigners, and for very good reason. With its attractive home-style layout, pretty garden for outdoor dining, and warm, yellow-toned interior for the buffet, it's a charming venue for tourists and a familiar favourite for long-timers. It's intentionally decorated like a private home, walls decorated with floral artworks, and the garden surrounded by bamboo.

11 Nguyen Van Chiem, D1
3822 5909
thanhnienrestaurant@yahoo.com
www.vnnavi.com/restaurants/thanhvien

Tib Restaurant

This fine Vietnamese Hue-style restaurant looks almost like a temple, and it's considered one of the city's premier

settings serving imperial cuisine. Although the fare is relatively inexpensive, Tib is so well-reviewed that it wound up as the venue of choice for former US President George Bush upon the occasion of hosting Australian Prime Minister John Howard for dinner in November 2007 – in terms of PR, Tib never had it better.

187 Hai Ba Trung, D3
3829 7242
www.tibrestaurant.com.vn/home.html

Tin Nghia

A charming little venue serving vegetarian cuisine. Its quaint appearance hides the fact that it was the first international vegetarian restaurant in Ho Chi Minh City and an important center of the city's vegetarian culture.

9 Tran Hung Dao, D1
3821 2538
7.30am - 1.30pm, 4.30pm - 7.30pm

Vietnam House



Vietnam House is a high quality restaurant specializing in both local Vietnamese and international cuisine. This restaurant is set in a restored French colonial house offering stunning views of the street.

93-95 Dong K Khoi, D1
3829 1623
vietnamhouse@vietnamhousesaigon.com
www.vietnamhousesaigon.com
7am - 11pm

asian

Lion City



This is a Singaporean franchise to watch with interest – since its humble beginnings in 2006 with the rather more unpleasant name Singapore Frog Porridge, it has risen in strength to become the most prominent representative of the cuisine in the city, and its growth has continued to be remarkable.

45 Le Anh Xuan, D1
3823 8371
www.lioncityrestaurant.com

Long Monaco



Long Monaco operates throughout the city under various brand names – this outlet is a standalone restaurant in the busy Etown office complex in Tan Binh district. You'll probably only visit if you're working nearby or visiting on official business, but you'll find the restaurant serves some great Asian business lunches.

Ground Floor, Etown 1
364 Cong Hoa, Tan Binh
3812 2242
www.longmonaco.com.vn

western/international

Al Fresco's



Offering a mix of Tex-Mex, Italian, and Australian food along with cold local & imported beers and a wine list featuring Australia's finest whites along with affordable South American reds.

16 Nguyen Thi Nghia, D1
3926 0036
alfrescos-hcm@alfrescosgroup.com
www.alfrescosgroup.com
8.30am - 11pm

Au Parc



It's only fitting that this Mediterranean-styled restored villa with its original tiles, old window frames, plush cushions, and opium-themed art collection sits in one of the most gorgeous streets of central Saigon. Au Parc is an unforgettable venue with a décor that manages to simultaneously capture the grace of the old Colonial architecture and the mood of west-Asian exoticism that transfixed

Europe in the Romantic period.

23 Han Thuyen, DI
3829 2772
 auparc@hcm.vnn.vn
 auparcsaigon.com




Bahdja
 
 Algerian restaurant serving north African delights such as couscous, tajines and desserts. Unique Mechoui set dinner is a popular choice and perfect for groups (available with prior notice).
87-89-91 Ho Tung Mau, DI
093 787 2010 (English, Arabic, English, Finnish)
0122 763 1261 (English, Russian, Vietnamese)
Mon - Fri 11:30 - 2pm
Mon - Sat 6pm - 11pm

Beirut Shisha Bar

 
 The Beirut Shisha bar offers fine Middle Eastern cuisine with imported meat to guarantee impeccable flavor. Shisha is the perfect way to relax after a long day in the city.


74/13D Hai Ba Trung, DI
38222188
 beirutbar.com
4pm - late

Black Cat Restaurant


 Originally envisioned as a fast food Vietnamese sandwich place, Black Cat Saigon now serves international food with a focus on burgers, most famously its "Big Cheese" featuring 500g of beef.

13 Phan Van Dat, DI
3829 2955
 www.blackcatsaigon.com
7am - 11pm

Blu Bar and Grill


 Blu Bar provides a wide range of Asian and Mediterranean specialties for breakfast, lunch, and dinner along with many unique beverage options.



53 Vo Trung Toan, D2
3744 4111
7am - 11pm

Bobby Chinn's


 This is TV celebrity and experienced international chef Bobby Chinn's showcase restaurant adjacent to Intercontinental Asiana Hotel in the Kumho Link. Stylish lounge environment offers fine dining with a separate lounge bar area. Extensive cocktail menu and wine list backed by artfully created western dishes. Ideal venue for launch functions - and possibly features the most luxurious restaurant restrooms in HCMC.



39 Le Duan, DI
6291 7788
 info@bobbychinn.com
 www.bobbychinn.com

The Burger Corner

 
 Tasty, fresh homemade burgers with a range of ingredients aimed at satiating both foreign and local palates. Menu includes local 'rice burgers' and prices are well below those of international chains.

43 Nguyen Hue, DI
3821 0094
 www.theburgercorner.com.vn
8am - 9.45pm



The Elbow Room

 
 The Elbow Room on Pasteur is an American-style bistro with a long bar, exposed brickwork, white walls, and whirling ceiling fans - making for a

casual, contemporary space with an international vibe. More of a diner than a restaurant, Elbow shoots at a cool, relaxed atmosphere, pleasantly decorating its warmly-lit walls with evocative black & white photos and subtle lighting.



52 Pasteur, DI
3821 4327
 elbowroom52@yahoo.com
 www.elbowroom.com.vn

Hog's Breath Café

 
 An Australian family diner and bar concept. Renowned for quality steaks, seafood and other western fare served in an informal environment. Smoke-free indoors.


Ground Floor, Bitexco Financial Tower,
2 Hai Trieu, DI
3915 6066
090 381 8700
 info@hogsbreathcafe.com.vn
 www.hogsbreathcafe.com.vn
8am - 12am

Jaspas Restaurant

 
 An easy-on-the-tongue and easy-on-the-eyes restaurant, stylish interior decorations and friendly service have led many patrons to rate this Australian-managed venue as being well-suited for family and business dining.



33 Dong Khoi, DI
3822 9925
012 262 68641
 g.murphy@alfrescosgroup.com
 www.alfrescosgroup.com
7am - 12pm

Jaspas Wine & Grill

 
 Jaspas Wine and Grill provides an extensive wine list along with many "reinvented" Jaspas dishes, new creations, and mouthwatering steaks. Japas also offers a wide array of delectable dessert options.



74/7 Hai Ba Trung, DI
3827 0931
 jaspas-hcm@alfrecogroup.com
 alfrescosgroup.com
8.30am - 11.30pm

Khoi Thom

 
 Khoi Thom, which translates to "fragrant smoke" features bright, colorful, Latin-American decoration inspired by renowned Mexican architect Ricardo Legorreta. This unique eatery offers a hybrid of Vietnamese and Mexican flavors.



29 Ngo Thai Nhiem, D3
3930 0233
 khoithom.com
10am - 11pm

La Habana

 
 Offering authentic Spanish cuisine and a wide choice of tapas, as well as Cuban cocktails, La Habana is a den of Cuban cocktails, La Habana inspired architecture located on inner-city Cao Ba Quat. Definitely the best venue of its kind in the city, Cuban culture is celebrated with regular salsa sessions & weekly classes in the exotic style, well-attended by hot-blooded young Vietnamese women.



6 Cao Ba Quat, DI
3829 5180
 lahabana_saigon@yahoo.com
 www.lahabana-saigon.com

Ly Club

 
 Often used as a venue for gatherings, networking meetings, and events where an air of wealth and sophistication is useful, Ly Club is a sure bet for making an impression on a date or business lunch. Built into a traditional French villa with wide elliptical arches, the atmosphere of naked opulence persists throughout the property.



143 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D3
3930 5588
 www.lyclub.vn

Margherita

 
 For some, Margherita doubles as an unofficial expat rendezvous, partly a result of its agreeable prices and sumptuous Western-style pizzas and foods.


175/1 Pham Ngu Lao, DI
3837 0760
8am - 11pm

Mogambo Bar & Grill

 
 Mogambo is a dark, African-styled restaurant with some the finest US & Tex-Mex and exceptional burgers.



50 Pasteur, DI
3825 1311
 mogambo@saigonnet.vn
7am - 11pm

Pacharan - Tapas & Bodega

 
 The city's best-known Spanish restaurant with a sports bar on the ground floor, two floors of dining space, and an open rooftop deck for cocktails and live music. Serving tapas, paella, and an extensive Iberian wine list.



97 Hai Ba Trung, DI
090 724 2757
 andres@pacharan.com.vn
10am - late

Parkview Restaurant

 
 This restaurant is best known locally for its seafood buffet, with a wide variety of international specialties freshly-prepared at the live cooking stations. Local and imported seafood includes oysters and prawns, molluscs and organic lobsters.


76 Le Lai, DI
3822 8888
 www.saigon.newworldhotels.com

Pasha

 
 Pasha on Dong Du is a particularly engaging Turkish venue laid out with dramatic traditional designs, including classic floral patterning on the bar and ceiling and enigmatic artworks depicting Egyptian beauties on the walls. Serving Turkish and Mediterranean cuisine, the kitchen is headed by Chef Ismet with over 30 years of experience in similar restaurants.

25 Dong Du, DI
6291 3677
 info@pasha.com.vn
 www.pasha.com.vn

Shri Restaurant and Lounge


 Visitors to Shri are regularly astonished to discover such an international-standard venue secreted away on top of a plain-looking bank tower, serving a catalogue of exotic recipes, and while prices are as to be expected, the fare is an impressive collection of dishes guaranteed to suit the palate of Western diners as well as pleasing those with an Asian culinary background.


Rooftop, Level 23, 72-74 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D3
3827 9631
 www.shri.vn

Skewers

 
 Skewers is laid out in a typical southern European style complete with terracotta tiles and exposed brickwork. An open-air kitchen at the front of the restaurant and a small cigar lounge upstairs set off the atmosphere and mark this venue as one with a unique presence in Saigon. The purely Mediterranean cuisine is appropriately authentic.

9A Thai Van Lung, DI
38224798
 www.skewers-restaurant.com



Subway

 
 Subway is now in Vietnam, offering its internationally-renowned range of subs sandwiches and cookies. World

travelers can expect the same high quality of ingredients regardless of what nation they are visiting.




121 Ho Tung Mau, DI
3914 4118
7.30am - 12am

Strata

 
 Located on the 50th floor of the Bitexco tower, Strata offers a stunning dining experience with views over the city and a dessert bar with coffee and tea. Popular with tourists and locals seeking a unique location for a special occasion.




Level 50, Bitexco Financial Tower,
2 Hai Trieu, DI
086 291 8750
 www.cirussaigon.com
10am - 10pm

Swiss Chalet

  
 Authentic Swiss, German and Austrian home-style dishes served in a distinctively Swiss design environment with masses of polished pine and checked table cloths. Comprehensive wine list and moderate pricing make this a home away from home for Europeans.

54 Pasteur, DI
3915 3983
 heinzvn@gmail.com
9.30am - 11pm

Warda

  
 Warda is a Middle-Eastern style bar and restaurant headed by a renowned Syrian chef. Guests can enjoy authentic middle-eastern cuisine indoors and outdoors while enjoying an almond cigar or shisha.

71/7 Mac Thi Buoi, DI
 info@wardavn.com
8am - 12am

Xu Restaurant Lounge

 
 A high-class restaurant with bold, contemporary decor on Hai Ba Trung, Xu's subtle and sophisticated lighting, comfortable suede sofas, hanging lanterns, and dark wooden furniture create an atmosphere of genuinely refined elegance. The venue is well-known for its pork wantons, bun cha, seared beef crostinis, bo luc lac diced beef and 'Xu-style' chicken rice. Xu is an elegant venue that works as a restaurant or a high-class bar for the upper echelons.



71-75 Hai Ba Trung, DI
3824 8468
 info@xusaigon.com
 www.xusaigon.com

Yofana

Yofana is one of the city's lesser-known frozen yogurt brands, and that's a little unfair. The quality of the imported American Taylor brand yogurt is so good that the store that deserves a far better reputation than it currently has;

10 Ky Dong, D3
6290 4013
 info@yofana.com
 yofana.com

ZanzBar

 
 Long-standing modern European restaurant renowned for its dark amber interior design, unique European-inspired cuisine and varied wine list. Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

41 Dong Du, DI
3822 7375
 info@saigongourmetgroup.com
 www.zanzbar.com/index.php
7am - 1am

Zoom Cafe


 Zoom cafe serves Tex-Mex and Vietnamese cuisine as well as running a Vespa tour service from within the café.

169A Bui Vien, DI
3920 3897
 vscooterguy@yahoo.com
7am - 2am daily

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Travel & Leisure

IMAGE BY GISELLE WHITEAKER



The Dubai Coastline



The Shifting Sands

From the golden sands rises a city of epic proportions. Shiny and new, it dangles an "Under construction" sign around its neck as it rapidly expands. This is Dubai

TEXT AND IMAGES BY GISELLE WHITEAKER

DUBAI AT ITS peak was the global media's darling. The shimmering city that rose rapidly from the Arabian sands could do no wrong. Working under the ruling family's mantra "Build it and they will come," the metropolis appeared from nowhere and became a city of superlatives with the world's tallest building, the world's largest shopping mall, the world's fastest elevators and at its peak, up to 40 percent of the world's construction cranes to build it. Expats flooded in to take advantage of high salaries and the tax free status.

Incredible multi-billion dollar projects were announced one after the other. Rumors about what was to come ranged from a beach with under-sand cooling to an underwater hotel. The emirate already had an indoor ski center, with

“Dubai was a city of excess. Expatriates on high salaries lived lives of luxury that they could not afford in their home countries”



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

The Burj Al Arab, The Dubai Marina, Ski Dubai, The Palm



temperatures of -1 degree Celsius contrasting with the broiling 40-degree plus temperatures outside, and an island in the shape of a palm tree lined with million dollar villas. Projects deemed unrealistic in other nations queued for a place in the Arabian sun.

Dubai was a city of excess. Expatriates on high salaries lived lives of luxury that they could not afford in their home countries. I remember being invited to a “construction party” in a villa on the Palm Jumeirah. My friend’s multi-million dollar villa had been handed over. They immediately ripped out every fixture and fitting, to be replaced with higher quality brand names. The party was in the interim, while the bath sat on their stretch of private beach, a bar served cocktails next to a pile of rubble, and revelers

made small talk around the only acceptably complete element; the swimming pool.

Then came the financial crisis. Construction ground to a halt. Expats fled under the weight of redundancies, leaving behind excessive loans and fast sports cars. “We knew it couldn’t last,” sneered the media, flipping from their prior platitudes.

The recession hit the United Arab Emirates hard, particularly Dubai which had invested heavily in tourism as a replacement for dwindling oil reserves. The city is, however, bouncing back in style. With the resumption of ambitious projects, albeit on a more sustainable scale, Dubai continues to court the tourist dollar and a more conservative breed of expatriates are moving in.

In a city where the expat population heavily outweighs the locals, the local culture is easily hidden. Many suggest Dubai transitioned so rapidly from a pearl fishing, largely nomadic lifestyle to an oil-rich state that its heritage has been left behind. There may be some truth to this, but underneath the glitz lies a strong Emirati culture few visitors see. Even residents are largely excluded from close involvement with the local culture. There is a sense that 85 percent of the population are the hired help, there to aid the Emiratis in building their futures. The lure of an international lifestyle of glamour overcomes most objections.

In With the New

Dubai can be geographically divided into two parts - old Dubai and new Dubai. New Dubai is the center of the Western expat community. It is the home of beautiful waterside apartments, luxurious villas, upmarket shopping malls, swanky resort hotels and architectural marvels. There is little evidence of Emirati culture here, aside from occasional bursts of Middle Eastern architectural design – intricate Arabic-style filigree replicated on an apartment block or squared off villa roofs modeled after wind towers.

Modern architecture has reached its zenith here. It kicked off with the Burj Al Arab, undeniably an iconic masterpiece. The self-proclaimed seven-star hotel shaped like a ship’s sail stands on a small artificial island connected to the coast. It boasts a seafood restaurant encircling an aquarium, a personal butler service, and hefty pillars decorated with 22-carat gold. It does not, contrary to popular belief, have a tennis court. The super-high tennis match between Roger Federer and Andre Agassi was a clever publicity stunt for The Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championship, the court reverting to its former occupation as a helipad once the media

had been and gone.

Nowadays, the Burj Al Arab has competition in the form of the Burj Khalifa. At over 828 meters, the Burj Khalifa is the world’s tallest building. Stretching needle-like into the open sky, the building dwarfs the structures in its shadow. Combined with the mammoth Dubai Mall, this area known as Old Town is a popular center, particularly at night when the palm trees drip with white fairy lights, leading to a plethora of restaurants covering every style of cuisine. The Arabic influence is subtly felt in the outdoor cafes serving strong Turkish coffee and refreshing glasses of lemon and mint juice.

The Dubai Mall, with its 1,200 or so retail outlets, is a testament to the Gruen Transfer. In mall design, the Gruen Transfer is the moment when consumers enter the mall and, surrounded by an intentionally confusing layout, lose track of their original intentions. The mall is filled with glazed-eyed shoppers who no longer remember where they are, who they are, or where they left their cars.

Inside the mall, the Olympic-size ice skating rink, Sega Republic indoor theme park, 22-screen cinema, “waterfall” (a fountain), and Kidzania, an award-winning children’s

HANDY THINGS TO KNOW

- There is a dress code for shopping malls. Dress modestly, covering shoulders and knees to avoid offense. Leave your transparent boob tube at home.
- Public displays of affection are not acceptable. Hand-holding will pass, tonsil hockey will not.
- Pornographic material, drugs and anti-Islamic material are not allowed through customs. Banned drugs include codeine, so check your cold and flu medication carefully. A runny nose in jail is not recommended.
- There is zero tolerance for drinking and driving, and the public consumption of alcohol is illegal. Keep your beer in the bars.
- Homosexuality is illegal. Be discreet.
- Technically, sex outside marriage is illegal. Sharing a hotel room is questionable but the tourist dollar is mighty strong.
- Never make a rude hand gesture. Ever. Unless you want to experience a Dubai prison.



Mall of the Emirates



Abra crossing the creek

PLACES TO STAY

Atlantis

Atlantis is tacky-fabulous. The interior is decked out in pink and purple making you feel like you have stumbled into a children's playroom, but the service is top notch with prices to match. The Aquaventure water park makes it all worthwhile, although you hurtle through the plastic tube in the shark tank so fast that it's hard to keep your eyes open. Indicative rate: US\$420 per night. www.atlantisthepalm.com

Kempinski

The Kempinski hotel is situated inside Mall of the Emirates, so convenience is the key word. The hotel is uber-trendy, as are the spa and Mosaic Chill; the hotel's landmark terrace bar around the rooftop pool is a super swanky place for a sundowner's beverage. If you really want to splurge, and experience bizarre contrast, book a ski chalet overlooking the indoor slope at Ski Dubai. Indicative rate: US\$350 per night. www.kempinski.com

One & Only Royal Mirage

On the shores of the Gulf, the One & Only Royal Mirage is a stunner. Think intricate arches, domes and towers, infused with rich green courtyards and vibrantly colorful gardens. Palm-shaded pools, reflecting waters and cooling fountains – all the extravagance you would expect from a well-established premium Dubai beachfront hotel. Indicative rate: US\$660 per night. www.royalmirage.oneandonlyresorts.com

Note: Yes, there are budget hotels. They are just not as much fun. Try around areas like Al Barsha, Bur Dubai or Deira for cheap and cheerful.

edutainment center, ensure distraction at every turn. The centerpiece is the Dubai Aquarium, one of the largest tanks in the world with the world's largest viewing panel, holding more than 33,000 living animals. Emirati men in crisp white *kandoura* and Westerners in jeans and t-shirts, stand side-by-side at the rope barriers, mesmerized by the underwater world.

The best views of the Burj Khalifa are from Dubai Fountain attached to the mall. Over 6,600 incandescent lights, 25 color projectors and numerous plumes of water are choreographed to music. The performances draw large crowds of photographers. The fountain was named through a competition that attracted 4,000 entries; 15 entries suggested the winning "Dubai Fountain," leaving 3,985 asking why they bothered entering.

What Ski Dubai lacks in imaginative naming, it makes up for in engineering genius. Located inside the Mall of the Emirates, Ski Dubai offers 22,500 square meters of alpine fun, consisting of a ski slope and a dedicated snow play area, with activities ranging from skiing to zorbing (rolling down the slope inside a transparent plastic ball). Locals in traditional dress are provided with long down jackets while Westerners jump into ski pants and jackets, to go over their shorts. The magic of snow is most evident in the wondrous faces of local children who have never seen winter before.

I was at the opening, where the ruling family expressed the same wonder. Many of the accompanying entourage refused the offer of warm socks and boots, never having experienced cold before, but were quick to accept once they had entered the chilled environment, their sandals scant protection in the -1 Celsius temperature.

For additional lessons in engineering, look no further than Dubai Marina, a suburban

district carved out of the desert. Not so long ago this area was a barren stretch of sand, a few lonely hotels littering the beachfront. Now Dubai Marina is a prime residential area, with an array of glittering towers lining the banks of a manmade canal. This central waterway runs three kilometers, giving water frontage to the 200 or so residential towers that house the largely expat population. Every apartment, mine included, comes with a pool and gym at the very least. The waterfront is crammed with restaurants, featuring the scent of apple flavored tobacco wafting from the *shisha* cafes, with Emiratis, Indians, British and Russians mingling freely.

But Still Keeping the Old Dubai

This is new Dubai. Old Dubai is a little harder to find and much less Western. This was the original heart of the city and the local culture is more evident. The districts of Bur Dubai and Deira were established long before Dubai found oil. They squat facing each other across an expanse of water called the Creek. From the downtown Dubai glitz it is hard to imagine the quiet pearl-diving and trading town that once sat on these shores.

Deira is still a center of commerce, and this is where the major *souqs* (markets) can be found. The spice *souq* is lined with sacks of multicolored herbs and spices, wafting their aromas across passers-by, while the gold *souq* is home to more than 300 purveyors of jewelry. Estimates suggest around 10 tons of gold is present at any given time here. In the back rooms of hidden apartments a similar weight of fake Rolex watches and handbag knock-offs wait.

On my first visit here I accepted the whispered offer to view brand-name handbags and was whisked away, a secret knock



Al Bastakiya



Barjeel (Wind Tower)

letting me enter an apartment jammed with a comprehensive selection of bags and watches to rival the wares of Ben Thanh Market. There is no shortage of men lurking in the *souq* hoping to show these less than legal wares.

One of the most authentic experiences available in Dubai is an *abra* ride across the Creek. These small traditional wooden boats ferry people over the water for a mere one dirham (US\$0.27), paid directly to the captain. On the Bur Dubai side, the textile *souq* waits, clothed in pashminas, rugs and carpets imported from as far away as Afghanistan.

Behind this *souq* sits the diminutive, yet fascinating historic district, Al Bastakiya. This is one of the oldest residential areas in the city of Dubai, dating from the 1890s when it was *the* place to live. Oil led wealthy residents to other districts and the area was partly demolished to make way for the Ruler's Court. It was not until 2005 that Dubai began to see the value of its past, initiating a restoration project.

What makes Bastakiya unique is its architecture. Every house here features the *barjeel* (wind tower), which acts as an air conditioning system, with the number of towers indicating the wealth of the owner. Several of the properties are now cafes and art galleries, rarely open, while the rest sit dormant, hidden down narrow alleyways and quiet lanes. This area, more than any other, highlights the pace of Dubai's development.

City of Dreams

In many ways, Dubai is a city of dreams. Architecturally this is certainly so, but it can also be seen in the luxurious lifestyle of those who call the city home. The consideration for some may be the status of women. There are no special considerations for non-Muslim

women in Dubai. Local women wear *abayas* (a loose black robe) and *hijab* (head covering) but no such requirements are placed on others apart from a modicum of modesty in public spaces such as shopping malls. Expect to be treated with respect and you will not be disappointed. Arabian hospitality demands no less. While outsiders may not have a lot of direct contact with the local culture, there are precious moments where the cultures join. This may be in the eyes of a henna artist during a heavily-touristed desert safari, or in a shared smile with a local child running amok in a shopping mall.

A Saudi woman initiated conversation with me on the metro. She was keen to explain how lucky she is, to be born in a place where women are revered and need never lift a finger. Her smile was so genuine that I could not bring myself to shake her beliefs by asking about women who want more than this.

Strongly Islamic, Dubai is still the most liberal of the Arabic states. The tax free status affords a higher standard of living for the majority and this has led to an impressively multicultural environment. Arabic mingles with English, Farsi, French and Tagalog in the workplace and on the streets. Nine months of perfect weather is also not to be sneezed at.

Bio: *Giselle Whiteaker, originally Australian, is an inveterate expatriate. She has lived in Japan, South Korea, the UK, and Vietnam. She now, at least temporarily, calls the United Arab Emirates home, but she travels so frequently that she sometimes forgets where she lives. Giselle is the editor of two lifestyle and property magazines - Exclusive Home Worldwide and Property Scene, and regularly writes for Etihad Airways' in-flight magazines amongst others.* ■

WHERE TO DINE

BUDGET

Wild Peeta

Wild Peeta serves modern Emirati street cuisine, the recipes influenced by the rich cultural diversity found across the UAE. From *Khaleeji shawarmas* (spit-roasted meat and pickles in pita) to *karakccinos* (local tea) and beetroot ketchup, this casual eatery creates unique flavor combinations with a local twist, using the freshest ingredients. Choose from the menu, or create your own *shawarma* for a culinary adventure.

www.wildpeeta.com

MID RANGE

Mezza House

There is plenty of Arabic food available in Dubai, but this may be the best. A tribute to the traditional cuisine of the Levant region, showcasing the delicacies of Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and Palestine, Mezza House is nothing less than mouth-wateringly spectacular. Whatever you choose, make sure you get the *fattoush* here, a traditional Arabic side salad packed with taste.

www.mezzahouse.com

HIGH END

Pier Chic

Pier Chic has to be one of the most romantic spots in Dubai. It's a shame you can't smooch in public. Set on stilts at the end of a pier on the beach in front of Al Qasr Hotel overlooking the Arabian Sea, with spectacular views across the ocean to the Burj Al Arab, Pier Chic offers an extensive a la carte seafood menu. Small portions, but exquisite flavors.

www.madinatjumeirah.com



The Nature of Laos

Before my first visit to Laos, I had heard it described as a 'less developed' Cambodia. I was soon educated on how woefully wrong that was.

TEXT BY JAMES PHAM IMAGES BY ANDY AMBAI

I'D NEVER REALLY wanted to visit Laos. Despite avid travel in the region, Laos simply never made it onto my bucket list. It didn't help that anytime Laos came up as a destination, I'd hear the inevitable, "It's just like Cambodia, but less developed". A recent trip, though, made me fall in love with the nature of Laos - the land and its people.

It's usually not difficult to feel the pulse of a city, especially a capital one, through its tangible geographical features and neighborhoods. Who can resist the romance of a slow lunch on Paris' Rive Gauche or not be energized by the youthful defiance of the unfashionably fashionable girls of Tokyo's Harajuku district or feel the cheerful outdoorsy vibe of Sydney's Harbor surrounds?

But Vientiane was palpably different. For an Asian capital, where was the Starbucks next to a 7-11 directly across the street from another 7-11? Where was the constant flow of beggars? Where was the bustling riverside with people selling balloon animals and sugared popcorn? Where was the wall-to-wall traffic, the incessant honking of horns? Having lived in Phnom Penh, Bangkok and Ho Chi Minh City, the quietness of Vientiane was deafening.

Then it hit me. The soul of this city wasn't so much defined by an abundance of something, but rather the absence of it. Frank, a five year expat, says "what makes people love living in Vientiane is exactly why it isn't the best place to visit. There's not much to do here. Everything closes down by about 10pm. There's no loud noise. You can't walk 50 meters without seeing someone you know. There's a real small town feel to it".

The old joke is that Laos PDR stands for "Please Don't Rush," and everywhere I looked,

that truism was evident in the hammocks that *tuk tuk* drivers slung in their carriages for a mid-morning nap, entire families walking hand in hand on the expansive yet empty riverfront and drivers routinely, and silently, giving way to each other on Vientiane's wide streets. So different from Vietnam, I actually had to ask whether it was illegal to honk.

"No, it's just that we don't like noise," explains Khun, a 34-year-old Vientianite. "If you have to honk your horn that means you're a very poor driver".

While Vientiane does have its share of trendy cafes, ethnic eateries and high-end crafts shops mainly clustered in the small and very walk-able Nam Phou area, you won't find many locals there. Keo, a Lao language teacher, often spends his downtime wandering around Pha That Luang instead, the iconic gold-covered third century stupa with its extensive gardens (admission 5,000 kip) and the nearby Patuxai, or Victory Gate, just northeast of the city center. A group of educated young adults I asked couldn't agree over which victory the Arc de Triomphe-like structure was supposed to celebrate - the Thais, the French or simply WWII in general.

It turns out that the 49m tower, colloquially referred to as the "Vertical Runway" (constructed using US funds earmarked for an airport), celebrates self-rule from France gained in 1949. A climb past kitschy souvenir stalls to the seventh floor opens up to 360° panoramic views of the sprawling but low-lying city, with hardly any buildings over three stories tall. Lao families flock here on weekends to picnic on the manicured grounds and take photos in front of the cooling fountain (admission 3,000 kip).

Situated on a bend on the Mekong River,

Vientiane's riverside with its many parks is a natural draw. Truong, a traveler from Hanoi, remarked as he gleefully removed his shoes, that he couldn't remember the last time he walked on actual grass. He then pointed to the many birds nests. "You would never see that in Hanoi".

For visitors seeking to explore the beauty of the Lao countryside just outside of Vientiane, a popular day trip is the Orchid Trek (www.vientianeorchidees.com) involving a hike along small jungle paths accompanied by two village guides and an orchid expert whose job it is to educate visitors on some of the 900 or so different orchid species endemic to Laos, in danger of becoming extinct due to deforestation and poaching for the orchid trade.

An excellent base for any Vientiane stay is the Ansara Hotel (www.ansarahotel.com). Designed and built by its Lao-French owners, Ansara's cluster of colonial-style buildings house 12 rooms and two suites on a quiet street on the edge of the Nam Phou area and a two minute walk from the river. Doubles start from US\$125 including breakfast, complimentary minibar and in-room laptop.

Vang Vieng

A three hour bus ride north of Vientiane is the small town of Vang Vieng, a convenient rest point on the way to Luang Prabang and an unlikely spot to be known as 'party central' of Southeast Asia. Long notorious for activities like tubing down the Nam Song River past a gauntlet of impromptu river bars serving lao-lao whisky and drug-laced milkshakes by the bucket, things came to a head last September when the government shut down two dozen riverside bars after 27



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Kiridara Hotel, street vendor, pier at the Pak Ou Caves, Beerlao

tourists died in 2011, mainly due to accidents on zip wires, death slides and drownings, usually while intoxicated.

Now the town is eerily quiet, harnessing instead its beautiful natural gifts. Kayaking, caving and trekking are popular as is a visit to The Blue Lagoon, 7km from the center of town over a rickety wooden bridge. We giddily go for a swim in the electric turquoise water (blue from limestone minerals) or chill on the grass, sipping a Beerlao before climbing the 100m entrance to a cave with the Sleeping Golden Buddha. Another option is to volunteer at the Organic Farm (www.laofarm.org) 3km north of Vang Vieng where a stay might have you building mudhouses, making goat cheese or mulberry wine or tending the organic garden.

For those looking for a luxe retreat, the Riverside Boutique Resort (www.riversidevangvieng.com) sits directly on the Nam Song River with a stunning view of the limestone Pha Tang Mountains, a sacred site to which the townspeople pray when they lose something like a cow or a

motorbike in hopes of a speedy return. Each of the 34 rooms features decor inspired by eight ethnic groups and are set around one of the most picturesque pools I've ever seen. The Restaurant du Crabe d'Or has the winning combination of sweeping views and traditional Asian and French cuisine. Doubles start from US\$87 including breakfast.

Luang Prabang

Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1995, Luang Prabang is a gorgeous marriage of traditional Lao architecture, on display in its many *wats*, unchanged wooden houses and a smattering of royal residences, with the gentility of French colonial buildings and their faded yellow walls and white trim, much like those seen in Vietnam.

Before the heat of the day, we climb up the 355 steps of Mount Phousi (tickets 20,000 kip) for the stunning sweeping views of the entire city, including where the Nam Khan and Mekong rivers meet. Conveniently located directly across the street is the Royal Palace Museum (admission 10,000 kip) for a



Kuang Si Falls

glimpse into how the royals once lived.

In the same few blocks are dozens of boutiques, spas, high-end Lao crafts and chic eateries. We stay until evening when a 1km stretch of road is closed down to traffic for the night market to set up. Colorful red tents house every handicraft imaginable and in true Lao laid back fashion, vendors happily show off their wares without even a sigh if nothing is bought.

Akshai, visiting from Mumbai, remarks that "tourism isn't crammed down your throat here. No one pesters you to do anything like in other Asian countries. They almost seem indifferent to your business which is refreshing."

On the very west end of the night market, we follow a crowd of people heading onto Food Street, a cramped alley with tables loaded with vegetarian rice and noodle dishes. We hardly believe that we're able to heap our plates with as much as they can hold for only 10,000 kip and find a spot amongst the friendly vibe of the communal tables.

Tired of embroidered wallets and colorful shawls, the next morning we arrange our own transport to the Kuang Si Falls, 25km out of town, beating out the tour groups by a good two hours. The main waterfall is 60m high but spills over a series of smaller cascades that seem to go on forever. We have a simple meal of grilled chicken and sticky rice by one of the iridescent blue pools, plucking up the courage to swim in the chilly waters (admission 20,000 kip). To keep with the water theme, the next day finds us on a slow boat towards the Pak Ou Caves where over 1,000 Buddha statues are crammed into two limestone grottoes. The

trip takes us past women doing the washing or tending to terraced vegetable gardens as they have done for centuries (US\$25 with lunch and admission, www.facebook.com/navamekong).

With 12 distinct ethnic groups in Luang Prabang, any tour inevitably stops by a village that does weaving, brews whiskey or makes paper, blatantly transforming itself into one massive souvenir shop. Village children rush to don costumes over tattered t-shirts and muddy faces, while sing-songing some variation of "Buy from me, only 5,000". For a more authentic experience, we rent motorbikes and head north to the village of Xieng Lek where we watch artisans ply their craft in family-run workshops like Lao Textile Natural Dyes which uses traditional methods of raising silkworms and extracting natural dyes from plants and minerals to craft quality products.

Set on a hill just on the outskirts of town, the 24-room Kiridara (www.kiridara.com) has uninterrupted views of Mount Phousi from its picture perfect infinity pool. The Phu Doi Restaurant serves up elegant versions of Lao cuisine, including the Luang Prabang Sampler (US\$7) of sesame seed crusted pork, stuffed lemongrass, and locally made sausage with a petit papaya salad, and the traditionally woody Ohlam stew (US\$8) with a menthol kick. Doubles start from US\$160 including breakfast.

While my short stay in Laos was barely enough to scratch the surface, I leave humbled by my ignorance of the nature of Laos, reflected in its gentle, peaceful people and rich, blissfully underdeveloped, natural gifts. (Conversion: LAK8,000 is approximately US\$1) ■

"Tourism isn't crammed down your throat here. No one pesters you to do anything like in other Asian countries. They almost seem indifferent to your business which is refreshing"



Trumpeting the Elephants

Both a celebration and awareness event, The Laos Elephant Festival is held annually to honor these gentle giants

TEXT AND IMAGES BY DYANNE KRUGER



IT'S EXTOLLED AS the "Land of a Million Elephants," but despite this enchanting moniker, the unfortunate reality is that the number of these lovely mammals in Laos has dwindled to less than 1,000. Current figures estimate just 400 wild elephants and another 420 or so domesticated ones remain in the entire country.

Since 2007, the annual Laos Elephant Festival seeks to raise awareness for the plight of these noble animals which traditionally figured so prominently in Lao daily life. Founded six years ago by the non-profit group ElephantAsia, the goal of the festival is "to draw the public's attention to the endangered status of the elephant, while acknowledging and celebrating the ancestral tradition of elephant domestication and the *mahout* way of life."

The three-day festival has been held in different regions of the country, with festival attendance growing significantly each year (200,000 this year alone, comprised mainly of Laotians, but with an increasing number of foreign travelers). This year saw ElephantAsia hand over the reins to local and provincial Lao authorities, and the 2013 festival was held in Sayaboury – a four hour bus ride from Luang Prabang.

As you would expect, the highlight of this year's event was the splendid assembly of

64 elephants to correspond with the 64th anniversary of the Lao People's Army Day in January. Led by their *mahouts*, many of these giants trekked to Sayaboury from all over Laos, some taking up to a week to make the long slow, lumbering journey.

The entertainment combined an eclectic mix of cultural events, a beauty pageant and circus sideshows. The pageant had Laotian women and elephants vying for the title of "Miss Elephant" and "Elephant of the Year," respectively. Contestants were adorned with colorful scarves, tassels, ankle bracelets and tail ribbons, and we mean the elephants of course. The charming winning pair had the honor of leading the grand procession that officially kicked off the start of the festival the next morning. The parade also featured seven ethnic groups representing the diverse cultural heritage of the Sayaboury district.

Other activities included *mahout* demonstrations, traditional Buddhist blessings, an elephant *baci* ceremony, a "Buffet for Elephants," an elephant drawing contest, night markets, live concerts by Lao and Thai artists, and a sound and light show along the banks of the Houng River. The grand finale was a fireworks display that, not surprisingly, prompted several multi-ton elephants chained to nearby trees to break free and flee to the forested hills. ■

WHEN TO GO

Dates vary, but generally sometime in mid-February.

HOW TO GET THERE

From Luang Prabang there are two regularly scheduled buses daily: 9am and 2pm, though for the festival, buses are often added, starting at 7am that depart when full. The bumpy four hour journey includes a ferry crossing and costs LAK60,000 (US\$8) each way.

WHERE TO STAY

Nokinsi, Simenang Village

Singles with air-con starting at LAK170,000 (US\$22) Tel: (+856) 74 211 017

Sayananh Hotel, Simenang Village

LAK100,000 - LAK150,000 (US\$13 - US\$19) Tel: (+856) 74 211 116

There seems to be no hotels with websites in Sayaboury, so securing advance reservations for the festival can be difficult for foreigners, but a must.

For further information visit:

www.elefantasia.org

www.elephantconservationcenter.com

Travel More For Less, Part 1

How to score free flights and maximize frequent flyer benefits



IMAGE BY NAM QUAN

Having visited nearly 60 countries as a travel writer and award-winning photographer, **James Pham** blogs about his adventures at FlyIcarusFly.com



TRAVEL HAS CHANGED tremendously in the past few decades. Since 1987, world travel has tripled, with 1 billion trips a year being taken internationally, and a whopping 3.1 trillion air miles flown in 2012 alone. People are flying more and farther. In 1987, the farthest flight was Sydney to San Francisco (7,417 miles via Pan Am), and now, it's Newark to Singapore (9,534 miles via Singapore Airlines).

You'd think that with the surge in oil prices and the ever-increasing fees airlines are tacking on, the cost of air travel would've significantly increased in the past few decades. But surprisingly, compared to the 80s, the cost of flying has actually gone *down* significantly. US domestic tickets are 40 percent lower than they were in 1980. International flights are also down. A New York to Hong Kong

flight in 1987 was US\$1,509. Now? US\$863, a 43 percent decrease.

Still, when you add up all the other factors that a trip entails, getting a break on an airfare is a bonus. No one wants to pay more than they have to for travel. Here are some of my favorite ways to travel more for less:

Be a Frequent Flyer

I have a friend who *always* asks for free upgrades every time he flies. He's not a frequent flyer nor is he signed up for any of the mileage programs. The number of upgrades he's gotten? Zero. Airlines have a hierarchy of who gets freebies and if you're not at least a member, your chances are next to zero. While I wouldn't advocate buying a more expensive ticket simply to accrue miles, you can be smart about it by opening

up branded credit cards, buying from airline partners and even answering surveys. Some cards, especially US-based ones (for those who maintain a US address), have very generous programs where you'll receive a sign-up bonus as well as a second bonus for spending a certain amount within a pre-set length of time. Do this twice and you'll easily have enough for a North America to Asia return ticket. Knowledgeable flyers on forums such as FlyerTalk speak of "churning", the term used for the process of opening a credit card, getting the bonus, then closing the card and repeating this every 60 days or so. Some even go so far as to buy coins from the state treasury (using a loophole to count this as a purchase, not as a cash advance) to avoid having to actually spend any money whatsoever. While that's definitely a gray area for me, it does show that there are lots of ways to accrue miles other than actually flying.

Now that you have miles, how can you best use them? Checking partner airlines is a great way to start. I had 25,000 miles on US Airways about to expire. A quick check on the internet revealed that I could cash them in on Thai Airways, a partner, for a Bangkok to Nepal round-trip. So instead of a US\$250 US domestic ticket, I was able to secure a US\$800 ticket to an amazing destination.

Sign Up for Everything

I hate getting junk email. But within that trash is the occasional gem, which is why I sign up for every newsletter from every airline I might possibly fly. Emailed advertisements give you the earliest notification of new routes or sales on a route an airline is trying to promote. I've gotten great deals on brand new routes, like Phnom Penh to Christchurch, New Zealand for less than US\$400 or Saigon to Brisbane for an insanely low US\$150. To lessen the spam, create a free web-based email account which you use to sign up for newsletters and have it forward to your primary email.

Check out next month's column where I'll discuss more ways to travel for less, including cruises and hotels. Share your best travel tips with us at travel@oivietnam.com. ■

airlines

Air China

7th Floor, Sun Wah Tower, 115 Nguyen Hue, DI
3823 3888
www.airchina.com

Air France

130 Dong Khoi, DI
3829 0981
mail.hcm@airfrance.fr
www.airfrance.com.vn

Asiana Airlines

39 Le Duan, DI
3822 2622
www.ea.flyasiana.com

Air Asia

No official office in Vietnam
www.airasia.com
Address of sales office: Noibai Airport, Terminal 1, International Departure Hall, 3rd Floor, Ha Noi
Website of agent: www.airasia.biz.vn
Phone: 04.37478953
95G - Ly Nam De - Phuong Cua Dong - Quan Hoan Kiem - Ha Noi
Tel: (04).37478953

Cathay Pacific Airlines

R502, 5th floor, 72-74 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, Ward 6, D3
3822 3203
sgn#mnt@cathaypacific.com
www.cathaypacific.com

China Southern

21-23 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, DI
3829 6800
passengerservice@cs-sgn.com
www.csair.com

Emirates

15 Nguyen Hue, 14th Floor, Dist.1, HCMC
Email: ehvietnam@emirates.com
Phone: 08 39113099
www.emirates.com/vn

Etihad

etihadairways.com

EVA Airlines

2A-4A Ton Duc Thang, DI
3822 4488
www.evaair.com

JAL Japan Airlines

4F Hotel Nikko Saigon, 235 Nguyen Van Cu, Nguyen Cu Trinh, DI
3830 6231

Jetstar

112 Hong Ha, Ward 2, Tan Binh Dist., HCMC
Tel. 08 38450092
servicecomments@jetstarpacific.com.vn
www.jetstar.com

Korean Air

Unit 909, Floor 9, Diamond Plaza, 34 Le Duan, DI
3824 2878
www.korean-air.vn

Lufthansa

14th Floor, Bitexco Building, 19-25 Nguyen Hue, DI
3829 8529
lufthansa.vn@dlh.de
www.lufthansa.com

Malaysia Airlines

37 Ton Duc Thang, DI
3829 2529
www.malaysiaairlines.com

Qantas Airways

186 - 188 Le Thanh Ton, DI
3910 5373

Qatar

Suite 8, GF, Petro Vietnam Tower
1-5 Le Duan St., room 4, Floor 8, AB tower, Dist.1, HCMC
84 8 38273888
reservations@vn.qatarairways.com
Working hours: Mon-Fri: 8-17, Sat: 8:30am - 12:30pm
Hanoi phone No: 04 39336767

Singapore Airlines

29 Le Duan, DI
3823 1588
www.singaporeair.com

Thai

29 Le Duan Blvd, DI
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Phone: (84-8) 3822 3365
E-mail: reservations@thaairways.com.vn
Monday - Friday: 08:00 - 16:30 (excluding holidays)
Saturday - Sunday: Closed

Turkish

Sales office in Vietnam
76 Le Lai St., room 4, Floor 8, AB tower, Dist. 1, HCMC
84 8 39360360
marketing.sgn@thy.com
Working hours: Weekdays: 8am-12pm/13-17; Sat: 8-12, Sun: closed

United Airlines

Unit 708, 7th Floor, Sun Wah Tower, 115 Nguyen Hue, DI
3823 4755
www.united.com

Vietnam Airlines

16F Sunwah Tower, 115 Nguyen Hue, DI
3832 0320
www.vietnamairlines.com.vn

Vietjet

CT Plaza Building 8th Floor, 60 Truong Son St., Tan Binh Dist., HCMC
84 8 35471866 / Hotline: 1900 1886
www.vietjetair.com
19001886@vietjetair.com

hotels

TWO STAR

Bali Hotel

★★
Ideally-located for attendees to any exhibitions held at the Saigon Exhibition and Convention Centre, Bali Boutique is flash and modern in style - with a little touch of the plush thrown in for good measure.
39 - 41 Hung Phuoc Villas, DI 7
54104747

Calmette Hotel

★★
Charming hotel on one of the most attractively-named streets in the city, although slightly out-of-the-way. Quality, elegant furnishings and modern amenities.
151 Calmette, DI 1
39144951

Cat Huy Hotel

★★
Cat Huy is the best-kept secret of the backpacker district, located in a peaceful and very local-looking alley close to the downtown area of Ho Chi

Minh City, but culturally part of deep suburban Saigon.

353/28, Pham Ngu Lao, DI 1
39208717

Ken Hotel

★★
A surprisingly well-designed hotel, this budget establishment looks anything but from within, although the location in a side alley off CMT8 is quite deceiving.
285/7 Cach Mang Thang Tam, DI 10
0906699371

Little Saigon Boutique Hotel

★★
A small, value-for-money boutique hotel with 18 air-conditioned, non-smoking rooms, Little Saigon Boutique Hotel is an easy walk to Ben Thanh Market and other DI sights. Hidden away in a quiet back alley right in the central area.
36 Bis/2 Le Loi, DI 1
35218462

THREE STAR

A&E Hotel - 8A Thai Van Lung

★★★
Local accommodation chain that aims at the classy mid-level market; still budget, but with a touch of dignity about it.
8A/1D2 Thai Van Lung, DI 1
38224495

Blue Diamond Hotel

★★★
A cut above the multiple nearby 2-star properties, this hotel has been officially recognized for its quality décor and service, including high accolades in international publications.
48-50 Thu Khoa Huan, DI 1
38236167

Bong Sen Hotel

★★★
Located in the heart of DI 1, The Bong Sen Hotel offers luxurious accommodation for guests who wish to relax or get a little work done.
117-123 Dong Khoi, DI 1
38291516
reser@bongsenhotel.com
www.bongsenhotel.com

Catina Saigon

★★★
Hotel Catina Saigon provides 3 star accommodation in large, boutique rooms that include free, high-speed internet access and city views.
109 Dong Khoi, DI 1
38296296

Tan Hai Long Hotel & Spa- Nguyen An Ninh

★★★
The Tan Hai Long Hotel and Spa offers award winning 3 star service and stunning views of Ben Thanh Market and downtown Saigon. 3 star Hotel and spa located in the heart of Ho Chi Minh city with 160 rooms and suites, also providing professional spa services by skillful and experienced staff
15-17-19 Nguyen An Ninh, DI 1
38272738

FOUR STAR

Hotel Continental Saigon

★★★★
One of Saigon's oldest hotels, most graceful colonial properties, and historic places to stay, it is perhaps most

famous as the location where much of Graham Greene's The Quiet American was written in room 214.

132-134 Dong Khoi, DI 1
38299201
continentalhotel@vnn.vn
www.continentalsaigon.com

Kimdo Royal City Hotel

★★★★
Nestled in amongst the commercial buildings at the top of District One's central business strip, the posh-looking Kimdo is right in the heart of the administrative, business, shopping, and entertainment district.
133 Nguyen Hue, DI 1
38225914
royalcity@kimdohotel.com.vn
www.kimdohotel.com

Liberty Central Hotel

★★★★
Liberty Central has a very prominent brand and is a particularly stylish, eye-catching property right in the centre of the tourist district.
179 Le Thanh Ton, DI 1
38239269
libertycentral@libertycentralhotel.com
www.libertycentralhotel.com

Norfolk Hotel

★★★★
Chic, warm exterior with boutique charms within, this property is an ideal escape for business travellers from the plasticity of chain hotels.
117 Le Thanh Ton, DI 1
38293415
nifo@norfolkhotel.com.vn
www.norfolkhotel.com.vn

Novotel Saigon Centre

★★★★
One of HCMC's newest hotels, Novotel is located on busy Hai Ba Trung St, just within walking distance of downtown attractions. It's everything you'd expect from the international brand with 24-seven guest services and a broad dining offer.
167 Hai Ba Trung, DI 1
38224866
H7965@accor.com
www.novotel.com

Oscar Saigon Hotel

★★★★
French colonial hotel in District 1 offering stunning panoramic views and 4 star amenities.
68A Nguyen Hue, DI 1
38292959
oscarsaigonhotel@oscar-saigonhotel.com
www.oscar-saigonhotel.com

Palace Hotel Saigon

★★★★
One of the tidier properties of its class within the vicinity, with 144 deluxe guest rooms of contemporary design well-equipped with modern facilities.
56-66 Nguyen Hue, DI 1
38292860
reservation@palacesaigon.com
www.palacesaigon.com

Park Royal Saigon Hotel

★★★★
Park Royal Saigon Hotel is an ideally placed conference hotel which caters to all MICE needs. The hotel offers a wide array of banquet services and can accommodate 30 to 300 guests.
309B-311 Nguyen Van Troi, Tan Binh
38421111
enquiry.prsn@parkroyalhotels.com

www.parkroyalhotels.com

Thao Dien Boutique Hotel

Set in a secluded, verdant garden occupying 1.2 hectares along the Saigon River, Thao Dien village is a tropical hideaway that's just 20 minutes from the city centre.

195 -197 Nguyen Van Huong, D 2
37442222

sales@thaodienvillage.com
www.thaodienvillage.com

FIVE STAR

Caravelle Hotel

Part of the city's modern history since 1959, few properties in Saigon are quite as iconic. A major center for foreign correspondents during the war, it has emerged as a plush and vibrant luxury hotel in the present era.

Caravelle Hotel is one of the city's classiest icons and represents a true slice of Saigon's history while remaining one of its most luxurious places to stay.

19 Lam Son Square, D 1
38234999

hotel@caravellehotel.com
www.caravellehotel.com

Equatorial Ho Chi Minh City

An international hotel located where the borders of the city's four main districts meet. The city's major commercial and entertainment area is only an 8-minute drive away.

242 Tran Binh Trong, D 5
38397777

info@hcm.equatorial.com
www.equatorial.com/hcm

Legend Hotel

Classic hotel offering 5 star amenities along with a scenic view of the Saigon

River, and providing a unique culinary experience with many options for fine dining.

2A-4A Ton Duc Thang, D 1
38233333
info@legendsaigon.com
www.legendsaigon.com

Majestic Saigon

One of HCMC's oldest and most characteristic hotels, the Majestic on the Saigon River with its grand French architecture is just a few steps away from Saigon's premiere attractions.

01 Dong Khoi, D 1

38295517
majestic@majesticsaigon.com.vn
www.majesticsaigon.com.vn

Moevenpick Hotel Saigon

An international hotel chain with Swiss roots, this comfortable hotel caters to both businesspeople and families with fine dining options, a fitness centre, and multiple conference rooms.

253 Nguyen Van Troi Apartments, Phu Nhuan
38449222

hotel.saiigon@moevenpick.com
www.moevenpick-hotels.com

New World Saigon Hotel

One of the most impressive business hotels in Ho Chi Minh City, with stunning views and 5 star amenities. 533 luxury rooms and suites offering the perfect ambience for concentrated work and undisturbed relaxation.

76 Le Lai, D 1

38228888
saiigon@newworldhotels.com
www.saiigon.newworldhotels.com

Nikko Saigon

One of the city's newest

accommodation jewels, this lavish hotel is designed to make the maximum impression of austere Japanese-style class from the lobby upwards. This is one of the most luxurious hotels in HCMC, with classic, precise and elegant decor.

235 Nguyen Van Cu, D 1
39257777

dos@hotelnikkosaigon.com.vn
www.hotelnikkosaigon.com.vn

Park Hyatt Saigon

Without a doubt the city's most luxurious hotel, Park Hyatt Saigon features French colonial inspired rooms, two award-winning restaurants, an outdoor pool and a stylish contemporary bar. The exterior is the result of meticulous research into the colonial architecture of the region.

2 Lam Son Square, D 1
38241234

saiigon.park@hyatt.com
www.saiigon.park.hyatt.com

Rex Hotel Saigon

Rex Hotel has consistently won awards for being one of the best hotels in Asia. Impeccable dining options, great location, and 5 star amenities make this recently refurbished hotel a preferred destination for travellers with generous budgets.

141, Nguyen Hue, Ben Nghe, D 1
38292185

rexhotel@rex.com.vn
www.rexhotelvietnam.com

Saigon Domaine Luxury Residences

High-class getaway hotel located out of the city centre on exotic Thanh Da Island, allowing guests to escape from the chaos of the city life while remaining close to the action. More hotel than apartment complex,

The Domaine's private residences are classic and luxurious, making the most of the natural surroundings.

1057 Binh Quoi, Binh Thanh
35561145
sales@saigondomaine.com
www.saigondomaine.com

Sheraton Saigon Hotel And Towers

Located in the heart of Ho Chi Minh City vibrant business and entertainment district, Sheraton Saigon Hotel & Towers is a 5 star haven of convenience, connecting guests with colleagues and friends.

88 Dong Khoi, D 1
38272828

sheratonsaigon@sheraton.com
www.starwoodhotels.com/sheraton/property/overview

Sofitel Saigon Plaza Hotel

The Sofitel Saigon Plaza is located in the city center, in the heart of the business district and close to Notre Dame Cathedral and Reunification Palace. 275 elegant rooms and 11 suites, a swimming pool, and a fitness center.

17 Le Duan, D 1
38241555

H2077@Sofitel.com
www.sofitel.com/gb/hotel-2077-sofitel-saigon-plaza/index.shtml

Windsor Plaza

Located in the heritage area of old Cholon, the Windsor offers authentic Vietnamese and Chinese hospitality with a mix of commercial, cultural, and retail experiences - and they put on a fine buffet.

18 An Duong Vuong, D 5
3833 6688

services@windsorplazahotel.com
www.windsorplazahotel.com



Vientiane's manifest choice


Ansara
Hôtel

Vientiane, Lao PDR

Tel: +856 21 213 514 / Fax: +856 21 213 523

info@ansarahotel.com / www.ansarahotel.com

CON DAO ISLAND

Six Senses Con Dao

True to the Six Senses philosophy of selecting remote (but accessible) destinations in areas of outstanding natural beauty, Con Dao is an untouched and breathtakingly beautiful area. Con Dao has been built with the very lightest ecological footprint, with villas set up along a mile of sandy beach, sheltered by the green forested hills behind and with stunning vistas of the deep blue sea and the curve of the bay.

Dat Doc Beach, Con Dao, Con Son
06 4383 1222
reservations-condao@sixsenses.com

DALAT

Ana Mandara Villas Dalat

Ana Mandara Villas Dalat comprises seventeen restored French-style villas from the 1920's and 1930's, preserving the original design, décor and charm, is and set in the cool climate of the rural highlands of Central Vietnam. Striking views of the surrounding town and countryside abound from all areas of the gently sloping hillside property.

Le Lai, Phuong 5, Dalat
06 3355 5888
reservation-dalat@anamandara-resort.com

Sofitel Dalat Palace

Hotel Sofitel Dalat Palace is one of the most beautiful and amongst the few remaining historical hotels in Southeast Asia. Built in 1922 and meticulously restored in 1995 to its original grandeur, the Sofitel Dalat Palace offers individualized service in the finest tradition of Vietnamese hospitality.

12 Tran Phu, Dalat
06 3382 5444
info@dalatresorts.com

DANANG

Furama Resort Danang

This 5-star haven on the world-famous Danang beach is celebrated as Vietnam's most prestigious resort – counting royalty, presidents, movie stars, and international business leaders among its celebrity guests. The Furama Resort enjoys a stunning beachfront location on one of Vietnam's finest beaches, fringed by natural pines and coconut palms. Two four-storey wings overlook the ocean on one side and a freshwater swimming lagoon and manicured tropical gardens on the others.

Truong Sa, Ngu Hanh Son, Danang
051 1384 7333
reservation@furamavietnam.com

Fusion Maia

Incorporating the spirit of our time, Fusion Maia Danang is a unique fusion of resort and spa where spa treatments are inclusive and a part of daily living in this beach resort. It is the first all-pool villa-style resort in the destination and offers 87 pool suites, spa villas, and beach villas each with modern, open-plan living and private courtyard with swimming pool. Customize-your-stay options and breakfast available at multiple locations are a few of the surprising offers in store.

Truong Sa, Ngu Hanh Son, Danang
051 1396 7999
reservation-dn@fusion-resorts.com

Life Resort Danang

Sitting on the Bac My An beachfront only 3km from downtown Danang, and 30km from Hoi An. A pair of four-storey hotel blocks house most of the

resort's rooms, with villas flanking one side of a long pool corridor splicing the middle of the resort. Its proximity to three UNESCO World Heritage sites as well as the former colonial French hill stations at Bach Ma and Ba Na make this ideally placed for incentive excursions.

Truong Sa, Ngu Hanh Son, Danang
051 1395 8888
reservations@lifestyle-resort-danang.com

HALONG BAY

Novotel Halong Bay

A glimpse into contemporary Vietnam with echoes of the country's intricate past through its elegant interior décor. Sturdy polished stone, glass and marble stand against the delicate Asian textures of silk, wickerwork and carved wood. With sweeping windows and large mirrors, the hotel captures panoramic views of Halong Bay and its spectacular seascapes at every turn.

Ha Long Road, Bai Chay Ward, Ha Long City
03 3384 8108
info@novotelhalong.com.vn

TUAN CHAU RESORT

Built on the beautiful Tuan Chau Island right in the midst of the perfect scenery of Halong Bay, Tuan Chau Resort is constructed in the style of classical French and modern Vietnamese architecture. This is a place to admire the undeniable beauty of Halong Bay – a site that is now recognised as the heritage of humanity. This is the ideal place to find white sands, blue ocean, and the rejuvenative energy of the Vietnamese tropical sun.

Tuan Chau Island, Ha Long City
03 3384 2999
info@tuanchauresort.com.vn

HANOI

Hilton Hanoi Opera

This landmark of Hanoi was inspired by the famous Opera House located nearby. A hotel of great beauty and luxury, the Hilton stands in the city's fashionable and elegant French Quarter, and is within close range of the charming Old Quarter and bustling Business District.

1 Le Thanh Tong, Hoan Kiem, Hanoi
04 3933 0500
frontofficeadmin.hanoi@hilton.com

Intercontinental Westlake

Superbly situated on the serene waters of Hanoi's West Lake and adjacent to the famous 800-year-old Golden Lotus (Kim Lien) Pagoda. Conveniently located and yet able to offer a retreat from the hustle and bustle of downtown Hanoi, the combination of spacious luxurious accommodations, facilities, and attentive Vietnamese hospitality make this the perfect place to stay for both the corporate and leisure traveller.

la Nghi Tam Tay Ho, Hanoi
04 6270 8888
Reservation.Hanoi@ihg.com

Sheraton Hanoi

Perfectly located by the shores of the largest lake in Hanoi and surrounded by a beautifully landscaped garden and courtyard, the hotel provides the perfect balance between tranquillity and convenience. Take in panoramic views of Hanoi's largest lake and enjoy great comforts in the 299 spacious guest rooms and suites, specially designed for relaxation.

K5 Nghi Tam, 11 Xuan Dieu, Tay Ho, Hanoi
04 3719 9000
Reservations.Hanoi@Sheraton.com

The Sofitel Metropole

Located at the heart of Hanoi since 1901, Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi has a long history as a luxurious place for prestigious events and popular rendezvous. Features include 364 rooms and suites, excellent French cuisine at Le Beaulieu, Vietnamese specialties at Spices Garden, and Angelina - Hanoi's most "avant garde" Italian Restaurant & Lounge. Seven function rooms, a swimming pool, fitness centre and the Le Spa du Metropole are also available in the hotel.

15 Ngo Quyen, Hoan Kiem, Hanoi
04 3826 6919
h1555@sofitel.com

HO CHI MINH CITY

InterContinental Asiana

Located in the heart of Ho Chi Minh City, the InterContinental Asiana Saigon is dedicated to providing local, authentic, and enriching travel experiences. Decorated in tasteful oriental flair, the hotel is dedicated to representing the charms of Asia and evokes the mystique of this beautiful continent and its cultures. Right next to Saigon's key landmarks, this hotel is ideally placed for high-class travellers and groups seeking a high standard of accommodation. Full MICE areas and facilities are on-site.

Corner Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan, DI 3520 9999
saigon@ihg.com
www.intercontinental.com/saigon

HOI AN

Life Heritage Resort Hoi An

Rooms are designed along Japanese themes, each having a personal porch with couches for reading and relaxing. Spacious bathrooms feature stand-alone showers or recessed baths, and many bathrooms enjoy views of a private garden. Ideal for events where participants will be enjoying the colourful ancient town area.

1 Pham Hong Thai, Hoi An Town, Quang Nam
051 0391 4555
hoian@life-resorts.com

The Nam Hai

A stunning all-villa resort located on the pristine China Beach featuring 60 one-bedroom retreats as well as 40 privately-owned two-to-five bedroom residences each with a private infinity pool.

Hamlet 1 Dien Duong Village, Dien Ban, Quang Nam
051 0394 0000
reservations@thenamhai.com



Palm Garden Resort

Set on five hectares of landscaped tropical garden with over 400 species of palm trees and plants right along the beach and near the World Heritage Hoi An Ancient Town.

Lac Long Quan, Cua Dai beach, Hoi An
0510 3927 927
www.palmgardenresort.com.vn

HUE

Ana Mandara Hue

The quiet sounds and vistas of the sea welcome guests to the first unique luxury beach resort with private pool villas in the area. Located a scenic 15km drive from central Hue, this is spacious resort with the largest villas and rooms in the area. The property includes private pool villas, beach villas, duplex and deluxe rooms in a wide range of styles and decor designed with complete and modern facilities.

An Hai Village, Thuan An Town, Hue Phu Vang
05 4398 3333
rsvn@anamandarahue-resort.com

La Residence Hotel & Spa

This former French Governor's residence dates to 1930 and is a masterpiece of art deco design. Its incredible location overlooking the Citadel and the Perfume River brings this 122-room hotel a total and serene tranquillity. The hotel features a 40m outdoor salt swimming pool at river height giving the illusion of merging into the Perfume River. Ideal for executive retreats and exotic incentives programmes.

5 Le Loi, Hue
05 4383 7475
resa@la-residence-hue.com

Pilgrimage Village

Pilgrimage Village offers the harmony of a soothing natural environment and fascinating local culture. Delicious meals, sound sleep, and the peaceful life of the quiet countryside refresh the spirit. Pilgrimage Village is also a place where skilful artisans carve, polish and weave to create authentic works that reflect the traditional culture of Hue.

130 Minh Mang, Truong An, Hue
05 4388 5461
info@pilgrimagevillage.com

NHA TRANG

Evason Ana Mandara

Reflecting the style of an old Vietnamese village, with warm hospitality, rich culture and unique tastes. The exclusive location affords city-centre access to Nha Trang's only beachfront resort. It is surrounded by private tropical gardens, offering simplicity, serenity and refinement together with spectacular views of Nha Trang Bay. Unforgettable incentive experience.

Beachside Tran Phu Boulevard, Nha Trang
05 8352 2222
reservations-nhatrang@evasonresorts.com

Six Senses Hideaway Ninh Van Bay

The accommodation here provides generous personal space and presents an uncompromised standard of luxury, with an architectural style reflecting the traditions of Vietnam. The resort is one of Asia's most exclusive and intimate beach escapes, sitting on dramatic Ninh Van Bay, with its impressive rock formations overlooking the South China Sea, white sand beach and towering mountains behind.

Ninh Van, Khanh Hoa
05 8372 8222
reservations-ninhvan@sixsenses.com

Sheraton Nha Trang

Sheraton Nha Trang Hotel & Spa offers ten categories of accommodation – from spacious, deluxe rooms to 70m2 executive suites and a huge presidential suite. With exemplary conference facilities, this is the number-

one MICE resort in the region. The Sheraton is also noted for its fabulous contemporary design feature – all rooms have an ocean view.

26-28 Tran Phu, Nha Trang
05 8388 0000

reservations.nhatrang@sheraton.com

PHAN THIET

Anantara Mui Ne Resort & Spa

The new face of the former l'Anmien, this resort offers an exclusive haven of luxury and relaxation in a spectacular beachfront location right in the heart of Mui Ne. The only property in the Mui Ne district with full conferencing facilities and a range of exclusive villas – and it has an impressive wine cellar.

Mui Ne

06 2374 1888

muine@anantara.com

Princess d'Annam

The Princess is an exquisite resort with an almost celestial atmosphere that is hard to find anywhere else in Vietnam. The look of the resort is classical, bright, and impeccably clean and private. The two Empress Suites are the pinnacle of luxury accommodation in Vietnam – they are mini millionaire's mansions in themselves, fully-equipped, bright and spacious, and possessing of the same ethereal design quality that pervades this whole resort. Set in the remote Ke Ga Bay, wordlessly beautiful.

Hon Lan, Binh Thuan

06 2368 2222

info@princessannam.com

PHU QUOC ISLAND

Chen Sea Resort & Spa

Located in a quiet bay, this resort allows guests to enjoy the peace and

natural beauty of Phu Quoc while also enjoying the exclusive atmosphere that the location suggests and the resort offers. The resort was born from a long and passionate study in order to be integrated and to respect the uncontaminated nature of the bay and of the coastal zone.

Bai Xep, Phu Quoc

07 7399 5895

cpv@chr.co.th

Saigon Phu Quoc Resort

Located on a hill of coconut palm trees, Saigon Phu Quoc is a beautiful, quiet seaside resort with plenty of sunshine. Just 10 minutes from the airport, the resort is an ideal haven for relaxing, fishing, trekking, snorkeling, and scuba diving.

62 Tran Hung Dao, Phu Quoc

07 7384 6999

sgphuquocresort@hcm.vnn.vn

La Veranda

The most distinguished of Phu Quoc Island's hotels and guesthouses, La Veranda sports paddle fans, butterfly exteriors, whitewashed louvers, and tropical gardens recalling a colonial plantation. Freestanding deluxe villas are notable for their sea-facing porches, spacious bathrooms, and cathedral ceilings.

Tran Hung Dao, Duong Dong Beach, Phu Quoc

07 7398 2988

contact@laverandaresorts.com

QUY NHON

Life Wellness Resort Quy Nhon

A hide-away style spa and beach destination set in 13.5 hectares of private mountainous land and beach. The tranquillity, splendid views, Cham-

inspired architecture and surroundings are so far unmatched in Vietnam. This resort was awarded Best Wellness Resort in Vietnam in 2005, 2006 and 2007 by the Vietnam Economic Times.

Ghenh Rang, Bai Dai Beach, Quy Nhon,

Binh Dinh

05 6384 0132

quynhon@life-resorts.com

Bai Tram Resort and Spa

Bai Tram is based on holistic ideals and the search for environmental balance embodying the trend towards seeing ourselves, the natural world, and the man-made environment as one. Its mission is to provide guests with a warm, charming, and natural service where they can be pampered at the right moment, and always with the subtle grace of the East and the modern refinement of the West. It is an ideal getaway for executive/staff retreats and ultimate incentives.

Hoa Loi, Xuan Canh, Song Cau, Phu Yen

05 7372 2563

rm@bai-tram.com

serviced apartments

Avila Serviced Apartment

These serviced apartments combine an excellent location with luxurious amenities.

20-20bis Thi Sach, D I

35218365

Bella Serviced Apartments

Affordable, classy apartment living in a tidy alleyway residence styled with white classical flourishes, Bella offers good living and proximity to the city without succumbing to the lures of the expat bubble. Facilities include a small but well-equipped gym on the top floor and pleasant terraces on front-facing apartments.

56/4 Nguyen Thong, D3

3526 0020

Cantavil Daewon Apartment

High-luxury complex with libraries, research center, and cultural information center on site. Also features an outdoor swimming pool. One of the most luxurious towers in the central area.

600A Dien Bien Phu, Binh Thanh

Central Garden Apartment

These luxurious apartments offer stunning views of downtown Saigon along with western style accommodations and excellent location.

Clean, inner-city luxury compound close to the Ben Nghe River.

225 Ben Chuong Duong, D I

38367734

City View

Located in the prime business and residential district, only minutes away by car from downtown area, City View is the perfect place for home and/or business in Ho Chi Minh City.

12 Mac Dinh Chi, D I

38221111

Hung Vuong Plaza Apartment

Hung Vuong Plaza apartments above the D5 Parkson are comprised of two 29 floor buildings with many luxurious apartments in bustling Chinatown.

126 Hong Bang, D 5

Jasmine Court Serviced Apartment

A boutique property with only 12 apartments, comprised of one and two-bedroom suites of various sizes. All apartments are designed in a fresh contemporary style and finished in a pleasing neutral colour scheme.

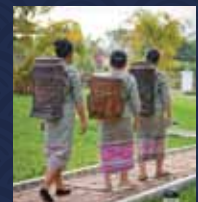
307/29 Nguyen Van Troi, Tan Binh

38446639

Lancaster Serviced Apartments

Lancaster Serviced Apartments Le Thanh Ton enjoys a commanding

Experience the wealth of our cultural heritage...



...The spirit of traditional Lao hospitality...
on the bank of the Nam Song River



Riverside Boutique Resort

Vang Vieng, Laos

Ban Viengkeo, Vang Vieng, Vientiane Province, Lao PDR

Phone: +856 (0)23 511 726-8. Fax: +856 (0)23 511 729

Email: info@riversidevangvieng.com

www.riversidevangvieng.com

position over the nightlife, culture, and business hub of Ho Chi Minh City, offering a sweeping panoramic view of the city skyline from virtually every window.

22 Bis Le Thanh Ton, D 1
38246666

The Landmark

The Landmark is a prestigious development of residential accommodation and office space situated in the heart of HCMC. The 16-storey complex, located on a prime waterfront site, was one of the first of its kind in the city.

5B Ton Duc Thang, D 1
38222098

Mai Ha Lan II Serviced Apartments

Mai Ha Lan II offers a sweeping panoramic view of the city skyline from virtually every window. It offers 33 luxurious and graciously furnished apartments with studio and two bedroom options.

8A/IC Thai Van Lung, D 1
62990992 0909868052

Norfolk Mansion

A comfortable serviced luxury apartment in the city center, the Norfolk features an outdoor pool, gym & sauna, and high-class Cantonese restaurant.

17-19-21, Ly Tu Trong, D 1
38226111

Saigon Court

Since its opening in 1998, Saigon Court has become well-known amongst the expatriate community for exceptional standards of service. This 12 storey building is among the highest in the area, offering its tenants commanding views of other parts of the city.

149 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D 3
39306466

Saigon Pearl Apartment

Ho Chi Minh City's largest five star apartment complex, Saigon Pearl comprises six 37-story residential towers located on the banks of the Saigon River in Binh Thanh District, about five minutes by taxi from downtown. Pool, gym, supermarket and dining facilities all on site.

92 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh
38219999

Saigon Skygarden

A 15-storey building located in the Saigonese Little Tokyo on Le Thanh Ton, offering 172 international-standard Serviced Apartments for lease.

20 Le Thanh Ton, D 1
38220002

Saigon View Residences

Saigon View Residences offer a range of Deluxe, Superior, and Executive room types in distinctive one and two bedroom apartments.

117, Nguyen Cuu Van, Binh Thanh
38404966

Sedona Suites

With a fantastic location in District 1 and rooms offering all of the comforts of home, this award winning serviced apartment complex caters to businessmen and families alike.

65 Le Loi, D 1
38229666

Sherwood Residence

Serviced apartments available for short or long term bookings, located in Pasteur, within walking distance of downtown Ho Chi Minh City, international schools, shopping centres, etc. Pool, sauna, gym, mini-cinema onsite.

127 Pasteur, D 3
38232288

Somerset Chancellor Court

Each of these 172 spacious serviced apartments in District 1 is fully-furnished

with an open kitchen concept, contemporary western style décor, and a large balcony.

21-23 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D 1
38229197

V-Star Apartment

Good proximity to the Saigon River and FV International Hospital, as well as international schools and the Tan Thuan export zone.

Go O Moi, Phu Thuan, D 7
37733151

travel agencies

Asiana Travel Mate

Offering tours to magnificent scenic areas in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, and India - the firm has strong purchasing power in these regions, allowing it to offer heavily discounted rates.

92-96 Nguyen Hue, D1
3825 1358
090 780 0432

Aquarius Booking Office

With access to a global network of leading travel specialists, Aquarius is a domestic & international air ticketing agency committed to offering low-cost flights, travel insurance, and accommodation.

4th Floor, Yoco Building, 41 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3823 1905

Amazing Thailand Tourism Office

Funded by the Thai tourism board, this office is loaded up with travel resources and advice for travellers to Thailand, an invaluable source of help for travelers on their way to the land of smiles. Travel resources and advice for travelers to Thailand.

5th Floor, Empire Tower, 26-28 Ham Nghi, D1
6291 3887

Ben Thanh Tourist

One of the better-known tour agencies in the city, Ben Thanh Tourist is 20 years old and specializes in domestic and foreign travel, MICE, tourist transportation, and air ticketing.

51 Dong Khoi, D1
3914 3921
090 611 1121

Clé Voyages - Xuan Viet Travel

Xuan Viet Travel has been providing travel services and advice for nearly two decades.

Unit 1105, Harbour View Tower, 35 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 4942

Fiditour

Fiditour offers a wide range of tours to the southeast Asian region, including unique cultural trips, adventure trips, beach holidays, cruises, and culinary trips.

129 Nguyen Hue, D1
3914 1414

Hoi An Express

Preferred by many five-star hotels in Ho Chi Minh city such as Windsor Plaza Hotel, Duxton Hotel, Legend Hotel Saigon, and Equatorial Hotel, this privately owned travel agency offers a wide range of services.

94 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3939 0135
090 803 9699

Refine Asia

Representing class, creativity, and absolute professionalism in Asian corporate and luxury travel services, Refine Asia is the first-class and luxury arm of the well-known regular travel services operator Focus Asia.

138 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, Ward 6, D3
3932 0732

Saigon River Tour

Established in 1998, Saigon River Tour provides speedboat services and speedboat tours (ecotourism, Cu Chi Tunnels, Mekong Delta) from Bach Dang Pier.

10b Ton Duc Thang, D1
6290 9410
098 936 8508

Sinh Cafe

Sinh Cafe started out as a coffee shop, but later expanded to cater to the needs of tourists and travelers. This unique travel agency offers tours within Vietnam, and also to Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand.

246-248 De Tham, D1
3836 7338

Viet Journey

Viet Journey was founded by dedicated travelers of the southeast Asian region, and they strive to provide quality, time-efficient service for travelers from around the world.

18-19-20 Ton Duc Thang, D1
3823 7152
090 809 7008

bowling

The Bowling Center

The Bowling Centre is a smaller venue with 12 lanes located in the International Club.

285B Cach Mang Thang Tam, D10
3864 3784

Bowling Pacific Garden

Small bowling alley at the Pacific Garden apartments complex, ideal for a more private game away from the crowds of teenagers.

8 Bis Ba Thang Hai, D10
3863 7944

Diamond Superbowl

An electrifying bowling experience featuring a 32 lane centrally-located bowling alley with fluorescent bowling balls and high-tech scoring.

4th Floor, 34 Le Duan, Ben Nghe, D1
3825 7778

PowerBowl 388

This is a 10 lane, 10 pin bowling alley with a games section attached, located on the 4th floor of the Parkson Saigon Plaza building.

Level 4, 35 Le Thanh Ton, D1
38295388

Powerbowl Hung Vuong

12 lane 10 pin AMF bowling alley with a games section located on the 3rd floor of the Parkson Hung Vuong Plaza building - a Bud's ice-cream station awaits indoors.

126 Hong Bang, D5

Saigon Superbowl

Formerly the coolest venue in HCMC and opened to great aplomb in the early noughties, this tired old complex in the wrong part of town still retains its international-standard huge bowling alley.

43A Truong Son, Tan Binh
3848 8888

charities

Education For Development Vietnam

An international organization that works with Vietnamese partners to improve and expand their educational services for disadvantaged children and youth.

305/30 Le Van Sy, Tan Binh
3991 6033

International Organization For Migration

The organization is concerned with the welfare and quality of life of the Vietnamese people, particularly migrant and mobile populations.

1B Pham Ngoc Thach, D1

3822 2057

Loreto Vietnam Australia

Dedicated to the reduction of poverty through beneficial, qualitative and responsive educational opportunities for underprivileged and disabled students.

17c Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3910 6364

Mekong Quilts - Ngo Duc Ke

Founded in 2001, Mekong Quilts employs women in communities northeast of Ho Chi Minh City, to create high quality, hand-crafted bed covers, accessories and gift wares. All profits from the sale of the quilts are reinvested into the community through the NGO Mekong Plus.

1st Floor, 35-37 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
2210 3110
mekong.quilts.creations.hcmddl@gmail.com

517- Sky Garden 1, Nguyen Van Linh, D7
6271 7758

Saigon Children's Charity

Saigon Children's Charity was founded in 1992 to help disadvantaged Vietnamese children to get an education and a fairer start in life. Their programs aim to help the most disadvantaged children of Vietnam to escape from poverty through education and training.

59 Tran Quoc Thao, D3
3930 0503

The Little Rose Shelter

The Little Rose Shelter is a refuge for young girls who have been sexually abused or trafficked for the purpose of labor or sexual exploitation. It offers psychological rehabilitation, opportunities to go to school, free healthcare and a supportive, loving environment to grow.

Hem 30, 55/2 Bis Lam Van Ben, D7
3872 0308

Unicef Vietnam

UNICEF Vietnam provides support in policy development, legal reform, and improving social services. Following reunification in 1975, the charity launched a nationwide programme to meet the basic needs of Vietnam's girls and boys.

Unit 1406, Suh Wah Tower, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 9413

Waifs Of War Foundation

The Waifs of War Foundation was established in March 2004 by a group of individuals concerned with improving the lives of the children born to Vietnamese mothers and American War servicemen fathers.

24 Le Loi, D1
3913 0439

cinemas & theatres

The Ballet and Symphony Orchestra

Ho Chi Minh City's local classical music venue with regular programs & performances.

212 Nguyen Trai, D1
3925 2265

Ben Thanh Theatre

Once the cultural center of District 1 when it was built in 1995, this is a good air-conditioned theater for Vietnamese shows & cultural activities that can accommodate over 1000 people.

6 Mac Dinh Chi, D1
3823 1652

CT Plaza Megastar

This theater complex offers close proximity to shops for shoppers and many other attractions. Large cinema complex on the 7th floor with 3D theatres and VIP room.

Level 10, 60A Truong Son, Tan Binh

6297 1981

Galaxy

Vietnamese cinema showing international and domestic films.

116 Nguyen Du, D1
3822 8533
230 Nguyen Trai, D1
3920 6688
246 Nguyen Hong Dao, Tan Binh
3849 4567

Golden Dragon Water Puppet Theater

Vietnamese water puppet show with live Vietnamese traditional music, this is an original performing art preserved and handed down for nearly a thousand years. Daytime performances by special arrangement.

55B Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3840 4027
098 937 9873 (Mr. Lam)

Ho Chi Minh Conservatory Of Music

One of three conservatories in Vietnam, offering world class musical education and performances.

Concerts at the local Ho Chi Minh City Music School.
112 Nguyen Du, D1
3822 5841

Hung Vuong Megastar

This theater complex offers close proximity to shops for shoppers and many other attractions. Large cinema complex in the CT Plaza building with 3D theatres and VIP room.

126 Hong Bang, D5
3222 0388

IDECAF Drama Theatre

IDECAF is a theater holding French cultural exchanges as well as offering courses in French.

31 Thai Van Lung, D1
38295451

Le Thanh Theatre

Experimental art space for dance and exhibitions, with regular performances of leading-edge artistic theatre.

25 Phan Phu Tien, D5
2242 4622
090 580 4820

Lotte Cinema Diamond

Fine cinema complex in one of the most iconic department store buildings in town. Ride up the elevator to the top floor to catch a flick.

13th Floor, 34 Le Duan, D1
3822 7897

Lotte Cinema Nam Saigon

The district 7 branch of Lotte cinemas features the Charlotte VIP lounge with 6 modern cinema rooms and a luxury coffee shop.

Level 3, 469 Nguyen Huu Tho, Tan Hung, District 7
3775 2566

Saigon Opera House

No mere historical museum piece, the Municipal Theater is a thriving performance centre with regular musical and cultural shows - predominantly of the classical, high-brow, and top-dollar variety.

7 Lam Son Square, D1
3825 1563
098 987 4517

The Soul of Vietnam

The Soul of Vietnam showcases traditional Vietnamese music shows with voice and traditional instruments. Be sure to check out the three-part Legend of the Trung Sisters' with accompaniment of stone musical instruments, gongs and two lifelike elephants.

7 Lam Son Square, D1
2229 9414

gyms

California WOW

The first and largest international

fitness company to open in Vietnam. Provides world class fitness services and products in a state-of-the art 5-star fitness and entertainment facility.

126 Hong Bang, D5
3222 0299
28-30-32 Le Lai, D1
6291 5999
5 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4
3826 0999

Crescent Wellness Group

Directly targeting foreign customers, especially Phu My Hung residents, CWG is equipped with the latest modern facilities and fitness equipment, selectorized strength training stations, plate-loaded machines and free weights.

3rd Floor, 103 Ton Dat Tien, D7
5412 1277

Get Fit Gym

Located on the 3rd floor in the H3 Building, this international-standard, gym offers a steam bath and sauna, yoga, kickboxing, rumba, salsa, merengue, cumbia and reggaeton classes.

384 Hoang Dieu, D4
6261 6169

K1 Fitness & Fight Factory

A well-known brand name founded by a group of professional kickboxers and now present in France and Southeast Asia, including Montpellier and Phnom Penh as well as here in Saigon.

14 Duong 38, Nguyen Thi Thap, D7
091 833 7111

Nutrifort Fitness

Aiming to be the voice of health and fitness in Vietnam, Nutrifort provides clientele with proper tools and teaching methods to keep the mind and body fit and healthy. Clients also learn about nutrition to nourish and maintain their health.

281 Chu Manh Trinh, D1
3825 8560

Rex Health Club

This spa was designed for both men & women, integrating traditional Vietnamese, Indian, and Chinese herbal remedies and techniques. Situated on the rooftop of the Rex Hotel, it features two outdoor swimming areas.

146 Pasteur, D1
3825 6136

Saigon River Club

Located in Ruby Tower at the Saigon Pearl, Saigon River Club is equipped with the very latest in fitness technology. It has a fully-equipped sauna and steam room and a large outdoor pool with jacuzzi.

Ruby Tower, 92 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh
3514 9009

Star Fitness Bitexco

Located in The Manor Tower, this gym is not only a fitness center it includes other specialized classes such as yoga, belly dancing, kick boxing, zumba, body toning, and so on.

Level 1, 91 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh
3514 0255

museums

Fine Arts Museum Ho Chi Minh City

With a collection housing more than 21,000 pieces in various displays, the Fine Arts Museum Ho Chi Minh City highlights traditional and modern works of HCMC artists as well as other artists from the south of Vietnam.

97A Pho Duc Chinh, D1
3821 3508

Geological Museum

A fittingly dull-looking building at the corner of Nguyen Binh Khiem and Nguyen Huu Canh, the museum has

over 20,000 samples of interesting rocks.

2 Nguyen Binh Khiem, D1
3829 8146

Ho Chi Minh Campaign Museum

Small military museum dedicated to the Ho Chi Minh Campaign that led to communist victory over southern Vietnam.

2 Le Duan, D1
3822 9387

Ho Chi Minh City Museum

An old French Colonial palace, the museum has a wide and varied collection and some interesting modern history of its own.

65 Ly Tu Trong, D1
3829 8250

Ho Chi Minh Museum

Three stories dedicated to Ho Chi Minh, the museum features an assortment of artifacts from his personal life, including a radio, sandals and clothes. After exploring the more than 3,000 Ho Chi Minh portraits, take a walk in the lovely gardens around the old building nicknamed the Dragon House' for its ornate roof and hybrid Franco-Chinese architecture.

1 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4
3940 2060

Museum of Southern Vietnamese Women

The Museum of Southern Vietnamese Women has become a place of interest for both locals and tourists alike. The museum was set up in order to educate future generations of women about patriotism and the national traditions of Vietnamese women.

202 Vo Thi Sau, D3
3932 7130

Reunification Palace

Formerly known as the Independence Palace, the Reunification Palace marked the end of the Vietnam War, when a North Vietnamese Army tank crashed through its main gates. Roped-off showrooms, exactly as they were in 1975, include the presidential office, bedroom, and reception.

135 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D1
0808 5008

Vietnam History Museum

This long-running historical museum offers a chronological display of many items and artefacts, and has been showered with multiple awards by the local administration.

2 Nguyen Binh Khiem, D1
3829 8146

Vietnamese Traditional Medicine Museum

The Museum of Traditional Vietnamese Medicine contains nearly 3,000 items informing guests about the subject dating all the way back to the Stone Age.

41 Hoang Du Khuong, D10
3862 7812

War Remnants Museum

Attracting more than 500,000 visitors a year, the War Remnants Museum shows the grim reality of war, focusing mainly on the American phase of the Vietnam War. The multi-building museum includes a courtyard with military equipment including a "Huey" helicopter, an M48 Patton tank and an F-5A fighter.

28 Vo Van Tan, D3
3930 6325

parks

Cong Vien Van Hoa Park

This former French recreational space has been converted into one of the city's favorite sports parks.

115 Nguyen Du, D1

Dam Sen Park

This beautiful park was constructed on reclaimed marshland and is widely considered to be Vietnam's most exciting cultural theme park.

3 Hoa Binh, D11
3963 3073

Ky Hoa Park

Large tourist area in the inner suburbs with many lakeside entertainment activities.

12 Ba Thang Hai, D10

Le Thi Rieng Park

A large park in D10, Le Thi Rieng park is a well-known spot for casual exercise, a friendly game of badminton and early morning birdwatching.

875 Cach Mang Thang Tam, D10
3862 6655

Phu Lam Park

Gentle park on a small lake amidst busy back streets of outer Cholon, popular with locals for fishing and exercise.

121 Kinh Duong Vuong, D6
3751 3313

September 23 Park

One of the largest parks in the city center. It's a great place to exercise, see free music performances, attend public events, and enjoy food from street vendors.

Pham Ngu Lao, Pham Ngu Lao, District 1

Suoi Tien Theme Park

Enormous amusement park on the outskirts of the city with multiple themed attractions demonstrating Vietnamese culture.

Xa Lo Ha Noi, D9
3896 0260

Van Thanh Park

This expansive park located on the banks of the Thi Nghe River offers myriad culinary options in addition to stunning views and natural atmosphere.

48/10 Dien Bien Phu, Binh Thanh

Zoo and Botanical Gardens

One of the world's oldest zoos, with a modest collection of animals and a botanical garden, with many rare orchids, ornamental plants, and over a hundred species of mammals, reptiles and birds.

2B Nguyen Binh Khiem, D1
3822 8309

places worship

Ba Chuong Church of St Dominic

Ba Chuong Church was redesigned in 2003, and now this visually stunning house of worship features a blend of traditional oriental and western architecture.

190 Le Van Sy, Phu Nhuan
3844 8206

Bac Ha Church

Built in 2008. The name Bac Ha is the combination between the two names of their original dioceses, Bac Ninh and Ha Noi. The church has two bell towers at 42m high, and there's a room dedicated to looking after kids to let their parents join the mass.

419 Ly Thai To, D10
3839 1032

Central Mosque

Built by South Indian Muslims in 1935 on the site of an earlier mosque, this was originally constructed for worshippers from southern India then-resident in Saigon. Now Muslims from all over the world come here to worship.

66 Dong Du, D1
3824 2903

Cha Tam Church

Cha Tam Church is an old catholic church built in 1900. The church was named for priest Cha Tam in honor of

his great sermons and contributions to the community.

**25 Hoc Lac, D5
3829 8914**

Cho Quan Church

An old church built on the foundations of earlier churches that have stood here for centuries, Cho Quan Church was constructed in 1887 in the Gothic tradition, with large stone pillars and a red tiled roof. The massive bell tower consists of three floors and provides stunning views.

120 Tran Binh Trong, D5

Cholon Mosque

Built by Muslims from South India in 1932, the Cholon Mosque Serves Cholon's Muslim community, including Malaysian, Indonesian as well as South Asian worshippers.

**641 Nguyen Trai, D5
3855 5350**

Dieu Phap

Almost half a century after Dieu Phap pagoda was founded, it has continued to provide a home and food for the poor, helpless, and homeless elderly people.

**188 No Trang Long, Binh Thanh
3553 3267**

Giac Lam Pagoda

Probably Ho Chi Minh City's oldest pagoda, Giac Lam features a rare bodhi tree and seven-storied stupa containing Buddhist relics. The 32 metre-high stupa, facing East, is one of the most distinguished towers of the city.

11, Lac Long Quan, Tan Binh

Hoa Khanh Temple

A tall, colorful, and oddly out-of-place temple, sticking up prominently from the homes and businesses that surround it.

**215 Phan Van Tri, Binh Thanh
3843 1699
www.chuaohakhanh.com**

Hung Phuoc Pagoda

Quiet and unassuming active Buddhist pagoda situated behind the Saigon Railway Station.

**540/23 Cach Mang Thang Tam, D3
3993 4113
095 806 3311**

Huyen Sy Church

One of Saigon's oldest churches convenient to the backpacker district, and built by the grandfather-in-law of the last king of Vietnam.

**1 Ton That Tung, D1
3882 3858**

Jade Emperor Pagoda

An ancient temple built by the city's Cantonese Chinese community, the interiors are filled with paintings portraying Taoist and Buddhist mythical stories and sculpture depicting the ten levels of hell and the apocalypse from Chinese mythology.

73 Mai Thi Luu, D1

Jamiul Islamiyah Mosque

Highly stylistic Mosque near the central police station, servicing a sizeable local Muslim community, it is also known as the Nancy Mosque.

**459B Tran Hung Dao, D1
3920 3325**

Loc Uyen Meditation Chamber

In stark contrast with the pagodas and temples that dot the city landscape, Loc Uyen Meditation Chamber is a place dedicated to seeking inner peace and the study of Buddhism. A colorful D6 pagoda with resident monks, daily devotional instruction, and a free traditional medical healer on Thursdays and Sundays from 8-11am.

**121 Kinh Duong Vuong, D6
3875 1155
093 868 0935**

Marlamman Temple

This small Hindu temple is frequented by both Saigon's tiny Hindu population along with residential Vietnamese.

The temple was built in the late 19th century by traders from Tamil Nadu and is dedicated to the Hindu Goddess Mariamman.

45 Truong Dinh, D1

Nga Sau Church / Saint Jeanne d'Arc Church

Dedicated to St. Joan of Arc, this salmon-pink church is built on the site of a former Chinese cemetery.

**116B Hung Vuong, D5
3855 7616
090 835 6266**

Quan Am Pagoda

An impressive pagoda dedicated to the popular Goddess of Mercy, with a beautiful interior and large fish and turtle pond.

12 Lao Tu, D5

Quoc Tu Pagoda

Prominent seven storied pagoda with colorful statuary in D10, the main complex of the pagoda spans seven stories with the first two open to the public.

**Ba Thang Hai, D10
3865 2700**

Saigon Notre-Dame Basilica

Ho Chi Minh City's foremost tourist attraction, this beautiful cathedral dates from the 1860s and is built with bricks from Marseille. In front of the cathedral stands a Virgin Mary statue, which is said to have been shed tears in 2005, causing thousands of people to stop around the Basilica.

**1 Cong Xa Paris, D1
3824 2903**

St Joseph Seminary

This stunning complex of old colonial-period buildings a few blocks to the east of Notre Dame Cathedral is looking its age after significant tropical weathering, but it's slowly being restored and has been training new seminarians since 1986.

6bis Ton Duc Thang, D1

Subramaniam Swami Temple

One among the city's only two South Indian Hindu temples, it was the first Hindu temple ever built in Ho Chi Minh City and the largest. Located a mere five minutes' walk from Ben Thanh Market.

98 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D1

Tan Dinh Church

Built by French colonists in the late 19th century, Tan Dinh Church is renowned for its distinctive pink facade and decorative designs. A popular photography subject for visitors to Ho Chi Minh City regardless of their religion.

**289 Hai Ba Trung, D3
3829 0093**

Thien Hau Pagoda

One of Cholon's most popular pagodas, this temple was originally built as an expression of gratitude by 19th century Chinese immigrants for Thien Hau's protection during their initial trip to Saigon by sea. Its many hanging incense coils make for superb photographs.

710 Nguyen Trai, D5

Tran Hung Dao Temple

One among a series of temples and pagodas dedicated to the Vietnamese folk hero Tran Hung Dao, who freed ancient Vietnamese people from the Mongolians in the 13th century.

36 Vo Thi Sau, D1

Vinh Nghiem Pagoda

Sitting next to the canal at the end of Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, this structure draws its inspiration from traditional Vietnamese culture and a touch of

the Japanese architectural style. The largest and most impressive Mahayana Buddhist pagoda in the city.

**339 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D3
3843 9901**

Xa Loi Pagoda

The largest pagoda in Ho Chi Minh City and known for a brutal 1963 raid, Xa Loi was built in 1956 following the drawings of the architects Nguyen Van Duong and Do Ba Vinh for worshipping Buddhist relics.

**89 Ba Huyen Thanh Quan, D3
3930 0679**

social clubs

Brogolf Bar Wars

Group of barflies who meet regularly for golf, open to new members. First Saturday of each month, breakfast, brunch, and 18 holes with a caddy.

**46-48 Ton That Thiep, D1
090 927 3997**

Dat Nam Friendly Club

While it may ring of a bingo association, this is a fairly well-respected venue for entertainment and cultural exchange amongst foreigners and entrepreneurs - a very casual networking opportunity.

**Basement Level, 116 Nguyen Du, D1
5404 3618**

Go Go Go Club

Japanese Go chess club.

**135/17/43 Nguyen Huu Canh, Ward 22, Binh Thanh
3512 7630**

International Ladies of Vietnam

A women's group that meets Thursday mornings for coffee from 10am- noon at Sherwood Residences- 1st floor (127 Pasteur, D3) Cost for coffee and snacks is VND130,000. Membership is VND700,000 per year. Open to all ladies

Latin Street Dance

Geisha's was funky enough without the addition of this new meet-up for Latin fans yearning for something a little grittier than salsa.

Geisha Tea House, 85 Pasteur, D1

Overland Club

Overland Club is a 100 percent foreign-owned Japanese company that organizes cultural classes including pottery (from basic to intermediate level, as well as painting unglazed pottery) and cooking classes (Japanese and Vietnamese). The Overland Club also hosts various events. Past events include noodle making, soap carving, and kids' cooking.

**36bis Huynh Khuong Ninh, D1
3820 9734**

Saigon Swing Cats

Saigon Swing Cats organizes dance classes, workshops and events at various venues around HCMC including restaurants, lounges and dance studios. Dance styles include the Lindy, Shim Sham and Tranky Doo.

**Petrohouse Tower- caffe molinari,
5 Le Duan, D1**

Vietnam Cookery Centre

A complete cookery center offering hands-on classes. This culinary compound introduces visitors to Vietnamese cuisine.

**263/8 Ung Van Khiem, Binh Thanh
3512 2764**

sports

Green Bamboo Club

Pleasant tennis club with several courts just a short hop over the bridge from District 1 into Binh Thanh.

**50/3 Xo Viet Nghe Tinh, Binh Thanh
3898 6504**

Lan Anh International Tennis Court

Popular international sports club facility with advanced sporting equipment, courts, gym, and restaurant. This sports club also hosts tennis tournaments and other events.

**291 Cach Mang Thang Tam, D10
3862 7144**

Kimdo Recreation Centre

Situated in downtown Saigon, Kim Do Recreational Centre provides a wide variety of services: restaurant, karaoke, live music cafe, bar, dancing, massage, steam bath and hairdressing.

**129A Nguyen Hue, D1
3822 5914**

swimming pools

Great World Pool

Popular public pool known for its high standard of cleanliness, this indoor pool is shallow at both ends and deep in the middle to ensure safety for non-swimmers.

**600 Nguyen Pham Tuan, D6
3853 7867**

Ky Dong Swimming Pool

Great D3 outdoor family pool, ideal for the kids.

**40 Ky Dong, D3
2241 5322**

Lam Son Swimming Club

Olympic-sized swimming pool with designated lanes (one exclusively for women) and a reputation for cleanliness.

**242 Tran Binh Trong, D5
3835 8028**

Lan Anh Swimming Club Pool

The popular Lan Anh club is a well-situated sports area with a clean, quiet pool and jacuzzi. A bar serves drinks and towels by the water. There are various areas with different depths from 1.4m to 2m, suitable for adults. Swimming lessons are available at the club.

**291 Cach Mang Thang Tam, D3
3932 5508**

Van Thanh Pool

A very casual swimming venue favoured by younger people and recreational swimmers.

**48/10 Dien Bien Phu, Binh Thanh
2219 5487**

Yet Kieu Swimming Pool

A long-standing swimming club that's become the standard for competition, clean water, and inexpensive prices, Yet Kieu is a well-managed complex of pools for the family - and it also has its own gym.

**1 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
0839101542**

classes

Saigon Cooking Class

Discover the mysteries of Vietnamese cuisine along with an English speaking Vietnamese chef. Classes can include a market tour to buy the day's ingredients followed by a hands-on cooking class, organized twice a day from Tuesday till Sunday (US\$39.50 to 45.50). Team building programs also available.

**74 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3825 8485**

VLS Vietnamese Language School

Imparting genuine fluency in Vietnamese since 1994, VLS is one of the city's best-organised and most professional training centers devoted to the Vietnamese language, with classes for all levels.

**4th floor, CMARD2 Building, 45 Dinh Tien Hoang, D1
3910 0168**

Fashion

HIGH CONTRAST

After last month's electric color explosion, this month we decided to tone it down and look at two big trends that, although timeless, are as relevant and progressive in 2013 as they have ever been. It's all about the versatility and contrast, whether it's all black or a mix of the two coupled with striking gold accessories and fierce heels for a more dramatic look. Or dressing down with flats and oversized bags for a more fun, effortless look. Also mixing soft and hard textures, volume and fitted silhouettes will make it incredibly easy to mix things up a bit.

There have been some great new finds this month like Bonjour which has proven to be a treasure trove of funky accessories and enough one off pieces to give your wardrobe a leg up in the quirky stakes.

MAKE UP: KENNY LIEU

MODEL: TANG HUYNH NHU/PL MODEL

PHOTOGRAPHER: NAM QUAN

STYLIST: JAMES ALLEN

ASSISTANT STYLIST: DANNY ST. LOUIS

Crop top | **Phuong My**
VND4,400,000

Jeans | **Bonjour**
VND580,000

Moccasins | **Nine West**
VND3,667,000

Bag | **Steve Madden**
VND2,240,000

Bracelet | **Accessorize**
VND485,000



Playsuit | **BoAime at L'Usine**
VND4,485,000

Bag | **Cheap Monday**
VND2,100,000

Necklace | **Accessorize**
VND615,000

Horn sunglasses | **Song**
VND1,869,000

Bangle | **Accessorize**
VND405,000

Blazer | **Bonjour**
VND1,700,000

Dress | **Thuy Design House**
VND2,750,000

Bag | **Accessorize**
VND1,425,000

Necklace | **Accessorize**
VND405,000





"Cambridge" shirt | **Lucie Brochard**
VND5,855,000

Faux Fur Coat | **Valenciani**
VND5,200,000

Belt | **Suite Blanco**
VND419,000

Bangles | **Accessorize**
VND325,000

Pencil Skirt | **Valenciani**
VND2,590,000

Shoes | **Nine West**
VND2,147,000

Jumper | **Bonjour**
VND950,000

Pleated skirt | **Thuy Design House**
VND2,750,000

Bag | **Song**
VND3,255,000

Shoes | **Steve Madden**
VND2,538,000





"Seoul" shirt tunic | **Lucie Brochard**
VND11,500,000

Fabric necklace | **Song**
VND525,000

Spiked Clutch | **Bonjour**
VND650,000

Shoes | **Nine West**
VND4,499,000

Dress | **Phuong My**
VND5,100,000

Necklace | **Suite Blanco**
VND459,000

Earrings | **Suite Blanco**
VND199,000

Wedges | **Steve Madden**
VND2,679,000

ADDRESSES:

Accessorize | Vincom Center B,
70-72 Le Thanh Ton, DI

BoAime | Stocked at L'Usine | 151
Dong Khoi, DI

Bonjour | 446 Vo Van Tan, D3

Cheap Monday | Stocked at
L'Usine | 151 Dong Khoi, DI

Lucie Brochard | By appointment
only | www.luciebrochard.com

Nine West | Vincom Center B, 70-
72 Le Thanh Ton, DI

Phuong My | 81 Le Thanh Ton, DI

Song | 63,75 Pasteur, DI

Steve Madden | Vincom Center B,
70-72 Le Thanh Ton, DI

Suite Blanco | Vincom Center A, 171
Dong Khoi, DI

Thuy Design House | 151/6 Dong
Khoi, DI

Valenciani | Saigon Centre, 65 Le
Loi, DI



The Weekender

At two of Saigon's biggest malls we found plenty of window shoppers with a knack for combining famous brands with clever bargain finds to create one-of-a-kind looks perfect for a lazy weekend of relaxing

COMPILED BY **JAMES ALLEN** PHOTOS BY **NAM HAI PHUNG**



Thanh Thao
17 | Student

Hat | Lotte Mart
Sunglasses | Fleamarket
Top | Fleamarket
Shorts | Cho Da Kao
Shoes | 123mua.com



Bao
25 | Graphic Designer

Shirt | Own design
Trousers | Clae, Bien Hoa
Shoes | Bien Hoa
Bag | nhommua.com



Thuc Anh
23 | Marketing officer

Sunglasses | Rayban/Gift
Shirt | Forever 21
Shorts | Boutique, Hanoi
Shoes | Hanoi
Bag | China



Tram
23 | Accountant

Shirt | Nguyen Dinh Chieu
Jeans | Le Van Sy
Shoes | Singapore
Bag | Le Van Sy



Tram
30 | Operations Manager

Necklace | Supermarket
Shirt | Saigon Square
Shorts | Mango
Shoes | Aldo
Watch | Longines



Nhi
26 | Import/Export

Tshirt | Gift
Bag | Lapa
Jeans | Saigon Square
Shoes | Nguyen

Go for Gold

Costume jewelry can be a fun and inexpensive way to liven up your outfit and even create a bit of drama with the right pairing. There are plenty of stores and jewelry designers stocking creative pieces so there has never been a better reason to go for gold!

COMPILED BY **JAMES ALLEN**



Necklace | **Anna Vo**
VND1,550,000



Gold Clutch | **Bonjour**
VND700,000



ITEM OF THE MONTH
"The Red Lantern" Necklace | **Le Fiance du Facteur** | VND2,195,000

"The Red Lantern" earrings | **Le Fiance du Facteur** | VND836,000



Necklace | **Accessorize**
VND615,000



Owl Bangle | **Accessorize**
VND405,000



Earrings | **Suite Blanco**
VND199,000



Bangle set | **Anna Vo**
VND850,000



"The Chinese Parrot" Brooch | **Le Fiance du Facteur** | VND1,150,000



Pendant necklace | **Accessorize**
VND405,000



Necklace | **Anna Vo**
VND1,560,000



Necklace | **Suite Blanco**
VND459,000



Gold Bracelet | **Accessorize**
VND485,000



Cutout Bangle | **Anna Vo**
VND370,000



Bangle | **Anna Vo**
VND370,000

WHERE TO BUY

Accessorize | Vincom Center B, 70-72 Le Thanh Ton, D1
Bonjour | 446 Vo Van Tan, D3
Suite Blanco | Vincom Center A, 171 Dong Khoi, D1
Le Fiance du Facteur | L'Usine | 151 Dong Khoi, D1
Anna Vo | 23 Dong Khoi, D1

The Frugal Fashionista

When looking good doesn't have to cost a pretty penny

TEXT BY JAMES ALLEN

GETTING A UNIQUE, luxury look doesn't have to bankrupt you, and more often than not, you probably already have something in your wardrobe that, with a bit of styling and few new accessories, can be completely transformed. This month's issue has explored the shinier side of life with big name labels, but if your money is earmarked elsewhere, get creative with your budget and failing that, get creative with what you've got. Why not try a few of these money saving tips to create luxury looks for less.

Invest in Your Feet

There are many famous quotes in fashion pages about the importance of buying a good pair of shoes, none more acidic than from the shoe god himself Manolo Blahnik who said: "Sometimes I hate a shoe in seconds." You don't have to spend millions, but investing in a couple of versatile heels or flats can mean all the difference, and if you are going to spend money somewhere, it should be on your feet; they deserve it.

Get Crafty

Although a good rule of thumb is less is more, there is no harm in getting yourself to Ben Thanh or Tan Dinh Market and buying up their stock of buttons in a spectrum of different colors and sizes. Replacing a few or all of the buttons on a pair of pants or a shirt can completely transform it into something subtly unique. For the adventurous there is always the option of bleaching stuffy dark colors into lighter shades, although beware that instructions vary and it will take a few attempts before you reach the pastel shade you are looking for. Aim for three parts lukewarm water and one part bleach, and allow enough room for movement. Keep your eye on the color change. Independent research is strongly advised!

Black

Any snappy dresser worth their salt knows that black never goes out of style.

It's flattering, and providing you don't go for tight spandex or lycra, you can pair cheaper black fabric with more expensive accessories and still look endlessly sleek and expensive. Mixing black and white is big this season, and if it's good enough for Marc Jacobs, it's good enough for us.

The Devil is in the Details

Luckily for those living here, when one sale ends another starts, so fattening up your wardrobe can be quite affordable. While rummaging, pay close attention to seam edges making sure they are finished, and button details and symmetrical patterns - just in case things don't quite line up. If pushed, you can always invest in a sewing kit.

Mix and Match

The fun of creating a unique look is in pairing cheaper pieces with expensive ones and really going for something new and stylish. There is obviously a fine line between individual style and K-Pop car wreck, but the idea is to boldly go and if you are so inclined, have a quick look through some fashion magazines for inspiration. A full length mirror and honest friends help as does a good selection of different accessories to tie it all together.

What fashion forward topics would you like to read about in our monthly column? Email us with your ideas at fashion@oivietnam.com ■



>>The List Fashion



Atexpats is Ho Chi Minh City's first truly comprehensive insider's guide for foreign residents - website launching 2013

eyewear

Dilusso

Selling many famous eyewear brands under Italian manufacturers such as Dolce & Gabbana, RayBan, Versace and Bvlgari. Provides high-quality products at an affordable price.

29A Dong Khoi, DI
3824 6469
090 921 0192

Eyewear Hut

Eyewear Hut offers prescription glasses, contact lenses, ophthalmic lenses and other devices. They also stock popular brands such as Luxottica, DeRigo, Charmant, Marcolin, Dolce & Gabbana, D & G, Tom Ford, Salvatore Ferragamo and more. Also caters to kids.

135 Nguyen Hue, DI
3821 1695

Eyewear Plaza

The largest shopping center for eyewear in Ho Chi Minh City with more than 1,000 products including sunglasses and prescription glasses.

33 Nguyen Du, DI
3829 5051

Oakley

Decades of Oakley innovation have led to a full array of market-leading products including performance apparel and accessories, prescription eyewear, footwear, watches and electronics. The company continues to build on its heritage of authenticity by reinventing products from scratch to achieve superior quality and genuine innovation that delivers the unexpected.

28 Ton That Thiep, DI
3821 5712

Sunwear Boutique

With many locations around the city, this luxury eyewear store supplies many designer brands, including Burberry, Vogue, Blue Bay, and many others.

89-91 Nguyen Du, DI
3824 4397

ladieswear

Axara Paris - Saigon Center

Axara may have seduced the whole world, but its 2010 launch in Vietnam at the Vincom Centre is still making headway with modern young Vietnamese women entranced by its romantic, glamorous designs.

65 Le Loi, DI
3914 7655

Banana Shop

Banana Shop provides everything a girl needs to be noticed in Ho Chi Minh City. Whether it be undergarments, shoes, bags, or jewelry, Banana Shop delivers with unique products from Hong Kong and the United States.

128 Ly Tu Trong, DI
3829 0061

Bebe

The shop sells its brand of women's clothing and apparel, dresses, jumpsuits, shoes and bags.

1st floor, Saigon center, 65 Le Loi, DI
3914 4011

Cao Vinh Fashion

Specializes in formal Western-style shirts, Cao Vinh is distinctive if for

nothing else than its simple, intriguing website allowing customers to specify design elements.

69 Pasteur, DI
3824 5645
090 817 9129

Cashew

Fashion shop chain with 4 boutiques in HCMC. Specializes in women clothes and accessories. Designed by their own designers. Familiar brand in HCMC catwalk and Vietnam fashion industry.

38 Ly Tu Trong, DI
6683 9669

Diva Silk Boutique

Diva is all about silk, oriental glamour, luxury, and a feminine charm to match. The products in this little shop comprise both locally-woven first-grade silk garments and those imported from Thailand.

146 Dong Khoi, DI
3822 7153

Esprit

Hong Kong-based lifestyle apparel brand offering affordable casual streetwear from a two-story shop in the heart of downtown HCMC.

58 Dong Khoi, DI
3827 6085

Eva Gopa

Office fashion, street-style fashion, and evening dresses for women.

11E Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, DI
3910 3877

Fit

Caters to women in their 20s.

44 Luu Van Lang, DI

Gaya

A high-end shop that sells cocktail and party dresses by French-Cambodian designer Romyda Keth. Gaya has specializes in home interior products.

1 Nguyen Van Trang, DI
3925 1495

Kelly Bui

Launched in April 2010, the shop sells the most recent collections by the brand. The collections shown on the website are the same as those in-store.

B1-24, Vincom Center, 70-72 Le Thanh Ton, DI
3936 9386

Khai Silk

Khai Silk is a favorite among local celebrities for its high quality tailoring, fabrics and service.

81 Dong Khoi, DI
3822 2856

Kiwi Fashion

Kiwi offers contemporary designs at an affordable price. It was founded by former Vietnamese model Kim Hong Phung and houses the latest fashion trends exclusively designed by Josephine Geralda, one of the leading designers in London.

74C-74/1 Hai Ba Trung, DI
3824 8214
3822 1191

La Bella

A Vietnamese fashion shop that carries dresses, skirts, tops and a large selection of bags and purses.

58-87 Pasteur, DI
3823 0172
9am - 9pm

Lyn Around

This is the Saigon branch of the international high-class fashion label Lyn Around. It is famous for its girly girl and street style.

1st Floor, Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, DI
3821 6575

L'Usine

The central retail space offers famous fashion brands from around the world with full rotating stock.

First Floor, 151 Dong Khoi, DI
6674 3565

Maison de Bunga

Maison de Bunga is a specialty women's clothing store specializing in designers with floral motifs, hats, bags, and other accessories.

81 Pasteur, DI
3943 0990

Mango

Mango is a Spanish fashion design company with over 2,000 stores around the world. Ho Chi Minh City is home to several of its branches. Mango sells fashion clothing for women including dresses, skirts, tops and accessories.

Unit I-2, 1st Floor, Saigon Center, 65 Le Loi, DI

3914 7464
96 Mac Thi Buoi, DI
3824 6624

Misa Collection

Well-known for tailoring bespoke ao dais.

67 Mac Thi Buoi, DI
3829 4007
098 330 0469

Ngan Private Collection

A collection of multi-brand fashion labels created by one of Vietnam's highly recognized fashion designers. Dedicated personal styling consultant available for those in need of their own stylist.

23 Ly Tu Trong, DI
6290 9391

Phuong My

A ready-to-wear fashion designer currently working from Ho Chi Minh City, producing feminine pieces using high quality fabric such as silk, organza and lace using expert tailoring and construction which has earned her frequent coverage in the country's top fashion magazines.

81 Le Thanh Ton, DI
09 7271 7788

Shin

Vintage style ladies fashion, clothes and accessories by local designers.

122 Ly Tu Trong, DI
090 935 2369

Sifa Fashion

Known for selling office wear for women.

192 Ly Tu Trong, DI
3825 0618

Song - Valerie Gregori McKenzie

French bohemian chic designs that caters to sophisticated women.

75 Pasteur, DI
3824 6986

Sophilita

A simple Italian fashion brand with several branches in Vietnam, Sophilita

mainly sells office, street, and casual, womenswear.

15C Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, DI
6275 9019

Umbrella

This fashion label caters to a higher end market with tailored bags to accessories.

35 Ly Tu Trong, DI
6276 2730
www.umbrella-fashion.com

Valenciani

Highly respected Vietnamese designer whose collections are featured in ELLE Vietnam and Vogue Vietnam.

1F/12 Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, DI
3821 2788
090 785 5788

menswear

An Phuoc

An Phuoc Garment Manufacturing was established in 1992 with 50 workers and 40 sewing machines, specializing in manufacturing for exporting enterprises. Now it has transformed itself into a garment export company featuring handmade clothing and shoes.

182 Hai Ba Trung, DI

Maschio Shop

Colorful retro men's fashions, one of the quirkiest fine-quality local fashion stores in the central area.

168 Ly Tu Trong, DI
3829 2975

Mizada

Since its inception in 2004, Mizada has become one of the leading luxury fashion brands in Vietnam. Mizada caters to both women and men with products such as T-shirts, jeans, coats, scarves, and much more.

105 Le Thanh Ton, DI
6673 4199

San Sclero Manhattan

Fashionable, smart menswear from the Viet Tien Garment Company, specializing in garment manufacture and trade equipment since the mid 70's.

1st Floor Saigon Tax Trade Center, 135 Nguyen Hue, DI
3864 0800
090 316 6364

Santo Nero

Centrally-located purveyors of international Santo Nero brand "Italian gents wear".

23 Ly Tu Trong, DI

Veston Huy Hoang

Men's tailored fashions, specialising in suits. Expect to Pay: \$200 and upward for a suit, fabric included. Obviously, the better the quality of fabric, the higher the price. 70% of customers are foreigners.

65 Pasteur, DI
3822 4609
090 865 4988

shoes & accessories

Accessorize

Accessorize is devoted to bringing customers eclectic products with its own in-house design team. Accessorize is focused on sourcing globally in an effort to find well priced and good quality collections of fashion

accessories following seasonal themes.
Vincom Center B, 70-72 Le Thanh Ton, D1

Adidas Performance Store

Sells running shoes and sportswear by the famous German brand.
2nd Floor Bitexco Tower, 135 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 2894
66 Le Loi, D1
3824 1455

Asian Fish

Serves made-to-order classic souvenirs, original ao dai designs, and is highly popular with Japanese customers. Also sells bags, sunglasses and clothing.
39/9 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3822 1839

Avocado

Airy and spacious shop for handbags and accessories.
117 Nguyen Thai Hoc, D1
0123 999 9099

Bam Skate Shop - VVT

Bam Skate Shop stocks a wide range of international brands for those in search of skating equipment and apparel.
228 Vo Van Tan, D3
090 878 9820

Cara Diamond & Jewelry Vincom

One of the better-appointed jewelry counters at Vincom B, Cara sells boldly-designed pieces at reasonable rates.
Shop B28, First Floor, 72 Le Thanh Ton, D1

Charles & Keith

Singapore-based fashion retailer specialising in shoes, handbags and accessories at a mid range price point.
17-18 Nguyen Trai, D1

Compa Jewelry store

Compa Jewelry Store specializes in diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and emeralds from the finest quality of raw materials that meet international standards. Compa Jewelry is also a manufacturer and importer of gemstones and fashion jewelry.
135 Nguyen Hue, D1
3915 2151

Doc Martens

Small central-city outlet of the popular international Doc Marten brand with an extensive stock of the latest styles.
39 Le Loi, D1
3821 4931

Hong Anh Collections - LTT

Using fabrics such as silk and taffeta, the brand caters to a younger crowd. Stocks clothing, handbags, jewelry and neckties.
75 Ly Tu Trong, D1
3824 3542

Ice Accessories

ICE and ICE Accessories are the newest brands from Duy Anh Trading Co., Ltd. under the creative direction of Adrian Anh Tuan. This high end fashion hub is now open at the Saigon Centre. Each ICE collection offers 100 types of fashionable designs and colors.
Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, D1
3521 0881

Ipa-Nima

With a focus on handbags and a design-first philosophy, Hong Kong expat Christina Yu's Ipa-Nima brand translates fashion trends into edgy accessories, steeped in soul.
77-79 Dong Khoi, D1
3515 3980

ITALY Shoes Shop

Modest Italian-style mens shoes at local prices in the central area.
186 Ly Tu Trong, D1
3827 9813

Kim Ngoc Jewelry

A counter in Tax building that buys

and sells jewelry made from gold and gemstones.

A37-A39 Counter, Saigon Tax Trade Center, 135 Nguyen Hue, D1
3914 4874

Kimsong

An open storefront that sells gold and gold-related jewelry
50 Le Loi, D1
3823 4414
090 821 3245

Kita Diamonds

Quality diamonds specialist with a professional showroom.
82 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
3821 1510

Lam Boutique

The shop sells clothing for women only and most of the items on offer are European casual vintage style with a touch of street chic. The clothes are made by the shop and has become quite popular among Vietnamese celebrities.

1st Floor, 71 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
090 671 2309

Le Hang Crystal Jewellery

With almost 20 years of experience in the design field, Le Hang's experienced group of staff create jewelry from fragments of Swarovski crystals.
101 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3827 3596

Lua Exclusive Boutique

Prestige shop that sells exclusive Vietnamese silks.
83 Ly Tu Trong, D1
3822 5292

Nine West

Originating in the U.S. Nine West has a built a name for itself by quickly translating runway trends into styles attainable on the high street, and in the case of Vietnam, the malls of district one. Collections found in store now include a wider range of accessories such as bags, belts and other lines of accessories.
Vincom Center B, 70-72 Le Thanh Ton, D1
Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, D1

Pandora

Pandora designs, manufactures and markets hand-finished and modern jewelry made from genuine materials such as sterling silver, pearls and gemstones at affordable prices.
6 Dong Khoi, D1
3822 3241

PNJ Nguyen Hue

PNJ was the first local jewelry company exporting products overseas. Since 1995, PNJ jewelry products have been introduced in Hong Kong Jewelry Fair, as well as exported to Denmark, Germany, US, Australia and is now entering the Dubai market.
Ground Floor, Saigon Tax Trade Center, 135 Nguyen Hue, D1
3914 4854

Puma

One of a network of Puma shops around town, this has a far more limited range than some of the other outlets, but scores on its convenient location.
1st Floor, Saigon Tax Trade Centre, 135 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 7464

Saigon Jewelry Company Ltd

Formerly known as the Saigon Jewelry Holding Company, SJC specializes in manufacturing and trading gold and jewels. The brand is well-recognized throughout Vietnam as well as in the Asia-Pacific region.
1st Floor, Saigon Tax Trade Center, 135 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 8844

Sapa Shop

Certainly one of the grooviest souvenir

shops on Le Loi, much of the stock comprises ethnic handicrafts brought down direct from breathtaking Sapa.
76 Le Loi, D1

Shoes Hanoi

Cheap, centrally-located shoe store with babywear boutique at the doorway. Since 1929, they've been making and selling shoes for both men and women.
107 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3829 5753

Steve Madden

Considered the fashion footwear mogul of the 21st century, Madden has been responsible for the design and marketing of the company's trendsetting shoes for the past two decades. His collections are aimed at fashion forward men and women, and also include bags and other accessories.
Vincom Center B, 70-72 Le Thanh Ton, D1

Sophia Jewellery

Fine jewelry sold in an annex to the lobby of the Oscar Saigon Hotel.
68A Nguyen Hue, D1
3822 8513

Tran Quoc Lan

Custom-makes shoes and sells shoes of all kinds.
97 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3829 5453

Tuyet Lan

Tuyet Lan's tailor will help you design your own garment or choose from a colorful selection of exquisite hand-embroidered pieces.
91 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3827 7038
090 392 6286

Viet Thanh

People still hunt Mekong crocodiles for their fine leather, and there's a healthy home-grown crocodile leather industry with this venue being one of the more upper-class of these establishments. Sells wallets, belts, handbags, keychains, and other small leather goods.
137 Dong Khoi, D1
3824 2735

ANH SILK

A little fashion shop near the Sheraton hotel selling both men's and women's clothing and with a fast turnaround tailoring service for silk garments.
151 Dong Khoi, D1
2211 9116

Cao Minh

Founded by Mr. Ly Minh in 1948, who dedicated his entire life to custom-tailoring works. Cao Minh Garment Private Enterprise was the first in Vietnam to successfully export its suits to Japan.
77 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3824 2547

Kim Dung Embroidery Tailor

Tailored outfits and specializing in Asian garments as well as Western suits and dresses for both domestic and foreign customers.
129 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3823 2077
012 7773 8146

Lam Tailor's

Considered the tailor of choice in the diplomatic community here, it had the honor to tailor a suit for President George W Bush when he was in Vietnam several years ago. They import their fabrics from England and Italy.
158C Dong Khoi, D1
3824 3830

Lan Vy

A small tailor shop near Ben Thanh market. Female tailor who specializes in shorts, skirts, business shirts and dresses.
217 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3822 5087

Minh Doan Tailors Shop

Specializes in suits for men and women.
120 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3823 1687

Phuong Anh

The shop stocks fine embroideries and brocade, with a 24 hour turnover tailoring service.
B4, 2nd Floor Tax Building, 135 Nguyen Hue, D1
38213115
090 380 9758

Tailors Nhut

Well-known tailor for men's business and event suits as well as ladies' business wear. Pre-tailored products are available in-store.
232 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3822 5338

Viet Tien Garment Company

The company was established in 1976, and has been successfully manufacturing garment, textiles and accessories for fashion industry.
178 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3829 4350

watches

D & D

Purveyors of fine watches on Saigon's central strip - one place to go to avoid questionable merchandise.
68 Nguyen Hue, D1
093 847 1846

Luu Hung Phat

There's no shortage of vendors of watches in this part of town, but not many that can afford a plum spot on the central district's richest shopping strip.
56 Dong Khoi, D1
3824 4777
090 380 8909

Rhythm Showroom

An authorized importer and distributor of the Japanese Rhythm brand into Vietnam. Rhythm has 16 stores in HCMC; this Tax Building showroom is known as Shop Dang Nghi.
Ground Floor, Saigon Tax Trade Centre, 135 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 3891

Swiss Watch

Straightforward, quality swiss watch products for the discerning Dong Khoi shopper.
41 Dong Khoi, D1
3827 6126
091 392 5212

Tan Tan Watch

Luxury watch retailers selling from a shop within the Kimdo Hotel foyer. Selling luxury branded watches such as Citizen, Movado, Enicar, Raymond Weil, Frederique Constant, Alfex, Mido, and Tissot - Swiss.
Kimdo Hotel, 133 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 8297

Thanh Phat Watch

Thanh Phat Watch is a famous long-standing wholesaler and retailer with many watch stores throughout the city. They specialize in selling high-end watches from Switzerland and Japan, such as Rado, Longines, Montblanc, and many more.
Ground Floor Saigon Tax Trade Center, 135 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 3231

Toptan

Toptan has been an exclusive

distributor of the luxurious Swiss watch brand Tissot since 2006. This outlet is a luxury watch showroom in the foyer of the Sunwah building.

Ground Floor, Sunwah Tower,
115 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 9279

clinics

American Chiropractic Clinic

American Chiropractic Clinic is a chiropractic, physiotherapy, and foot care clinic in the Heart of Saigon. We are staffed by American and French-trained Chiropractic Physicians and Vietnamese Physical Therapists.

8 Trung Dinh, D3
3930 6667

Australian Clinic & Pathology Diagnostics

The Australian Clinic, Pathology & Diagnostics (ACPD) is comprised of a medical outpatient clinic and associated pathology laboratory. The clinic hosts highly trained and experienced medical specialists.

273 - 275 Ly Thai To, D10
3834 9941

Center Medical International

Center Medical International is an outpatient clinic fully-equipped to provide international standard comprehensive and specialized medical services. All physicians are either French or Vietnamese.

1 Han Thuyen, D1
3827 2365

Columbia Asia Saigon Clinic

Beautiful international clinic a short distance from the cathedral, with exemplary standards of healthcare for walk-in patients.

8 Alexandre De Rhodes, D1
3823 8454

Diag Center International

Situated in Ho Chi Minh City, Diag Center International is a diagnostic testing center, which consists of a team of thirty Vietnamese staff, and operates under French medical biologists and assisted by a group of Vietnamese medical technicians trained in France.

146 An Binh, D5
3838 1551

Hanh Phuc International Women & Children's Hospital

Hanh Phuc International Hospital aims to be the leading private healthcare provider for women and children in Vietnam. Designed and managed up to Singaporean standards, the 260-bed Hanh Phuc Hospital aims to provide a comprehensive range of quality healthcare services to women and children with a personalized touch and in a warm and friendly atmosphere.

2nd floor Saigon Trade Centre,
37 Ton Duc Thang, D1
3911 1860

Institute of Traditional Medicine

Established in 1975, the Institute of Traditional Medicine is a holistic research and teaching hospital. Patients are treated using traditional medicines, some of which are produced by the institute itself. Some doctors speak English and/or French, and acupuncture lessons are on offer.

273-275 Nguyen Van Troi, Phu Nhuan
3844 5954

Lotus Clinic

Lotus Clinic was established in 2007 as the first Japanese medical clinic in Ho Chi Minh City.

Lancaster Bldg , 22 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3827 0000

International SOS Medical Care

Located in the city center, the clinic is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a

year providing routine and emergency healthcare services as well as on-site laboratory and radiology services. Languages spoken include Japanese, Korean and French, among others.

167A Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D3
3829 8551

Perfect Skin lab

More than just a spa, this District 1 venue is a genuine skin lab that caters to each customer's unique characteristics and needs. The lab is the latest concept developed by Dermal Essentials, the elite distributor for Dermalogica, a skin care system researched and developed by The International Dermal Institute in Vietnam.

1st floor, unit 9-10 Saigon Center,
65 Le Loi, D1
3910 0372

Stamford Skin Center

The Stamford Skin Centre has grown to include qualified specialists who treat general diseases of the skin such as acne, eczema and other forms of dermatitis, rosacea, psoriasis, and skin cancers.

254 Dien Bien Phu, D3
3932 1090
090 845 3338

Uc Chau Cosmetic Surgery

This central clinic performs straightforward cosmetic treatments, including enhancing the nose bridge, breast enlargement, eyelid folds, and wrinkle removal.

25 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
2212 3396
2212 3398

Victoria Health Care International Clinic

Victoria Healthcare offers the highest standard of healthcare, based on American and European practices, and offering compassionate and efficient service with the greatest respect for the patient.

79 Dien Bien Phu, D1

Vietnam Family Medical Practice

International clinic located in the Manor complex, within easy reach of high-rollers living around the Saigon Pearl area. The sister clinic is located beneath Diamond Plaza.

Ground Floor, 91 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh
3514 0758

dental

2000 Dental Clinic Trung Tam Implant

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

125 Le Thi Rieng, D1
3925 6501

Dang Luu Dental Centre

Dang Luu Dental Centre offers the full range of dental services, including implants, crown and bridges and teeth whitening. Orthodontic services are also provided. Some of the dentists have been foreign-trained.

34 Phan Dang Luu, Binh Thanh
3903 6636

Digital Dental Clinic

Digital Dental Care draws on well-known Korean consistency in service standards and precision equipment to offer a truly world-class service in the Phu My Hung area.

R4-35 Ton Dat Tien, D7
5412 2276

Elite Dental

With an atmosphere more reminiscent of a luxury hotel, this is one of the largest high-quality dental clinics in

HCMC, established to answer expat demands for superb dental techniques and professional staff.

57A Tran Quoc Thao, D3
3933 3737

German International Dentistry

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

1489 Nguyen Van Linh, D7
3776 3777

Grand Dentistry

Grand Dentistry is an upscale dental office located in the ground floor of Sunwah tower on Nguyen Hue street. It is noted for being very tourist/expat friendly. This dentistry features English speaking staff and expatriate dentists.

Ground Floor Sun Wah Tower,
115 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 9446

Minh Khai Dental Clinic

French/American/Swiss managed clinic with well-maintained international-standard equipment.

199 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, Nguyen Cu Trinh, D1
3925 3399

Saint Paul

Saint Paul has facilities all over Ho Chi Minh City, and with the slogan "slight, exact, and painless," the doctors at Saint Paul aim to please even the most fastidious patients.

50 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3835 6159

Smile Dental Center

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

173 Ton Dat Tien, D7
5413 6635

Starlight Dental Clinic

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

2 Bis Cong Truong Quoc Te, D3
3822 6222

Westcoast International Dental Clinic

Large, international team of dentists and support staff from Canada, Australia, Japan, France, Italy, Thailand, and Vietnam. The clinic regularly hosts visiting dentists from many other countries.

27 Nguyen Trung Truc, D1
3825 7485

hairdressers

Art Hair

A small-time local Korean community hairdresser's with a highly-regarded service, presenting an ideal opportunity to be styled after the fashion of the most glamorous country in Asia.

R4-1 Hung Phuoc Villas, D7
5410 3154
090 663 2580

Hair Salon Nguyen The Hien

Nguyen The Hien is an upscale Vietnamese hair salon catering to both men and women. Named after its award-winning hairdresser and designer, the salon is decked out in stylish, modern décor.

102 Ham Nghi, D1
3821 2275

Hairlab

Hair salon without a hint of Asia, bright & clean with all the proper hair-tech on the first floor of the Saigon Center.

1st floor, unit 9-10, Saigon center,
65 Le Loi, D1

3910 4576
093 799 0880

His Salon - Gentleman's Barbershop

Popular men's salon with very good service and complimentary beer.

29 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3829 9455

Hung Pasteur

This salon offers a complete range of beauty treatments and services using quality imported products, drawing in a host of local celebrities and wannabes.

182 Pasteur, D1
3823 1118
090 391 9375

Just Men

A full-service salon for men. A spa and salon specializing in the unique styling and maintenance needs of men only. Masculine all-wood interior and dark brown Mercedes-style chairs. Specialising in hair, facial, massage, and relaxation for men.

40 Ton That Thiep, D1
3914 1407

Kim Hair Salon

An affordable hair salon in downtown Ho Chi Minh City. The range of services is focused on different hair treatments, but also includes manicures and pedicures.

2B Chu Manh Trinh, D1
3825 8643
090 823 9011

Masa hair

Beauty salon, make up, facial care and hair services – hair treatments and restoring damaged hair.

111 Ham Nghi, D1
3821 1282
093 777 5862

My Duyen

Cutting, perms, combs, hair washing, and dyeing - full services out of trendy Thai Van Lung.

20 Thai Van Lung, D1
091 927 7126

The Salon

Prominent ladies' salon & sanctuary - the sister venue to the well-known His Salon with its touts out on Ton That Thiep. Services include hairstyling, shampoo, hair removal, manicures, and pedicures.

Ladies' hair & bodycare sanctuary.
64 Ton That Thiep, D1
3914 3999

Vamp Hairline

Vamp Hair Line is a high-class Japanese hair salon offering quality hair care services.

9th Floor LANT Building,
56-58-60, Hai Ba Trung, D1
7303 3330
012 2768 8614

hospitals

Cao Thang Eye Hospital

The CT International Eye Hospital is one of the few dedicated, comprehensive eye institutes in the country. Internationally recognized staff diagnose and treat the entire spectrum of conditions of the eye, including complex problems such as diabetic retinopathy, retinal detachments, macular degeneration, glaucoma, and cataracts.

135B Tran Binh Trong, D5
090 588 6086

Cho Ray Hospital

Cho Ray Hospital is the largest healthcare service in Vietnam, providing full priority service for expatriates, with a staff including 696 doctors and 1350 nurses.

201B Nguyen Chi Thanh, D5
3855 4137

Columbia Asia International Hospital - Gia Dinh

Skilled and experienced doctors offer exceptional medical care at affordable prices with the latest in medical technology. Patients benefit from advanced medical diagnostics, treatment and personal care.

1 No Trang Long, Binh Thanh
3803 0677

DialAsia International Hospital

A specialist centre in kidney treatment for the expat community, DialAsia is a fairly well-reputed international hospital of nephrology & dialysis, offering medical consultancy in renal diseases, haemodialysis, and paraclinical examinations.

253 Dien Bien Phu, D3
3930 0828

FV Hospital

FV Hospital is a Vietnam's only internationally accredited healthcare facility. A wholly foreign-owned general hospital offering a wide range of medical and surgical services under one roof, equipped to care for patients from consultation and diagnosis through to the completion of treatment.

6 Nguyen Luong Bang, D7
5411 3334

Hoan My Hospital

Private hospital with a wide range of specialist areas, running for 15 years on Phan Xich Long.

Private owned hospital, has been run for 15 years
60-60A Phan Xich Long, Phu Nhuan
3990 2468
3995 8962

Saigon International Maternity Hospital J.S.C.

A private-owned hospital specialising in maternity, this was the first hospital to meet the Hotel-Hospital international standard in HCMC since the year 2000.

63 Bui Thi Xuan, D1
3925 3620

Traditional Medicine Hospital

This hospital is a major medical centre practising the essence of that millennia-old exploration into the rhythms of the human body and its connection to the natural world which firmly belongs to this region.

179 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D3
3932 6579

Tu Du Hospital

Tu Du is a large state hospital specializing in maternity, women, and children's diseases, family planning, and many other areas. Highly experienced doctors and staff provide affordable care.

284 Cong Quynh, D1
5404 2829

Vu Anh International Hospital - Obstetrics

Luxurious hospital facility offering modern care in a comfortable setting. The hotel also provides 12 VIP rooms for patients seeking 5 star medical services featuring garden access and designer furniture.

15-16 Phan Van Tri, Go Vap
3989 4989

214C Nguyen Trai, D1
6291 5477
012 2805 6789

OPI Nail Spa Nguyen Hue

Providing a full range of official products and services of the OPI brand.

103 Nguyen Hue, D1
2211 4956

pharmacies

Curewel International

Involved in marketing and distribution of pharmaceuticals, as well as personal healthcare products, throughout Southeast Asia, Sri Lanka, and Mauritius.

49/3 Bis, Tran Quang Khai, D1
38484493

Pharmacy Nguyen Hue

Small western medical pharmacy right in the central city CBD area, selling both domestic and imported medicines.

81 Nguyen Hue, D1
3829 3058

spas

An Nam Spa

Housed in a beautiful nine-story building with different areas for men and women, guests can enjoy a panoramic view of Saigon while calming their senses in a relaxing sanctuary.

26-28 Dong Du, D1
3825 1250

Avida Spa

High-tech luxury spa situated in central Ho Chi Minh City, Avida uses only high-quality beauty products imported from Germany and Italy.

106 Tran Hung Dao, Pham Ngu Lao, D1
3837 3977

Dep Mai Spa

Dep Mai Esthetic & Spa features Japanese estheticians providing excellent skin care advice and professional services.

15B/ 56 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3825 1962
090 811 8870

Dermal Essentials

Dermalogica, a Los Angeles-based company, is a revolutionary skin treatment system. Call Dermalogica's therapists for a complimentary Face Mapping consultation.

108 Pasteur, D1
3910 2038

Eden Spa

Extremely central, Eden is located in a quiet niche off Nguyen Hue in the commercial center. Owing to its expertise in skincare and first-class relaxing atmosphere, Eden has the gumption to claim a number-one spot in the discerning Japanese market.

19-25 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 3815
097 810 6868

Glow

A boutique day spa located in the heart of the city. In this relaxing, peaceful atmosphere, guests can enjoy a full range of massage/treatment options.

Kim Do Hotel, 129A Nguyen Hue, D1
3823 8368

Golden Lotus Foot Massage Club Sauna

Fully-featured massage establishment with pool, steam room, and hydraulic massage located in trendy Thai Van Lung. Various salt scrubs, and high-end beauty products imported direct from Korea are available.

15 Thai Van Lung, D1
3822 1515

Golden Lotus Traditional Foot Massage Club - Thi Sach

Modern technology and professional staff, Lotus' most popular package includes a 90-minute massage

followed by ten minutes of 'Lotus tea time'.

20 Thi Sach, D1
3829 6400

HP Oxygen Spa

A safe haven from the dust and smoke of the city offering an array of body/skin treatment options, including advanced skin care, an eye lightening process, body massages, hair care, and foot care.

Ground Floor, Yoco Building,
41 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3822 1286

093 800 2322

Huong Sen Spa

Located in a charming old French villa, Huong Sen Spa is a natural green oasis with skin, face, and body treatment services.

215 Nguyen Van Troi, Ward 12, Phu Nhuan
3842 2218

090 395 1902

Jasmine Spa

Experienced staff utilize exotic skincare products to comfort guests in this cozy urban sanctuary, which has has a large, loyal following that swears by its friendly and professional service.

45 Ton That Thiep, D1
3827 2737

KL Spa - Thi Sach

Modest spa located in the La Jolie three-star hotel. Open for walk-in customers as well as hotel guests, offering basic inexpensive services.

4D Thi Sach, D1
3521 8999

KL Spa - Le Lai

KL Spa is one of the city's more luxurious spa venues located in the Tan Hai Long hotel. It features four VIP rooms for deluxe service, with a high-end multimedia setup, private sauna room, and bathroom. Two quiet massage rooms are also available and can serve up to 8 guests.

Level M, 14-16 Le Lai, D1
3827 2740 ext 2222

Korean Style Sauna

Sauna and massage that serves mostly Japanese and Korean men - some of the more discerning expat clients. For a delicate touch.

15 Thai Van Lung, D1
3822 1515

L'Apothiquaire - Saigon South

This Japanese/French style spa is an exclusive distributor of organic French skin care products, and other exclusive products from around the world.

1st floor, 103 Ton Dat Tien, Tan Phu, D7
5413 6638



La Cochinchine Spa

Located in the Rex Hotel, this luxury spa and fitness centre combined with a swimming pool and bar has a particular style that is a combination of Vietnamese, French, Cham, Hindu, and Asian cultures. Luxury spa and gym located at the Rex hotel.

6F, Rex Hotel, 141 Nguyen Hue, D1
3825 1812

info@lacochochine.net
www.lacochochine-hcm.net
12pm-10:30pm

La Maison de L'Apothiquaire

This unique spa is situated in an artfully-designed villa and offers guests many therapeutic body and skin treatments. The luxurious villa also provides a yoga studio, enclosed garden, and many exclusive skin care products.

64A Truong Dinh, D3
3932 5181

100 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3822 2158

1st floor, 103 Ton Dat Tien, Tan Phu, D7
5413 6638

MIMI Clinic & Spa

Prestige Spa for celebrities holding frequent beauty events – and therefore one of the best-known local brands in medical aesthetics for over 10 years in HCMC.

32 Dong Khoi, D1
3824 5666

090 387 6666

Mirra Spa

Located on a quiet & green street in the heart of the city, Mirra Spa is distanced from the noise & pollution to provide a peaceful escape from the stress & pressure of everyday life.

11A Suong Nguyet Anh, D1
3925 6863

Miu Miu

Spa with an elegant and charming décor, offering facials, body massages, and manicures. Pervaded by exotic oils and aromas, the staff provide counsel on unique skin-care products from Thailand and around the world in English, Vietnamese, and Japanese.

4 Chu Manh Trinh, D1
6659 3609

Oasis Salon & Spa

The original Oasis spa & beauty salon, this venue offers a full range of services at competitive prices. Full hair care, facial, massage, nail spa, beauty care & waxing services.

1st & 2nd Floor, 45 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 6469

090 337 0507

1st & 2nd Floor, 92 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3821 6469

090 337 0507

Qing Spa & Relaxation

Foot & body, facial, hair, eye treatments with relaxation packages and manicures / pedicures. Situated above a bar of the same name.

1st Floor, 110 Pasteur, D1
6675 1887

Saigon Spa

Recommended inexpensive spa treatments with a full spa menu.

1st Floor, 47 Dong Khoi, D1
6650 4806

Sense Spa

Sense Spa is a massage, skin, and body care haven with a plethora of high-end imported creams, lotions, and serums.

54 Dong Du, D1
6299 0964
090 684 2965

Spa Tropic

Established since 2002, Spa Tropic is one of Ho Chi Minh City's most reputable boutique day spa, recognized in international travel publications such as Travel + Leisure, Conde Nast, Lonely Planet, and Newsweek 'Four Thing To Do While in Ho Chi Minh City'.

79 Phan Ke Binh, D1
3910 5575

Thann

Thann provide a range of natural hair and skincare products formulated from botanicals derived by combining the art of natural therapy with modern

nails

118 Nail & Beauty

118 Nail and Beauty is a salon and spa providing full services including oil, hot stone, foot and body massages, along with skin/nail care.

118 Pasteur, D1
3821 5313
090 372 8338

Kelly Pang

Nail salon established in 2004 as a small nail salon in Phu Nhuan, Kelly Pang has gradually become known as a training center and professional nail care facility throughout Vietnam.

dermatological science.

Level 2, Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, D1
098 362 4497

Thalgo La Beaute Marine

Thalgo is on the cutting edge of spa treatments, and is renowned for its products and skilled therapists.

40C Ly Tu Trong, D1
3824 4990
090 360 6366

The Body Shop

A global manufacturer and retailer of naturally-inspired, ethically-produced beauty and cosmetics products. The Body Shop offers many kinds of skincare products, makeup accessories, hair & body care products, perfume, and bath milk.

87 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3823 5318

The Prime – Spa For Men

American skin treatments for men from top brands such as Dermalogica and Lab Series. Equipped with imported machines from Europe. The spa has five therapy services, including basic skin care, professional skin care, intensive therapy, eye therapy, body therapy – and a Prime special service package.

192 Le Lai, D1
3925 5743

Tri Siam

Well-respected salon on the edge of town, offering manicures & styling.

76C Hai Ba Trung, D1
3823 2554

Xuan Spa

One of the most luxurious spas in Ho Chi Minh City, Xuan is located inside the five-star Park Hyatt hotel. Services include packages such as Urban Retreat Package, Apricot blossom – Mai, Bamboo, and more.

2 Lam Son Square, D1
3824 1234

YKC

One of the longest established spa in the city, YKC is popular for its professional service, and complete range of services from nails to massages.

209 Dien Bien Phu, D3
3829 2791

Yuan

Despite being labeled as a foot massage establishment, Yuan actually has a full range of services. Customers usually make appointments. Yuan is especially geared towards Japanese expats.

1588 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3825 0795

Yves Rocher Botanical Beauty Spa

A famous international botanical cosmetic brand with a full range of products, The Botanical Beauty Spa Center combines the expertise of its beauticians with the efficacy of Yves Rocher treatments.

16-18 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3824 8782

Zest Massage

Famous for its fish pedicures, Zest, located in the outer western region of District One, serves up some fairly dynamic Thai massage.

60 Bui Thi Xuan, D1
6291 6835

art & crafts

Art Arcade

Art Arcade displays a wide range of original Vietnamese artwork in a charming passageway off of Dong Khoi.

151 Dong Khoi, D1
3824 4076

Beeline

Small shop with cute stuffs. Special traditional hand-embroidered bags, shoes, clothes, and souvenirs.

60-62 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3822 2364
155 Dong Khoi, D1



Blue Dragon

Blue Dragon designs 'recycled' fashion and décor. Eco-friendly bags, jewelry, and home accessories made of feed-sacks, rubber, billboard and paper.

1B Bui Vien, D1

2210 2084

9am - 10pm

Cao Lien Huong

Artistic & traditional handicrafts on Saigon's heritage street.

49 Dong Khoi, D1
3521 0445
091 806 0608

CD Paragon Leather - Caodong Boutique 2

Attractive leather souvenirs & handicrafts

Ground Floor, Saigon Centre,
65 Le Loi, D1
3915 1778

Chon Nhan Production & Trading

Chon Nhan Production & Trading specializes in making high grade fine art, especially bamboo works, oil paintings, lacquering, and carved furniture. They have experience in interior design and handmade crafts.

70D Nguyen Hue, D1
3667 0341
090 383 8355

Du Du

One of Saigon's higher-class souvenir shops.

78 Dong Khoi, D1
38276128

Em Em

Bright, unusual souvenir shop with high-quality ethnic fashion accessories unavailable elsewhere. Special figurines and a tailoring service are also available.

38 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3829 4408

Em Oi

Funky souvenir shop with a twist, selling original designer T-shirts, handmade jewelry, recycled bags, and hand-crafted leather products.

124d Le Loi, D1

Ethnic Folk Art Anh

Fine ethnic folk products, mostly hand-made embroidered cloths, accessories and statues carved from horns and bones.

Lot B1-C11-C12 2nd Floor, Saigon Tax Trade Center, 135 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 3716
090 360 7527

Fatima Shop

Fatima shop is manufacturer, wholesaler and retailer of customer handicrafts, lacquerware, embroidery goods, and silverware souvenirs.

3 Ton That Thiep, D1
3914 2403
090 891 3377

Gia Gia

One of Vietnam's leading manufacturer and distributor of products made from precious stones. Range includes paintings, jewelry, precious stones used for medicinal purposes and fashion products.

135 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D1
3823 5384

Hai Yen

Sells fully-rigged model ships and boats, situated next to the Oscar Hotel. Fine model ships & boats

68 Nguyen Hue, D1
3822 0280
090 318 1600
090 369 6262

Huong Nga Fine Art

Huong Nga designs, manufactures and sells high quality arts and crafts products in Vietnam and around the world.

41 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3823 8356

Loang Xoang

Owned by a husband and wife glasswork artist team, they mainly sell their creations through their website, Facebook page, and at the monthly handicrafts fair.

232/8/6 Ba Hat, D10
090 855 6665



MEKONG QUILTS

The produce high quality, hand-crafted bed covers, baby quilts, accessories and giftware.

1/F, 35-37 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
2210 3110
517-Sky Garden 1, Nguyen Van Linh, D7
6271 7758
www.mekong-quilts.org
9am-7pm

MH Craft

The shop has a collection of fine handicrafts, artworks, furniture, and all kinds of knick-knacks made from Vietnamese traditional materials such as egg shells, buffalo horns, bamboo, white clay, lacquer, and more.

33 Ton That Thiep, D1
3915 2913
090 382 7471

Na Sa Shop

Selling fine wooden sculptures from a small store at the back of a tiny retail enclave, sales staff insist that the particular wood chosen has natural medicinal properties.

35 Le Loi, D1
016 9778 8303

Ngan Quang Wooden Boats

Sells model-size wooden boats.

74/1 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3829 1814
091 822 9272

Nguyen Freres - Fine Furnishing

Spacious furniture establishment selling handmade goods of silk, mother-of-pearl, stone, brick, bronze, silver, indigo, wood, lacquer along with Buddha figurines, carved wooden screens, ceramic decorations, red lacquered boxes, water puppets, and lacquered statues.

2 Dong Khoi, D1
3823 9459
098 380 3070

Nhu Y Oriental Lacquerwares

Nhu y provides coasters, tissue boxes, wine bottle holders and boxes, cabinets, frames, plates, trays, vases, and many other items with unusual designs spattered with lacquer dots.

22 Ho Huan Nghiep, D1
3829 6138
091 360 6525

Paper Paradise

Funky little retailer selling just about anything relating to paper and paper arts.

19 Do Quang Dau, D1
091 597 8896

Phuong Mai Gallery

Phuong Mai Art Gallery focuses on the contemporary art works of both up & coming and established artists from across Vietnam. The real deal in a district of mass-produced art retailers.

129B Le Thanh Ton, D1
3823 3181

Saigon Kitsch

Historic socialist pop-art culture is printed on t-shirts, coffee mugs, coasters and a raft of other goodies creating cool gifts for folks back home - or expats home in HCMC.

43 Ton That Thiep, D1
3821 8019
093 590 5675

Sapa Crafts & Fashion

Established in 1996, the shop sells clothes and bags reflecting the style of the picturesque village in the northern region of Vietnam after which it is named.

7 Ton That Thiep, D1
3821 8836
090 244 1256

SoCola Boutique

Unique souvenir items and crafts in an off-beat retail space. Highly unusual trinkets.

39/4 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
3822 1839

books & magazines

Cua Hang Van Phong Pham

Large stationery shop with paints and supplies for artists, this is the place to come for art paper, easels, paints and brushes.

54 Le Loi, D1
3825 7986
091 917 0356

Fahasa - Le Loi

One of Vietnam's largest book chains with 56 stores around the country, Fahasa has a good range of English titles.

60-62 Le Loi, D1
3829 6386

Fahasa - Nguyen Hue

One of the largest book distributors in Vietnam with 35 years of operations, Fahasa provides a wide range of books – including English titles – from local to translated editions, as well as CDs, videos, puzzles and stationery.

40 Nguyen Hue, D1
3822 5796

Nam Phong bookstore

A second-hand bookstore specializing in French literature, selling mainly novels and nonfiction titles with a selection of second-hand folio editions. The website is in French only, with a built-in searchable database of all titles available.

94 Ho Tung Mau, D1
3914 7859

Parker & Waterman

A specialist luxury pens counter in the foyer of the Bitexco Financial Tower, This Parker & Waterman outlet sells precision-crafted pens with gold & platinum finishes.

Ground Floor Bitexco Tower, 2 Hai Trieu, D1 6291 8739

Phuong Nam Book

With a system of over 30 bookstores in Ho Chi Minh City, PNB sells & publishes hundreds of foreign-language titles. The Saigon Center store also has a wide range of children's books.

Level 2, Saigon Center, 65 Le Loi, D1 3915 1475

electronics & camera

Bose Showroom

Something of a connoisseur's choice, a look through this showroom in the Tax Building will demonstrate some fairly impressive speaker and sound system equipment.

Ground Floor Saigon Tax Trade Center, 135 Nguyen Hue, D1 3821 5944 0903723933

Canon Vinh Hung

Canon Vinh Hung has over 15 years of experience providing the citizens of Saigon with quality Canon cameras and other products such as photocopiers, fax machines, and photo printers.

103 Tran Hung Dao, D1 3837 1066 090 370 0011

Lioa Electrics & Electronics

Hardware mart for power components, electrical appliances, and lighting systems. LIOA has more than 20 years of experience as the largest automatic stabilizer manufacturer in Vietnam.

138 Yersin, D1 6295 9077 012 3839 6768

Saigon Photo Center - Nam Ky Khoi Nghia

Saigon Photo Center has been providing an extensive range of photography services since 1991. They offer services such as photo printing, digital inkjets, equipment trading, camera sale, and equipment rental.

114 bis Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D1 3825 8735 090 383 2224

Maydocsach eBook Readers

Vietnamese distributors of Kindle and Nook eBook readers, including e-ink screen and color LCD versions. Providing free Vietnamese language eBooks.

149/2 Le Thi Rieng, D1 6678 4542 093 822 2489

Son Ha

They sell products such as TVs, Karaoke and stage systems, soundproofing, MP3 players, refrigeration, and appliances.

41 Huynh Thuc Khang, D1 3923 1938 090 820 3262

home & furnishings

AA Deco Company

AA Interiors provides high-quality fabrication and fit-out services for hotels, residences, spas, and so on throughout the city. Also sells many well-known furniture brands.

219 Nguyen Van Thu, D1 3823 0940 3744 2728

AkzoNobel Decorative Center

Dulux Paints specialist with attractive central-city showroom/store.

91-93 Nguyen Hue, D1 3915 3491

Authentique

An interior decorating shop featuring Vietnamese traditional styles with a small showroom in the busiest area of the city,

71/1 Mac Thi Buoi, D1 3823 8811

Canada Home Deco Company

Established by an expat Canadian couple in 2003, Canada Home Deco specializes in distributing high-quality blankets, pillows, bedspreads, and cushions.

158 Hai Ba Trung, D1 3822 3430

Catherine Denoual

Supplies blankets, pillows, mattresses, tablecloths, cushions, and other luxury linens to reputable hotels, spas, resorts, and individual consumers.

15C Thi Sach, D1 3823 9394

Good Home

Quality, inexpensive Japanese furniture offering three distinctive styles based on the lifestyles of the customer.

CR2-06-A, 107 Ton Dat Tien, Tan Phu, D7 5413 6918

JB Oriental Heritage

Unique Kashmiri products stocked in a plush retail space in the Saigon Center, JB Oriental Heritage sells fine imported Asian products, including carpets and exotic rugs, handicrafts, and objets d'art.

Unit 20, Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, D1 3821 2892 090 775 8926

Klassy

Luxury furniture retail store featuring imported wares from leading manufacturers in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Italy. Styles range from classical to modern. Besides a broad range of furnishings, Klassy offers professional interior design advice and a full delivery service.

122 Pasteur, D1 3821 7141

Lam Bui Natural Home Goods

Founded in 2004 by a team of intrepid entrepreneurs, Lam Bui Natural Home Goods is a large, well-stocked home goods store with specialty old-style furnishings and decor items.

Unit 16-17, 2nd Floor, Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, D1 3914 3553

Mosaique Decoration

Mosaique Decoration takes all the unique beauty and craftsmanship of Vietnam and adapts it to contemporary home décor. Mosaique offers unique lighting design, decorative embroidery, silk quilts, and other home accessories.

Ground Floor, Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, D1 3821 7233

Patina Home

A furniture and home-styling company specializing in antique reproduction collections, Patina Homes offers an exquisite range of handcrafted furniture, upholstery and home accessories.

SLO08 Garden plaza, Ton Dat Tien, Tan Phong, D7 5412 4071

Premium Housewares

Providing high quality kitchenware and accessories, Premium Housewares presents its products in more than 70 countries worldwide.

77 Pasteur, D1 3824 7504

Red Door Décor

A well-known furniture store in Ho Chi Minh City offering products such as interior/exterior decorations, artwork, handicrafts, glass ceramics, garments, and textile materials.

31A Le Thanh Ton, D1 3825 8672

SB Furniture

SB Furniture is an award-winning furniture store with a reputation for excellent service and attention to detail. They specialize in products made with artificial wood, and cabinets for apartments and villas.

Unit 8-10, 1st Floor, Saigon Centre, 65, Le Loi, D1 0902157935

markets

An Dong Market

This boisterous wet market beneath the Caesar Hotel. Customers can find food carts, bulk raw ingredients, shoes, sandals, jeans, shirts, and many other goods.

36 An Duong Vuong, D5 3835 4773

Ba Chieu Market

An old market hosting nearly 800 independent businesses in central Binh Thanh district, famous throughout the city for its rich and diverse commodities. Fresh Food, groceries, crockery, household appliances, textiles, and apparel. Second hand clothing available at cheap rates.

40 Dien Hong, Binh Thanh 3841 2483

Ben Thanh Market

Saigon's most iconic tourist attraction, this Vietnamese souvenir bazaar is busy, hot, and full of most everything you'll need to pick up to prove you've been to Vietnam - you can also stock up on your entire quota of presents for family and friends here.

Quach Thi Trang Square, D1 3829 2096

Binh Tay (Cholon) Market

Binh Tay Market is the largest market in Saigon located in an elegant building of Chinese design in Chinatown. The market caters mostly to wholesale trade, but also offers household items, makeup, and beauty products.

Le Tan Ke, Ward 2, D6 3857 1512

Tan Binh Market

Products here are targeted towards the locals, so don't expect to see luxurious or high-end products. The prices can't be beaten though. Bargain to your heart's content.

Le Minh Xuan, Ward 8, Tan Binh 3864 3711

Tan Dinh Market

Tan Dinh Market has been providing Saigon with a thriving market experience for decades. Customers can choose from food carts, clothing services, textiles, and fresh fruits and vegetables. Busy old-style market with impressive architecture, selling a great selection of fabrics and seafood.

48 Ma Lo, Tan Dinh, District 1 3820 1272

War Surplus Market (Dan Sinh Market)

Dan Sinh is known as the army surplus market. Located just 5 minutes from the backpacker area and city center, it specializes in selling war surplus and military style clothing and items. It is also a good market for electronics and other types of imported industrial machinery.

104 Yersin, D1 3825 1130

supermarkets

Annam Gourmet

An upmarket deli-grocery chain offering gourmet groceries, cheese, organic products, gluten-free products, fruit and vegetables, gourmet deli, wine and other beverages. Features a deli café serving coffee, wine and foods. Regular shoppers can benefit from a loyalty card program.

16-18 Hai Ba Trung, D1 3822 9391

Sieu Thi Tax Supermarket

General supermarket in the centrally-located Tax Building.

1st Floor, Saigon Tax Trade Centre, 135 Nguyen Hue, D1 3821 3849

wine & liquor

Bacchus Corner

Bacchus imports from most of the world's wine regions and supplies wholesale and retail customers. It encourages wine tasting in its Pasteur store using the unique Enomatic system, and staff are skilled in advising on wine matches with food.

158D Pasteur, D1 3829 3306

Beer Plaza

Beer Plaza has an extensive range of international beers in stock. Connoisseurs will be pleased to find all of their favorite varieties of beer along with unique glassware.

94-96 Le Lai, D1 091 816 6809

Boutique Cellar

All about wine, lots and lots of wine. Priding itself in being the sole distributors of premium wineries around the world.

11 Suong Nguyen Anh, D1

Liquor City

Purveyors of fine international wines & spirits.

95, Suong Nguyen Anh, D1 090 240 9024

Shop Thai Duong

Beer, wine, & spirits importers. Previously known as Tan Mai.

54 Ham Nghi, D1 3821 5398 098 888 9496

The Warehouse

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

178 Pasteur, D1 3824 6629 090 921 0014

Vinifera

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

15C7 Thi Sach, D1 3822 1141

Business & Tech

IMAGE BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY





International Relations

As part of our new series on consulates in HCMC, we speak with Consul General Simon van der Burg of the Netherlands about his country and its collaboration with Vietnam

TEXT BY ALFREDO DE LA CASA IMAGE BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY

SIMON VAN DER Burg arrived in Vietnam this January to take up the post of Consul General of The Netherlands in Ho Chi Minh City. Although this is his first appointment as a Consul General, van der Burg has a long history working in embassies and consulates all over the world, having held positions in Belgium, Russia and Washington, D.C. His previous experiences also touched on the private sector, as he used to work for Fortis Bank as a liaison between the bank and the government, which has helped him to see both sides of the spectrum. He proudly affirms that he always learns something in every country in every job: how to compromise in Brussels and the can-do attitude in Washington.

Although still in his early days in the role, van der Burg is enjoying his new home. His first impression of Vietnam and the city in particular, is positive: a vibrant city full of hard working people and with many business opportunities.

Although the Consulate of the Netherlands is not actively promoting tourism, van der Burg encourages Vietnamese citizens to visit Holland. This year Amsterdam is particularly attractive with many events and different museums (including Van Gogh's) reopening. What's more the spring flower show at the Keukenhof, with over seven million bulbs, is likely to be a favorite for Vietnamese as they do love flowers.

He also recommends a visit to his hometown Rotterdam with points of interest including the dams and sea barriers that protect the city and its residents from the sea.

With around 1,000 Dutch citizens living in southern Vietnam, the Consulate, in collaboration with the Dutch Business Association in Vietnam (DBAV), organizes regular seminars and networking events as well as lunch discussions. The DBAV holds a monthly networking night event in venues like Lighthouse.

What recommendations do you have for Dutch citizens traveling or living in Vietnam?

Simon: Vietnam has a lot to offer, from mountains to sea to ancient cities, with many contrasts and amazing places to visit like Sapa, the Mekong Delta, Phu Quoc island, Hoi An, Da Nang or Hue. Try to visit as many as possible and enjoy their cultural richness.

What, if any, do you think are the biggest dangers in visiting or living in Vietnam?

S: I find Ho Chi Minh City very clean and safe. However as with many countries, the traffic! Motorcycles in particular, with so many people using the road, you need to be careful, especially in the city center. Like most other big cities you also need to be aware of bag snatchers.

Everyone knows Unilever, but what other Dutch companies are present in Vietnam?

S: There are currently around 100 Dutch companies here; most of them are small to medium sized. However, many Vietnamese may not be aware of how many Dutch products they use on a daily basis: starting the day by using many of the Unilever cosmetics, enjoying breakfast with Dutch Lady milk and using Shell lubricants in their motorbikes. Most house light bulbs are likely to be manufactured by Phillips and who does not enjoy a nice Heineken beer?

What are the three 'must knows' about Holland that you would like to share with our readers?

S: First, around two thirds of the Netherlands' territory is on or below sea level, we earn our money below sea level and we know how to live with water – a fact that we have in common with HCMC and the Mekong Delta. Second, in Holland there are more bicycles than people, as it is the preferred means of transportation and very environmentally friendly. Third, in April our Queen will stand down and Prince William

Alexander will become our new King.

Where can we find good Dutch food or restaurants in HCMC?

S: There is room for Dutch food in the HCMC's restaurant scene. A potential business opportunity for Dutch and Vietnamese entrepreneurs to start a business in this field!

Do you hold any events throughout the year that promote your culture that the public can attend?

S: In 2013 we are celebrating the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Vietnam and Holland. We are also planning to organize a Holland Village in a public venue in the centre of HCMC in November this year showing Dutch houses as well as contemporary knowledge and what Dutch companies have to offer.

Apart from Dutch traditions we want to share knowledge regarding water treatment, climate change and agro business. In 2010 almost a million people visited Holland Village in Ho Chi Minh City. For more than a week the 23/9 Park was a showcase of Dutch culture and entrepreneurship, offering images of windmills and tulips alongside demonstrations of contemporary techniques and products.

The government in HCMC has requested the Netherlands consulate organize Holland Village this year in the framework of 40 years of diplomatic relations between both countries, and we are determined to make it another big success. ■

"Two thirds of the Netherlands' territory is on or below sea level, we earn our money below sea level and we know how to live with water – a fact that we have in common with HCMC and the Mekong Delta"

Dear Legal Ease,

I'm considering entering a business venture with some Vietnamese colleagues. I'm able to draw up a simple contract in English but am not sure what I need to do to make it legal and binding. Would I have to get it translated? If so, can it be translated by anyone, or are there registered agencies I'd have to go through?

**Thanks,
John**



IMAGE BY NAMQUAN

A member of the Paris Bar, **Hadrien Wolff** has been practicing law in Vietnam for six years, currently as a partner of **Audier & Partners**. He specializes in banking and corporate law, regularly advising major foreign banks and assisting foreign investors in setting up joint venture companies with Vietnamese partners in sensitive sectors such as media, power and natural resources



FIRST, LET'S GO back to the fundamentals: the most secure way for different people to join forces to create a business is to establish a company. I would strongly advise you to take that step with the business venture that you are considering. The good news is that foreign and Vietnamese investors are allowed to establish companies together for the purpose of doing business in Vietnam. Such a company with a mix of Vietnamese and foreign capital is commonly called a joint venture company.

The first thing you need to do is confirm that the business sector you're involved in is open to foreign investment under the commitments of Vietnam upon its accession to the World Trade Organization. That schedule may be easily found on the WTO website, although you may need a lawyer to help you wade through it (often how I get free drinks in bars!). Fortunately, most sectors are open to foreign investment.

The company, regardless of its corporate form (mainly, the limited liability company and the shareholding company), will legally operate from the date of issuance of the

investment certificate by the Vietnamese authorities, which evidences the approval of the authorities on both the implementation of the project and the establishment of the company. As you may already know, the procedures for the issuance of investment certificates are very long and complicated. It's possible to prepare the application dossier and follow up with the authorities yourself, however there are a lot of technical details and undisclosed preferences of each authority that actually require the involvement of an experienced lawyer for the process to not to drag out longer than strictly necessary.

The rights, powers and responsibilities of the shareholders of the company are ruled by the joint venture contract (effective from the date of the issuance of the investment certificate), which must be in writing but is not required to be notarized or certified.

The joint venture contract is not to be mistaken with the charter of the company, which provides all details in respect of that company and, most importantly, its decision making process and the responsibilities of the

management team.

Vietnamese law does not expressly require a joint venture contract to be executed in Vietnamese. However, the executed joint venture contract and the charter must be submitted to the Vietnamese authorities as part of the application file for the establishment of the company neither of which needs to be notarized. To facilitate their review of such documents, Vietnamese authorities require either executed Vietnamese originals in addition to the foreign language originals to be submitted or with a certified Vietnamese translation of the notarized and legalized original executed in a foreign language. So even if it's not the law, you'll need to have a Vietnamese copy of everything!

In case of submission of certified translations, the document must be translated by a duly licensed private translating company or a State authority with the functions of translation and certification.

If you have any legal questions you want answered, send them to legal@oivietnam.com ■



IMAGE BY NAM QUAN

Anh-Minh Do is the editor at TechInAsia.com for Vietnam focusing on technology startups, trends and companies. Minh also organizes events at Evecoo.vn



Reinventing the Moto

Companies are finding out that the backs of motorbikes aren't limited to passengers anymore

IN VIETNAM, THERE are over 30 million motorbikes. That's one for every three people. It's a huge market that people are building big businesses on top of - literally.

Every time you go out on the street, you'll see motorbikes that look something like the picture above - a clunky fat box on the back of a motorbike. There's no hip name for these guys yet, they're just called *cho do* (carry stuff). But in the past few years, they've taken the big city by storm and this year, they're especially picking up.

With the rise of daily deal sites like *Nhom Mua* and the entrance of e-commerce guys like *Tiki.vn* (books), *Vat Gia* (general

e-commerce) and *The Gioi Di Dong* (electronics), you're going to see a lot more *cho do* bikes on the street. In fact, at my last count, there are at least 30 e-commerce sites operating in Vietnam, doing everything from lingerie to baby goods to shoes and t-shirts - all hoping to be the next Amazon or Zappos. And don't forget what most expats already know, food delivery sites like *eat.vn*, *Hungry Panda* and *vietnammm.com* weren't around two years ago.

The trend has also given birth to other projects, like *Giao Hang Nhanh* (fast delivery), which is a strictly delivery-oriented service that focuses on helping

e-commerce sites deliver their goods. They just might be Vietnam's UPS. There's also a cool company called *SetechViet*, which builds a device installed inside your motorbike. It allows customers to text their motorbike to turn it off, find its location, notify you if somebody is stealing it, and more.

And Japanese electric scooter manufacturer Terra Motors will be selling a luxury US\$5,000 electric motorbike in Vietnam by year's end.

Keep watching the streets: motorbikes are only going to get more interesting in the year of the snake. ■

Dear Paul,

I want to open a cash deposit account here. What banks do you recommend? And why do certain banks, like HSBC, require only a passport to open an account while others like Citibank and Sacombank require work permits, and a lot more paperwork?

**Thanks,
Tracy**



IMAGE BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY

Paul McLardie is a partner and a member of the investment committee at **Total Wealth Management** in Saigon. Previously he was Head of Wealth Management for a firm in Moscow and before then spent eight years at Barclays Bank UK within the Private Clients and Large Corporate sectors



THANKS FOR YOUR question. I would like to start with the second part first. Whether you are looking to open a bank account or a term deposit here the paperwork can feel quite onerous, but there is a very important reason for this. Banks need to follow a form of compliance called Know Your Customer (KYC). It is primarily there to combat money laundering and, more importantly to foreigners, here to set up the time and transactional limits that you are legally allowed to do.

The information that they require is to prove who you are, where you live, who you work for and how much you earn. Each individual bank may have different internal regulations on what they can choose for each category and change all the time from bank to bank as there is no fixed procedure for all the industry here yet.

Where they ask for a copy of your work contract and who you work for and possibly your work permit is purely for

transactional reasons, firstly to show how much you can legally transfer out of the country. If you hold a resident account rather than a non-resident account, this will show to the bank how long you are due to be in the country and the bank is within its rights to withhold products from you. For example, if you have six months left on your contract and even though you know your contract will be renewed, some banks will not allow you to open a 12 month deposit account.

As for cash deposits or term deposits, you need to look at the product and why you want to use them. At Total Wealth Management, we would not recommend one particular bank to place your term deposit with. This is because each person is different and they will have different needs but mainly, the market here is very fast moving, especially if you want to chase headline rates. Before looking at term deposits there are a few things you

need to know:

The double figure headline rates that you see are for dong only. Not for US dollar or any other foreign currency. If you have US dollars you will lose money on the FX conversion at outset and then again at maturity if you want it back in US dollars. The interest that you earn will need to stay in dong. You can withdraw this or spend it as dong but you are unable to withdraw this as a foreign currency or even transfer the value of it abroad.

The term and cash deposit rates in Vietnam are high, but dropping at the time of writing. However you should never just chase the rate. Find out which product suits your needs the most. Think of what the reason is for having the deposit, the time scales you are looking at and what you want to get out of it.

Have a finance question you want answered? Email us at finance@oivietnam.com. ■

>>The List Business



Atexpats is Ho Chi Minh City's first truly comprehensive insider's guide for foreign residents - website launching 2013

banks

Asia Commercial Bank

442 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D3
39290999

Bank of China

19th Floor, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 9949

Citibank

15/F Sun Wah Tower, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1
3824 2267
094 801 6318

Commonwealth Bank

65 Nguyen Du, D1
3824 1525
012 1861 8695

HSBC

Metropolitan Building, 235 Dong Khoi, D1
3724 7247

Mizuho Corporate Bank

18th Floor, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1
3827 8260

Standard Chartered Bank

Saigon Trade Center 1st Floor, 37 Ton Duc Thang, D1
3911 0000

Shinhan Vietnam

100 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D3
3829 1581

Vietcombank

2bis-4-6 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3824 4797
www.vietcombank.com.vn

consulates

Australian Consulate-General

47 Ly Tu Trong, D1
3521 8100
www.hcmc.vietnam.embassy.gov.au
Mon-Fri: 8.30am - 12pm; 1pm - 5pm

Belgium Consulate

105 Duong Van An, D2
6281 8001
9am - 11.30am on Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri

Cambodia Consulate

41 Phung Khac Khoan, D1
3829 2751
Mon-Fri: 7.30am - 11.30am; 2pm - 5pm

Consulate General of Canada

10th floor, The Metropolitan, 235 Dong Khoi, D1
3827 9899
Mon-Thu: 8.30am - 4.30pm

Chile Consulate

79/1/1 Phan Ke Binh, D1
3910 2903

China Consulate

39 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3829 5009
www.vn.china-embassy.org/eng/
Mon-Fri: 8.30am - 11am

China Consulate - Commercial Office

39 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3823 1142
ptmchn@hcm.vnn.vn
www.hochiminh.mofcom.gov.cn

Cuba Consulate

45 Phung Khac Khoan, D1
3829 7350
Mon-Fri: 8am - 11.30am; 1.30pm - 4.30pm

Denmark Consulate

115 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 9373
Mon-Thu: 8.30am - 4.30pm; Fri: 8.30am - 3pm

Finland Consulate

Room 501, 5/F Sailing Tower, 111A Pasteur, D1
3827 2029

France Consulate

27 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3520 6819
www.consulfrance-hcm.org

Germany Consulate

126 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D3
3829 2455
www.ho-chi-minh-stadt.diplo.de
Mon-Fri: 8am - 11.30am; 1.30pm - 4.30pm

Hungary Consulate

22 Phung Khac Khoan, D1
3829 0130

Iceland Consulate

80 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D1
Mon-Fri: 9am - 5pm

Consulate General of India

55 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D3
3823 7050
www.india-consulate.org.vn
Mon-Fri: 8.30am - 12.30pm, 1pm - 5pm

Indonesia Consulate

18 Phung Khac Khoan, D1
3825 1888
www.indonesianconsulategeneral.vn/en/
index.php
Mon-Fri: 8am - 12pm; 2pm - 5pm

Italy Consulate

81 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh
08 6258 6473
Mon-Fri: 8am - 12pm; 1pm - 4pm

Japanese Consulate

261 Dien Bien Phu, D3
08 3933 3520
8.30am - 11.30am; 1.15pm - 4.45pm

Kuwait Consulate

24 Phung Khac Khoan, D1
3827 0555
kuwaitconsulate@gmail.com
Mon-Fri: 9am - 4pm

Laos Consulate

93 Pasteur, D1
3829 7667
Mon-Fri: 8am - 11.30am; 1pm - 4.30pm

Malaysia Consulate

2 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
3829 9023
malhcmnh@kln.gov.my
Mon-Fri: 8am - 11.30am

Mexico Consulate

215 A-B Hoang Van Thu, Phu Nhuan
3844 5520
Mon-Fri: 8am - 3pm

Myanmar Consulate

50 Sam Son, Tan Binh
5449 2425
www.gmas.com.vn
Mon-Fri: 9am - 12pm; 2pm - 5pm; Sat: 9am - 12pm

New Zealand Consulate

235 Dong Khoi, D1
3822 6907
Mon - Fri: 8.30am - 11.30am; 1.00pm - 5.00pm
Nordcham
12A Floor, Bitexco Building, 19-25 Nguyen Hue, D1

3821 5423
www.nordcham.com

Norway Consulate

21-23 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3822 1696
norcons@hcm.fpt.vn
Mon - Fri: 08.30am - 11.30am; 1.30pm - 4.30pm

Panama Consulate

7A Le Thanh Ton, D1
3825 0334
consulgeneral@hcm.fpt.vn
Mon - Fri: 9am - 5pm

Russia Consulate

40 Ba Huyen Thanh Quan, D3
3930 3936
www.russianconsulates.com

Consulate-General of The Republic of Singapore

8th floor, Saigon Center, 65 Le Loi, D1
3822 5174
www.mfa.gov.sg
Mon - Fri: 8.30am - 12.30pm; 1.30pm - 5pm

Slovakia Consulate

64-68 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3829 8888
Thurs: 2pm - 5pm; Fri, Sat: 8.30am - 11.30pm

South Korea Consulate

107 Nguyen Du, D1
3822 5757
Mon-Fri: 9am - 12pm; 1.30pm - 5pm

Sweden Consulate

8A/11 Thai Van Lung, D1
3823 6800
Mon-Fri: 8am - 12pm; 1.30pm - 4.30pm

Switzerland Consulate

42 Giang Van Minh, D2
3744 6996

Thailand Consulate

77 Tran Quoc Thao, D3
7.30am - 11.30am; 1.30pm - 3pm

The Czech Republic Consulate

28 Mac Dinh Chi, D1
Mon-Fri: 8am - 5pm Sat: 8am - 11.30am

The UK Consulate

25 Le Duan, D1
3829 8433
Mon-Thurs: 8.30am-12.30pm; 1.30pm - 4.45pm; Fri: 8.30am - 1pm

U.S. Consulate General Ho Chi Minh City

34 Le Duan, D1
3520 4610
Mon-Fri: 8am - 12pm; 1pm - 5pm

Ukraine Consulate

22-24 Nguyen Van Thu, D1
09 0987 5678
Mon-Fri: 8am-11am; 1.30pm - 5pm

insurance

ACE Life Insurance

One of the world's largest multiline property and casualty insurers, insurance products include universal life insurance, term life, whole life, riders, and global personal accident.

AIG Vietnam

AIG's presence in Vietnam dates back to the 1920s, although modern operations began back in 2005. They

offer a wide range of personal and commercial insurance products.
**9th Floor, Saigon Center, 65 Le Loi, D1
3914 0067**

Baoviet Insurance Corporation

BaoViet is now the leading financial insurance group in Vietnam with more than 145 branches across 63 provinces.
**23-25 Thai Van Lung, D1
3822 0247**

BHNT Great Eastern

Life assurance & financial plans for customers of various age groups. The company's focus is on promoting health and longevity - they have the perfect incentive to do so, really.
**Level 8, 25 Bis Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
6288 6339**

Blue Cross

Blue Cross Vietnam is a Medical Insurance Administrator specializing in Health and Travel insurance in Asia. Our competitive advantage is in our design and administration of modern travel and medical insurance plans; plans built for people living and working in Vietnam.
**Level 8, River View Tower, 7A Thai Van Lung, D1
3821 9908**

If Consulting

IF Consulting vision is to provide continuous advice to individuals and businesses in assessing health/accident risk and finding the best suitable solution.
**IBC Building, 3rd Floor 1A Me Linh Square, D1
3827 7362**

Liberty Mutual Insurance

Liberty Mutual is a 100% US-owned general insurer licensed to provide insurance services directly to Vietnamese individuals and state-owned enterprises as well as motor insurance.
**15th Floor, Kumho Asiana Plaza, 39 Le Duan, D1
3812 5125**

LIG Insurance

The company provides property and casualty insurance, along with customer relations management and automobile claims support services and long-term insurance to individuals and corporations.
**Unit 809, 8th Floor, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1
3821 9968**

McLarens Young International

McLarens Young International is a global claims service provider that helps our clients achieve timely and equitable claims resolution.
**9th Floor, Yoco Building, 41 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3821 3316**

Prudential Vietnam

Prudential Vietnam is one of the leading life insurers nationwide, also providing a variety of financial solutions, with over 200 customer service centers, branch offices and general agency and business partner offices.
**Unit 25F, Saigon Trade Centre, 37 Ton Duc Thang, D1
3910 1660**

information technology

Asia Pacific Solutions

A software development and IT support service company, services include

developing all kinds of engineering systems and implementing software solutions.

Suite 1201, 12th Floor, IIIA Pasteur, D1 3825 1041

NTT Communications Vietnam

NTT Com Vietnam delivers high-quality ICT services to customers in Vietnam, providing voice and data communication infrastructure, and supporting SME

11th Floor, Sailing Tower, IIIA Pasteur, D1 3827 3646

Oracle Vietnam

Oracle offers an optimized and fully integrated stack of business hardware and software systems, lowering the cost and complexity of IT implementation and management.

Suite 25 & 26, Sunwah Tower, I15 Nguyen Hue, D1 3821 9186

Prism Smart IT

Prism is a foreign-owned Information and Communications Technology company that offers IT Managed Services and Total Business Solutions to companies throughout Vietnam.

4th Floor, Yoco Building, 41 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1 3829 6416

law firms

Apex Law

With an organized network of legal services in the major cities and countries of Asia, The Apex management system represents a creative edge in meeting the evolving legal landscape in this country.

Unit 4A2, 4F Nam Han Office Building, 65 Nguyen Du, D1 3822 2942 012 6479 9212

Baker & McKenzie

Baker & McKenzie is a law company with over 72 branches around the world, including offices in Australia, China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Canada, and the United States. Has a team of 4000 highly trained and insightful lawyers.

12th Floor, Saigon Tower, 29 Le Duan, D1

J&P Law Firm

J&P Law is a full-service law firm providing the highest quality legal services to both international and domestic clients, and its widely-recognized practice areas include Corporate, M&A and Finance.

Level 7 - Room 702, 81-85 Ham Nghi, D1 3910 0619

Logos Law Firm

Logos HCMC Office offers comprehensive legal services in a wide range of subject areas for foreign investors in Vietnam through highly qualified lawyers licensed in Korea, Vietnam, and the United States.

Unit 2002B, 72-74 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, Ward 6, D3 3822 7161 091 612 0802

Nishimura & Asahi

Nishimura & Asahi is one of Japan's premier full-service law firms, covering all aspects of domestic and international business and corporate activity.

Unit 704, 7th Floor, Sunwah Tower, I15 Nguyen Hue, D1 3821 4432

Phuoc & Partners Company

Phuoc & Partners is an independent law and consulting firm with integrated legal and tax practices. The firm enables clients to reduce their administrative overhead and focus on core business

activities.

Room 1602, Level 16, Centec Tower, 72-74 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, Ward 6, D3 3823 5895

PricewaterhouseCoopers

A huge international firm represented in Vietnam since 1994, PwC boasts a thorough understanding of the transitional economy of Vietnam and a wide knowledge of policies and procedures covering investment, tax and accounting, and consulting throughout the country.

4th Floor Saigon Tower, 29 Le Duan, D1 3825 1947

marketing

Admaker

Advertising and marketing company specializing in creative design, media placement, production, promotion, events, and public relations.

Unit 2.4, 2nd Floor, 12M Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1 3910 3500

Ambrij Vietnam

Specialist supplier in the concept, design, production and supply of corporate gifts and merchandise.

14-16-18 Chu Manh Trinh, D1 3824 8364

Bates 141 Vietnam

The Vietnamese brand of a global WWP social media marketing company. Bates 141 has bases in 11 countries across Asia and counts HSBC, Unilever, Avon, and more amongst its ranks of prestigious clients.

7th Floor, Vietnam Business Center, 57-59 Ho Tung Mau, D1 3821 8632

Edge Marketing

Particularly dynamic local marketing firm, committed to a "highly productive collision of creativity and technology". The firm's international staff bring local and foreign perspectives to each campaign.

1Bis Ngo Van Nam, D1 3911 1190

Ogilvy & Mather

An international advertising agency, O&M aims to be "the most local of the internationals and most international of the locals" in the advertising market.

12th Floor, 72-74 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, Ward 6, D3 3821 9529

Purple Asia

Purple Asia stands out as one of the most unique advertising design firms in the city, with a commitment to making brands perform better on the hard-to-crack local market.

Melody Tower, 422-424 Ung Van Khiem, Ward 25, Binh Thanh 3898 1005

Saatchi & Saatchi - The Lovemarks Company

This world-class international advertising firm has grown from strength to strength in Vietnam, picking up some major clients and showing exponential growth in the local market.

3 Phan Van Dat, D1 3824 1207

media

GroupM - MEC Media

The focus of GroupM is the intelligent application of physical and intellectual scale to benefit trading, innovation, and new communication services to bring competitive advantage to clients and companies.

Level 6, IIIA Pasteur, D1 3821 2233

S3 Studios

The first international calibre, full-service production house and studio in Vietnam, S3 is designed to accommodate commercial photography, film & video productions and events.

1K Ngo Van So, D4 3941 1179

real estate agencies

Colliers International Vietnam

Globally, Colliers International is a leading commercial real estate services company offering comprehensive expertise to investors, owners and tenants around the world.

Bitexco Office Building, 7th Floor, 19-25 Nguyen Hue, D1 3823 3529 3823 3530

Cushman & Wakefield Vietnam

Their primary focus is on consultancy, brokerage, and investment across the retail, office, and hospitality sectors.

Level 2, Pathfinder Building, 52 Dong Du, D1 6291 4707

House Link

House Link offers a wide array of apartments and houses for lease all over Ho Chi Minh City.

23 Phung Khac Khoan, D1 3824 5271

Realty World

Realty World is a leading real estate business in Ho Chi Minh City, focusing on real estate business, consulting, managing, and marketing. Currently they specialize in apartments, office buildings, and villas.

111 Nguyen Huu Canh, Ward 22, Binh Thanh 3899 4979

Savills

Savills PLC is a global real estate services provider listed on the London Stock Exchange.

Avalon building, 53 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1 3825 8598 090 396 8097

The Nest

The Nest is a customer-dedicated property company focusing on leasing luxurious properties in Saigon. French-Vietnamese managed with over four years of property experience.

369/6 Do Xuan Hop, Phuoc Long B, D9 090 319 8901

recruiters

Opus Recruitment

Opus group was originally a unit under KPMG Thailand that defected to run independently, focusing on quality executive searches.

2A Rolanno Offices, 128 Nguyen Phi Khanh, Tan Dinh, D1 3827 8209

Navigos Group & Vietnam Works

Navigos Group provides recruitment solutions in Vietnam. Services include VietnamWorks (which posts about 200 new jobs per day) and Navigos Search (the leading recruitment firm in Vietnam).

130 Suong Nguyet Anh, D1 3925 5000

Odgers Berndtson Vietnam

A global firm specializing in the recruitment of senior level executives, the firm employs experienced professionals from specific market areas to provide discreet access to industry leaders.

Suite 1609, 1st Floor, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1 3827 8777

relocation

Allied Pickfords

One of the largest and most respected providers of moving services worldwide, AP assumes complete responsibility for all moving services through a single point of contact.

District 1 0122 5141 848

Asian Tigers

Pan-Asian moving firm with a perhaps unrivalled level of experience and expertise in packing, storing and moving a family's treasured belongings throughout this region and beyond. The largest fleet of trucks and the most warehouse space of any mover in the Far East, with door-to-door services.

9th Floor, Unit 9.3, 9 Doan Van Bo, Ward 13, D4 3826 7799

Crown Line

Crown Line is a well-known Japanese moving firm now operating out of Ho Chi Minh City.

60 Nguyen Van Thu, D1

JVK International Movers

Focused primarily on the international and local movement of household goods since 1979, JVK has established itself as a leader in this unique transportation field.

1st Floor, Saigon Port Building, 3 Nguyen Tat Thanh, Ward 12, D4 3826 7655

M&P International

M&P International is a specialized freight-forwarding and shipping agency. They specialize in designing logistics infrastructures which provide a compromise between cost, speed, and reliability.

Ground Floor, Thien Son Office Building, 5 Nguyen Gia Thieu, D3 3930 2747

Santa Fe

Santa Fe is world-renowned for Global Relocation Services. From an individual move across town to global corporate relocations, the firm provides customised services to meet customer-specific needs.

8th Floor, Thien Son Building, 5 Nguyen Gia Thieu, D3 3933 0065

shipping

HL Shipping

A worldwide freight forwarder offering dedicated, integral services in the international trade market providing a reliable, customer-oriented, and cost-effective coverage of all shipping needs, including a comprehensive assessment of all costs and assurance of on-time delivery for each segment. Competent service in English direct from the MD Jeff Tran.

29 Huynh Van Banh, Ward 17, Phu Nhuan 3995 6117

Logitem Viet Nam

Warehousing, shipping and transportation, 100% Japanese owned.

23 Tran Nao, Binh An, D2 3744 2281

Sagawa Express Vietnam

A subsidiary of Sagawa Holdings Group, this firm specialises in providing solutions to general logistics issues in Vietnam, and it has a general logistics certificate unique in this country.

169 Dien Bien Phu, Ward 15, Binh Thanh 3840 9330 090 900 3649

The Outer Districts

IMAGE BY HUY TRAN



A District Apart

Ho Chi Minh City is much, much more than just District 1. Venture over to neighborhoods like An Phu and you'll be surprised by what there is on offer

TEXT BY **MARIANNA DANIELS** IMAGES BY **HUY TRAN**



Concept Coiffure



B.O.M Shop

"THE MAIN DRAW here is the more relaxed pace of life, and since it's close to the river the air feels cooler," says Alex, the owner of Blue Crab restaurant and long time resident. Most tourists, and even expats, miss out on the quiet charms of An Phu, whether out of disinterest or a misguided notion that "it's too far". But take the time to hop over the Saigon Bridge or through the Thu Thiem tunnel and you will find that this suburb offers many unique shops and restaurants worth exploring.

The odd location of **Phuc Ban Me Cafe** (39 Xa Lo Ha Noi), on a frontage road just off the highway, hides a secret garden. This recently opened cafe was built by the owner and offers a lovely, rustic atmosphere to its patrons. There are four open-air buildings set around a central garden with a large pond and waterfall. The cross-cut log paths that lead up

to the fall coupled with the sound of running water provide the perfect combination of white noise and isolation needed to relax. While the menu offers the usual café fare, it's the quality that makes it stand out. We recommend the salads made with fresh, crisp produce (no wilted lettuce here) for VND25,000 to VND50,000. Then balance the healthy salad with a rich and creamy milkshake for VND30,000. And for a glimpse of the chaotic city just outside, head up to the rooftop terrace to watch the world literally speed by along the Hanoi Highway.

Next, head out to do some shopping. There aren't a large number of shops in District 2 but it is the go-to area for gardening supplies and homewares. Tran Nao Street is lined with plant nurseries and local shops selling wooden and bamboo furniture where you can pick up beautiful tropical orchids starting

at VND60,000 or perhaps even a hanging egg-shaped basket chair for VND3 - VND5 million. Many luxury furniture stores can be found on Xuan Thuy and Thao Dien Streets.

B.O.M Shop (2 Thao Dien) is one of the few places in the city to find beanbag chairs. Here they're called Chilly Bags and are handmade in Vietnam with a wide range of colors and patterns, and can even be custom printed with logos or pictures. The fabric can be coated to resist chlorine, making them waterproof - perfect for an outdoor terrace during the rainy season or by the pool. Prices start at VND1.6 million.

Indulge Yourself

For a fun mother and daughter pampering session, head to **Concept Coiffure** (48 Tran Ngoc Dien) - a salon and spa that takes full advantage of the numerous French colonial



Le Delices de Mai

Papagayo

houses that An Phu is known for. Set in a re-purposed villa near the river, you can sip green tea while looking out over the sunny garden and pool during your makeover. And your junior counterpart can receive the same professional service at Concept Kids with treatments such as Diva for a Day (VND520,000) and Pampered Princess (VND300,000).

And for those who don't have time to escape to a resort for the weekend, then let **Papagayo** (18 Tran Ngoc Dien) bring that holiday-feel to you. Greg, the owner, explains "it's meant to have the feel of a resort. You can spend the whole day here dining, drinking or swimming". This small compound of bungalow-style buildings houses a restaurant, bar and boutique as well as a small swimming pool and petanque court. You can enjoy an al fresco Mediterranean dinner on the restaurant patio, or order a drink and unwind poolside in a lounge chair or beanbag. At night the atmosphere is dreamy with soft lighting throughout and floating colored lights in the pool. The menu consists of French cuisine, pastas and salads. A highlight of the food here is the open-air barbeque pit where you can watch the

cook prepare your meal. We recommend the homemade creamy passion fruit mousse with mango *coulis*; it's excellent. Main dishes range from VND180,000 - VND490,000. The onsite boutique, Diablo, offers high-end houseware, furniture and art.

World Food Options

District 2's quaint backdrop and wide sidewalks make this area a great place for dining outdoor and **Le Delices de Mai** (33/2-33/5 Quoc Huong) restaurant sits perfectly in a spacious alley. They describe themselves as a French, Cameroonian and Vietnamese restaurant. Mai used to live in Cameroon with her French husband and family where she learned to cook Cameroonian cuisine like juicy chicken with plantain. It is an unusual combination that makes for complex and delicious food. The best seats are across the street under a canopy of tree branches decorated with caged tropical birds offering musical ambience. The menu is different every day and includes dishes like *basa fish meunière*, Cameroonian chicken and a variety of grilled sausages and skewers. Main dishes range from VND80,000 - VND100,000.

Diners desiring something more coastal should make the stroll to Blue Crab (49D Quoc Huong). Its sparsely decorated walls, wooden tables and chairs can be misleading - what this place lacks in appearance it makes up for in quality and freshness in the seafood. The owner, Alex, has worked in the city's restaurant industry for years and purchases his products from top-quality suppliers. Everything is prepared to order. Most of the dishes are Vietnamese style but there are some Western offerings such as their moules marinières, which are not to be missed. The smell of wine and garlic in this dish is strong enough to have your mouth watering before it even hits the table. One of their newest specialties are Canadian lobsters from the only licensed supplier in Vietnam. The service here is very friendly, and Alex, who's a great source for recommendations, will likely be serving you himself. Dishes range from VND50,000 - VND170,000 and most of the seafood is priced per 100 grams.

While it may take a little effort to drive out to District 2, it's well worth it. As you ride back into the city center and the traffic starts to close in around you it's easy to start planning your next excursion here. ■





Defying Gravity

Twisting, floating, hanging upside down, flying yoga is physical fitness 'lifted' to another level

TEXT BY **LYRA DACIO** IMAGE BY **NAM QUAN**

I'VE BEEN PRACTICING yoga on and off for the last three years - well okay, more off than on and getting back on the yogi track has been something I've been itching to do for some time now.

In Phu My Hung there are plenty of gyms and private yoga instructors offering classes but laziness always got the better of me, that is, until I heard about flying yoga also called aerial yoga. And when I learned that the youngest student in the class was three-years-old and the oldest was 77, I suddenly felt motivated.

If you're wondering what the key difference is between your regular yoga and this form, it's the hammocks hanging from ceiling. In flying yoga, this fabric acts like a swing or soft trapeze, allowing flexibility and easy movement. It is used to change one's 'dynamic relationship' to the ground, allowing the user to understand their body better and its relationship to being suspended.

According to Dr. Chandra, the founder and director of Universal Yoga (35 Duong Noi, Hung Gia 4) in District 7, this form of yoga was introduced about two years ago and involves performing a series of exercises inspired by yoga, dance, pilates, calisthenics and aerial acrobatics in order to achieve a total-body workout, while being suspended two to three feet off the ground.

He advises those who want to try flying yoga to build a foundation with floor yoga first. Basically, poses that are done on the floor can be replicated in the flying yoga studio and according to Dr. Chandra, "It's easier because you have support when doing flying yoga."

Watching one of his students effortlessly tangle and untangle herself from the suspensions made me a quick believer. The tangling I can handle, but reverting back to the untangled position is mind boggling, and fear of the cloth tearing under my weight came to mind. I was assured the suspensions can withstand 1,000lbs (454.5 kg).

Fear of Flying

"Flying yoga attracts people who are into dance and who want a good strong workout," Dr. Chandra shares.

He adds that with flying yoga, inverted and advance poses can be easily achieved and holding a pose is easier and requires less strength compared to floor yoga. Once you get over the fear of flying, you reap its benefits. Inverted poses help in decompressing the spine

which relieves the back from pressure (as in slip disc). It actually helps in strengthening the spine. Younger students who practice flying yoga regularly may become taller, and people with high blood pressure or hypertension should seek medical clearance first.

Some poses that Dr. Chandra effortlessly demonstrated were:

– **The Bow:** Similar to a backbend, but your hand grabs on to your ankles from underneath the cloth instead. This pose helps in flexibility and stretching the spine.

– **Splitting:** You stand on two cloths and lower your body into a split as low as you can. This gives the hamstrings a good workout.

– **Inversions:** This can be done on the flying yoga suspension or on the wall which helps decompress and strengthen the spine.

Jelda, who has only been practicing flying yoga for three months, revealed that she has noticeably become slimmer and felt more relaxed at work. Her favorite pose is the sleeping position but she has yet to master the splitting one. She admits that in her first session she experienced dizziness which, Dr. Chandra confirms, is normal while the body is still adjusting to the exercises.

He insisted I try some poses and so I gave in to the beckoning orange cloths. I attacked it like a child on a swing but when it was time to bend back and unite my hands with my feet from under, all my bravado flew out the window. Let's leave it for another day, shall we? ■

"He adds that with flying yoga, inverted and advance poses can be easily achieved and holding a pose is easier and requires less strength compared to floor yoga"

Selecting a School, Part 2

Continuing on last month's topic, Lauralynn explores other factors needed to find the right school for your child



IMAGE BY NAMQUAN

Lauralynn Goetz, B.A., M.M.Ed. US, is a director of an early childhood education center in Vietnam



"IT'S SO MUCH EASIER going to a school that's nearby" is not a solution. Finding a good school for their children is undoubtedly the number one priority for parents. The choice is often confusing and the implications potentially far reaching. Viewing the school's website is one way to begin. Unfortunately you won't discover the reasons why parents chose a certain school and what their opinion is until after enrolling.

It is important to find out what the school's attitude is towards the needs of multilingual children. Check out the social aspects, the curriculum, the teachers' qualifications and the extent to which parents are encouraged to be involved with the school. The parent is the first and most important teacher.

For older children who will be going on to higher education, you need to find out how attending a particular school will affect future education plans.

Another important consideration today is whether the school offers the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. The International Baccalaureate does not own, operate or manage any schools. It works in partnership with more than 3,500 IB world schools in 145 countries. These schools share the mission and commitment of the IB education by playing an active and supporting role in the worldwide community of IB schools.

The IB program was founded in Geneva, Switzerland in 1968 as a non-profit educational foundation. Teachers at the International School of Geneva,

with assistance from several other international schools, created the IB Diploma Programme. What started as a single program for internationally mobile students preparing for university has grown into three programs for students aged two through 19. Initially the IB program was ignored by schools in the US, but today it has been adopted by leading schools worldwide. The program allows students an international choice of colleges and universities.

American or British

Programs in pre-schools, nurseries and kindergartens should be offering curricula which align with IB standards. Another option for young children is to attend a bi-lingual school. It facilitates learning Vietnamese and establishes multi-cultural friendships. However, the same standards of curricula must apply. It is most critical for very young children's development that their curricula align with international standards.

Obviously, every child is different and their capacity to adapt will be different as well. Your choice will also be influenced by whether you'll be moving back to your home country before your child is ready for college. If this is the case, an international school will either follow the American system, with high school grades and SATs, or the British system of International GCSEs and A levels. This will make it easier for your child to reenter the school system back home if you choose a program that matches that of your home country.

Fees will also play a factor in your decision. Depending on your child's age and the school, it can be very expensive.

Finally, some of the international schools have a waiting list, especially for very young children. Register your child as soon as you can to ensure their place.

Have an education dilemma for our expert? Email us with your question at education@oivietnam.com. ■



HL Shipping Co., Ltd.

29 Huynh Van Banh St., Ward 17, Phu Nhuan Dist., Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Tel : (84-8) 3 995 6117 - 2 217 1588 - 2 216 9288 - 2 216 9388

Fax: (84-8) 3 995 6118 - 3 995 4943 Email: info@hlshipping.com

Website: www.hlshipping.com

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>>The List District 2



Atexpats is Ho Chi Minh City's first truly comprehensive insider's guide for foreign residents - website launching 2013

food & drink

BAKERIES

Annam Gourmet Market

A French-owned grocery shop stocking a large range of imported foodstuff, fresh vegetables and fruits, beers, wines.

41A Thao Dien, D2
3744 2630
www.annam-gourmet.com
anphu@annam-gourmet.com
9am to 8pm

Voelker

French bakery selling fresh breads, pastries and chocolate
39 Thao Dien, D2
6296 0066
voelker-vietnam.com

BARS

Mcsorley's

Recently opened Irish pub with a swimming pool and outdoor patio. Serves pub grub with events and theme nights happening regularly.

4 Thao Dien, D2
3519 4659
www.mcsorleys.vn
3pm – midnight weekdays,
10am – late weekends

Papagayo Saigon

A resort-style design and French Mediterranean food are the make-up of this newly opened hangout.

18 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2
6252 1333
papagayo.saigon@gmail.com
11am- 3pm Tuesday – Sunday, 6pm –10pm

Buddha Bar

One of the long standing bars in the area, it has a pool table, darts, big screen tvs along with cheap beers and bar food.

7 Thao Dien, D2
3744 2080
buddhabarsaigon.com
5pm - 9pm, Monday - Sunday

restaurants

FRENCH

Gastro'home

New delicatessen shop offering western-fusion French food by French chef Stephane Courtin. Visit the shop or try their catering service.

100 Xuan Thuy, D2
6281 9830
7.30am – 9pm

La Villa ✓ Oi's Pick

This Colonial-style villa set in a quietly gentrified district 2 street is a cache of luxury with its beautiful poolside garden and cosy, scenic white-toned dining room area. Dine outside or in, on an off-the-cuff menu prepared by the French chef, based on the best market ingredients available on the day. Set amongst the flowers and with a ring of the lost charm of the Colonial era, this is an appealing and impressive venue for An Phu's high-profile community.

14 Ngo Quang Huy, D2
3898 2082
reservation@lavilla-restaurant.com.vn
www.lavilla-restaurant.com.vn
Lunch (11.45 – 3pm), dinner (6.45 to late),
Closed Sundays
*Reviewed by Oi March 2013

Trois Gourmands

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

own cheeses as well.

18 Tong Huu Dinh, D2
3744 4585
Open for lunch and dinner from Tuesday to Sunday

ITALIAN

Pendolasco – Thao Dien



The original Pendolasco has been an institution in Saigon since the late 90's, and this newer venue picks up on the success of the parent restaurant in the more gentrified An Phu area. Accordingly, the D2 Pendolasco is somewhat classier than its namesake in backpacker-laden D1. Expect excellent classic Italian cuisine – wood-fired pizza, spaghetti, and tiramisu – cooked with a focus on fresh flavours and featuring the finest imported ingredients from Italy.

36 Tong Huu Dinh, D2
62532888
www.pendolasco.vn
info@pendolasco.vn
11am - 10pm

Sarpino's Pizzeria



Sarpino's Pizzeria is a famous pizza brand from Canada with three branches around Ho Chi Minh City that specializes in pizza, pasta and rice.
43 Thao Dien, D2
3744 2132

JAPANESE

Tama River-Japanese Restaurant

Bottles of sake fill shelves along the wall behind the sushi bar, and unique Japanese paintings add a nice visual touch. Since opening four months ago, the restaurant has attracted a diverse clientele, from locals to expats.

14E1 Thao Dien, D2
3744 6782
10am - 2pm and 5 - 10pm

Chisana Hashi

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

River Garden, 170 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
6683 5308
www.khaisilkcorp.com
thanphu@khaisilkcorp.com
11am – 1.45pm & 5.30pm – 9.30pm,
Monday - Sunday

THAI

Baan Thai



A traditionally-styled venue with all the ethnic decor of Thailand, laid out in a warm-toned dining environment with comfortable sofa-like seating. Baan Thai serves authentic Thai cuisine using a considerable variety of tastes and spices prepared by Thai chefs. Generally speaking, the cuisine leans more towards being authentic in taste than serving the more internationalised versions of Thai cuisine available elsewhere.

55 Thao Dien, D2
3744 5453
www.baanthai-anphu.com
11am - 11pm Sunday to Thursday. Open until midnight on Friday and Saturday

Jasmine Thai



A laid-back enclave of fine Thai dining in the high-class area of District 2, Jasmine Thai is a quiet, candle-lit affair awash in the ethereal tones of Thai traditional music. Thai is a cuisine that's difficult to get right even in Thailand, and in Ho Chi Minh City the quality and authenticity is known to vary – expect here variations on dishes you'll find throughout the Thai culinary

tradition with features more common to those restaurants serving in Western nations.

85 Quoc Huong, D2
3519 0038

VIETNAMESE

Banlan Tree

A fine dining Vietnamese restaurant that serves authentic Vietnamese cuisine. Banlan Tree is part of the Khai Silk group so the design is extremely well thought out, gleaming wooden surfaces complementing the red signature walls. Offers a set lunch, set dinner and international breakfast
River Garden, 170 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
6683 5308
6.30am – 10.30pm

WESTERN/ INTERNATIONAL

Boathouse

With a great view of the Saigon River, this restobar serves imported steak, healthy salads and much more in an alfresco environment.

40 Lily Road, An Phu Superior Compound, D2
3744 6790
www.boathouse.com.vn
7.30am – 11pm

Mekong Merchant

Set in a colonial house within an open-air courtyard surrounding, this restaurant serves delicious pizza, sandwiches, smoothies with an extensive wine list.

23 Thao Dien, D2
3744 4713
info@mehongmerchant.com
8am – 10pm

Snap Cafe



By day, Snap Cafe is a community-centered, family-friendly cafe and restaurant. By night, guests can enjoy live music, sports on the big screen, quiz nights, pool, foosball, and more. Serves international cafe fare, great food, icy-cold draught beer and wine by the carafe. The space is a large open-plan room with an attached garden and play area for kids. Holds regular movie screenings.

32 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2
35194532
www.snap.com.vn
7.30am - 10.30pm

The Deck



Located on the banks of the Saigon River, this restaurant offers great international and Vietnamese fare.

38 Nguyen U Di, D2
3744 6632
www.thedecksaigon.com
info@thedecksaigon.com
8.30am to late

Vino

They offer professional advice on selecting and tasting wines. The outdoor terrace area is the perfect spot to sample a new vintage and brunches on the weekends.

NO.1, Street 2nd, D2
6281 9059
www.vinovietnam.com
info@vinovietnam.com

supermarkets

An Phu Supermarket

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

vegetables, cheese, wine, toiletries and more

43 Thao Dien, D2

Classic Fine Foods

Supplier of international brand foodstuff like Illy, Valrhona, Bonne Maman along with fresh vegetables, dairy, and meat.

No. 17, Street 12, D2
3740 7105
www.classicfinefoods.com

Metro

Wholesale suppliers of foodstuff, office supplies, furniture, clothes and more. Entry is reserved for business owners only but foreigners can obtain a one-day pass by showing their passports.

Residential An Phu, An Khanh Ward 2
3740 6677
6am – 9pm, Monday – Sunday

business

LAW FIRMS

Nguyen Giap Law Firm

14 Tran Nao, D2
3740 7812
www.hangluatnguyengiap.com
hangluatnguyengiap@gmail.com
8am - 5pm

Dang Khuong

26 Street 44, D2
8224 09726

MARKETING & ADVERTISING

Industrial Design Asia

Offers design engineering and innovation consultancy for plastics, consumer products, electronics, metal parts. Dutch industrial designers with over 10 years of working experience in Asia. Contact them to get a free quotation.

VILLA B,12A Street Number 12, D2
3740 6388

Thanh Tung

Prints digital, cuts decal, LED signs, Braille and stainless neon materials to ensure compliance with quality.

373 Luong Dinh Cua, D2
090 952 1411
8am - 5pm

REAL ESTATE AGENCIES

Namhouse

Provides rental properties for home and office use, focusing in the District 2 area.

48A Tran Ngoc Dien, D2
098 900 7700
www.namhouse.com.vn
sales@namhouse.com.vn
8am-5.30pm, Monday - Saturday

Snap Café

Has an extensive list of property rentals in District 2.

32 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2
3519 4282
www.snap.com.vn
7.30am - 10.30pm

health & beauty

DENTISTS

European Dental Clinic

This is the dental clinic's second location in Ho Chi Minh City. Experienced practitioners, latest technology, most dentists from UK and France. Offering state of the art technology, competitive pricing, and supreme quality, this dentistry is truly dedicated to their patients.

17-17A Le Van Mien, D2
091 874 9204 or 090 955 1916

eurosaigon@hotmail.com
www.europeandentalclinic-asia.com

Saigon Smile

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

96 Tran Nao, D2
6674 4255
8am to 8pm

Nu Cuoi Hoan My (Perfect Smile)

14-16 Tran Nao, D2
3740 7470
hoanmysmile@gmail.com
8am to 8pm

Dental Truong Thanh

276 Tran Nao, D2
5402 3009
www.nhakhoatruongthanh.com
nktuongthanh@yahoo.com.vn
8am to 8pm

FITNESS

Ais Sports Complex

Open to the public, the center has a 25m swimming pool, basketball court and an astroturf play area. Inquire about special packages.

APSC Compound, 36 Thao Dien, D2
3744 2549
www.aisportscentre.com

Cyril And You

French physical instructor Cyril specializes in sports conditioning, resistance training and senior training along with designing a personal fitness program to fit your needs. Holds regular sessions at Boathouse.

Thao Dien, D2
094 777 1326
www.cyril-and-you.com

NTFQ2

Besides an excellent weights and cardio area, the facility runs group classes including power yoga, pilates, circuit training, martial arts and spinning. The centre also contains a spa and a restaurant serving up calorie-calibrated meals to help members stay in line with individual fitness programs.

34 Nguyen Dang Giai, D2
3744 6672
www.nutrifort.com
ntfq@nutrifort.com
6am - 9pm Monday - Friday,
7am - 8pm Saturday & Sunday

Thien Nga (Swan) Club

Fitness club that has training equipment and a 25sqm swimming pool

751 Xuan Thuy, D2
3899 0012

X-Rock Climbing

With two locations in the city, this wall in An Phu stands at 26 meters. The center offers nine levels from beginners to hardcore.

503A Nguyen Duy Trinh, D2
2210 9192
www.xrockclimbing.com

Yoga Club

Yogo fitness center for both men and women

18 Street Number 2, D2
3897 6786

HOSPITALS & CLINICS

Animal Rescue & Care

A.R.C. was founded in 2010 to directly address the plight of abused and abandoned animals in Ho Chi Minh City. Abandoned and wild cats and dogs can be adopted or fostered from their online database. ARC also organizes several animal welfare education and low-cost spaying campaigns. New volunteers are always welcomed there.

31-44 Thao Dien, D2
arcpets@gmail.com
www.arcpets.com

An Phu International Clinic

An international standard clinic with a full range of specialist and modern medical equipment with a

dedicated team of professors, doctors, experienced nurses.

251A Luong Dinh Cua, D2
6660 6602
www.dakhoaanphu.com
info@dakhoaanphu.com
8am to 5pm

Family Medical Practice

With a nationwide operational advantage, they provide international standard medical services in a safe, professional and welcoming environment.

95 Thao Dien, D2
3744 2000
www.vietnammedicalpractice.com
hcmc@vietnammedicalpractice.com
8am-6pm Monday-Friday, 8am-2pm Saturday

SPAS

Cochinchine Luxury Spa & Fitness

La Cochinchine Luxury Spa & Fitness assists in improving the mental and physical state of a person using and will traditional Vietnamese, Indian, Chinese herbal remedies and techniques.

Rex Hotel, 141 Nguyen Hue, D1
3825 1812
www.lacochinchine-hcm.net

Saigon Dep

The clinic treats various skin diseases and offers skin care protection and prevention packages.

79 Xuan Thuy, D2
3899 0448
www.saigondep.net
sgd@saigondep.net

Thao Dien Village

Within this tourist complex is a luxury spa and wellness center.

189 - 197, 197/1 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
3744 2222

The Royal Spa And Salon

Services include acrylic nails, facials, hair salons and massages

14E14 Thao Dien, D2
3519 4873
9am - 9pm

shopping

HOME INTERIORS

Austin Home

Furniture shop that stocks art deco pieces, cushions, fabrics and wooden ornaments for the home

20 Thao Dien, D2
3519 0023
6am - 6.30pm

Clic Clac Sofa

Sells sofas that double up as beds in various sizes and wood

327F Luong Dinh Cua, D2
5402 7434
www.clicclacsofa.com

education

SCHOOLS

Acg International School

An IB school that provides international education from kindergarten to senior.

The curriculum and assessment includes: International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Program (PYP), University of Cambridge International Lower Secondary program, leading to Checkpoint assessment in Year 9 and IGCSE in Year 11.

190 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
3519 2727
www.acgedu.com

British International School

Offers pre-school to secondary education under the English national curriculum.

225 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
3744 2335
www.bisvietnam.com
susanwilson@bisvietnam.com

Horizon International Bilingual School

A bilingual school, HIBS opened in 2005 and applies 100 percent of the Vietnamese national curriculum, MOET,

as well as providing students with an intensive English program along with teaching science and math in English.

6 - 6A - 8, 44 Street, D2
5402 24 82
hibsvietnam.com
info@hibsvietnam.com

L'atelier

A French language center offering classes in all forms to children and adults. Classes include spelling and grammar tuition after school, monitoring for the French education program, preparing for official tests (DEFL, DAFL, TFL, IB), and Vietnamese lessons, including extra-curricular activities during the holidays.

33/19 Quoc Huong, D2
3744 6844
www.latelier-anphu.com
latelier.anphu@yahoo.com

Saigon Sports Academy

A multi-sports training school that teaches chess, swimming, tennis, soccer, among others.

28 Tran Nao, D2
3703 1100

Smartkids

An international childcare centre provides kindergarten and pre-school education for children between 18 months and six years old. A fun and friendly environment, the school focuses on learning through play.

1172 Thao Dien Compound, D2
3744 6076
yoko@smarthkidsinfo.com
www.smarthkidsinfo.com

travel

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Exotissimo

With 20 years of operations in the region, they offer unique travel experiences with destination-based offices in Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand, Japan and China.

41 Thao Dien, D2

3519 4111
www.exotissimo.com
yen@exotissimo.com
9am - 9pm

Ha Nguyen

Specializes in providing tickets for Eva Airlines, Qatar Airways, China Airlines, Cathay Pacific, American Airlines, Singapore Air, Malaysia Airlines, Korean Airlines, Qantas Airways, Lufthansa, United Airlines and many other international airlines.

64B3 Xuan Thuy, D2
6674 9041

SERVICED APARTMENTS

Fideco River View Apartment

The Fideco River View Apartment is located in a safe and secure area in district 2, offering tenants luxurious amenities with a panoramic view of Saigon.

14 Thao Dien, D2

Riverside Apts

Overlooking the Saigon River, the compound offers short and long term leases.

53 Vo Truong Toan, D2
37 444 111

www.riverside-apartments.com

River Garden Apartment

River Garden is the first luxury river-view condominium development in HCMC. It is located within a 15-minute drive of downtown and provides its occupants with stunning views of the Saigon River in a resort type of environment.

170 Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien, D 2

Villa Song Saigon

Colonial-style, boutique apartments characterised by solid hardwood flooring and an outdoor swimming pool ensconced by verdant gardens.

197/2, Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien, D 2
37446090
0906099180
www.villasong.com



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www.oivietnam.com

>>The List District 7



Atexpats is Ho Chi Minh City's first truly comprehensive insider's guide for foreign residents - website launching 2013

food & drink

BAKERIES

Savouré Bakery

Offering gourmet cakes and pastries with all the fine characteristics of the European gourmet tradition. Customers can choose from a wide array of baked goods including cakes, desserts, breads, cookies, wedding cakes, and moon cakes during the season.

Grand View, SD 4-I, Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
5412 2469
www.savourebakery.com

BARS

Peaches

A spacious, attractive restobar with comfortable, lounge-style seating and a bar area, this watering hole mixes three beers on tap and a large screen for live sports with a pan-Asian curry menu.

557-I Sky Garden 2, D7
5410 0999

The Tavern

The Tavern is a Western pub & restaurant where patrons can play darts & pool, watch football or enjoy reasonably priced food and drinks.

R2-24 Hung Gia 3, Bui Bang Doan, D7
5410 3900

CAFES

Baskin Robbins

With more than 7000 branches in more than 50 countries, Baskin Robbins is the largest ice-cream chain in the world with flavors such as Baseball Nut and Lunar Cheesecake.

105 Ton Dat Tien, D7
7308 3131
www.baskinrobbins.vn

Bud's

Bringing the taste of American ice cream to Vietnam, Bud's Ice Cream has nine stores in Ho Chi Minh City. Apart from a variety of delicious ice cream flavors, Bud's also offers a wide range of Western and Vietnamese food.

SD - 04 Panorama Residential Complex, D7
3932 2778
www.budsicecream.com.vn

Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf

The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf serves some of the best coffee and tea from around the world. It also has a full line of baked goods made from high quality ingredients, most of which are from their own proprietary recipes.

Ground Floor, Crescent Mall, Ton Dat Tien, D7
3824 4527
www.coffeebean.com.vn

FB Deli Coffee

FB Deli Coffee features a unique black and white design and signature coffee beans imported from Italy. Guests can also enjoy many varieties of homemade cakes, along with Tiramisu, muffins, and sandwiches. All cakes 50% off from 7 to 10pm.

SE-1 My Khanh 2 Apartments, D7
5411 9696
8am - 10pm

The Fountain Coffee Ice Cream

Known for its Swiss ice cream with all the fixings, Fountain Coffee also serves Western dishes in a spacious lounge area.

SB4-1 My Duc Residential Complex, Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
5412 3257

MOF Japanese Sweets & Coffee Crescent

Sourcing the majority of their dessert ingredients from Hokkaido, Japan, MOF

serves up premium desserts and a Japanese restaurant menu.

101 Ton Dat Tien, D7
5413 7332; 090 822 7999
www.mof.com.vn/en
10am - 9.45pm

NYDC

Established in 1995 in Singapore, NYDC, The New York Dessert Café, aims to bring a piece of New York to Southeast Asia with their popular mudpies and a whole range of Western comfort foods.

107 Ton Dat Tien, D7
5413 6523

S'cottage Restaurant - Café

Inspired by the mysterious wooden house in the Hansel and Gretel story, S'cottage serves up home-style meals in a spacious, fairy-tale inspired space.

SB-02 My Duc Residential Complex, Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
5411 1186

restaurants

CHINESE

Huong Vien Hunanese Restaurant

Serving China's little-known spiciest cuisine, the dishes of China's reddest province and the preferred taste of Chairman Mao, Huong Vien is well-decorated although a bit on the pricey side, with dishes averaging VND180,000.

559-S61, Sky Garden 2 Apartments, D7
5410 4368

Ming Dynasty

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

23 Nguyen Khac Vien, D7
5411 5555

INDIAN

Ashoka

Ashoka is a small chain of slightly more upscale Indian restaurants serving both Northern and Southern Indian cuisine including curries, naan and tandoori.

S9-1 Block R13, Bui Bang Doan, D7
5410 1989

ITALIAN

Sarpino's

Sarpino's Pizzeria serves authentic Italian pizzas as well as other Italian dishes such as oven-baked pasta, baked rice, wraps and salad, all at reasonable prices.

351 12-1 Grandview, Nguyen Cao Nam, D7
5412 2480
www.sarpinos.vn
9am - 10.30pm

Salt & Pepper Italian Restaurant

Located in the modern confines of The Crescent, this contemporary-styled Italian restaurant and pizzeria has an open kitchen and an outdoor terrace area. Serving up a range of pan-Italian cuisine, the menu includes a selection of salads, pastas, main courses, pizzas and desserts, all at affordable prices.

103 Ton Dat Tien, D7 | 5412 4848
www.saltpepper.com.vn
11am - 2pm, 6pm - 11pm

JAPANESE

Baby Spoon

Famous for its extensive omurice menu (fried rice wrapped inside an egg omelette), Baby Spoon offers contemporary Japanese-Western fusion cuisine. Baby Spoon omurice (green bell

peppers, bacon, tomato sauce omurice) is the house specialty.

SB 2-1 Parkview, D7
3822 3356

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
5412 3940

THAI

Nathalie's Phu My Hung

Nathalie's Phu My Hung is situated in an ideal location on a central corner in the district 7 high-profile metropolitan area. Serving delicious Thai cuisine in charming and romantic surroundings, the restaurant has two floors with a unified, simple decor and warm colourful tones throughout.

S9 Hung Vuong 3 Apartments, D7
5410 0822
nathaliesthairestaurant@yahoo.com
www.nathaliesthairestaurant.com

Thai Express- Crescent Plaza

Thai Express's interpretation of Thai food exhibits the best of the cuisine but with the edges softened for a global palate unused to the extremes of Thai style cooking. Averaging from 40,000 VND to 200,000 VND per dish, its price can't be beat for the same quality and deliciousness.

105 Ton Dat Tien, D7
5415 5556
manager@thaieexpress.vn
www.thaieexpress.vn

VIETNAMESE

Co Ba Vung Tau

Co Ba Vung Tau is a chain of traditional Vietnamese restaurants serving up their famous banh khot amongst an extensive menu of affordable Vietnamese food.

R1-72 Hung Gia 1, Bui Bang Doan, D7
5410 2027

ASIAN

Cham Charm

For years now, Cham Charm has been the word in impressive, luxurious, and prestigious local dining, and it certainly seems a contender for one of the world's most beautiful restaurants. Situated by the crescent lake in District 7, Charm is more like a museum than a dining venue, filled with the artefacts and sculpture of the Champa people and with gorgeous artworks and colourful hangings on the walls. The upstairs area is a wide-open terrace with plenty of tables for a more relaxing atmosphere. The cuisine is pan-Asian.

2 Phan Van Chuong, D7
5410 9999
chamcharm@rhaisilkcorp.com
www.rhaisilkcorp.com/restaurants/
chamcharm/index.html

WESTERN/INTERNATIONAL

Boomarang Bistro Saigon

Located in The Crescent by the Crescent lake, the spacious Boomarang Bistro Saigon serves Australian and other Western food in the most pedestrian friendly part of town.

107 Ton Dat Tien, D7
3841 3883
www.boomarang.com.vn

Cham Charm

Famous for their extensive international nightly buffet featuring 8 types of oysters, American Angus beef and

Australian filets, Cham Charm is devoted to Cham arts, culture and cuisine and is tastefully decorated with Cham artifacts and sculptural works.

02 Phan Van Chuong, Phu My Hung New Urban, D7
5410 9999

El Gaucho

El Gaucho Argentinian Steakhouse is an international chain of restaurants serving authentic Argentinian cuisine in a space reflecting modern yet rustic decor, giving it an inviting ambience and genuine atmosphere.

Unit CRI-12, The Crescent, D7
3825 1879
www.elgaucho.com.vn

Scott and Binh's Restaurant

A whole bunch of independent reviewers on tripadvisor can't be wrong - this unassuming little bistro is making big waves with visitors to the city and resident expats alike. Scott & Binh's offers comfort food for those craving a taste of the Western hemisphere, with the aim of giving guests a sense of having been invited into someone's home for dinner. With a menu replete with tasty sandwiches, burgers, pasta, and various other international dishes, this is an ideal guilty hideaway from Vietnamese cuisine for just one meal at least.

15-17 Cao Trieu Phat, D7
3920 8986
scottandbinhs@gmail.com
www.bizuhotel.com/main/pages/
scottbinhs.php
4pm - 11pm Tue-Fri; 11am - 3pm
Sat; 4pm - 11pm Sun

supermarkets

Annam Gourmet

An upmarket deli-grocery chain offering gourmet groceries, cheese, organic products, gluten-free products, fruit and vegetables, gourmet deli, wine and other beverages. This location also features a coffee lounge.

SB2-1 My Khanh 4, Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
5412 3263/64

Citimart

Despite being smaller in floor size than some other supermarkets, Citimart, a large Vietnamese supermarket chain, carries a wide selection of imported goods.

SC-10 Green View, Nguyen Luong Bang, D7
5411 2238
B3-4, B3-5, B3-6 Ha Huy Tap, D7
3412 8008
54-1 Hung Vuong 3, Nguyen Van Linh, D7
5410 1040

Lotte Mart

Lotte Mart is a South Korean supermarket chain with two branches in Ho Chi Minh City carrying a very wide range of products.

469 Nguyen Huu Tho, D7
3771 9899

Veggy's

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

554-1 Sky Garden 2, Pham Van Nghi, D7
5410 2613

business

BANKS

ANZ Bank

47 Phu My Hung
5410 1666
www.anz.com/vietnam/vn

HUMAN RESOURCES

Xage Consultancy

A human resource management consulting firm that develops people and organizations specializing in talent development, organizational development and outplacement.
35A-1-2, 1st Floor, Grandview C, Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
5412 3402

MARKETING & ADVERTISING

Xone FM

The first independently run radio station in Vietnam, Xone FM provides the latest and hottest songs in both English and Vietnamese via 10 channels throughout the country.
100 Nguyen Luong Bang, D7
5413 5341

REAL ESTATE AGENCIES

Anh Nguyen Real Estate

Anh Nguyen specializes in rental and sales of residences in Phu My Hung.
168 Ha Huy Tap, D7
090 958 2489

Vietnam Housing

Vietnam Housing specializes in helping Vietnam's foreign community with their long- and short-term real estate rental and purchasing needs.
R1-49, Hung Gia 3, D7
5412 5979

health & beauty

DENTISTS

Naomi Dental Clinic

A full service dental clinic under the direction of Japanese dentist Dr. Nakashima Mikio.
R4-45 Hung Phuoc 4, D7
5410 3397

HOSPITALS

FV Hospital

French Hospital - Vietnam is a multi-specialty hospital equipped with modern equipment and providing a full range of medical services including medical and health advice, diagnosis and surgical treatment at a single point.
6 Nguyen Luong Bang, D7
5411 3333

SALON

Yuri

A full-range Korean beauty salon in the Lotte complex, with a chief focus on beautiful hair styling.
3rd floor, Lotte Mart, 469 Nguyen Huu Tho, D7
3775 2990; 093 481 8085

shopping

HOME & FURNISHINGS

Mekong Quilts

Mekong Quilts offers sustainable employment to women from poor rural regions of Vietnam and Cambodia who craft fashionable, quality silk quilts and home wares.
517 Sky Garden I, Nguyen Van Linh, D7
6271 7758
www.mekong-quilts.org

LADIESWEAR

Aquamarine

Aquamarine and Xuan Thu are premium swimsuit brands for men, women and children.
3 Nguyen Luong Bang, D7
3842 7105

Vera

Vera is an international premium lingerie brand that is designed and made in Vietnam. The line offers cutting edge lingerie and is reasonably priced.
469 Nguyen Huu Tho, D7
3822 1152
www.vera.com.vn

education

SCHOOLS

Kindermusik

The center is a music, movement and English-language program for children from birth to 7 years. Each lesson promotes early literacy and English language acquisition, social skills and more. Kindermusik programs align with standards and/or requirements for the US, UK, UE, TESOL Pre-K and IB Primary years.
Ground Floor, Crescent Residence2, D7
kindermusik.edu.vn
090 709 9480

Renaissance International School Saigon

Opened in 2008, The Renaissance International School Saigon offers programs from Early Years to secondary curriculum, founded on the International British System. The four buildings on the school's one-hectare site include a 350-seat auditorium, a computer resource centre, gymnasium and 25 m swimming pool.
74 Nguyen Thi Thap, D7
3773 3171
www.rissaiagon.edu.vn

RMIT International University Vietnam

RMIT International University Vietnam is the Asian hub of Melbourne-based University RMIT - Australia's biggest tertiary institution. The largest offshore campus in the world, RMIT Vietnam offers programs from business and management to design and micro engineering.
702 Nguyen Van Linh, D7
3776 1300

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.
78 Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
5413 0901
www.ssis.edu.vn

Vstar School

Vstar School provides education from Grades 1-12 in a spacious 30,000m2 environment including a sports field and swimming pool.
Him Lam Residential Complex, Nguyen Huu Tho, D7
3821 3821

VLS Vietnamese Language School

Imparting genuine fluency in Vietnamese since 1994, VLS is one of the city's best-organised and most professional training centers devoted to the Vietnamese language, with classes for all levels.
R4 -28 Hung Phuoc 2, Le Van Thiem, D7
3602 6694

recreation

CINEMAS AND THEATRES

Lotte Cinema

Lotte Cinema (Nam Saigon) has 1,336 seats in 6 theaters, showing movies in English and Vietnamese.
3rd Floor, Lotte Mart, 469 Nguyen Huu Tho, D7
3775 2527

Megastar Cineplex

Showing movies in English and Vietnamese, and Megastar offers more cinema screens than anyone else in Vietnam. Both the Crescent Mall and Parkson Paragon location s have 8 theaters.
5th Floor, Crescent Mall, 101 Ton Dat Tien, D7
5412 2222
5th Floor, Parkson Paragon, 3 Nguyen Luong Bang, D7
5416 0088

SPORTS

The Crescent Wellness Club

Overlooking The Crescent complex's

lagoon, this multi-purpose and organically designed fitness and wellness centre offers an array of modern facilities including a state-of-the-art gym, group fitness classes, yoga sessions, a squash court, swimming pool, steam bath and nutrition bar.

3rd Floor, Crescent Plaza, 105 Ton Dat Tien, D7
5412 1277

Saigon South Golf Club

The closest golf course to HCMC's downtown area, Saigon South is a 9-hole, par 3 golf course and driving range situated behind FV hospital. There are foreign trainers to help golfers with golf skills. Equipment hire is available.
Nguyen Van Linh, D7
5411 2001

travel

HOTELS

Bizu Boutique Hotel Phu My Hung

The hotel's 24 guestrooms are all designed with guests' comfort in mind, featuring wireless Internet access along with all the basic facilities. Other features at the hotel include a restaurant, billiards, karaoke, 24hr room service 24hr, an elevator, laundry service/dry cleaning and meeting facilities.
15-17 Cao Trieu Phat, D7
5411 1008

Bizu Premier Hotel Phu My Hung

Twenty-five rooms spread over 5 floors provide modern comforts such as satellite/cable TV, bathtub, balcony/terrace, bathrobes, air conditioning.
7-9 Cao Trieu Phat, D7

Black Sea Hotel

Black Sea Hotel is a conveniently located 2-star hotel close to Lotte Mart and FV Hospital.
11-A-15-17 Hung Phuoc 2, D7
5412 1234
www.blackseahotel.com.vn

Boutique Garden Hotel

Newly opened in 2012 and conveniently located close to Phu My Hung, FV Hospital and Tam Duc Hospital, guests can choose from 20 rooms.
R3-84 Hung Phuoc 3, D7
5410 5941

Golf Hotel Phu My Hung

Opened in 2008, the 2-star Golf hotel has 38 international standard rooms that feature a complimentary buffet breakfast, tea & coffee making facilities, ADSL Internet and Wifi access.
R4/17- 19 Phan Khien Ich, D7
5410 4999

Hotel de Paris Saigon

The Hotel De Paris offers 24 budget rooms equipped with cable / satellite channels, a TV and free Wi-Fi. The hotel staff are available 24/7 and can help with booking tours and tickets. A concierge, a business centre and a lift are also available at the hotel.
4 Street 12, D7

Ibis Hotel Saigon South

The 3-star Ibis Hotel Saigon South is located in front of Saigon Exhibition and Convention Centre and only 15 minutes from the city centre. It features 140 rooms with free Wifi internet access, a restaurant/bar and 3 meeting rooms. There is a free Ibis shuttle available to and from the hotel to major corporate offices and the city centre.
73 Hoang Van Thai, D7
5410 1111
www.ibis.com

Laguna Hotel

Designed for both business and leisure travel, Laguna Hotel has 23 rooms and features room service, car park, Wi-Fi in public areas, a restaurant and laundry service/dry cleaning.
R3-84.85 Hung Gia 4 Internal Road, D7
5410 2888

Lucky Star Hotel Phu My Hung

Renovated in 2012, the Lucky Star Hotel

Phu My Hung's 15 guestrooms feature a variety of comforts such as bathtub, desk, complimentary wireless internet access and mini bar.

R3-36 Phan Khien Ich, D7
5410 3472

Milano Hotel

Milano Hotel offers 24 spacious and well-appointed rooms featuring large windows, a flat-screen cable TV and a mini-bar. Other services include laundry, ironing and currency exchange facilities.
R4-26 & 27 Hung Gia 4, Cao Trieu Phat , D7
5412 2225

One World Hotel

All 32 rooms at this 3-star hotel offers guests a refrigerator, air conditioning, television and desk. Also to be found at the hotel is a family room, elevator and room service.
16-18-20 Hung Gia 3, D7
5410 4455

Sabena Hotel

The Sabena Hotel sits in a quiet, tree-lined street just off the major Parkway Nguyen Van Linh. The Saigon Exhibition & Convention Center, RMIT International University and The Crescent Mall are only 1km away.
24 Noi Khu Hung Gia 4, D7
5416 1000

Sophia Hotel

Sophia Hotel features 12 guest rooms, each including air conditioning, mini bar, desk, shower and bathtub. The property also has a restaurant, concierge, safety deposit boxes, room service and Wi-Fi in public areas.
R3 60 Hung Phuoc 4, D7
5410 3689

Torino Hotel

Located on a peaceful and green neighborhood, this 10-room contemporary property is close to restaurants, cafés and shopping centers.
25 Road No. 2, D7
5410 5611

Vien Dong Hotel - Phu My Hung

All 58 rooms at this 2-star hotel come equipped with modern facilities including in-room safe, balcony/terrace and satellite/cable TV, all located 5km away from the city center.
R4-27, R4-28 Hung Phuoc 3, D7
5410 2494

SERVICED APARTMENTS

The Crescent

The Crescent is located along the Crescent Lake in the heart of Phu My Hung New City Centre, offering an exclusive high-class lifestyle for locals and expats. This area consists of a variety of green parks, restaurants, luxury apartments, retail shops and entertainment venues.
101 Ton Dat Tien, D7

Garden Court

Completed in 2009, Garden Court is a luxury apartment building located close to schools, supermarkets and shopping centers and a golf course.
Garden Court, Ton Dat Tien, D7

Garden Plaza

Garden Plaza is a high class apartment building designed after modern Singapore buildings, comprising of four inter-connected 8-storey blocks.
Garden Plaza, Ton Dat Tien, D7

The Panorama

A complex consisting of six medium- and high-rises, from 6 to 24 storeys tall, The Panorama has 276 individual apartments and 51 stores.
The Panorama, Ton Dat Tien, D7

Sky Garden

Sky Garden is a huge complex of apartments including 42 buildings with more than 3,000 individual apartments set on 10.4 hectares.
Sky Garden, Nguyen Van Linh, D7
5410 1616

Faces & Places

Events around HCMC



Exit the Dragon

Marking the end of celebrations for the 15 day Chinese Lunar New Year period, The Lantern Festival in Cho Lon was a parade of color in the form of dragons, lanterns, fans and banners.

IMAGES BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY





Living to Learn

Professor Ngô Bảo Châu, a Vietnamese mathematician and professor at the University of Chicago (USA), presented a dialogue on "How We Learn" at the British International School to an eager crowd of about 500 faculty and students.

IMAGES BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY





Show and Tell

Rebranded the Australian International School after a merger with ACG International School Vietnam, the AIS Open Day was an opportunity to visit the school's main campus in Thu Thiem, D2, featuring a new iMac Suite, dedicated studios for art, theatre, dance and music and world-class sporting facilities, including salt-water swimming pools and courts for basketball and tennis.

IMAGES BY QUINN RYAN MATTINGLY





All That Jazz

Choreographer John Huy Tran told the real story of jazz dance as it evolved through music hall and musicals to modern-day hip hop in a dance extravaganza organized by Dancenter.

IMAGES BY **NAM QUAN**



Carnival

On Mar. 14, Seventeen Saloon took a break from the wild wild west for one night and turned its pham ngu lao location into a Brazilian carnival with prizes for the best costumes, live samba music and a gameshow with prizes for quick witted guests.

IMAGES BY **NAM QUAN**

Oi Marketplace

Exclusive deals all over town just for Oi readers available throughout the month of April



STAY

PARKROYAL SAIGON

Located near the airport, the hotel's 186 rooms and suites are equipped with a full array of modern amenities along with complimentary Wi-Fi and cable internet connection. Dining options include the Garden Brasserie restaurant and the Lotus Bar offering signature cocktails and wines. Or have a relaxing treatment at the St. Gregory Spa.

Oi readers receive 15 percent off best available rates for rooms and 15 percent off at the Garden Brasserie and Lotus Bar.

309B-311 Nguyen Van Troi, Tan Binh, 3842 111, www.parkroyalhotels.com



EAT

ZEST BISTRO & CAFÉ

This bistro serves up tasty fusion food in an eclectic, airy space. The decor varies between urban chic (think whitewashed walls and monochromatic palettes) and quirky (Swiss-chalet meets propaganda-style art). The menu features appetizers such as crispy spicy tuna sushi rolls and garlic butter scallop crostini. Mains include Cajun crab cake with corn and bean sprout salad and BBQ baby back ribs. General Manager Jonathan Ly recommends the fish and chips and the curried mutton skewers. Mains range from VND88,000 - VND255,000.

Oi readers receive 20 percent off the total invoice.

5 Ton Duc Thang, D1, 3911 5599, www.facebook.com/ZestBistroCafe



VATEL SAIGON

A French-themed restaurant run by students of the International Business School in Hotel & Tourism Management under the supervision of internationally experienced managers and teachers, the 100-seat eatery offers a bistro-style lunch menu and an à la carte dinner menu.

The lunch menu changes every two weeks, but often features starters such as prawn salad with Provence style sauce (VND125,000) and homemade half-smoked duck salad (VND145,000) and mains along the lines of pan-fried fillet of sea bass in white butter and dill sauce (VND175,000) and roasted duck with honey and peppercorn (VND195,000).

Oi readers receive 20 percent off the Formula Bistro Lunch which is a Starter + Main Course or Main Course + Dessert for VND240,000 or Starter + Main Course + Dessert for VND290,000.

120Bis Suong Nguyet Anh, D1, 5404 2212, www.vatelsaigon.com



LEARN

DRAWING SAIGON

Artist Bridget March conducts small group drawing sessions in the relaxed surroundings of the Mekong Merchant restaurant in D2. Her motto is, "If you can write, you can draw." The sessions cover five essential secrets known to professional artists and aim to help students discover a new way of seeing the world. Costs include all drawing materials to take away, plus welcome drinks and some delights from the kitchen at the end of the session. Open to beginners and improvers.

Oi readers receive 25 percent off the regular price of US\$40 per session. Choose from Monday, April 22 from 9:30-11:30am or 6:00-8:00pm or Tuesday, May 7 from 9:30-11:30am.

0122 377 9074, www.facebook.com/drawingsaigon



LEARN

VIETNAM COOKERY CENTER

Known as the original cooking class in Ho Chi Minh City, the Vietnam Cookery Center offers up culinary classes with or without market visits. The center features individual cooking stations in a cheery space and a rotating menu that includes favorites like caramel pork in clay pot, beef filet salad with tamarind sauce and red bean pudding.

Oi readers receive a 15 percent discount on the class price and a free VCC apron (regularly US\$5).

26 Ly Tu Trong, 4th Floor, Suite 45, D1, 3827 0349 or 3823 8085, www.vietnamese-cooking-class-saigon.com

HOW IT WORKS

- Contact the business directly to make a reservation

- Identify yourself as an Oi reader to claim the exclusive deal


- Some restrictions may apply. See www.oivietnam.com for more details

Share your Oi Marketplace experience on our website!

Are you a business with a great deal to offer Oi readers?

Contact us at: editorial@oivietnam.com



You can 

Save Vietnam's endangered wildlife with WAR

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-  Name a wildlife.
-  Support food for wildlife.
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WAR
WILDLIFE AT RISK

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



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