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VIETNAM

MARCH 2014

1Year
Anniversary
Issue

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This Month's Cover

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Model: Tran Hoang Yen

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WINE & DINE

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Editor's Note

ISSUE NO. 12
MARCH 2014

Our Story

THIS ISSUE MARKS an important milestone for *Oi*. We are now one year old!

In the past year, we've striven to cover topics and stories that have been inspiring, controversial, decadent and everything in between. This issue is called *Oi Story* but it might as well be "Our Story" because *Oi* is meant to represent all of us, and what's near and dear to us, living in Vietnam. To celebrate our one year anniversary, we thought it'd be fun to let you in on what it takes to produce a monthly publication from scratch, from the mundane of meetings and deadlines to the sublime of snagging a great interview or writing a story that people really respond to. Also in this issue, our photographers give us a glimpse of the work required to produce a cover, from concept to execution, that readers will want to pick up.

While our small team here at *Oi* all contribute to the magazine, the largest personality of all is still Saigon herself and we're featuring the city as a gorgeous backdrop in two articles. Michael Arnold talks to historian Tim Doling on the city's disappearing historical architecture in *Living in the Past* and photographer Adam Robert Young captures random acts of ballet set against some of Saigon's most iconic locations. I'm sure you'll share my amazement at the strength and grace of these dancers as they elevate a park bench into the role of a supporting character, a shuttlecock into an air rocket and the act of eating *pho* into a balancing act.

Our travel lovers will appreciate the pair of destinations we have for you this month. For a convenient getaway, we're featuring hidden Hanoi with the help of a new and very cool hand-drawn map. Jura Cullen uncovers some of Hanoi's lesser known charms in *Treasure Map* while James Pham takes you to the tiny island of Lanai (Hawaii), a true paradise

that may soon be lost forever. As someone recently engaged, Lanai with its wild beaches, gorgeous resorts and closeknit community ethos has jumped to the top of my honeymoon destination list (and ideal retirement home)!

Growing up in the US, I remember watching *Yan Can Cook* as a kid on PBS, not necessarily because of the food (that part was just a bonus) but because of Chef Martin Yan's larger-than-life personality that was just so fun to watch. It was the rare show that parents and children could watch together, and plus the food he was cooking was more accessible to my mom compared to the fine French cuisine of Julia Child. I think I also had a soft spot for him because he reminded me of my dad, both with their thick Asian accents and skill in the kitchen. *Oi* talks to Chef Yan about what it was like to be an Asian pioneer before cooking shows took over the world and also on his love affair with Vietnamese cuisine.

Something else that you may not know about me is that I'm all about the discounts. Whether it's clipping coupons, subscribing to frequent diners cards at restaurants or ferreting out specials and promotions, I go to great lengths to snag a deal. In *Strength in Numbers*, James Pham covers the pros and cons of the social buying scene in Vietnam, and whether there are some deals which are really too good to be true.

I'd like to speak for all of us at *Oi* to say "Thank you!" for coming on this journey with us over the past year. Here's to many more! ■

CHRISTINE VAN

Managing Editor



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MARCH 6 - 7 - 8

What: Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde Theater Performance

Where: The Opera House, 7 Cong Truong Lam Son, D1; 7:30pm

About: The ADGE and TNT Theatre Britain will present the thriller-cum-horror comedy Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. The production is being adapted to the stage by the same artistic team that created Gulliver's Travels, Frankenstein and Brave New World. Director Paul Stebbings has also directed recent TNT/ADGE productions such as King Lear, Macbeth and Romeo and Juliet. The company's style combines dynamic physical theater with specially composed music, songs and striking visual imagery, adding a dash of audience participation to create a truly theatrical event. The production is touring over 20 countries in the world, from Britain to Vietnam. The performances will be in English with Vietnamese subtitles.

Contact: Tickets cost VND600,000 and can be purchased at the box office at The Opera House (left wing), 7 Cong Truong Lam Son, D1; or call 3829 9976

MARCH 7

What: 7th Installment of Heart Beat

Where: Cargo Bar, 7 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4; 8pm

About: Techno scene developer Heart Beat Saigon presents an eclectic mix of performers including DJs Cybersnack, Marshall White, Pav Parotte and Konka. Entrance fee costs VND100,000 and VND50,000 for students.

Contact: Buy tickets at ticketbox.vn or email info@heartbeatsaigon.com

MARCH 7

What: Eclectic Night

Where: The Observatory, corner of Le Lai and Ton That Tung, D1; 10pm till late

About: The Observatory presents DJ Maft Sai, known for his vast eclectic and unique collection of rare vinyl. He will showcase years of his extensive research, digging and DJ-ing as the boss of an eclectic record label. Entrance fee costs VND150,000.

Contact: Call 3925 9415 for tickets and inquiries

MARCH 7

What: Hong Kong Bound: AAF Preview Exhibition

Where: Craig Thomas Gallery, 27i Tran Nhat Duet, D1; 6pm - 8pm

About: The exhibition is a preview of selected works by 10 artists that CTG will be showing at the Affordable Art Fair (AAF) in Hong Kong. The works comprise of the figurative and abstract, mixed media, oil and acrylic painting, woodburn sculpture and installation. The artists included are Lim Khim Ka Ty, Bui Thanh Tam, Lieu Nguyen Huong Duong, Pham Huy Thong, Tran Minh Tam, Nguyen The Hung, Bui Tien Tuan, Tran Quoc Tuan, Luong Luu Bien and Ngo Van Sac.

Established in 2009, CTG is a natural evolution of its founder's decade long involvement in the Vietnamese art scene and the relationships developed with artists, curators and collectors during that time. The gallery is focused on supporting the development of young, emerging to mid-career Vietnamese artists and providing them with a platform to present their work to a wider audience.

Contact: For more information, email: cthomasgallery@gmail.com



MARCH 8

What: Celebrating Women's Day with a Handmade Card Workshop

Where: VinGallery, 6 Le Van Mien, D2; 10:30am - 12:30pm

About: To celebrate Women's Day, VinGallery will host a card-making workshop. You can also try out their DIY card session workshop for VND70,000 per person. You will get a complimentary flower to give her showing how much you appreciate her.

Contact: Visit www.vingallery.com for more info



MARCH 8

What: Art Market

Where: VinGallery, 6 Le Van Mien, D2; 10am - 4pm

About: Art Market features handmade arts and crafts, paintings, drawings and limited edition prints, ceramics, sculpture, handmade jewelry, homewares and gift items. Photographers are welcome to showcase their works. This is a great opportunity for art lovers to come and grab first-hand designs.

Contact: Visit www.vingallery.com for more info



MARCH 8 - 15 - 22 - 29

What: Saigon Soul Pool Parties

Where: Splash Bar, New World Saigon Hotel, Le Lai, D1; 10am - 11pm

About: Saigon Soul Pool Parties aim to become the liveliest ongoing event in the city with parties every Saturday. At each event, they will have DJs spinning tunes, a fully operational bar with drinks from VND50,000 as well as local restaurants setting up food stations. The New World spa will be offering outdoor massages, with local artisans selling their creations, giveaways, hotel promotions, swimwear retailers and more. Entry fee is VND100,000 and free for hotel guests.

Contact: For more info, call Dallas Waines at 0122 734 8128 or email dallas.waines@gmail.com



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MARCH 13

What: Canvas & Wine: Life Drawing and Painting

Where: VinSpace Art Studio, 6 Le Van Mien, D2; 6:30pm - 9pm

About: Painting from life is a rewarding experience. Start drawing a model for short poses and work towards a long pose to develop your own work, with the help of an instructor. No previous experience in painting or life drawing is needed.

Contact: Visit www.vingallery.com for more info

MARCH 15

What: Australian International School (AIS) Open Day, 9am - 12pm

Where: Thu Thiem Campus, 264 Mai Chi Tho (East-West Highway), D2

About: An opportunity to meet the school's students and teachers, enjoy a range of educational activities at the school (suitable for adults and children), watch exclusive performances by AIS students and experience an Aussie BBQ.

Contact: For more info, visit: www.aisvietnam.com/opacity

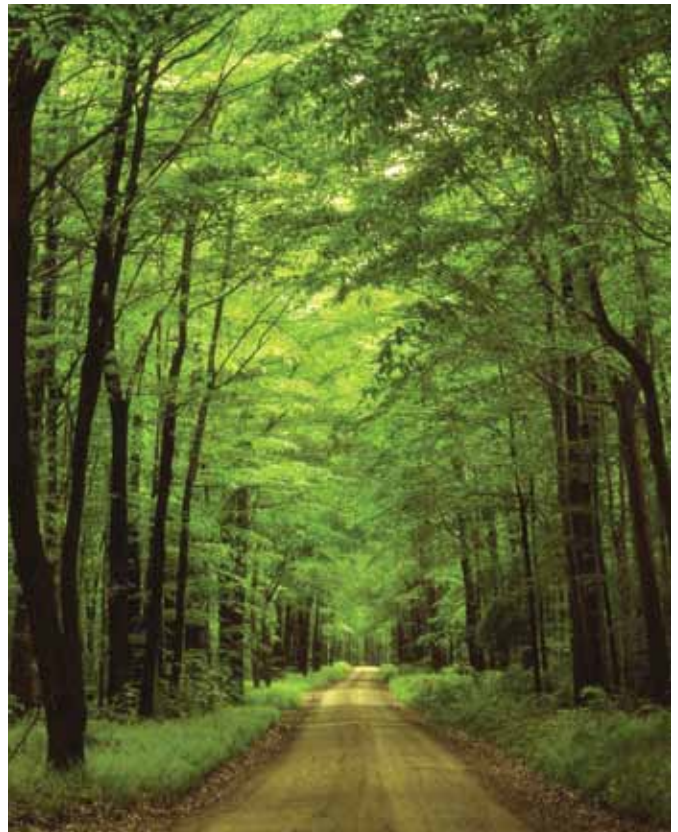
MARCH 18

What: Apocalaugs Nows!

Where: Cargo Bar, 7 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4; 8pm

About: A night of stand-up comedy featuring Daniel Kinno from the US and Dave Callan from Australia, with supporting Saigon comedians Steve Jackson and Jeremy Ginsberg. Entrance fee is VND250,000 and gets you a free bottle of Magners cider.

Contact: Visit www.facebook.com/saigoncomedyclub



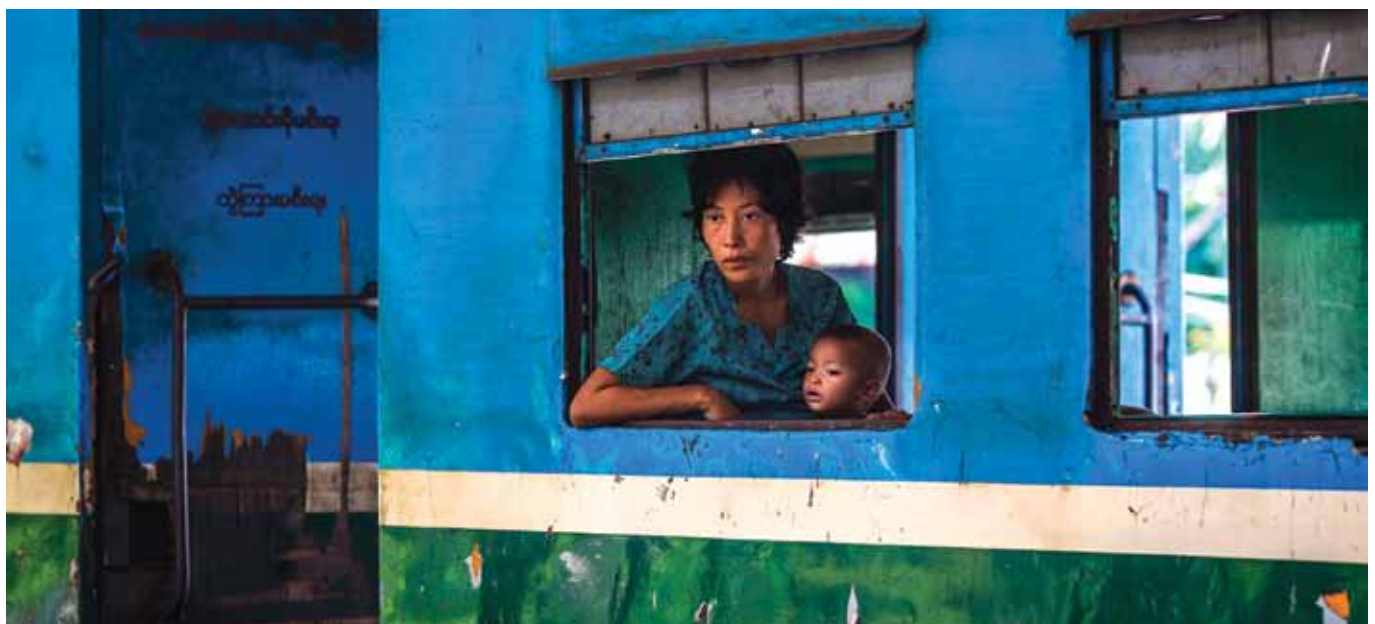
MARCH 15 - 16

What: Ta Lai Trophy - Corporate Challenge

Where: Cat Tien National Park, Dong Nai

About: Open to 33 companies with teams of two runners, the challenge will require running in the jungle, mountain biking, swimming and kayaking. The level is extreme (5-7 hours), therefore only suitable for experienced racers or runners. Participating companies are charged a fee of USD195 while racers are required an entry fee of USD135.

Contact: For registration and further details, visit www.talai-adventure.vn



MARCH 15 - 16 - 22 - 23

What: Lightroom, Photoshop & Photography Workshops

Where: Saigon Hub, 27 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D1

About: Saigon School of Imaging offers courses in Lightroom (15th & 16th), Photoshop (22nd), and photography (23rd) led by professional photographer Quinn Ryan Mattingly. It promises to help you learn the best way to shoot and edit stunning images. All courses are eight hours in duration (9am - 6pm), with a one-hour lunch break. One-on-one courses are also available.

Contact: For more info, email quinn@quinnmattingly.com or visit www.saigonimaging.com

MARCH 19

What: CBC Networking Night

Where: Sofitel Saigon Plaza, 17 Le Duan, D1; 6pm - 8:30pm

About: Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam invites you to join them in an evening of drinks and networking. Mix and mingle and share some stories while expanding your network and enjoying some canapés and drink specials. Come out and meet some new contacts from all different types of industry sectors and other business chambers. Free entrance for CanCham members and co-hosting members provided you bring your membership card while non-members are required to pay an entrance fee of VND50,000.

Contact: Email hcmc@canchamvietnam.org or call 3824 3754 for more info



MARCH 20

What: Canvas & Wine: Depicting The Dance

Where: VinSpace Garage, 95 Pasteur, D1; 6:30pm - 9pm

About: Figures in movement are a traditional topic in art and culture. For this session, the model will pose in several movements that will allow you to paint a scene of figures dancing, like the influences of Matisse and Picasso. No previous experience in life drawing or figure is needed.

Contact: Visit www.vingallery.com for more info

MARCH 20 - 21

What: Mamma Mia!

Where: Australian International School, Thu Thiem Campus, East-West Highway, D2

About: A mother. A daughter. Three possible dads. And a trip down the aisle you'll never forget! The smash hit musical based on the songs of ABBA, has been reinvented by students of the Australian International School (AIS) and performances will be available over two nights at 6:30pm. Choreographed, staged, propped, directed and performed by the Secondary students of the Australian International School in District 2, the musical is a must-see. Free admission and tickets are available at the AIS Reception.

Contact: For more info, visit www.aisvietnam.com or visit the Reception desk at any of the three campuses for tickets.

MARCH 20 - 21 - 22


What: Two by Jim Cartwright

Where: (March 20 & 21) La Habana, 6 Cao Ba Quat, D1; (March 22) McSorley's Square, 4 Thao Dien, D2; 7:30pm

About: Saigon Players, as part of its 10th season, presents Jim Cartwright's award-winning tour-de-force play, *Two*. The play is about a night in a pub owned by a bickering husband and wife. Throughout the play, you will see the pub's different customers and their quirks and issues as well as the fragile relationship between the landlord and the landlady. The play will take the audience through a rollercoaster ride of human emotions, and promises an engaging, heartwarming night.

Tickets cost VND200,000. Proceeds of the show will go to Operation Smile (www.operationssmile.org.vn) and Friends For Street Children Association (www.ffscvn.org).

Contact: For inquiries and bookings, email saigonplayers@gmail.com




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MARCH 21 - 30

What: One Way or Another: Contemporary Art Exhibition

Where: VinGallery, 95 Pasteur, D1 and 6 Le Van Mien, D2

About: One Way or Another brings together artists from across the world who work within the genre of international art. The exhibition includes artists with roots in Vietnam, France, South Africa, Spain, the US, Australia, Indonesia and the UK. The title of this exhibition suggests that there is not, whatever the country, a formulaic way of making or seeing art. These artists and their work reinvent different kinds of languages and initiate a new set of conversations that highlight the multidimensional ways of conceptualizing and producing art today. The diversity of their work highlights boundless influences, from a wide array of art historical references to popular culture, drawing on both local and international cultures

Contact: Visit www.vingallery.com for more info



MARCH 21 - 23

What: Saigon Model United Nations

Where: Saigon Exhibition and Conference Centre, 799 Nguyen Van Linh, D7

About: Hosted by Renaissance International School Saigon, Saigon Model United Nations (MUN) is run internationally in high schools and universities whereby students, who each represent different countries in the United Nations, research and write resolutions to world problems and then go on to debate using parliamentary procedures. This is a training ground for those future diplomats, leaders of NGOs and those who enjoy the cut and thrust of a debate.

Contact: Email ngalth@renaissance.edu.vn or call 090 888 3465 for details

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MARCH 22

What: Family Fun Day

Where: Saigon Star International School, Thanh My Loi, D2; 11am - 4pm

About: Saigon Star International School will host its 4th Annual Family Fun Day, opening its doors to the whole community and welcoming everyone to join a fun-filled day of activities. There will be bouncy castles by Mr. Bouncy, pony rides by Saigon Pony Club, arts and crafts corner by VinSpace, face painting and lots of games on the school fields. Black Cat will be on hand with a barbecue, Al Fresco's will be providing pizza and there will be treats like ice cream, popcorn and candyfloss throughout the day. Entry is free and transport will be available from select locations in Binh Thanh, An Phu and Phu My Hung.

Contact: Call 3742 7827 for more information

MARCH 26

What: New Trends for Business Intelligence

Where: New World Hotel, 76 Le Lai, D1; 1:30pm - 4:30pm

About: CEO and IT professionals are invited to join TRG at the "New Trends for Business Intelligence" seminar to learn about the new trends of business intelligence and how to turn data to valuable assets for improved performance and best practice in implementing business intelligence.

Contact: Contact Pham Thi Thao Linh at linh.pham@trginternational.com or 3823 6900 for inquiries

MARCH 26

What: AmCham Palooza Party

Where: Renaissance Riverside, 8-15 Ton Duc Thang, D1; 6pm- 8:30pm

About: The monthly Palooza Party organized by American Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam is a platform to develop friendships, networking opportunities and information exchange. People from all age groups are welcome to attend. Everyone is advised to wear business casual attire. Admission is free for members and VND100,000 for non-members.

Contact: Email Lily Nguyen at contact@amchamvietnam.com or call 3824 3563

MARCH 29

What: The Laguna Lang Co Triathlon

Where: Laguna Lang Co, Cu Du Village, Loc Vinh Commune, Phu Loc, Thua Thien Hue

About: Featuring a 1.8k swim, 62k bike ride and 12k run, the triathlon will be complemented by a team relay, a duathlon, and a Fun Run.

Contact: To register, contact Go Adventure Asia at www.goadventureasia.com/LLT/lltreg.htm



NOW UNTIL - APRIL 25

What: Art Labor's Unconditional Belief Exhibition

Where: San Art, 3 Me Linh, Binh Thanh; 10:30am - 6:30pm

About: Unconditional Belief is an exhibition by collective Art Labor (visual artists Truong Cong Tung and Phan Thao Nguyen and curator/writer Arlette Quynh Anh Tran), who imaginatively explores the concept of 'belief' in Vietnam by examining particular site and historical accounts. The exhibition surveys different layers of belief - from human dependence on spiritual power or sacred objects in healing sickness, to the use of education to disseminate religious ideas. Unconditional Belief is not simply an artwork display; it also experiments with the possibility of reading an exhibition as an artistic research book. Entering this book / exhibition, the viewers can walk in, touch, see and read; they will encounter turning points of the artists' investigations, traces of their references from academic sciences, hints to decode the artworks and even the collective's plan for future projects.

Contact: For more info, visit www.san-art.org



NOW UNTIL - APRIL 25

What: Daisy, Daisy - Ode of Digits Exhibition

Where: Phuong My Flagship Store, 81 Le Thanh Ton, D1

About: Daisy, Daisy - Ode of Digits is an exhibition that explores the poetry behind the relationship of humans and technology. Using motifs of the science-fiction genre such as metallic materials, the red light of a spaceship control center, precise laser-cut components and 3D drawn figures, Sandrine depicts various persona of her ideal futuristic woman, the one whom both humans and machines fall in love with, like Daisy in the song "Daisy Bell."

Born in France, Sandrine Llouquet has lived in Vietnam since 2005. She graduated from École Pilote Internationale d'Art et de Recherche - Villa Arson in 1999.

Contact: Email tra@san-art.org for details

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The country by numbers



VND24,510 AND VND25,010

are the new gasoline prices for 92 RON and 95 RON, respectively, after a VND300 per liter increase last month. The price of diesel was also up VND240 per liter and is now priced at VND22,720 per liter. Kerosene and FO were raised by VND230 and VND200 per liter, respectively.

The average price of 92 RON, the most commonly used grade of gasoline in Vietnam, has risen to USD115.61 a barrel over the last month, while diesel has reached USD122.

Last year Vietnam's fuel prices saw five hikes and six decreases.



250

bikes will be available for rent for VND4,000-VND5,000 per hour under a pilot project in Hoan Kiem District, Hanoi. In a recent government-supported project, Hanoi is among the five major cities in Vietnam that will implement the bike rentals program to encourage people to use this environmentally-friendly means of transport.

The vehicles will be managed by electronic cards. Bicycles for rent will be available at bus stops or tourist attractions, especially the Old Quarter. The four other cities in this scheme are HCMC, Hai Phong, Danang and Can Tho.

70

sets of remains were excavated for DNA tests in a telepathy-related scam. Self-proclaimed 'telepath' Nguyen Van Thuy, 54, and his wife, Man Thi Duyen, who also professes to be a 'telepath,' were arrested for faking war martyr remains, earning hundreds of thousands of dollars from the Vietnam Bank for Social Policies for each 'find.' According to VTV channel's investigation, the graves actually contained animal bones. With each set of 'remains,' the bank paid Thuy VND75 million.

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30%

tax proposed for SMS voting and football prediction services. Programs that invite customers to predict football results or cast votes for contestants in reality TV shows by sending text messages should be subject to an excise tax worth 30 percent, the Ministry of Finance has proposed.

Customers are currently charged VND5,000 to VND15,000 for each text message sent to such services, while the normal cost is only VND350 per message. The ministry said SMS voting and prediction is similar to betting, so it must be treated the same as gambling and lottery businesses, which are currently subject to excise taxes.

5.44

kilometer bridge over the sea in northern Hai Phong has begun construction. Upon completion in 2017, the bridge will be the longest of its kind in Vietnam and among the longest sea-crossing bridges in Southeast Asia.

The project covers a 15.63 km traffic line linking Tan Vu – an area at the end of the Hanoi-Hai Phong expressway in Trang Cat Ward of Hai An District – to the port of Lach Huyen on Cat Hai Island.

The line will include about 10.19 km of access road leading to the bridge. It will be 16 meters wide, covering four lanes for vehicles and two safety corridors. Meanwhile, the access road will be 29.5 meters wide for vehicles to run at 80/kph.

The total cost of the project is estimated at VND11,849 billion, of which VND10,049 billion will be sourced from the Japanese ODA, and the remaining amount will come from the Vietnamese government's counterpart capital.



200

kilogram shark made an appearance in the central province of Khanh Hoa, making it the first long-tail shark to be spotted in the area. According to the Nha Trang Oceanography Institute, long-tailed sharks typically live around 60-90 kilometers from shore and 366 meters under the sea. It is not a danger to humans and has been ranked as "vulnerable" or endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

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The Bulletin

Promotions and News in HCMC and beyond...



TREAT YOUR LOVED ONE

Sandy Beach Non Nuoc Resort in Danang is offering a honeymoon package at VND5,900,000, valid from March 1 to December 14, 2014. It includes round trip airport-resort transfer, three days/two nights accommodation in a Bungalow Garden View, breakfast in room or daily buffet breakfast at Alamanda Restaurant, romantic candlelight dinner for two and a 45-minute spa treatment per couple with the choice of a head, shoulder or foot massage.

Other benefits include welcome drink and flower bouquet upon arrival, free bottle of sparkling wine and honeymoon room decoration on arrival, free late check-out until 6pm subject to room availability, two complimentary drinks at Garden Pub, free upgrade to higher room category subject to room availability, extension stays with special rate at VND2,000,000/room/night inclusive of breakfast; 10 percent discount for F&B and 15 percent for spa services. Contact Sandy Beach Non Nuoc Resort at cdv@chr.co.th or (051) 1396 1777.



MEDITATE ON IT

Huy, a Yoga Ashtanga certified instructor, is offering a meditation class (a Buddhist practice called the Samatha method) for free. Classes are available in English and Vietnamese. On Wednesdays, classes are held from 7pm - 8pm (Smile Group), 9:30am - 10:30am on Saturdays (Shri Yoga) and 2pm - 3pm on Sundays (Smile Group). Smile Group classes are held at 38/16A Tran Khac Chan, D1 (near Tan Dinh Market) while Shri Yoga classes are at 54/2/25 Bach Dang, Tan Binh (near the airport).

Huy has trained under Tirisula Yoga (Singapore) by Master Paalu and Master Weiling. He visited India several times to study Samatha and Vipassana Meditation (Buddhist techniques) at Gaenka 10-day Vipassana retreats and at Lokaratna Buddha Vihara in Bangalore under Venerable Vinayarakkhita Thera. He believes that **asanas** (yogic physical postures) brings awareness, releases stress, calms the body and mind, thus, creating the right conditions for a peaceful Samatha meditation and Pranayama practice (yogic breathing techniques). For enrollment and details, contact Huy at huy.lekhac@yahoo.com or 090 688 7468.



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CELEBRATE WOMEN'S DAY

To make your Women's Day memorable, **InterContinental Asiana Saigon** (corner of Hai Ba Trung and Le Luan, D1) offers a dinner from 6pm - 10pm and lunch buffet from 10:30am - 2:30pm on March 8. Market 39 restaurant offers a dinner buffet at VND1,099,000, inclusive of a free flow of wines, soft drinks, beer, water and signature cocktails. Meanwhile, Yu Chu Chinese restaurant offers "all you can eat" dim sum starting from VND500,000 per person including Chinese tea and soft drinks. Call (08) 3520 9099 or email dine@icasianasaiгон.com for information or to make a reservation.



HONG KONG AIRLINES LAUNCHES HCMC ROUTE

From March 17, Hong Kong Airlines will fly three times a week between Hong Kong and Ho Chi Minh City. Flights will be every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, leaving Hong Kong at 12:20pm and arriving in Ho Chi Minh City at 1:55pm; departing Ho Chi Minh City at 3pm on the return flight, arriving 6:30pm. Combined with the current Hanoi-Ho Chi Minh City route and new routes, Hong Kong Airlines will offer 10 weekly flights between Vietnam. For more ticket information, visit the Hong Kong aviation website www.hkairlines.com.



DENTAL BREAKTHROUGH IN VIETNAM

In November 2013, the first case of nerve repositioning for dental implant surgery was reported in Vietnam. The surgery was performed by Dr Vo Van Nhan of Nhan Tam Dentist Center. The 59-year-old patient, Nguyen Van Luom, lost his entire lower jaw from a gunshot 40 years ago and before his surgery in 2013, had a prosthetic jaw.

Nerve repositioning is an advanced surgery technique that can only be practiced in developed countries. It is far superior compared to other implant techniques and is seen as new hope for patients like Luom. The surgery has been performed by only 44 doctors worldwide. Vo Van Nhan is the first and only dentist confirmed capable of performing nerve repositioning surgery in Vietnam.



CONNECTING PEOPLE & SPORTS

If you're a swimmer, a cyclist, a runner, or all three, Ho Chi Minh City can be a fantastic place to do sports if you know where to look. A new website, www.triglobe.net, aims to connect people in HCMC who are interested in sports with information on where to find training buddies, exchange training routes, arrange meeting points, and provide info like where to find a bike. The website will be updated regularly.



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KFC NOW A CLICK AWAY

Food delivery marketplace foodpanda has partnered with global leading restaurant franchise KFC. From now on, customers can order the whole KFC menu online at www.foodpanda.vn.

In Vietnam, foodpanda already entered partnerships with Al Fresco's, Pepperonis, Subway, Tokyo Deli and Thai Express. On a global level, foodpanda cooperates with McDonald's, Pizza Hut, Domino's, Subway, Papa John's, Starbucks and 7-Eleven.

KFC is the largest fast food company in Vietnam, launched here in 1997 and now boasting 134 locations. Founded in 2012, foodpanda provides an online and mobile marketplace with a wide gastronomic range, enabling restaurants to take their menus online and extend their customer base.



CURING THE FEET & HANDS

InterContinental Danang Sun Peninsula has just launched the PEDI:MANI:CURE STUDIO by Bastien Gonzalez. The famous Bastien treatments are much sought after by movie stars and international A-listers and are now available at the resort. Bastien selects and trains every member of his team in his treatment protocols, guaranteeing high standards across the board. Benoit Perie, a French pedicurist who previously managed the Spanish Bastien's Studio in Barcelona and the Turkish one in Bodrum, manages the Danang team.

Among the indulgent treatments at the resort is the award-winning Bastien's Duo; a 75-minute synchronized treatment by two therapists simultaneously, focusing on nails, hands and feet, for ultimate manicure and pedicure.

For more info, visit www.danang.intercontinental.com.



AO DAI MUSEUM

This 20,000 square meter museum located at Long Thuan Garden House in District 9 is the first in Vietnam to display *ao dais* (women's traditional wear). More than 500 *ao dais*, with some dating back 84 years ago, are displayed, and the *phuong bao* (phoenix dress) will also be showcased. Ao dai designer Hoang, a former lecturer at the Ho Chi Minh City University of Architecture in 2006, initiated the museum. Admission costs VND100,000 for tourists, VND30,000 for the handicapped, and free for the elderly and children. Proceeds of the admission are used to promote Vietnamese dress culture and traditional arts.

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Behind the Covers

Our photographers reveal the challenges of shooting a cover



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Old lady laughing, Taking It To The Streets (March 2013), Discovering Cho Lon (May 2013)

CREATING *Oi*'S FIRST cover was a unique process, because we were essentially setting the tone and style for all future covers. I believed it was important to aim for consistency, and so I knew we had to get it right from the start. As my background is in documentary photography, I like to capture interesting characters and emotions. Our Creative Director and I were considering an image of an old lady laughing as a cover but, as the opinions of the rest of the team were taken into consideration, it became clear that it was perhaps not the best direction to take to launch the new publication. My main

goal was to have each cover incorporate a portrait, or at least feature a person and a scene related to the inside content in a fairly prominent way. This, combined with the generally-accepted philosophy that attractive faces help to sell magazines, led us toward the direction that's still being maintained today for *Oi* covers, but in each photographer's own style. The one I still like the most is the *Discovering Cho Lon* (May 2013) cover. I just like the feel of the image that shooting in a pagoda provided us, as well as the model's expression and body language. The

colors in the background, the model's dress and even the orange of the *Oi* masthead just work really well together to create a beautiful scene and atmosphere. If I had to choose a second favorite, it would be either the *Eating Vietnam* (June 2013) or the last cover I did, *Generation* (October 2013). I just really like the way these images translated into a glossy A4 cover, but also the ambiance and mood of the shots as well.

– Quinn Ryan Mattingly, Photographer at Large (March 2013 – October 2013)



FROM TOP: Adam's alternative indoor shot, Saigon's Shopping Secrets (December 2013), A Family Affair (February 2014)

SAIGON'S SHOPPING SECRETS

December 2013

The pressure was on when I was assigned my first cover shoot for the December issue. As a new member of the team, I knew I needed to bring my A game and prove myself.

The cover story was about shopping, and as we were tossing around the ideas of a stylish woman with shopping bags in front of one of Ho Chi Minh City's shopping malls, I immediately visualised something very specific. Most mornings I drop my wife off at work in Crescent Mall and have always admired the building's distinct crescent shape. I knew that was where I'd get the shot I was after.

I also knew there would be definite challenges to make it work. First, I had to deal with some difficult conditions. In order for the building's facade to be illuminated nicely, I had to shoot when the sunlight shone most brightly on it. This, however, would then become an unflattering light for our model. There would have to be skillful control of the lighting by balancing the sunlight with studio lights and other variable neutral-density filters. I had also planned to take alternative images inside the mall as a back up. Finally, with our Creative Director Paolo's contact at Crescent Mall, we were able to obtain a permit to shoot at the venue.

On the morning of the shoot, I arrived to

find something quite unexpected. A shrine had been set up outside the entrance of the mall with candles, incense and food offerings – inconveniently right where the shoot was to take place. People knelt in front of the altar and prayed for what I imagine must have been blessings for the prosperity of the mall.

The situation wasn't any better inside the mall, as the area I'd planned to use to create the indoor shots was now obstructed by a huge impromptu stage for a fashion promotion, and a film crew was using the one decent location that wasn't ruined by the stage.

Thankfully, by the time hair and make-up was done on the model and lighting was set up, the shrine was gone and we immediately started shooting the outdoor images. I did a few interior photos, just in case, but there was no way they would be as strong as the outside ones – I was trying to shoot in the small area not obstructed by the stage, and then the lighting started playing up – so I called it a day.

The one we went with for the cover was exactly the way I'd imagined it would be. Even her dress was the same color as the café umbrellas in the background, though, so everything tied in nicely. It's a shot I'm proud to have created.

– **Adam Robert Young**, Staff Photographer



A FAMILY AFFAIR

February 2014

John & Tran are the owners of a restaurant in District 7 so they're very busy people and could only arrange to do the shoot for a short time – two hours. Working within this time limit, I had to plan everything perfectly. Within those short two hours, I had to brief both John and Tran on the content and direction of the shoot, do their make-up, style their clothes and ready them for the camera.

Even with all this planning, problems abounded. Ethan, the couple's son, was a challenge to work with. He's an exuberant little boy, with a lot of energy! Once we had dressed him up in a traditional ao dai, he couldn't stop running and jumping around. During the photo shoot, his parents and I had to chase after him, shoot, scramble to pose whenever he stopped for a break, shoot again... and pray that the

results would be good.

A couple of times when I was just about to press the shutter, he ran out of the frame completely!

During the shoot, Ethan also wanted to do what most kids do – watch cartoons. So we let him watch his cartoons in the hope that maybe he would slow down a bit. But then once the TV was on, he immediately stood still and became expressionless. He was so focused on the TV that he wouldn't pose despite all of our coaxing.

Eventually, his parents had him sitting between them and I acted like a clown while shooting, getting them to smile and laugh for the photos. In the end, we got the photos and the family looked happy and radiant on the cover.

– **Ngoc Tran**, Staff Photographer ■





Fine Print

A day in the life of *Oi's* Managing Editor

TEXT BY **CHRISTINE VAN** IMAGE BY **ADAM ROBERT YOUNG**

I READ RECENTLY that there are over 200 million blogs on the internet. Add to that online publications, news outlets and specialty websites and it's obvious that there is no lack of reading material available at the click of a mouse or the swipe of a finger. But there is something visceral about newspapers and magazines that I hope will never be replaced by e-ink and a screen. It's the feel of paper against skin, the smell of newsprint, the anticipation of what the next page holds. I suppose that's why I've devoted the last eight years to the magazine industry. It's the allure of creating a beautiful publication completely and utterly from scratch. It's searching out the untold stories or finding a new spin on a story that's been told hundreds of times before. It's working with some of the most creative people I've ever come across who are just as passionate about taking that perfect photo, writing that perfect line, creating the perfect layout. Sure, I routinely wake up in cold sweats with the fear that we won't be able to fill pages with quality content, meet a print deadline or snag a coveted interview, but it's all part of the job.

9am It's Monday which means it's the first of three weekly acupuncture sessions. I board the #35 bus headed to the nunnery on Ton Duc



Thang. The founding sister who everyone affectionately calls "Grandma" greets me by name as she has for the last few years, since I've been coming for treatment for carpal tunnel syndrome, an occupational hazard. While a nun inserts needles into my elbows, wrists and the tips of my fingers, I make a mental to-do list for the day which includes an editorial meeting, lunch with a client and a media event. The tingling, pulsating sensation throughout my hands and arms is strangely soothing.

10am I spend the next hour or so working through my inbox which can be my absolute favorite or most dreaded part of the day. The first email, though, gets the day off to a positive start. It's from the husband of someone we interviewed, writing to say he's

happy with the second portrait shot we took of his wife. (This, too, is an occupational hazard, managing people's self-perceptions, especially when it comes to having a photo published in print. "Do I really look like that?" and "Can you photoshop out [fill in the blank here]?" have been common questions.)

Next is an email from a reader with a suggestion for a Saigon Mythbusters question and another from an expat who's just opened up a gourmet food stand. Quirky! I make a note to check it out. The next email warms my heart. It's from an artist who was touched by our story on Mimi, the transgender funeral performer. She's asking for *Oi* to arrange an introduction for a collaboration on a project dealing with censorship, oppression and transgender issues. I share the email with the team, as these really mean a lot to us, knowing that the stories we're producing are having a real impact on our readers.

Then come two story pitches. The first is about a walk along the Saigon River, but the tone is slightly off. It's written for readers who don't know the city at all, and that's not our core readership. I suggest a rewrite; we'll see what happens. The second is from a freelance writer and it's a travel article about a destination we haven't covered. I quickly write back to see if the writer has high quality photos to go with the article. At *Oi*, we love working with writers, experienced or not, who have fresh ideas and unique stories to tell.

11:15am Bulletin (openings, promotions, etc.), Datebook (events) and Faces & Places are regular features of the magazine, to keep our readers up-to-date with the latest developments around the city, whether they be a hot new restaurant opening or a performance down at the Opera House. With something happening every night of the week here, I have to be selective, deciding which will interest our readers while also showcasing a unique concept or event. 2013 was a good year for Faces & Places because it was Vietnam's 40th anniversary of diplomatic ties with a host of countries, each with their own unique cultural way of celebrating it, leading to some great photo ops. Today, Minh emails me with news of their Barcamp event and I pencil it in. While we scour the web for events, it's also appreciated when readers and event managers email us with their info.

12pm Because *Oi* isn't sold, advertisers are our lifeblood. Today, I meet with a

prospective client who wants to know how *Oi* fits with their brand. Over a turkey wrap and a coffee, we discuss the different ways we can support their brand, deciding on a celebrity interview held at their venue as well as social media support for their upcoming promotions.

2pm In the shadow of Bitexco, our editorial team is meeting for our monthly planning meeting. We take turns pitching, rejecting and fleshing out ideas. James, the Deputy Editor, has been snagging discounts on various Vietnamese social buying sites and thinks a behind-the-scenes look will be interesting. Someone else chimes in with a new book they heard about, detailing the stories behind everyday jobs here in Vietnam. It has strong human interest appeal. There's also a celebrity chef in town which is always a popular assignment because it inevitably entails a gourmet meal. As the ideas flow, I mentally run each storyline by the censor. It wasn't too long ago that our Chinatown issue had to be renamed, unfortunate collateral damage due to a controversial Vietnamese movie that ended up being banned around that same time.

While we nail down the content for our next issue, I make photography notes. Which articles will need to be illustrated conceptually? Which shoots will require extra planning? We're all excited about our photo essay idea for ballet dancers in everyday situations, but it's going to be labor-intensive. We'll have to think about location, lighting and timing. We'll hash that out at our photography meeting later in the week.

4:15pm The last part of the day is spent tracking down potential leads, figuring out deadlines for writers, photographers and account managers and sending out article briefs. A phone call about a last minute change of venue for a concert we're covering has me scrambling to see if one of the photographers can make the new location. She can. Mini-crisis averted.

6pm Everyone is packing up for the day and I still have to get home to change into something a bit dressier for tonight's event, the fourth anniversary of the Hard Rock Cafe. Networking is so important in this industry, but I'm also hoping to enjoy a few mojitos and some sliders with my fiancé. It's a dirty job, but it's my job and I wouldn't have it any other way. ■



1 Year Anniversary

As we celebrate our 1 year anniversary here at Oi Vietnam, we want to say “Thank You” to the people who have made it possible – our advertisers! Oi Vietnam is FREE for our readers because of the companies and people who advertise in the publication. Please support these companies and individuals who support us.

Here's to many more years of excellent partnerships with our valued advertisers and loyal readers!



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THE MYTH:

What's the real story behind the haunting of the HCMC Fine Arts Museum?



IMAGE BY ADAM ROBERT YOUNG

THE HCMC FINE ARTS MUSEUM was originally the private residence of a Mr. Hoa, the wealthiest man in Saigon at the time, who also owned other famous buildings about town such as the Majestic Hotel and Tu Du Hospital. Hoa had more than 10 sons but only one daughter, a pretty, charming girl named Hua that he doted on and loved to show off. Gradually as time passed she stopped appearing in public and in the odd quiet nights, neighbors heard moans and cries coming from the mansion. And then one morning Hoa posted a notice announcing the death of his daughter. It stated the cause of death was from a sudden and intense bout of illness. The subsequent funeral was quick and simple, and she was buried in Long Hai, next to the family's vacation home.

These curious events led to numerous rumors; some said that she went mentally insane and that her father was hiding her out of shame. Others claimed they saw her ghost roaming the house, crying and screaming. And many more recalled seeing a figure in white with long black

hair walking inside the house, visible through the villa's many windows. A maintenance man who was hired to do the wiring described a particular room inside the villa - a beautiful and fully decorated room that also appeared to be a prison because it had padlocks on the outside and a hole was carved into the door where he witnessed servants sneaking food through it. Needless to say, gossip about his story spread, some of it even denying her death. A short while later, another story appeared in print, stating a couple of grave robbers, believing that she was buried with many valuables, had unearthed the daughter's coffin only to find it empty.

Even a book about the haunting, titled *The Ancient Tomb of Hua*, was published asserting that the daughter's real name was Hua Tieu Lan and that she was buried in a tomb next to the Bien Hoa graveyard. It also tells of a soldier named Tinh who stumbled into the graveyard one day and "under the pale moonlight, Tinh saw a white figure walking rounds around the tombstones, her dress fluttering in the wind. An owl cried in the night as

though it had spotted the same figure he saw."

The Truth?

Hoa's daughter was afflicted with leprosy and despite his search for a cure, he found none. Many of the doctors he asked for help rejected his pleas because of the social stigma associated with leprosy at the time, and also because the disease was still relatively unknown then and highly contagious. Left with no other option, Hoa was forced to quarantine his daughter in a separate room of the villa for the safety of those around her. Eventually, the girl succumbed to her illness.

Despite his great wealth Hoa could not save his beloved daughter, not from death, not even from the pain and torment of the disease. Yet even in death, he did not want to be parted from her. Afraid that she would be lonely in a tomb far away from home, Hoa put her preserved corpse in a granite coffin with a glass lid and kept the coffin inside the same room that harbored her during her sickness. -

Translated by NPD Khanh ■

Horse Play

Vietnam's first Equestrian Grand Prix

TEXT BY **NPD KHANH** IMAGES BY **ADAM ROBERT YOUNG**

IT'S 2014, THE Year of the Horse, and things at the normally laid-back Bach Ma Equestrian Farm are stirring up. Equestrian coaches, horse riders, event organizers, designers, builders, doctors and veterinary specialists, the Vietnamese press, and even an overseas Fédération Équestre Internationale (FEI) judge have visited the farm in the past few months. All this is in preparation for the first Equestrian Grand Prix in Vietnam on March 8 & 9, 2014. The private event is by invite-only and will feature 30 competing riders.

"Equestrian events are very specific," says Cliff, an organizer of the Equestrian

Grand Prix. "In Vietnam, we do not have as many horses available as we do in other countries. Unfortunately it's very difficult and expensive to import good horses for riding. Riding in general is expensive. We also lack experienced vets to care for sick horses, and skilled farriers to care for their hooves and shoes. There is so much that needs to be done for the competition to happen. We have to take care of not only our guests, but also the horses that will be arriving with the guests."

Adding: "Our own horses have to be trained and prepared as well. We need a doctor and a medical van 24/7 for the entirety

of the event. We have to work with local vets and prepare them as much as we can. We need to have a proper FEI judge flown in to keep ourselves up to international standard. We need so many things that simply aren't available in Vietnam. There's so much to do and only two more weeks to go. But we will do it and we will do it properly."

"Yes, there are horse races in Vietnam, but not a proper equestrian competition, one that celebrates the skill and art of horse riding, show jumping, vaulting, dressage, all the disciplines of horse riding and training, as well as the relationship between riders



and their horses,” says Kim, one of the 30 competing riders. Kim is a successful Vietnamese businesswoman who’s both excited and anxious for the upcoming competition that will, hopefully, be the first of many in Vietnam. “And there’s absolutely nothing like it in Vietnam. Even the notion of equestrianism, true equestrianism, the art, the skill, the dedication, the patience implied and required, just does not exist in Vietnam. We will change that.”

“Our only hope is that this event will serve to promote horse riding in Vietnam and draw together a community of people who love horses and the art of horse riding,” says Cliff.

Marshmallow and Romeo

“I want to be the representative for Vietnam in the SEA Games,” Kim professes. “It’s really ambitious I know when I’ve only ridden for, at most, a little more than a year. But I set goals in order to know where I’m going. If you don’t know where you’re going, you go nowhere. I compete now not actually to win but to inspire, to motivate, and to better my riding.”

Eleven-year-old Angela is one of Kim’s competitors, and despite her young age, Angela has had more than half a decade of riding experience under her belt and numerous riding titles and trophies in her cabinet back home. “I started riding at five. I actually wanted to start at four but my parents didn’t allow me to because I was too young.”

Angela has ridden in four different countries: Singapore, Jakarta, Thailand, and most recently, Vietnam. To her, each riding experience and each horse is unique. “In Jakarta, there was a horse named Marshmallow, which I was riding on. Here there’s a horse named Bella. She can sometimes get really excited and can go really fast, so I always have to keep my strength up, just like I did with Marshmallow. There’s also another horse here named Romeo. I may get the chance to ride him in the competition. I’m really excited because Romeo is a palomino. I’ve never ridden on a palomino before and I really, really want to ride one! But Romeo... he’s a bit different from the other horses. Sometimes he doesn’t respond well if I nudge him with my foot. Sometimes I have to call or shout to get to him.”

For Angela, it takes years to foster a relationship with each individual horse – to get to know them, train them and work with them – which is even more of a challenge for her, since her family moves every couple of years. She is not in the least bit disheartened, however. “Here it’s a different place. I have to learn how the horses are trained here and work with them.”

And the reason why she’s competing?

“I just want the little boys and girls my age out there to know that there is a place like this here, and maybe come and join us,” she replies.

For more info, visit www.bachma-equestrian.com.vn ■





Brushed Aside

The disappearing art of calligraphy

TEXT BY **NPD KHANH** IMAGE BY **NGOC TRAN**

HAI IS A calligrapher. Here is how his days go: From 9am to 7pm, he sits in his usual spot on a small plastic chair at the corner of Dien Bien Phu and Truong Dinh in District 3 where he draws, writes and sells his creations to tourists, passers-by or to the odd nostalgic connoisseur of fine calligraphic arts.

He does this every day, Monday to Sunday, the same thing over and over again for the last nine years. Among the incredibly small and ever-shrinking community of full-time calligraphers in HCMC, he's known as one of the oldest and most experienced artists of the trade.

However, Hai looks nothing like a stereotypical calligrapher. He doesn't wear the traditional black and white *ao dai* that has long since become the calligrapher's uniform in Vietnamese society. He doesn't even own one. He's not a thin 50-something, respectable-looking old man with a full white beard. He's only 34, brown and scruffy, slightly on the portly side with scraggy, swirly hairs where his beard should be, and while he does look mildly easy on the eyes, his looks in no way scream respectable.

"When you go to a Tet flower show or when you want to get a lucky word for the coming year, you are not actually looking for a piece of art or to understand the true meaning of a word. You are actually looking for an experience. So the people in those places give you the experience you want. They do that by wearing the clothes you expect them to wear and appear the way you want them to look," he explains of his attire. "I'm not selling anything like that. I'm just a guy doing what I like for people who like the same things I do."

Words to Live By

Hai's love affair with the art of writing began during Tet 1999. He was 19 then and a student at Cao Thang College of Technology and Engineering. "One day I went to the night flower market in Tao Dan. They still hold it now. There were lots of calligraphers there that night. The first thing I saw were two verses from a poem by the Buddhist monk Man Giac and it goes like this: *Cho bao xuan tan hoa rung het. Dem qua san truooc mot nhanh mai.* ("Do not say that when spring passes all the flowers leave. In the courtyard last night, one still blooms.") These two verses came from the last poem Man Giac uttered right before he died. The last line, "a single apricot blossom," was later used to name a Vietnamese princess.

"That was the first time I ever saw a true piece of calligraphic art," says Hai. "Despite my preconceptions, it wasn't some big, lofty statement or words of grandiose wisdom.

It was just this incredibly gentle, seemingly whimsical poem. But at the same time there was power and layers of meaning in it. "Beneath the flowers" is actually talking about the human will to persevere against the hardship of life. It's saying that all things have an intrinsic worth and despite how the world may change, there comes a time when things return to their original values. There's so much more to it. It amazed me that a few short sentences can impart such wealth of wisdom, that there is such weight and depth to each word. These are not the empty, hollow vessels spewn forth every day by society. Even now, I still feel like there's yet another layer of meaning so profound that I haven't been able to grasp."

From then, he trained under an artist while also learning on his own through books and constant practice. The first 'shop' he opened was on Dien Bien Phu Street in 2005, a few years after graduating from college. "There's no story behind it. No drama or big scoop. I just went from being a tech student to being an artist-in-training. Everybody has a calling in life. Mine is calligraphy."

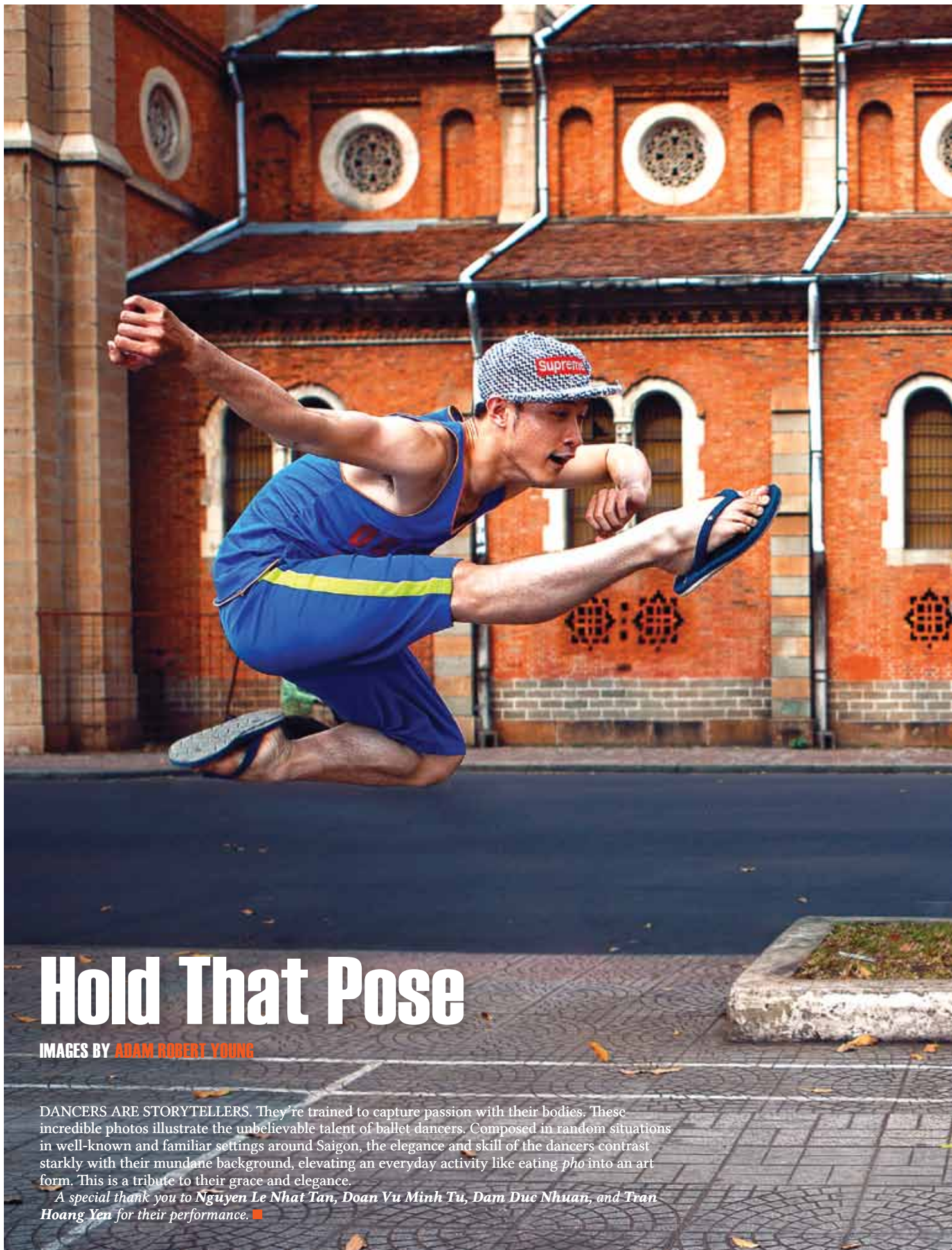
In 2009 he moved to where he is now and shared the street and one storeroom, (borrowed from the Nguyen Thi Minh Khai Public High School) with four other older, more experienced calligraphers.

"This street back in the day was known as 'the calligraphy street.' People used to call it the go-to place for all things calligraphy. The press has come here. Newspapers have come here. TV shows. A couple of them were foreign, too. I have met my share of journalists and reporters before you," adds Hai.

In early 2013, things took a turn for the worse when the high school reclaimed its storeroom and wall space, prompting the gradual departure of the other four artists. Hai is now the last of his group. "It's tough to make it as a calligrapher. It's not a very modern art. It's outdated, out of fashion, and fans are dwindling. It has to compete with younger, mass-produced 'art' like cross stitch paintings. Something so small like having no place to store your supplies can put you out of business. It really is a job you can only do if you truly love it."

When asked whether he is allowed to continue to stay in the same corner, Hai is unsure. "For all I know, they may just boot me off their curb tomorrow." But he does not particularly mind either. "If that happens, I'll go home and keep doing what I love. Things come and go, and some days they come back again. In this tumultuous world, I believe that there will come a time when things return to their original value." ■





Hold That Pose

IMAGES BY ADAM ROBERT YOUNG

DANCERS ARE STORYTELLERS. They're trained to capture passion with their bodies. These incredible photos illustrate the unbelievable talent of ballet dancers. Composed in random situations in well-known and familiar settings around Saigon, the elegance and skill of the dancers contrast starkly with their mundane background, elevating an everyday activity like eating *pho* into an art form. This is a tribute to their grace and elegance.

A special thank you to *Nguyen Le Nhat Tan, Doan Vu Minh Tu, Dam Duc Nhuan, and Tran Hoang Yen* for their performance. ■













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Wine & Dine

IMAGE BY ADAM ROBERT YOUNG



Martin Yan's dim sum

Wok Talk with Chef Martin Yan

Oi talks to one of TV's most loved cooking personalities

TEXT BY JAMES PHAM IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN



INSIDE NGAN DINH, the signature Chinese restaurant at the Windsor Plaza Hotel, Chef Martin Yan is mic'd up and working the crowd, hopping from table to table chatting up admiring fans. Diners from all parts of the globe are here to see the most unlikely of TV personalities — the Chinese-born, Hong Kong-trained, US-based star of *Yan Can Cook*, one of the longest-running cooking shows on television, chalking up more than 1,900 shows and travelogues broadcast in over 50 countries, including Vietnam. Renowned for his humor and slapstick, it isn't long before Chef Yan has a frizzy-haired Australian teen up at the demonstration table, ungainly wielding a cleaver with the malaise of someone who's never seen the inside of a kitchen. Within minutes though, she's slamming down the knife with ninja precision, flattening, peeling and mincing cloves of garlic in one fell swoop. *Oi* sat down with Chef Yan to talk discrimination, the celebrity chef phenomena and what it'll take for Vietnamese cuisine to gain international acclaim.

***Yan Can Cook* debuted in 1978. What was the**

cooking show landscape like then?

MY: For my first TV show, we had three people in our production team: a lady to help wash dishes and coordinate things, a chef and myself. We made five shows a day and 130 shows in 24 days. People around the world were just beginning to be curious about Chinese food and culture. [At that time], it was all *chop suey* and *chow mein*. Our generation was the first to showcase traditional regional cuisine.

As an Asian chef with heavily accented English, competing with traditionally Caucasian TV hosts, did you experience any discrimination?

MY: A lot of my friends have experienced racism, a glass ceiling for Asians, but I've been fortunate. My style is different from a lot of TV hosts... I'm always having a good time. When you have fun, people have fun, so they're less critical. When you smile, no one can give you a hard time. I'm sharing my love and passion of food, the thing we all love; I'm not talking about religion or politics. When I

get on stage, I tell people: "We're all here for the same reason. If you don't know how to do [something], I'll come to your home to teach you." It's all about making friends. But I have bad news for you. If you don't like it, I don't give a damn. I just say it with a smile.

Cooking shows have come a long way since you started. There are now entire channels devoted to food. How do you feel about the "celebrity chef" trend?

MY: When I started, there was a total of three shows, along with Julia Child. Now cooking has become massive. It's not just teaching cooking... Martha Stewart and Rachel Ray have become talk show hosts. [But] I was never a personality. I'm a professional. I'm a cooking teacher. On PBS [the TV home of *Yan Can Cook*], we're much more low key than the Food Network which is a commercial entity. I've never considered myself to be in the entertainment industry. I have no pony tails or rings. Nowadays they all have tattoos... I'm an Old School guy. How I would define a "celebrity chef," a true master, is someone who can turn simple



Chinese food. If you go to the US, most Vietnamese restaurants are just *pho* and nothing else. People don't truly appreciate [the cuisine] because it's not offered on the menu. I think it takes that certain step and certain people to help promote it. There's no single famous Vietnamese chef to help promote it yet. I'm not an expert in Vietnamese cuisine, but I hope to introduce it through my show and bring it to a different level.

You're here as a culinary ambassador for the WMC Group which has restaurants all over the city, including Cafe Central, Amigo and Ngan Dinh. What's restaurant consulting like?

MY: Chefs in the kitchen can get tired. They don't have time to be inspired. I'm here, not to teach them how to cook, but to inspire them.

In classic Chinese cuisine, the entire meal is cooked in one pot. In the old days, they didn't have enough big plates, so at big parties everything was put together in one pot and everyone just dug in: family, friends, villagers. Maybe one family had chicken, another family a fish. You could taste my mother's cooking skill, each family's recipe. I'm all about classic Chinese dishes with modern presentation. I'm just adding my personal touch, my signature, like an artist, so when you see it, you know who made it, like the touch of wasabi in my Yin Yang Shrimp dish, or my Fish in Pumpkin Sauce with a bit of caviar. Just that extra touch transforms the whole dish. I want to leave a legacy with the restaurants I work with. Martin was here and now the dumplings taste different.

Of all your projects - restaurants, cooking schools, more than 30 cookbooks and 3,700 cooking shows broadcast worldwide - what's brought you the most satisfaction?

MY: Twenty-five years ago, people were never exposed to regional cuisine. Food habits are hard to shake, worse than trying to get someone to quit smoking. But now, in many cities, you have everything, including regional specialties. I wouldn't say that what we've done has contributed significantly to that, but what we've done promoting Chinese food and culture has at least encouraged people to be curious.

You know, I have done so much that everything else is just a bonus. For instance, I was recently selected for the Top 10 Outstanding Chinese Award. Ten people out of 1.4 billion who've made a contribution to China! People are always telling me that when they were kids, they watched my show instead of cartoons. In my approach to cooking, "Yan can, so can you!", I try to inspire people. I want to create happy families and happy kitchens.

I always tell people that I love what I do so much, the paycheck is just a bonus. I'd be happy to do it for free, but they insist on paying me! ■

ingredients into magic. Turn nothing into something.

You've been to Vietnam many times and have even done a cooking / travel series on Vietnam. What about the country appeals to you?

MY: We spent 60 days traveling all over Vietnam, and completed 26 shows for *Martin's Taste of Vietnam* [broadcast throughout Vietnam in 2013]. It was the first time Vietnam has been introduced with such a massive undertaking. We went to a fish sauce manufacturer in Phu Quoc, harvested birds' nests, experienced some fascinating things.

The people all over are Vietnam so charming. When they talk, I don't know whether they're talking or singing. The Vietnamese diet is also wonderful. I love the pomelo salad, papaya salad, the big pancakes you can throw anything in to.

There are dishes made of leftover things

that no one wants to use. Look at broken rice, a dish that turns a wasted, useless ingredient into a gourmet dining experience, creating something out of nothing. These broken rice ladies make one dish for 40 years so they become experts in that single dish. You can call them 'single dish restaurants.' How can you beat them in quality and expertise?

In Vietnam, without huge highways, people have to eat locally. In America, during winter, things are grown somewhere else and picked when they're green. Papayas are green, tomatoes are green, bananas are green; they're tasteless. Here there are fish tanks right in the restaurant. How many times have you gone into a Western restaurant and seen that? Frozen is not the same as fresh.

What will it take for Vietnamese cuisine to explode internationally to the degree that Chinese and Thai food has?

MY: Vietnamese food is going through the same path as *chop suey* and *chow mein* of

The Unicorn

An eclectic combination of German food with Japanese sushi

TEXT BY **ROBERT STOCKDILL**
IMAGES BY **ADAM ROBERT YOUNG**

FUSION FOOD is all the rage these days, with many combinations of cuisines tempting the taste buds of diners the world over. Ho Chi Minh City is no different - and the newest entrant into the fusion category is a small, homely restaurant and cafe called **Indaba** (35 Ly Tu Trong, D1). Read the word "Indaba" and you might at first think it's an Indian restaurant. It's not. "Indaba" is another term in Europe for the mythical unicorn, the legendary horse with the single horn in its head, a symbol of power, purity and grace.

Owner Tai Nguyen is the restaurant's chef. He cut his teeth in Bavaria, southern Germany, most recently working in a well-known Japanese restaurant in Munich which explains the combination of German food and Japanese sushi on the menu.

Tai told *Oi* that when he designed the restaurant he wanted to create somewhere warm and inviting. "I want the people who come to our restaurant to feel like they've come to our home."

In time he'd like to be able to ask customers what they'd like to eat and to prepare something especially. The first step towards that goal is to make regular menu changes. Tai plans to change out items every few weeks so there is always a surprise for diners who return.

Indaba opened in November 2013 and is open daily from 9am to as late as 2am. He wants to cater not just to regular diners, but to those who work late shifts who want to chill out after clocking out.

As a place to chill, Indaba hits the spot. The decor is all warm reds with orange and yellow strips of paint, dark brown tables, cream trim, with an eclectic collection of framed photographs on the walls, candles and bold light shades hanging from the ceiling.

At the rear there is a small mezzanine floor where you can relax, shoeless on cushions around low-rise tables in semi privacy, as if floating above the kitchen below.

Our Meal

We choose a quiet night to try out the fusion menu, which gave us the chance to chat with



**“I want the people
who come to our
restaurant to feel
like they’ve come to
our home”**

Tai about his culinary background and seek his recommendations for starters and mains. He nominated the Indaba Spring Rolls and a half portion of his Mexican BBQ Spare Ribs special for starters, an intriguing contrast of flavors and styles, and neither distinctively Japanese or German.

The Spring Rolls (VND75,000) were nothing like the common Vietnamese style. The three rolls were round and deep fried, but there any similarity with Vietnamese or Asian spring rolls ended; these were stuffed with tuna and mixed veggies, they were crumbed and crunchy on the outside; soft, smoky and dry on the inside. Served with a mayo-based dipping sauce and a generous portion of salad topped with juicy red tomato halves, the dish was morish and filling, reminiscent of delicious European smoked fish pies this reviewer enjoyed as a child. The Mexican spare ribs (VND180,000) are a favorite of Tai. We were glad these were served starter size because they were large and meaty - with a sweet, flavorful sauce balanced with a healthy dose of spice. The meat virtually fell from the bone and the garnish of sliced potatoes and garlic added an intriguing complexity to the meat and spice.

For mains we opted for very different meats to test the breadth of the menu: Grilled Duck Breast served with sesame sauce, steamed rice and salad (VND270,000), and Grilled Salmon with Teriyaki sauce (VND240,000). This reviewer has too often tried duck cooked by French chefs which were overly rare and tougher than leather, so we were a little reluctant to sample duck from another European chef. But Tai’s duck was superbly cooked: tender and tasty, not the least bit chewy. It was accompanied by a generous fresh salad and soba noodles (not rice as the menu declared) which were creamy and soft and a surprisingly good accompaniment: Eastern noodles meet European duck. The salmon also easily passed the test. Beneath a sweet, crunchy skin, the pink flesh was tender and moist, the flavor preserved and the texture smooth. It, too, came with a generous serving of fresh salad and rice.

Indaba has a good range of wines by glass or bottle, a high quality coffee machine and a comprehensive spirit and cocktail list. So whether the occasion is coffee, brunch, dinner, a romantic evening drink or a meeting place late at night, Indaba is a warm, welcoming, cozy destination at almost any time of the day. ■

Curry Cravings

A tempting place to satiate your Indian food cravings whether at home or dining out

TEXT BY ROBERT STOCKDILL IMAGES BY ADAM ROBERT YOUNG



BABA'S KITCHEN (164 Bui Vien, D1, tel: 3838 6661), one of the city's most popular Indian restaurants, has shed the shackles of District 1, opening a modern takeaway and delivery service facility in District 2. Backpackers in transit through the city are often disappointed not to get a seat at Baba's Kitchen because the restaurant is so well frequented by local residents who know its secret: they'll travel from several districts afield for their fix of mutton *korma*, onion *pakora* or chicken *tandoori*, and garlic *naan* bread.

But such is the constraint of your atypical Bui Vien retail space, the kitchen was until recently struggling to keep pace with the fast turning tables of diners and the ever-growing demand for home deliveries. So in District 2, the team has opened a giant stand alone kitchen and takeaway outlet on Tran Nao in the shadow of the new Thao Dien Pearl twin tower apartments and adjacent to the new metro railway line under construction.

The face of Baba's Kitchen is Robin, a strikingly tall, soft spoken native Indian, who greeted us with a beaming smile and urged us to try an eye-popping array of dishes. One of the best things about Baba's Kitchen is that its food has no predetermined levels of spiciness. If you crave a tear-fuelling mouth-burning experience, just ask. But if your taste buds are overly sensitive to hot spice, then say the word and you, too, can enjoy the delicately blended spices of India without downing spoonfuls of yogurt after every bite to cool the pain.

Our Meal

Indian food is best enjoyed by a group (of

four or more) because there are so many dishes to choose from that ordering many and sharing them (provided you can all agree on the heat rating) is the best way to experience the taste of India, not to mention a great social experience. Our group numbered just two, so the feast before us seemed like a painting of the Last Supper. Roasted *papadam* (VND12,000 each), with their crunchy texture and delicately flavored grains, are an essential start to any Indian meal. Then followed starters of onion *pakora* (VND50,000) and chicken *samosa* (VND50,000). The onion *pakora* was delicious. Deep fried in a thin, light batter coating, you can dip them in mango chutney or mint or just savor the sweet onion flavor on its own. The *samosas* were soft with a delicate hint of spice and perfect mix of potato, chicken and vegetables; a half dozen of these would make a meal in itself.

And then the main dishes started to come. Another hallmark of the restaurant is the generous servings. All too often in my experience with other Indian restaurants (outside Vietnam) starters have been of generous proportions and when the curries arrive they're served in tiny bowls with as few as three chunks of meat or fish swimming in a watery sauce. By default, the rice becomes the actual meal. But Baba's Kitchen's mains are more generous. The curries have just the right balance of meat and sauce. The tandoor oven cooked meats and fish are large chunky morsels ready to dip in sauces.

Robin chose a Mutton *Korma* (VND105,000) rich and meaty and not too spicy (exactly as requested) and Butter

Chicken (VND90,000), an Indian staple which he told us is very popular with his Vietnamese customers. Mutton gets a bad rap in many parts of the world, especially in New Zealand and Australia, where sheep meat is spurned unless labeled lamb (meaning the beast is less than one year old when killed). The difference of a few days makes little difference to the flavor or texture when cooked with the sort of array of herbs and spices the Indians use, so Antipodeans should not be shy to try it.

Then came a fish garlic *Tikka* (VND95,000) from the tandoor oven, not too dry or oily - just right - the flesh flakey and light, and no irritating bones getting in the way. Cheese *naan* (VND40,000) - rich and full of flavor helped soak up the curry sauce - but having a hint of sweetness, this can easily be enjoyed on its own so long as consumed while hot as it tends to get a little dry on the edges when cooled.

And then of course, there was rice (starting from VND30,000) - lightly fried with finely chopped vegetables and egg, light tasty and fragrant and somehow more moist than Chinese stir-fried rice, for sure.

No review of Baba's Kitchen would be complete without a reference to the cute little tin mugs in which water is served (yes, water is free. Other HCMC restaurateurs take note). We can't explain why, but they leave a lasting impression - but not as much as the delicious flavor of the food.

Now, if the crowds of Bui Vien discourage you from visiting Baba's Kitchen, you can rest assured wherever you live in Ho Chi Minh City's main districts, you can experience Baba's Kitchen at home fresh and hot. ■

Propagating the Food

A message for the hungry

TEXT BY MICHAEL ARNOLD IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN



AS IF SHE HADN'T done enough already for the hungry of Ho Chi Minh City, bistro queen Noelle Carr-Ellison last month rolled out yet another restaurant – this time right next door to Au Parc, the venue that started it all back in 2002. **Propaganda** (21 Han Thuyen, D1) is perhaps a kitschy spin-off from Hoa Tuc – but while it does follow the same formula of serving high-quality Vietnamese food to a mixed crowd of well-to-do locals and curious expats, Propaganda's dishes aren't exactly your traditional local fare.

"Don't go near us with the word 'fusion,'" warns Noelle, leaning conspiratorially over one of the tables at her sunny new venue. "I think it's not really that different from Vietnamese food. We use 100 percent Vietnamese ingredients; it's just that no one's ever done, say, a spring roll with an omelet and avocado in it. I don't know why, because they eat omelet, and they eat avocado, and they eat brown rice, and they eat rolls – but nobody's ever put that combination together before. So it's not really 'not doing Vietnamese food,' it's more like taking the chefs and shaking them a bit, and saying, 'You know, you've been doing the same thing for a hundred years, can we have something new please?'"

If 'fusion' isn't the correct term, then perhaps 'remix' best describes the cuisine here. True fans of Vietnamese national dishes will find the menu both familiar and surprising, while those who've never quite managed to acquire a taste for the *pho* and the fish sauce will find themselves unexpectedly drawn to these fresh, rebooted versions of old classics in new contexts.

The rolls are very much a case in point. We took Noelle's advice and tried her own personal innovation, the fresh spring rolls with omelet, avocado, brown rice, and soya

sauce (VND70,000). Served cut into slices, they look more like sushi than they do rolls – which only makes one wonder why this isn't more common, as they're far easier to dip and eat this way. She's right about the taste – the egg and avocado serve to soften the crunchy vegetables and chewy wrap, and the rice lends an earthy warmth absent from the standard white rice versions.

The use of brown rice is actually one of the restaurant's drawcards, and several dishes are brought into sharper definition by trading out white for brown. The signature noodle dish, Propaganda noodles with tofu, puffed brown rice and chili-peanut-shallot crunch (also VND70,000) is reminiscent of many local *bun* dishes stirred through with sauce and herbs, but without the tartness and pungency they're usually associated with. That's not to say it isn't flavorful – the puffed rice and rich tofu are almost chocolatey in combination. The same goes for the crunchy tri-colored rice with seafood and vegetables (VND125,000), served in a clay pot – far, far less oil than you'd expect for this kind of dish, and a particularly delicious option for the kids.

The desserts are similarly outstanding. The sticky coconut rice with fresh mango and coconut cream (VND70,000) is as full-bodied as a creamy gateau, and the soursop and palm sugar homemade ice cream with its whole mouthfuls of blended fresh fruit is as much a clever reinterpretation of a very common dessert as the Vietnamese dishes are of theirs.

Kitsch Dining

Like all the bistro-style restaurants opened under Noelle's wing, the venue itself is airy, classy, and very consciously styled to its theme – in this case, the propaganda art of wartime Vietnam, which has since

acquired a kitsch status not unlike the pop oeuvre of Andy Warhol. It's a bold move for a French national to broach a political motif, but Noelle doesn't believe she's being particularly cheeky in borrowing the iconography for the restaurant.

"I think the art form is really meaningful," she says. "I want to show people that this art is actually pretty cool." The huge mural that dominates the ground floor area is a new work in the war-era style that Noelle had commissioned herself, which conscientiously avoids sensitive themes. The inspiring slogan translates as "every day I choose a different dish," a play on a Trinh Cong Son lyric rather than a call to arms.

But that's not to say Propaganda doesn't tout its own agenda; albeit one more nutritional than political. French manager Cindy Kawak, who coaches informally on healthy living and plans to run a course on the subject in the event space above the restaurant, sees the venue as an opportunity to popularize good eating. "There's an empty space upstairs, so we can play with that. Yoga [or] an art show."

Cindy was also instrumental in a group effort to match international wines with Vietnamese cuisine, resulting in a special dinner set menu allowing guests to sample a range of wines with complementary local dishes.

Come early to try the venue's extraordinary homemade *banh mi* breakfasts, the fresh bread somehow channeling the essence of the baguette back into the local loaves it originally inspired. Drop in between 5pm and 8pm after work to try the *Apéro* menu, featuring free appetizers based on local street food with any bottle of wine over VND380,000. Chances are you're very likely to succumb to Propaganda's party line. ■

>> The List

Wine & Dine

bakeries

ABC Bakery & Cafe

The bakery serves more than 30 different baked products ranging from baguettes to pizza slices, along with a wide selection of drinks such as coffee and fruit juices.

223-225 Pham Ngu Lao, DI

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, DI
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, DI
6295 9087
10am - 9pm

Cheesecake Ngon 🍷 OI's Pick

Cheesecake Ngon is a small boutique-style cheesecake shop. They use only top quality local and imported ingredients that give their cakes their signature smooth, creamy taste. They can provide cheesecakes for all occasions: birthdays, functions, cafe/restaurant supply or even just a single slice. With a range of flavors including passionfruit, raspberry, strawberry, lemon, coconut and of course original and a price starting at VND40,000 per slice.

44 Truong Quyen, D3
www.cheesecakesnow.com
3610 0211

Fly Cupcake

The shop specializes in various flavors of cupcakes.

74E Hai Ba Trung, DI
06 Pham Ngoc Thach, DI
www.flycupcake.vn

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, DI
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, DI
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.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, DI
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, DI
3822 1718
www.ladoree.com
7am - 9.30pm

L'amour Bakery & Cafe

More than just another bakery, L'amour is the perfect place for those whom are looking for respite from busy HCMC. This patisserie offers a large selection of European cake and pastry, fresh juice and coffee. You will also find pastas, salads, and sandwiches, ideal for lunch time.

Open from 6am - 10:30pm
24 Hai Ba Trung DI

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, DI
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, DI
3823 3223
nguyen.tran@paceycupcakes.com
www.paceycupcakes.com
9am - 10pm

Paris Baguette

Korean chain Paris Baguette offers fresh baked products such as cakes, pastries, bread, as well as assorted coffee and

tea drinks. They also serve sandwiches and salads.

Nguyen Thi Minh Khai corner Cao Thang, DI
Vincom Center A, 171 Dong Khoi, DI
2 Cao Thang, D3
www.parisvn.com

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, DI
3824 8179
5am - 10pm

Savouré 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, DI
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, DI
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, DI
3823 8302
6am - 11pm

bars

Ahey Beer Club

Recently opened, this nautical themed bar serves local and imported beer along with food served by wait staff in sailor outfits.

79 Nguyen Cong Tru, DI

Allez Boo

A popular bar in Saigon featuring tropical bamboo decor, multiple levels and a DJ spinning funky beats. This unique bar offers a wide range of beers, shakes, spirits cocktails and food throughout the day.

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

Alpha

Alpha is a sports bar recently opened on the first level of The Manor. Offers weekly promotions such as Manor Mondays (happy hour all day for Manor residents), Teacher Tuesdays (happy hour all day for teachers), Thirsty Thursdays (two for one on all cocktails), Sport Saturdays (screening sports from around the world) and on Sundays movie nights by the pool and a roast dinner.

The Manor, Level 1, 91 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh

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, DI
3822 1720

Blanchy's Tash

This cocktail lounge is a perfect place to relax with friends, meet with colleagues or just enjoy a cocktail or two. With plenty of seating around the central bar as well as tables for couples or larger groups, plus a more intimate VIP area with comfortable sofas, you will find the right space for any occasion.

95 Hai Ba Trung, DI
www.blanchystash.com
090 902 8293

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, DI
3824 3483
simon@hcm.vnn.vn
www.bluegeckotosaigon.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, DI
090 760 9202
dorutdose@gmail.com

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, DI
6656 6338

Broma Saigon Bar

Famously known for 'not being a bar' Broma is one of Ho Chi Minh City's most popular hangouts with prices ranging from VND30,000 - VND500,000. Broma is a more upscale option for those wishing to escape the cheap drinks in The Pham.

41 Nguyen Hue, DI
3823 6838
bromasaigonbar@gmail.com

Cargo Bar

Cargo Bar is a dedicated music and arts venue designed and committed to delivering diverse entertainment, along with a good drink menu.

7 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4
www.facebook.com/cargosaigon

Carmen Bar

Carmen Bar features a small cavern-like 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

Charm Bar

Unassuming expat bar in the central city

with table soccer and an upstairs floor for private functions. Opens late night.

58 Huynh Thuc Khang, D1
3915 3826
thecharmsg@yahoo.com

Chill Skybar

Offers the most stunning panoramic views of Saigon and a wide range of wines and cocktails personally prepared by Vietnam mixologist Le Thanh Tung. **Rooftop, AB Tower, 76A Le Lai, D1**
www.chillsaigon.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, D1
3824 1555

Brotzeit German Bier Bar & Restaurant

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.
39 Le Duan, D1
9822 4206
brotzeit.co/kumholink

Chilli Pub Saigon 🍷 Oi's Pick

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, D1
09 8376 3372
fifi291182@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, D1
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 Truong Quoc, D3
090 944 5544

Eon51

Eon51 includes a fine dining restaurant, a champagne lounge, a cigar bar and a heli pad cocktail bar. Spread on three levels, Eon51 is a destination for bespoke private and corporate events in Saigon.
Levels 51-52, Bitexco Financial Tower, 2 Hai Trieu, D1
6291 8751
www.eon51.com
7am - 2am

Game On

Opened in July, Game On is Saigon's newest and biggest sports bar that serves

breakfast, lunch and dinner. The bar also has an extensive drink menu that includes coffees, juices, beers, wines, vodkas and more. Besides being a good place to watch games, Game On also boasts a function room for corporate meetings or private parties.

115 Ho Tung Mau, D1
6251 9898
gameonsaigon@gmail.com
8am till late

Ginger 60

A low-key expat bar with an extensive drink menu and live music in a friendly atmosphere.
60 Ton That Thiep, D1
093 772 1011

Go2

Go2 is a popular nightspot in the backpackers area. This two level bar offers dancing, shisha, and a streetside view with comfortable seating. The bar also has a pool table and extensive western food menu.
187 De Tham, D1
3836 9575

Hair of the Dog

A large space creating an interesting bar with an alfresco sidewalk area downstairs, and an upper lounge area overlooking the lower bar that allows for a view of the DJ station. If it follows its Hanoi theme, it will be a DJ music-focused nightclub.
194 Bui Vien, D1

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, D1
6291 7595
www.hardrockcafe.vn
11.30am - 2am

Heaven Bar Saigon

Standing out from other nightclubs, Heaven Bar impresses their guests with nice decor in tone of red and blue, a broad range of sparkling drinks, Ladies' night, awesome DJ at weekend, and many exciting events for expats.
8 Le Quy Don, D3
090 534 3316
www.barsaigonheaven.com
5pm - 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.

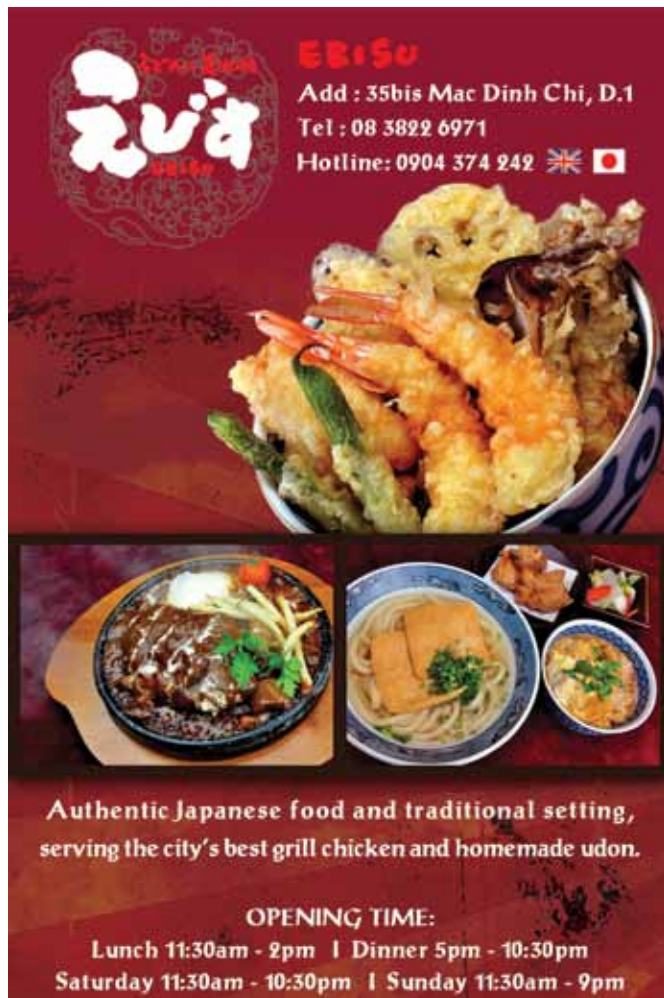
54 Dong Khoi, D1
3822 2664
3pm - 1am

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, D1
090 777 5141
4pm - 1am

Last Call 🍷 Oi's Pick

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



EBISU
Add : 35bis Mac Dinh Chi, D.1
Tel : 08 3822 6971
Hotline: 0904 374 242 🇬🇧 🇯🇵

Authentic Japanese food and traditional setting, serving the city's best grill chicken and homemade udon.

OPENING TIME:
Lunch 11:30am - 2pm | Dinner 5pm - 10:30pm
Saturday 11:30am - 10:30pm | Sunday 11:30am - 9pm



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

Open 11am to 11pm
North & South Indian food
Halal & vegetarian dishes
Of course we can cater!
order online at vietnammm.com & eat.vn
"Baba brings India to Vietnam"

evening bars, with a small deck from which to overlook the nightlife set on Dung Du.
59 Dong Du, D1
3823 3122

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, D1
3837 7679
www.lepub.org

Lion Brewery and Restaurant

The brewery offers its signature Lion beer, brewed by its German master brewer, who trained in Germany, along with other kinds of beer. The Lion restaurant has two banquet halls that can accommodate 530 persons.
11-13 Cong Truong Lam Son, D1
www.lionsaigon.com

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, D1
3837 2704

Lush

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 Lu Tu Trong, D1
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, D1
3821 0151
5pm - 12am

Miss Saigon 🍷 Oi's Pick

Recently opened, this quaint and cozy bar offers great service and delicious cocktails for those looking to quench their thirst after work. Beers start at VND30,000 and cocktails start at VND55,000 with happy hour from 6pm – 8pm where beers cost VND20,000. Open from 6pm to midnight.
8A/ICI Thai Van Lung, D1

MTV

A large Vietnamese cafe in D3 spread over two levels with space for quiet romantic chat or larger group meets. Serves a broad range of coffees and chilled drinks.
65 Vo Van Tan, D3
3930 2597
www.mtvcafe.com.vn

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, D1
3915 3150
heinzvn@gmail.com
3pm - 1am

O'Brien's 🍷 Oi's Pick

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, D1
3829 3198
www.irish-barsaigon.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, D1

Purple Jade

Purple Jade is a stylish and chic venue with exceptional world class cocktails by the city's award-winning bartender along with snacks to melt away the bustle of the city.
First floor- InterContinental Asiana Saigon
Corner of Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan
3520 9099
www.intercontinental.com/saigon



RED Bar
 RED offers one of the longest Happy Hours in Saigon, from 9am - 9pm, with live music available from Monday - Saturday. This multi-level bar has a non-smoking floor and a function room along with a top quality pool table and soft-tip dart machines. A menu of Eastern and Western dishes also includes wood-fire pizzas.
70-72 Ng Duc Ke, District 1
2229 7017

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 ceiling fans, subdued decor, and quietly romantic atmosphere with oil candles on the table tops.
19 Lam Son Square, D1
3823 4999
www.caravellehotel.com/en/1/15/325/products.aspx

Saigon Retro 🍷 Oi's Pick

One of the newest expat bars on the block, offering friendly bar service. Live sport on screen, including English Premier League.
113 Ho Tung Mau, D1
6278 2349
4pm - 2am

Shots Bar

A corner bar on Bui Vien that, along with drinks, serves a variety of food such as seafood, pork and chicken dishes.
207 Bui Vien, D1

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, D1
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, D1
3827 4738
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, D1
3824 2888
www.vascosgroup.com

Wine Embassy

For those looking to relax and enjoy a glass of wine after work, Wine Embassy is the perfect place with wine specialists and an interactive menu to help you pair your wine with crafted food.
13 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
3824 7827
www.wineembassy.com.vn
4pm till late
11am - late

Xu Bar

A cocktail hot spot with Coconut Martinis, Cranelo Sparkles and Passion Fruit Caprioska on offer along with a variety of tapas with DJs and drink specials throughout the week.
71-75 Hai Ba Trung, D1
www.xusaigon.com

cafés

ABC Bakery & Cafe

ABC Bakery & Cafe has over 30 different kinds of baked goods such as baguettes, danishes, whole cakes, sliced cakes and even pizza. Together with its range of baked items, it is also has Western and Vietnamese coffee and juices.
223 - 225 Pham Ngu Lao, D1
www.abcbnc.com

Achaya Cafe

Achaya Cafe have two floors providing a nice atmosphere for meeting, relaxation or party. The menu is extensive with drinks and Western, Japanese, Vietnamese food from sandwiches, spaghetti, pizzas, steak and special Japanese sweet desserts.
90 Le Loi, D1
093 897 2050
11am - 10:30pm

Aisha Lounge

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, D1
6660 9040
www.aishalounge.com

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

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, D1
3827 8588
facebook.com/angelinuscoffeevn

Blue Cafe

A sprawling, unique cafe in Go Vap, with indoor-outdoor seating and an attempt to recreate the appeal of rural Dalat. Enjoy the shade inside, or sit outside amidst the greenery and watch aircraft taking off from Ton Sat airport. Extensive menu and broad range of coffees and chilled drinks.
701-703 Phan Van Tri, Go Vap
3588 6824
www.mtvcafe.com.vn
7am - 11pm

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, D1
3920 4090
www.bobbybrewers.com

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.
98 Phan Xich Long, Phu Nhuan

Bukafe - Cafe

This quaint cafe offers a Japanese style setting with chairs that have you seated on the ground. While offering elegant drinks and tasty simple dishes, make sure to catch the live bands. It won't set you back much either with inexpensive drinks.
43 Nguyen Huu Cau, D1
090 265 2635
bukafe.cafetruyen@gmail.com

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, D1
3290 6004

Caffo 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, D1
3821 1009
www.fresco.com.vn

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

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

Cake Durian Duiro

A chain of cafes selling durian inspired crepes and buns with prices under VND100,000.

Kiosk in Le Thi Rieng Park, 875 Cach Mang Thang 8, DI
093 333 9365
www.banhsauieng.com

Centrofarms Coffee

This recently opened cafe, located near the airport, sells its own eponymous brand of Centrofarm organic roasted beans direct from Dalat with indoor and outdoor seating that's perfect for people watching and getting your daily dose of caffeine.

19 Ut Tich, Tan Binh

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

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

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

Cooku's Nest

Cooku's nest has a clean, artsy vibe offering drinks and snacks.

13 Tu Xuong, D3

2241 2043

Crêperie & Café

Inexpensive Western fare targeted mainly at locals, delivering some fairly decent low-cost sandwiches.

5 Han Thuyen, DI

Cryptic Acoustic Cafe

Cryptic Acoustic Cafe features an architecture that blends classic and modern elements. Featured drinks include Cryptic frappe (the combination of coffee and Orion cake, banana and fresh cream), Cryptic soda (soda, flavored orange peel, lemon and

fresh cream) and Cryptic yogurt (with yogurt, mango, strawberry, peach). This place also holds acoustic and art performances.

343/6 To Hien Thanh, DIO

DeJa Vu Cafe

It is easy to mistake this cafe for someone's home as the tranquil atmosphere will have you tension free in no time. The peaceful setting is ideal for dates or low-key social events. Make sure to catch the live bands that frequent the cafe.

314/2 Dien Bien Phu, DIO
6276 6966

info@dejavu.vn

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

Fe Cafe

Fe Cafe brings you all kinds of scrumptious coffee, along with Vietnamese food and dessert. It offers breakfast, lunch, dinner and offers delivery as well. The interior is a mix of alternative and fancy, with wooden furniture, soft backrest pillows and decorative paintings.

26 Ly Tu Trong, DI
090 878 3788
www.facebook.com/fecafe.vn
7:30am - 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
www.geishacafe.com

Gemmi Coffee

This cafe serves a variety of food like salads, chicken dish alongside coffees and other beverages. Provides live solo piano music every night from 8pm.

193 D3 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D3

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 Jean's

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
www.gloriajeanscoffees.com/vn

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

iBox 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

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

Imagine Coffee shop

One of the walls of this rustic cafe is literally covered with books. An easy place to get lost for an evening with prices below VND100,000.

58 Ho Bieu Chanh, Phu Nhuan
090 956 0105
www.facebook.com/ImagineCafeShop
09 0956 0105
nguyenmai.huan@gmail.com
8am - 10pm

Kebab Cafe

The healthiest kebab! Featuring an excellent homemade white sauce, fresh veggies and chicken or pork marinated without oil. The French owner also serves savory and sweet crepes and a home-made puree.

538/2/8 Doan Van Bo, D4
01648 805 915
contact@kebab-cafe.com
www.kebab-cafe.com
10am - 10pm

Kem My

This quiet ice cream shop is the perfect place for families and couples to indulge their sweet tooth. It offers a fresh release from the heat of Ho Chi Minh City.

11 Duong 41, D4
093730 3030
www.kemmy.vn
3.30pm - 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
keserakesera.com

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

L'amour

A stylish bakery and cafe new to Hai Ba Trung, in the city centre, L'amour specialises in cakes and desserts and serves Illy Coffee. Eat in or take away.

24 Hai Ba Trung, DI
3520 8180
www.lamourbakery.com

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

LightBox Cafe

This stunningly designed cafe also doubles as an event and photography studio, so make sure you dress to impress at this location because you never know who might snap your picture. They also serve vegetarian cuisine with prices ranging between VND300,000 - VND500,000.

179 Hoa Lan, Phu Nhuan
3517 6668
www.lightbox.vn

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
www.lusinespace.tumblr.com
9am – 9pm

Le Tokyo Baum

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

46 Nguyen Van Trang, DI

3926 0388

May Coffee

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

1 Cong Xa Paris, DI
3827 7099
www.maycoffee.com

Minhu Coffee

This specialty cafe offers a wood furniture interior setting, which resembles the cabins you would expect to see in the western North American frontier. Live bands are a regular feature at the cozy cafe and prices are inexpensive.

149/35 Le Thi Rieng, DI
3601 9319

MTV Cafe





Providing a relaxing atmosphere after a hard day's work with some of the top hits out today, MTV cafe is the perfect place to unwind with that special someone or just a cup of coffee.

65 Vo Van Tan, D3
3930 2597
mtvcafe.com.vn

MZ Coffee

A cafe in a colonial villa that was built in the early 20th century. It boasts a broad selection of coffee, from fine Vietnamese condensed milk coffee to Italian Lavazza expresso, cappuccinos and lattes as well as wines and beers.
56-56 A Bui Thi Xuan, D1
39255258
www.m-zing.com

NYDC

   
A fun, dynamic and cosmopolitan place for food, desserts, beverages and not forgetting the company of good friends. Prices range between VND100,000 - VND300,000.
Diamond Plaza, 34 Le Duan, D1
3822 9992
www.nydc.com.vn

Onset Cafe

 
This lounge cafe features live bands and is a good setting for work events or business meetings. With bold interior furniture it is a popular respite for Ho Chi Minh residents.
319 Ly Thuong Kiet, D11
6670 7092
onsetcoffee@yahoo.com.vn



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


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

Phuong Cac Cafe

  
With indoor and outdoor lounge areas this cafe is a relaxing respite from the grind of Ho Chi Minh City. With live bands and drinks under VND100,000 it makes for the perfect getaway.
Bis 213 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D3
3932 7484

Phúc Minh Coffee


Phuc Minh coffee is an airy, clean environment providing a varied menu and delicious coffee. The staff is attentive and quick with a friendly approach. Prices start around VN 25,000 for this simple cafe.
51 Hung Phuoc 4, D7

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

Regina Coffee

A popular hangout for hip, young Vietnamese around Nguyen Du, serving western coffee in a vintage, artsy environment.
84 Nguyen Du, D1

Retrobite Diner Cafe

Inspired by the concept of 1960s Americana, bi-level Retrobite Diner Cafe features an interior that includes booths, retro egg chairs, jukebox and classic radio players. The menu is mostly American food with sandwiches, hamburgers,


pastas, steaks, milkshakes, waffles and more.

6 Cong Truong Quoc Te, D3
3521 0673
retrobite.vn@gmail.com
7:30am - 11pm

Soho Coffee

 
Two level local cafe chain serving light meals, coffee and local chilled drinks.
185 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3839 5038
7am - 11pm

Starbucks Coffee


Has 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.stellacaffe.com

The Blue Cafe


A spacious cafe divided into two different areas with a lush, outdoor garden seating lounge and an air conditioned in-door lounge. The Blue Cafe has live music with drinks under VND100,000.
701-703 Phan Van Tri, Go Vap
3588 6824

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.
www.coffeebean.com.vn
7am - 11pm
39 Le Duan, D1
Ground Floor, Crescent Mall
Ton Dat Tien, D7
157-159 Nguyen Thai Hoc, D1
39 Le Duan, D1
12-14 Thai Van Lung, D1
94 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D3
235 Nguyen Van Cu, D1
235 Dong Khoi, D1
1-5 Le Duan, D1
60-62 Cach Mang Thang 8, D3
1-3 Phan Chu Trinh, D1


The Library

The Library provides a welcoming atmosphere for those in search of tranquility, comfort and great drinks in the heart of Saigon
Ground floor - InterContinental Asiana Saigon
Corner of Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan
3520 9099
www.intercontinental.com/saigon

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, D1
3822 0377

Tram Coffee ☺️ Oi's Pick




A unique romantic cafe experience hidden well off the beaten track, but close to District 1 in neighbouring Phu Nhuan District. Sip a coffee, juice or beer or

indulge in good cafe food over candlelight in a dark, intimate environment hidden amongst trees and trickling streams. Relax in an air conditioned room or dine alfresco amongst the greenery. The perfect spot to impress a date with your local knowledge.
100 Tran Huy Lieu St, Phu Nhuan
2240 5306


The Myth Cafe

 
Escape the daily grind of Ho Chi Minh City with a trip into the mystical setting of Myth Cafe. With live bands and prices under VND100,000 it's no wonder The Myth cafe is one of the best around.
176 Dien Bien Phu, D3
3820 9735
thuyhangmtv@yahoo.com

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


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

Vecchio Cafe

The interior features Italian ornate décor, dim lighting and antique furniture, enhanced by Italian music. Offerings include pasta, soup, chicken dishes, salad, beef dishes, gelato and beverages such as smoothies, fresh fruit juices and tea.
39/3 Pham Ngoc Thach, D3

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

Yogen Früz

Serves frozen yogurt with 20 different kinds of fruits for you to choose from. This place also provides an environment where customers can relax and be social.
B3-15B Basement Vincom Center B, 72 Le Thanh Ton, D1
www.yogenfruz.com.vn

Zoom Cafe 🍷 Oi's Pick


This distinctive Vespa-themed Café has been a popular fixture in D1 for ten years. Today, the café 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

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

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

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

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

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

Ocean Palace

A place for those who love Chinese food. The large dining room on the ground floor can accommodate up to 280 diners. Up on the first floor are six private rooms and a big ballroom that can host 350 guests.
2 Le Duan Street, D1
3911 8822

Seven Wonders (Bay Ky Quan)

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, DI
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, DI
3925 1111
www.dimsumhouse.vn

Yu Chu

Yu chu is renowned for the quality and presentation of its authentic Cantonese and Peking cuisines along with its elegant décor. Watching the chefs prepare signature dishes such as hand-pulled noodle, dim sum and Peking duck right in the kitchen is a prominent dining feature here.

First floor, InterContinental Asiana Saigon
Corner of Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan
3520 9099
www.intercontinental.com/saigon

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, DI
2229 8882
www.lacuisine.com.vn

La Creperie

La Creperie is the first authentic Brittany French restaurant that serves savory galettes, sweet crepes with tasty seafood and the best apple cider in Saigon.

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

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, DI
3829 8143
www.lafourchette.com.vn

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, DI
3821 3056

L'essentiel



A recent arrival to the growing ranks of authentic French dining experiences in HCMC, L'essentiel offers a quiet intimate dining experience downstairs with space for private functions and alfresco dining on an upper floor. The menu changes weekly, the food is fresh and the wine list carefully collated.

98 Ho Tung Mau, DI
0948 415 646

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
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 under the eye of iron chef Vietnam winner David Thai.

40 Thai Van Lung, DI
www.lebouchondesaigon.com

Le Chateau de Saigon

Situated in a small but romantic French villa, Le Chateau De Saigon Restaurant is designed to accommodate any kind of event. Whether it is dinner with family and friends, or a passionate evening with your loved one, Le Chateau De Saigon will provide a sophisticated and memorable dining experience.

45A Le Quy Don, DI
www.lechateaudesaigon.com

Le Jardin

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, DI
3825 8465

Le Paris

Le Paris has an interior that features depictions of Eiffel Tower, Seine River and Notre Dame Cathedral. Food offerings include French, seafood, steaks and vegetarian dishes.

45 Mac Thi Buoi, DI
www.facebook.com/leparisrestaurant

Le Steak de Saigon

Drawing inspiration from French steakhouses, Le Steak de Saigon serves imported and local meats, with beef fondue and table-side beef tartare as the most recommended. Aside from table service, the restaurant offers take-out and delivery as well.

15 Dong Du, DI
3822 4593
www.lesteakdesaigon.com

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, DI
3824 1555
www.sofitel.com

Le Rendez-Vous de Saigon

A new wine bistro that offers a warm and friendly atmosphere. Unwind either in their stylish downstairs bar, or lounge on cozy leather seating in the upstairs section with a balcony overlooking a courtyard in an alley. The venue offers a tasty selection of wines from France to South Africa, and a delectable menu of French cuisine.

9A Ngo Van Nam, DI
www.lerendezvousdesaigon.com
6291 0396

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, DI
3825 7667
www.therefinerysaigon.com

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, DI
3822 2457
www.tycozsaigon.com

Vatel Saigon Restaurant



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, DI
08 5404 2220
vatsaigon.com

at a reasonable price. Large space for private parties, outdoor catering and free home delivery also available. Special set lunch veg/non-veg from VND90,000 upwards. Promotion (free trip to Cambodia) and discount available for people booking in groups.

17/10 Le Thanh Ton, DI
3823 1372
www.ashokavietnam.com

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. Their vindaloo is a must try.

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

Bollywood

Complete North & South Indian Cuisine. Special Chaat & Tandoori Dishes. Parties, Events & catering service available, Daily Lunch tiffin and Set menus.

Free Delivery (All Phu my Hung)
22131481 - 22450096
0938069433
Hotline: 0906357442 (English)
bollywoodvietnam@gmail.com
facebook: bollywoodvietnamindiancuisine
(for complete menu)

Bombay Indian Restaurant

Located in DI near the Ben Thanh Market area, serving Indian & Halal cuisine. The ambiance is relaxed thanks to Bombay's easy-going, family kitchen vibe.

57-59 Ham Nghi, DI
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, DI
8223 0173
www.ganeshindianrestaurant.com

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, DI
3521 0324

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, DI
3837 1767

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, DI
3508 3777

indian

Ashoka

Ashoka is one of the city's most popular and enduring Indian restaurants with a reputation for good food with a wide range of North Indian culinary dishes

italian

1960 Presidential Club

1960 Presidential Club is a member-only restaurant with an interior design inspired by Saigon in the 60s. You will experience more traditional style of

Italian cuisine with an extensive menu led by chef Franco Buresi.
Floor 22 Sailing Tower, 111A Pasteur, DI
www.club1960.vn

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, DI
3520 9099
6.30am - 10.30pm

Capricciosa

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
Vincom Tower, 70 Le Thanh Ton, DI
3993 9786
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, DI
3824 4286
www.casaitalia.com.vn



Ciao Bella 🍷 Oi's Pick

Hearty home-style Italian food served with flair and excellent service. An extensive menu is complemented with daily specials. Arriving guests are greeted with a free glass of Prosecco. Diners sit in a cozy setting upstairs or on the ground floor for people watching. Big groups should book in advance.
11 Dong Du, DI
3822 3329
tonyfox56@hotmail.com
www.saigonrestaurantgroup.com/ciao



Chef Mamma's

Chef Mamma's is located at Saigon's Superbowl Center offering a variety of Italian and Asian food. The restaurant opens from early in the morning until late at night serving breakfast, lunch and dinner.

A43 Truong Son, Tan Binh



Da Vinci's

Da Vinci's is an Italian-American style pizzeria delivery offering pizzas, lasagna, spaghetti, calzones, salads and desserts. Their full menu is online at www.davinчивietnam.com. Free delivery to Districts 1, 3, 4, 5, 7 and Phu My Hung.
Open 11am - 10pm.
Call 083 943 4982 or
SMS your order to 093 328 4624



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

La Hostaria

Designed with an intimate atmosphere involving 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.
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

Pizza 4P's 🍷 Oi's Pick

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
www.pizza4ps.com

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
www.sarpinos.vn

Scoozi

An Italian restaurant that offers pizza, pasta, salad, special desserts and a wide variety of drinks. Provide dine-in, take away and home delivery services.
6 Thai Van Lung, DI

japanese



Achaya Cafe

Achaya Cafe have two floors providing a nice atmosphere for meeting, relaxation or party. The menu is extensive with drinks and Western, Japanese, Vietnamese food from sandwiches, spaghetti, pizzas, steak and special Japanese sweet desserts.
90 Le Loi, DI
093 897 2050
11am - 10:30pm

Aka Taiyo

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
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

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

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.
47 Phan Chu Trinh, DI

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

www.blanchystreet.com
** Reviewed by Oi in April 2013*

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

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

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
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
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

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 you're living local.
Ground Floor, Nikko Hotel Saigon
235 Nguyen Van Cu, DI
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, DI
3824 2754

Ichiban Sushi

Ichiban Sushi Vietnam serves fine sushi and signature drinks/cocktails in a lounge setting.
204 Le Lai, DI
www.ichibansushi.vn

Indaba Restaurant

Indaba Cafe & Restaurant offers Japanese, Western and Vietnamese cuisine. It boasts homemade ingredients such as udon noodles, soy sauce for sushi and matcha ice cream.
35 Ly Tu Trong, DI
www.facebook.com/indabacafe

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, DI
3829 0326

Kabuto Tokyo

One of the more exuberant Japanese venues in this city, Kabuto Tokyo on Mac Thi Buoi specialises 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 Buoi, DI
3822 2351
kabuto.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, DI
38245355
www.yakatabune-saigon.com

Kissho

Experienced chefs prepare teppanyaki, sushi, and yakiniku dishes before your eyes. In addition, an extensive wine list is available as well as an array of fine sake to complement the exquisite flavors of premium imported meat and seafood.
14 Nguyen Hue, DI
www.kissho.wmcmvietnam.com

Kuru Kuru Shushi

A Japanese restaurant that features a rotating conveyor belt for the buffet, offering 50 different selections. It also offers an a la carte menu.
129 Nguyen Du, DI
www.kurukuru.com.vn

Kokekokko Pandora

Kokekokko is a combination of modern style fast food with the essence of ancient Japanese cuisine. The restaurant space is designed with high quality materials and features youthful and modern dynamic subtleties. With prices under VND100,00 Kokekokko is a must see.
4th Floor Pandora, I/I Truong Chinh, Tan Phu
3849 6840
www.kokekokko.com.vn

La Fenetre Soleil

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, DI
3824 5994

Mus Mus

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
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, DI
10am - 10pm

Robata Dining An

The restaurant has a downstairs bar and a second floor with private rooms that have sunken tables, sliding fusuma doors and tabletop barbecues. Popular with the Japanese expats, the menu serves up healthy appetizers, rolls, sashimi and An specialty dishes like deep fried chicken with garlic salt sauce An style (VND100,000).
15C Le Thanh Ton, DI
www.robata-an.com

Sakura Vietnamese-Japanese Restaurant

Cozy, friendly and modern Japanese restaurant near all of the attractions in the city center.
99 Suong Nguyet Anh, DI
6291 1036
sakurasaku.vn

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

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, DI
3823 8042
www.sushibar.vn.com

Sushi Dining Aoi

Sushi Dining Aoi is one such restaurant, where the whole atmosphere of the place evokes the best of the culture. With its typical Japanese-style decor – the smooth earthen tones of the wooden furniture and surrounds, the warmth and privacy of the VIP rooms – it's possible to believe you're in a more elegant realm.
53-55 Ba Huyen Thanh Quan, D3
3930 0039
www.sushidiningaoi.com

Sushi World

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, DI
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, DI
5404 2244
tokyodeli.com.vn

Uraetel BBQ Restaurant

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.
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, DI
3823 3232
vickis.com.vn

Wainosuke

Wainosuke is a Japanese and Italian style restaurant. It serves food such as pastas, salads and steaks to name a few and wine from traditional Japanese to premium Italian wine.
37 Ho Tung Mau, DI
3821 4016
www.wainosuke.vn.asia

Yoshino

The decor is straight out of the set of Shogun, with black wood, tatami mats, stencilled cherry blossoms and all the trappings of Japanese exoticism – tastefully done. While Ho Chi Minh City is certainly not short of fine Japanese eateries, this one is particularly impressive.
2A-4A Ton Duc Thang, DI
3823 3333

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, DI
3824 2754

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, DI
3825 7974
www.daejanguum.vn

Hana Restaurant

Japanese-Korean fusion in the heart of DI. 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, DI
3829 5588
9am - 10pm

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, DI
3914 1565
www.mihanquocvn.com
8am - 11pm

Mr. BBQ – Korean Chicken & Hot

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, DI
3823 9000

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 Buoi, DI
3829 4297

steakhouses

Au Lac do Brazil

Serving Saigon for more than 10 years, Au Lac do Brazil is the very first authentic Brazilian Churrascaria in Vietnam, bringing a new dining concept - an "All you can eat" Brazilian style BBQ where meat is brought to your table on skewers by a passador and served to your heart's content. They have an extensive selection of fine wines as well.
HO CHI MINH CITY
Au Lac do Brazil I
238 Pasteur, D3
(08) 3820 7157
HA NOI
Au Lac do Brazil II
6A Cao Ba Quat, Ba Dinh
(04) 3845 5224
For Banquet & Catering
Call or email
pr@aulacdobrazil.com
090 947 8698
www.aulacdobrazil.com
www.facebook.com/aulacdobrazil

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, DI
3829 5368
www.norfolkhotel.com.vn

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
www.steak.vn
11am - late

El Gaucho

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.elgaucho.asia

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
www.steakhouse.com.vn

Pho 99 🍲 Oi's Pick

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

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.

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

thai

Coriander

A small Thai joint decked out in natural materials with cork walls and sedge-lined floors serving green shrimp curry, the fried noodles in Thai style, or the squid vermicelli for a taste of the Gulf of Thailand.

16 Bui Vien, D1

Golden Elephant

A cozy and relaxing Thai style restaurant, serving an extensive collection of Thai specialties including noodles, curries, rice, stir-fries, soups, and a good range of seafood.

34 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3822 8554

Jasmine Thai

A quiet, candle-lit affair complete with the ethereal tones of traditional music, guests can enjoy variations on dishes prepared in the Thai culinary tradition.

85 Quoc Huong, D2
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

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
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
www.spicevn.com

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.thaiexpress.com.vn
10.30am - 10pm

vietnamese

3T Quan Nuong

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

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

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

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

Banh Xeo An La Chien

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
www.banhxeoanlaghien.com.vn/en

Barbecue Garden

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

Bo Nong

This performance venue features a traditional cultural show with Vietnamese cuisine. Established by Frenchmen Thibault Detraz and Jeremy Gremillet, who aim to bring the French passion for fusing live entertainment with dining.

143 Nguyen Trai, D1
www.bo-nong.com

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.

73 Ly Tu Trong, D1
6276 2609
www.bunsaignon.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

Cuc Gach Quan

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

Five Oysters

Serves local cuisine with an emphasis on seafood and beers starting at VND10,000. Open daily from 9am until late.

090 30 12123
www.facebook.com/FiveOysters

Ganh

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

Gold Fish offers a slice of authentic Vietnam with a genuinely rural cuisine.

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

Grillbar - Eatery & Cafe

A new trendy kitchen and cozy restaurant with the concept of taking traditional Vietnamese charcoal grilled street food and serving it in a New York style cafe.

122 Le Thanh Ton, D1
38227 901
www.grillbar.com.vn

Highway 4

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
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
www.hoatuc.com

Hoang Yen

A venue for those who are looking for high-quality Vietnamese cuisine. Try some of the country's delicacies in a modern yet inviting atmosphere. The eatery's various clay pots are flavorful; some feature marm, a delicious fermented fish paste. While the restaurant's cuisine is light and healthy overall, those with a penchant for green veggies should definitely order one of Hoang Yen's assortment of edible 'flowers' – especially the sautéed hoa thien ly. It is recommended to order a few dishes and share them all.

7-9 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
148 Hai Ba Trung, D1
Parkson Hung Vuong, Third Floor, Hung Vuong Plaza, An Duong Vuong, D5
CRI- 12, 103 Ton Dat Tien, D7
www.hoangyencuisine.com

Khoai Restaurant

Specializes in dishes from Nha Trang.

3A Le Quy Don, D3
www.rhoairestaurant.com

Lang Viet 🍲 Oi's Pick

Lang Viet combines water puppet theater with Vietnamese northern cuisine. There are two performances in the evening (5pm and 6:16pm) and last for 45 minutes, with an option of a la carte dining, set menu or buffet afterwards. During the day, the restaurant serves breakfast and lunch, starting at 10am to 2pm. Their sister restaurant, Pho Xua, was once visited by Former President Bill Clinton in 2000.

36 Pham Ngoc Thach, D3
3829 9266
www.langvietxua.com

Lemongrass

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

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
www.facebook.com/LuongSonQuan

Nam Phan

Nam Phan is a 200 seat restaurant that is accented Vietnamese cuisine with live classical music.
34 Vo Van Tan, D3

Nam Phat Restaurant

A Vietnamese restaurant that specializes in hosting social events such as weddings and business conferences. Traditional Vietnamese cuisine is the specialty with prices ranging from VND100,000 - VND300,000. The setting is of an elegant banquet hall.
21 Nguyen Trung Ngan, D1
3910 6488
nhahangnamphat@gmail.com

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

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

Mitau

Mitau creates a gathering place for those who love Hue cuisine. The interior includes memorabilia, statues, bric and brac and golf trophies.
52 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3823 0767
www.mitauhue.com

Nghi Xuan

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
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
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
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

Propaganda Bistro

Offers Vietnamese cuisine such as spring rolls and Vietnamese street food with a Western twist. Serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. The restaurant features hand-painted wall murals.
21 Han Thuyen, D1
3822 9048
www.facebook.com/Propaganda-Saigon

Quan Bui Authentic Vietnamese Cuisine

Leafy green roof garden, upmarket restaurant with reasonable prices and a wide menu of choices. Open style kitchen advertises its cleanliness. Designer interior with spot lighted pictures and beautiful cushions give an oriental luxurious feeling – augmented by dishes served on earthenware crockery.
17a Ngo Van Nam, D1
3829 1515
(deliveries: 3602 2241 or 091 400 8835)

Quan An Ngon

Quan An Ngon appeals easily to tourists and local people alike in its unique concept: presenting the diversity of Vietnamese cuisine from different regions in a village market style. The restaurant is set in a large new building, which from its external yellow appearance is reminiscent of an old European villa; but inside its space is designed as an ancient Hue ruong house.
138 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D1
3827 9666
www.quanngon138.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.
9th Floor, 12D Cach Mang Thang Tam, D1
3823 2232

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

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.com.vn

Song Ngu

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.
70 Suong Nguyet Anh, D1
3832 5017

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

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
www.vnnavi.com/restaurants/thanhvien

Thang Bom Quan

Serves hot pot and special style BBQ.
49 Pho Duc Chinh, D1

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.
187 Hai Ba Trung, D3
3829 7242
www.tibrestaurant.com.vn

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

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 Khoi, D1
3829 1623
www.vietnamhousesaigon.com

(other) asian

Crawfish King

Crawfish King serves special menus with crawfish, lobster, mantis shrimp, American-style chicken wings, oysters, fruit beer, sea urchin and more. Offers free

delivery for customers in D1 and D3.
63 Truong Dinh, D1
6272 7888
www.facebook.com/crawfishking63
7am - 12am

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
www.longmonaco.com.vn

western/international



Parkview

Located within New World Saigon Hotel, Parkview is a sophisticated restaurant with a view of the adjacent 23 September Park. Their buffets feature both Asian and international favorites along with local and imported fish, oysters, prawns, shrimps and snails. Every Sunday, the brunch buffet offers a fine fare including rotisserie and steak specialties, with an ice bar serving up sushi and sashimi.
New World Saigon Hotel
76 Le Lai Street, D1
3822 8888
saigon.newworldhotels.com
www.saigon.newworldhotels.com

27 Grill

27 Grill is an open kitchen run by Danish chefs Casper Gustafsen and Camilla Bailey and is known for its steaks. It also offers a spectacular view of the city. Opens from 5:30pm - 11pm.
Rooftop, AB Tower, 76A Le Lai, D1
www.chillsaigon.com

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
www.alfrescogroup.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, D1
3829 2772

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, D1
093 787 2010 (French, Arabic, English, Finnish)
0122 763 1261 (English, Russian, Vietnamese)

Ben Style 🍌 Oi's Pick

Every sandwich comes wrapped with a label that displays its calories, protein, fat and carbohydrates content. A 544-calorie Cheesy tofu meatballs sandwich costs VND80,000 while a 281-calorie Chicken salad sets you back VND50,000. The chicken jumbo sandwich comes with a massive 638 calories, 59 grams of protein and 62 grams of carbohydrates, but only 16 grams of fat. Ben also offers meal plans for those who want to get fit and bulk up.

302 Co Bac, D1
090 691 2730

Beirut

Offers Lebanese and Mediterranean food with belly dancers every night from 8:30pm to 10pm and Latino dancers from 10pm to midnight.

74/13D Hai Ba Trung, D1
www.beirut.com.vn

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, D1
3829 2955
www.blackcatsaigon.com

Burger Oi

Burger Oi offers fast delivery at affordable prices. Try their burgers, filet of fish, BBQ pulled pork, fresh cut curly fries and desserts. See their full menu online at www.burgeroi.com

Call 083 826 5426 or
SMS your order to 093 836 3030

Chuck's

Chuck's offers American comfort food like pancakes, omelets, burritos, fries, tacos, burgers and hotdogs.

27 Tran Nhat Duat, D1

Crab Pot

Crab Pot is a beer and seafood restaurant serving breakfasts, lunches and dinners of American, French, Seafood and Vietnamese cuisines, with delivery and catering services also.

65 Pham Ngoc Thach 6, D3

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, D1
3915 6066
www.hogsbreathcafe.com.vn

Jaspas Wine & Grill 🍷 Oi's Pick

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, D1

3827 0931
alfrescosgroup.com



MEXICAN RESTAURANT

Khoi Thom

Khoi Thom - "fragrant smoke" in English - is a unique venue, set in a bright, colourful al fresco decor inspired by renowned architect Ricardo Legoretta. A long way from Mexico, Chef Alejandro Torres's menu blends "Cocina Potosina" and timeless Mexican classics.

29 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3
www.khoithom.com

La Fenetre Soleil

La Fenetre Soleil, literally means 'window to the sun', showcases a fusion of Old World fittings such as exposed bricks, antique furniture and chandeliers with New World elements such as fur cushions and mosaic tiled and glass tables. Serves a range of cocktails, imported beer, coffee and smoothies together with a Japanese-Vietnamese fusion menu.

4 Ly Tu Trong, D1

La Habana

Offering authentic Spanish cuisine and a wide choice of tapas, as well as Cuban cocktails, La Habana is a den of Cuban-Spanish inspired architecture located on inner-city Cao Ba Quat.

6 Cao Ba Quat, D1
3829 5180
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, D1
3837 0760

Market 39

Market 39 showcases seven interactive live show kitchens, featuring a la carte all-day dining and an extensive buffet selection served daily during breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Ground floor, InterContinental Asiana Saigon
Corner of Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan
3520 9099
www.intercontinental.com/saigon

Mogambo Bar & Grill

Mogambo is a dark, African-styled restaurant with some the finest US & Tex-Mex and exceptional burgers.

50 Pasteur, D1
3825 1311

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, D1
090 724 2757
andres@pacharan.com.vn
10am - late

Pasha

Serving Turkish and Mediterranean cuisine, the kitchen is headed by Chef Ismet with over 30 years of experience in similar restaurants.

25 Dong Du, D1
6291 3677
www.pasha.com.vn

Saffron

The first thing that will strike you when you enter Saffron is the terracotta pots. Located 50 meters from Ciao Bella, a popular Italian restaurant on Dung Du, this restaurant offers Mediterranean food, some with a distinct Asian influence added for further uniqueness. Guests are welcomed with complimentary Prosecco, fresh baked bread served with garlic, olive tapenade and hummus.

51 Hai Ba Trung, D1
382 48358

Skewers

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, D1
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, D1
3914 4118

The Burrito Revolution

A food cart serving Mexican food such as tacos, burritos, tortillas and more.

124 Bui Vien, D1
090 271 4882

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, D1
3821 0094
www.theburgercorner.com.vn

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, D1
3821 4327
www.elbowroom.com.vn

The Hungry Pig

A sandwich bar that takes bacon very seriously, The Hungry Pig is a place where you can find bacon, wrapped in fresh-baked bagels and baguettes.

144 Cong Quynh, D1
3836 4533

Wainosuke

Wainosuke is a Japanese and Italian style restaurant. It serves food and wine from traditional Japanese to premium Italian wine.

37 Ho Tung Mau, D1
www.wainosuke-vn.asia

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, D1



White Forest

Set in a modern décor, the restaurant serves authentic Italian and French cuisine accompanied by a good selection of European wines and cocktails. Happy Hour cocktails from 2pm - 7:30pm where it's buy one get one free. Order take-away online at vietnammm.com, foodpanda.vn, and eatvn

14 Bis Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D1

0122 428 5237
www.whiteforest.com.vn

Xu Restaurant Lounge

The venue is well-known for its pork wancans, 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, D1
3824 8468
www.xusaigon.com

ZanZBar

ZanZBar boasts an eclectic range of international cuisine, great wines, handcrafted espresso coffees, happy hour specials and more. Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner seven days a week from 7am until late.

19-21 Dong Khoi, D1

Zest Bistro & Cafe

A casual restaurant featuring an American, French and fusion menu. Located across from the waterfront, just minutes away from the Bach Dang pier, Zest offers diners one of the nicest views in the city.

5 Ton Duc Thang, D1
3911 5599

Zoom Cafe 🍷 Oi's Pick

Zoom cafe serves Tex-Mex and Vietnamese cuisine as well as running a Vespa tour service from within the café.

169A Bui Vien, D1
3920 3897
7am - 2am daily

>>The List District 2

BAKERIES

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

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

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

CAFES

Agnes Cafe - Dalat Coffee & Flower Shop

At Agnes Cafe they offer fresh coffee, smoothies and juices along with a delicious breakfast and lunch menu. This quaint and cozy cafe is a perfect place to meet up with friends or just relax to get away from the bustling traffic outside. They offer free delivery.

IIA-B Thao Dien, D2
agnescafe@agnescoffee.vn
6281 9772
facebook.com/pages/Agnes-Cafe

Shalom Coffee

Shalom Coffee is offering for all your coffee and chocolate needs, warm snacks, cold refreshments, breakfasts and lunches.

53 Vo Truong Toan, D2
37444111
www.coffeeshalom.com

RESTAURANTS

FRENCH



Le Bacoulos

Le Bacoulos is a French restaurant, bar and lounge that serves French cuisine, bar food like burgers, fish and chips alongside vegetarian options like spinach soup and Greek salad. There's also a garden to unwind in with a glass of wine or enjoy a game of pool.

13 Tong Huu Dinh, D2
3519 4058
www.bacoulos.com

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

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.

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

INDIAN

Ashoka

Ashoka is one of the city's most popular and enduring Indian restaurants with a reputation for good food with a wide range of North Indian culinary dishes at a reasonable price. Large space for private parties, outdoor catering and free home delivery also available. Special set lunch veg/non-veg from VND90,000 upwards. Promotion (free trip to Cambodia) and discount available for people booking in groups.

33 Tong Huu Dinh (Street 53), D2
3744 4177
www.ashokavietnam.com

ITALIAN

Pendolasco - Thao Dien



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

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

Chiisana Hashi

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

River Garden, 170 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
6683 5308

THAI

Baan Thai



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

Jasmine Thai



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

Baniam Tree

A fine dining Vietnamese restaurant. Offers a set lunch, set dinner and international breakfast

River Garden, 170 Nguyen Van Huong, D2

Frangipani Hoa Su

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

26 Le Van Mien, D2
frangipani.restobar@gmail.com

WESTERN/ INTERNATIONAL

Boathouse 🍷 Oi's Pick

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

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 Truong Toan, D2
3744 4111
7am - 11pm

Blue Crab 🍷 Oi's Pick

Blue Crab offers delicious seafood - prawns, scallops and lobster, crab, oysters, scallops and many more for rock-bottom prices. All of the seafood is sourced from the same supplier as a number of high-end hotels and restaurants in the city, ensuring the food is fresh and high quality. For meat-lovers there's also a wide range of dishes that include pork ribs and chicken wings. They offer weekly specials as well.

49 Quoc Huong, D2
3744 2008
www.bluecrabsaigon.com

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

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

The Deck



Located on the banks of the Saigon River, this restaurant offers great international and Vietnamese fare.

38 Nguyen U Di, D2
www.thedecksaiagon.com

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
www.vinovietnam.com

>>The List District 7

BAKERIES

Dunkin' Donuts

This American doughnut and coffee franchise offers munchkins, croissants, donut sandwich and toasted sandwiches - along with the popular sugar raised, glazed chocolate mochi, glazed, chocolate coconut, cinnamon, Boston kreme, Bavarian Kreme, strawberry-filled or chocolate frosted donuts.

59 Nguyen Duc Canh, D7

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 4-1, 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.

557-1 Sky Garden 2, D7

Ruby Soho

A popular district 7 spot with excellent and cheap range of cocktails, good food and great music! Listen to the likes of Jimi Hendrix, The Ramones or Beck while downing an ice cold one.

552-1 Sky Garden 2, D7

Sala Beer

Enjoy Asian and European dishes at Sala Beer and choose and enjoy more than 50 famous beer brands from around the world.

Ground floor White House Hotel
R2-25 Bui Bang Doan, Hung Phuoc 1, D7

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

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
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
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
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

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

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
www.mof.com.vn/en

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 muppies and a whole range of Western comfort foods.
107 Ton Dat Tien, D7

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

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.
559-561, Sky Garden 2 Apartments, D7

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

INDIAN

Ashoka





Ashoka is a small chain of slightly more upscale Indian restaurants serving both Northern and Southern Indian cuisine including curries, naan and tandooris.
S9-1 Block R13, Bui Bang Doan, D7
5410 1989

Spice India

Spice India offers a wide range of dishes that cater to any palette. Enjoy your curry with a side of Bollywood.
56-1 Bui Bang Doan, Hung Vuong 3, D7
093 841 6551
www.namaste-india.com.vn





ITALIAN

La Cucina

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

atmosphere.
 Reviewed in Oi April 2013
Block 07-08 CRI-07, 103 Ton Dat Tien, D7
5413 7932

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
www.sarpinos.vn

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

JAPANESE

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

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
www.nathaliesrestaurant.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




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

   
 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

WESTERN/INTERNATIONAL

Berru

Berru is a family-run Turkish restaurant offering a variety of Turkish specialties on the menu including kebabs, koftas, mezzes and soups. This is one of the few halal restaurants that imports all of their halal meat.
SC 3-1 Khu Pho My Khang, Nguyen Luong Bang, D7

Boomerang Bistro Saigon

Located in The Crescent by the Crescent lake, the spacious Boomerang Bistro Saigon serves Australian and other Western food in the most pedestrian friendly part of town.
107 Ton Dat Tien, D7
3841 3883
www.boomerang.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

EL CAMINO

   
 A small bar & restaurant situated in the heart of Phu My Hung. Relaxing outdoor saloon featuring inexpensive Spanish tapas and small plates from gourmet ingredients. Affordable selection of Spanish & French wines.
137 SB-02 Khu My Phat, Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
5412 4641, 3pm - midnight
www.facebook.com/elcaminovietnam

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

Salt & Pepper

Salt & Pepper Restaurant mainly serves Italian dishes.
103 Ton Dat Tien, D7
www.saltpepper.com.vn

Scott & Binh's Restaurant

This unassuming little bistro is making big waves with visitors to the city and resident expats alike. 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

supermarkets

100%

100% Alimentation Generale De Qualite is the latest high-end grocery store to grace the streets of An phu. With a rustic charm 100% provides customers with 100% safe, natural and local products all sourced and manufactured in Vietnam. The shop only offers products that reach international food safety requirements and runs food events at the store. All products are available to order online at www.100percentvn.com.
26b Thao dien, D2

Annam Gourmet

An upscale deli and grocery chain offering gourmet groceries, cheese, organic products, gluten-free products, fruit and vegetables, gourmet deli, wine and other beverages. All locations, in District 1, 2 and 7, have a coffee lounge that serves breakfast, lunch, drinks and early dinner.
41A Thao Dien street. D2. 3744 2630
SB2-1 My Khanh 4, Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
16-18 Hai Ba Trung, D1

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
www.classicfinefoods.com



Le Cochon D'or


 LeCochon D'or shop sells European and International meat that include ham, sausages, pate, terrine, and smoked specialties. A taste of home, because you and your taste buds deserve it! Customizes service available including door-to-door delivery.
64 Ngo Duc Ke, D1
3829 3856
8am - 7pm
www.ngp.com.vn

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

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

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

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

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 Nguyet Anh, D1

Shop Thai Duong

Beer, wine, & spirits importers. Previously known as Tan Mai.
54 Ham Nghi, D1

The Warehouse

A premium wine importer, distributor, and retailer supplying wines from all over the world, the Warehouse also offers spirits, wine accessories, glassware and refrigeration to complement their customers' choices.
15/5 Le Thanh Ton, D1

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

Travel & Leisure

IMAGE BY JURA CULLEN

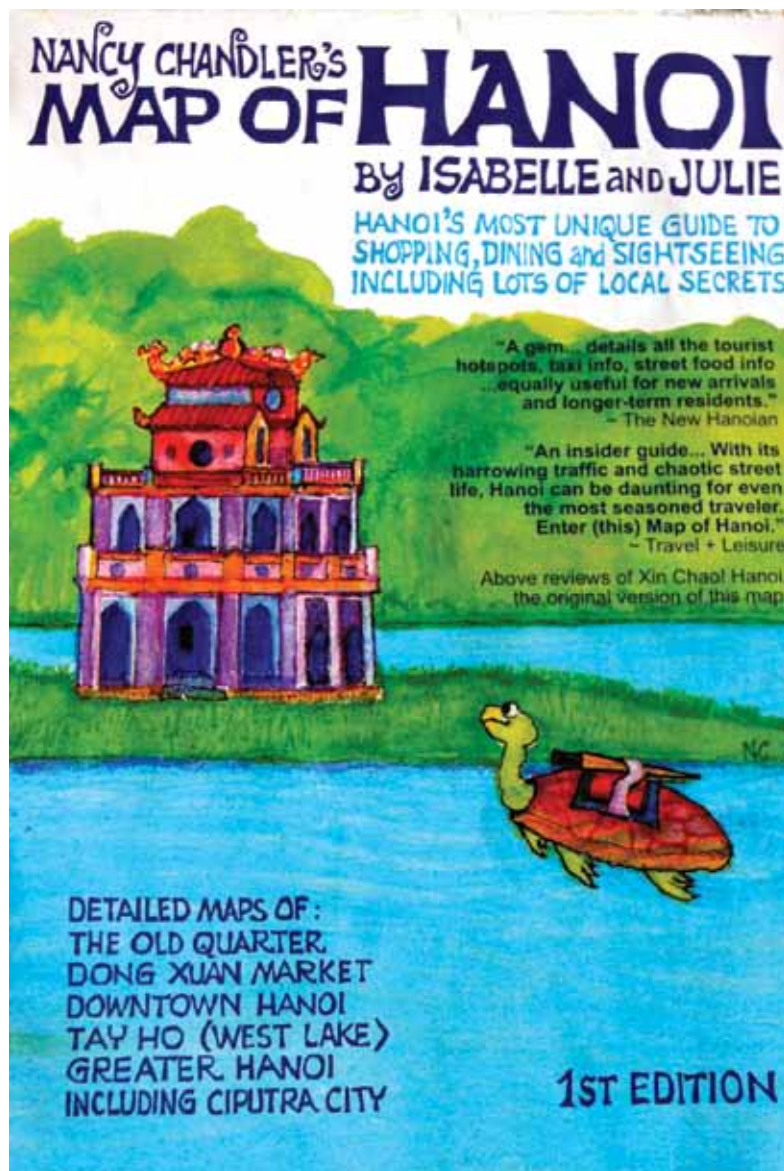


Cua Hang Mau Dich
"State-run food shop"

Treasure Map

Uncovering Hanoi's hidden charms

TEXT AND IMAGES BY JURA CULLEN



HANOI'S LANDSCAPE SEEMS to sprawl endlessly into an inconceivable labyrinth of concrete roads, rivers, bridges, buildings and houses, and at its center is a mass of higgledy-piggledy streets and alleyways. The Old Quarter has been the heart of commerce in Hanoi since its founding by Ly Thai To in 1010, with the same pattern of warren-like streets since the 15th century.

So how does one make sense of exploring Hanoi? Two long-term residents of the city, Isabelle and Julie, have set out to help with the creation of a detailed map and guide to the city's well- and lesser-known charms. When the pair first moved to Hanoi six years

ago, they had only the most basic tourist maps in hand but after a visit to Bangkok, where they encountered Nancy Chandler's Map, they were taken with the idea of a hand-annotated map and decided to make one for Hanoi.

"When time allowed, (Julie is a teacher, Isabelle a doctor) we would hop on Isabelle's bike and just head up and down the streets marking down our discoveries with dots and numbers, trying to be as methodical as possible – some days we would be out for 10 hours," says Julie.

Unlike most conventional maps, Nancy Chandler's Maps show more than just the

classic tourists sites and street names. They go into incredible detail including street specialities, food stalls, restaurants, shops, tiny hidden temples, and other quirky particulars. It was not just about what they could see from the street, the two ladies had to dig deeper, speaking with and getting to know Hanoians along the way in an attempt to understand more about the city.

"Once, I was attracted by what was inside one of the long, dark, damp corridors of the old town, so I stepped into a derelict tiny courtyard and stumbled upon an old woman crouched over a blackened, battered pot over a cooking fire," recounts Julie. "It was her kitchen – outside, bare, basic, uncomfortable. She stood up, listened to my awkward words in Vietnamese, and with a stony face seized my elbow to drive me out of the place. Or so I thought. In fact, she was taking me to her living room, the only place where she could decently offer me tea and willingly communicate."

Because of a severe housing shortage after the war, the Old Quarter became one of the most densely populated areas in the world. This is part of the reason why people live their lives out on the streets and even the railways, and why Hanoi has such a rich street culture. The two explored alleyways discovering shortcuts, ancient wells and community houses, learning along the way not to worry about invading what we would perceive as people's personal space.

They also came to appreciate Hanoians' great ability to take people as they come and not pass judgment – although perhaps this is to be expected in a city where people head out to parks to do exercise still dressed in their pajamas.

"When we were visiting promising bars, restaurants or hotels we often had to stop three or four times on the same street but we could not face taking off our helmets, hanging them up, and then combing our hair to look presentable, so imagine the sight of the pair of us taking lifts, visiting rooms or going through menus while chatting in a foreign language with our helmets on, like pizza delivery boys, and no one seemed surprised!" says Julie with a chuckle.

Hanoi is as good a place as any to lose one's inhibitions as the ladies found out when they discovered Huong Sen Massage off Nghi Tam. "It is a very traditional Vietnamese style spa with absolutely no frills, a place where Vietnamese ladies go in groups to socialize and relax. It is warm and noisy with women of all ages strutting around absolutely naked, except for their mobiles glued to their ears. We are always welcome and much stared at. No one speaks a word of English. Just imagine all these women soaking in a line of giant wooden buckets, with only a shower cap on our heads, drinking unidentified thick green beverages in a misty atmosphere." But they didn't just try the spa for their map; it has now become one of their favorite places for a soak, a steam, and a massage.

The first map was released in 2010, geared primarily towards expats. The most recent version, created in partnership with Nancy and Nima Chandler, includes even more

"It was not just about what they could see from the street, the two ladies had to dig deeper, speaking and getting to know Hanoians along the way in an attempt to understand more about the city"

information about the city. The beauty of the map is that it doesn't tell you where to go, but opens up the possibilities of this charming but chaotic city. It is full of tips about Hanoi's eccentricities, telling you where to find song bird clubs, antique electric fans, unusual architecture, and even padded-bottomed underwear!

All Drawn Out

After meeting Isabelle and Julie, I explored some of their favorite places with the help of the map.

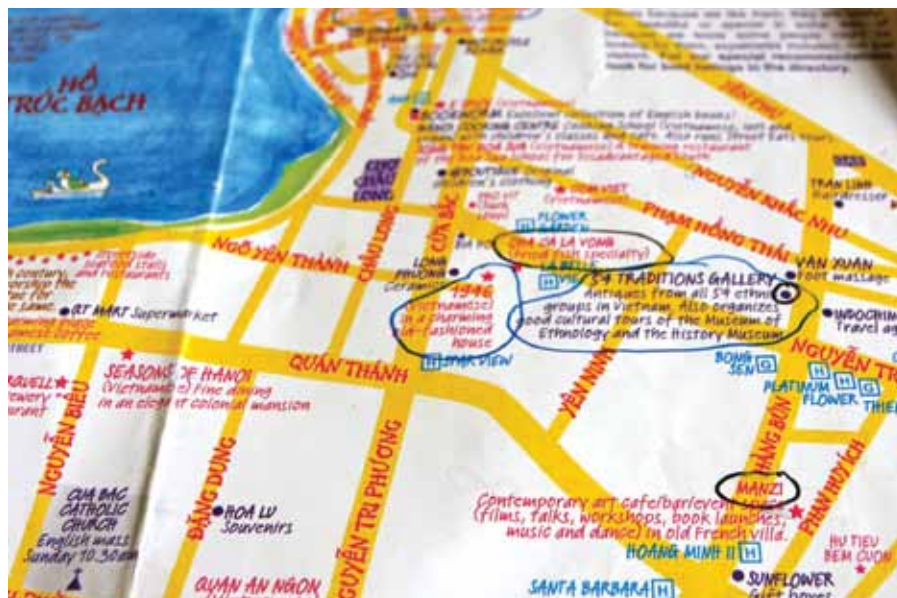
One of the first places I headed off to find was **Cua Hang Mau Dich** ("State-run food shop") on Truc Bach island. Although the island is tiny, all the roads seem to go round and round in circles and at first we were only able to find *pho cuon* stalls with brash young men calling out for us to stop. Eventually we found the right road and the small unassuming French-era building tucked behind strangling climbers with barely a sign for identification. Inside the dark building every wall and surface is cluttered with ration-era paraphanelia from food stamps to black and white photos to Soviet fans. Many of the tables are made from old Singer sewing machine frames.

Prices are cheap but then dishes are austere with a distinctly higher bone-to-meat ratio. The restaurant harks back to the difficult bygone days when rationing was still in place - ration tickets are issued to you upon ordering. It still manages to have some delicious, but very simple, dishes including pounded fish cakes, tofu in tomato sauce, 'burnt' rice, and chicken fried with lime leaves - delicious until you realize that you are nibbling the morsels of meat off a head. It is very popular with Vietnamese and much more authentic than many of the standard guidebook recommendations.

On another day, with map in hand, I wandered down Phan Huy Ich, a charming street still lined with French villas from the 1920s. I headed to a little café and contemporary art space called **Manzi**. It's a calm place to step into, out of the bustle of Hanoi, and enjoy a particularly bitter and



TOP TO BOTTOM: Old Quarter, Manzi, song bird club



Truc Bach Map



West Lake

strong *ca phe nau da* while looking at the ever-changing art exhibitions, flooded by light from the tall french windows.

Next I headed off on one of the map's self-guided walking tours – indicated on the map by a dotted brown line. It winds through the Old Quarter taking you down some of the most interesting streets such as Lan Ong, a traditional medicine street, where you can smell the herbs before you even begin to see bags of hanging sea horses and geckos amongst other peculiar things. The walk takes about 2.5 hours leading you in a sensible circuit down most of the traditional guild streets.

Another of Isabelle and Julie's recommendations is to take advantage of the lake road around West Lake (which didn't exist when they first arrived) and go cycling and temple hopping. Cycling is by far the best way to see the city as bikes can be parked almost anywhere so it's very easy to stop at any point. On our way along the lake we also got to watch all the men out fishing. After wondering who would dare eat fish out of West Lake, based on the murky color and

copious rubbish, I began to chat with some of the men. One younger guy, who spoke very good English, explained he is an engineer and does this merely as a hobby – he never actually eats the fish.

Afterwards we cycled on to **Chua Van Nien** on the far northwest side of the lake. We headed downstairs under the temple to a specially designed grotto complete with a small flowing stream. Soon we were pacing around and turning a huge pink marble linga, a very unusual experience as lingas are not usually found in Hanoian temples. All the temples are marked on the map along with cafes and bars such as **Commune** and **21 North** where you can stop for a break on your way around the lake.

Since the most recent map went to print, one of the new art and nightlife spaces included – Zone 9 – has closed permanently. But of course new places are always cropping up so it is a good idea to check for updates on the website. One of their new favorite cafes, **Kafe**, didn't make it on the current map but is causing a stir as a hip place for young Vietnamese and foreigners to meet and eat

"Cycling is by far the best way to see the city as bikes can be parked almost anywhere so it's very easy to stop at any point"

tasty casual food in a light and airy converted French villa, with a large roof terrace for when Hanoi's weather behaves.

The map is an invaluable tool for getting to know Hanoi. It is now included in every room in the Sofitel Metropole and is available at Bookworm, Hanoi's English language bookstore. It has clearly been a labor of love for the two, driven by a passion for the city rather than commercial reasons.

"Our main hope is that it will motivate people to explore and enjoy Hanoi for themselves," say the two. ■

Bio: *Jura Cullen* has been based in Hanoi for the last two years. She has also lived in Sudan, the US, France and the UK. Her blog *Hound in Hanoi* (juraphotos.wordpress.com) includes photography from quirky things seen in Hanoi with her Nubian hound Tala, and other travels around the region and world.

ADDITIONAL INFO

Nancy Chandler Map of Hanoi
website which includes updates:

www.nancychandler.net/product_update.asp?pld=1105#Sightseeing

Huong Sen Massage

68 An Duong (off Nghi Tam)

Cua Hang Mau Dich

("State-run food shop")

37 Nam Trang, Truc Bach

Manzi

Café and art space

14 Phan Huy Ich

Commune

Café and bar on the West side of West Lake
www.communehanoi.com

21 North

Café, bar, and music venue
www.21northhanoi.com

The Kafe

18 Dien Bien Phu
www.thekafe.vn/index.php/en/

FOR HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL WALKS THROUGH THE OLD QUARTER

Friends of Vietnam Heritage,
a non-profit educational group
fvheritage.org/events/city-walks/

The Hanoi Bicycle Collective
(bike rentals and tours)
www.thbcvn

Paradise for Sale

Finding the Old Hawaii on the island of Lānaʻi

TEXT & IMAGES BY JAMES PHAM



Kahehili's Leap

HAWAII – THE NAME alone is enough to conjure up visions of idyllic sandy beaches bordering crystalline waters just steps from world-class malls, resorts and restaurants. Most would-be travelers tend to think first of Honolulu on the island of Oahu, known for its famed Waikiki Beach and the island's North Shore, home to international surfing competitions. Newlyweds may make it to neighboring Maui for a helicopter view of its dormant volcano and stunning waterfalls. Few, though, have ever heard of Lānaʻi, much less visited the sixth largest of the Hawaiian Islands, the least accessible to the public.

While nearly five million tourists visited Oahu in 2012, just 72,000 made it to the tiny island of Lānaʻi. The lucky few that do, however, experience a version of Hawaii unlike any other, a magical step back in time, worlds away from the glitz and glamour of its better known sister islands. Visitors may come for the pair of award-winning Four Seasons resorts and secluded, hard-to-get-to beaches but they come back for the slow-paced way of life,

a permanently faded photograph of Old Hawaii. Even among perpetually relaxed Hawaiians, Lānaʻi is known as *the* place to get away from it all.

Lānaʻi, pronounced as three syllables, not two (“lanai is a porch, Lānaʻi is the name of our island,” says Simon Seisho Tajiri, Program Manager at the Lānaʻi Culture & Heritage Center) is 98 percent privately owned with the remaining two percent owned by the State of Hawaii. In fact, for the last century and a half, the fate of its population (3,102 at the last census) has been inextricably intertwined with the will of a succession of individuals, still called “landowner” by locals.

Purchasing Power

The late 1800s saw the island used for ranching under Walter M. Gibson. In addition to bringing Mormonism to Lānaʻi, he also imported more than 50,000 sheep and goats which were left to graze freely, quickly decimating the native cover, forever changing the natural water recharge processes.

“Within memory of the last generation, there were still native trees and plants on the island. Now, 150 years later, we’re still dealing with the aftereffects of [Gibson’s] decision to bring sheep and goats to the island. Some of the ancient place names are tied into our identity as to what it means to be Lānaʻi. Had we understood that better, we might have been better at preserving it,” Simon says with a hint of wistfulness.

James Dole then purchased Lānaʻi in 1922, turning practically the entire island into one gigantic pineapple farm. At one point, it’s said that the 141 square mile island produced 75 percent of the world’s pineapples, employing the majority of Lānaʻi’s workforce and earning it the moniker of “Pineapple Island.” The plantations attracted workers from all over, including Japan, China, the Philippines and Portugal, explaining why most locals bear physical features of multiple ethnicities. A lingering legacy is found in Hawaiian jokes which poke fun at all the minorities, but with the meanest reserved for *podagees*, Pidgin for “Portuguese,” who were often the

Left: A shop in Lanai City
Right: Church at Keomoku

Q & A

Oi sat down with Alice Bouman, Resort Manager for the Four Seasons Lodge at Koele, which perennially finds itself on lists of the world's best places to stay.



Four Seasons Manele Bay

It's unusual to have two properties so close to each other. How does this affect the guest experience?

For guests, it means they don't have to carry money. They can use facilities at both locations and just sign everything to their room. We also offer a seamless stay. Halfway through their trip, they can change properties and we'll have the key and their luggage waiting for them without having to fill in any additional forms. It's like an island hop without hopping islands because each property has a very different identity and provides a different experience. There are microclimates here, which means that we can be between 10 - 15 degrees cooler than down at Manele Bay.

Usually, service-oriented people are drawn to the hospitality industry. Here, it wasn't by choice. What have the challenges been?

You're right that people didn't have a choice. Pineapple picker #1 became server #1. But as times have changed and more employment options became available like in healthcare or in the school system, more and more of the staff have chosen to be in hospitality. Our two properties have about 650 employees and 70 percent of our staff are truly from here. Unemployment on the island is like one percent. Positions open up and I can't fill them locally at the moment because the one percent that aren't working aren't working for a reason.

A lot of our staff haven't had exposure to other luxury properties so we spend quite a bit of time training and developing. We want our staff to have their personality shine through.

Four Seasons began operations here under Murdock and now Ellison. How hands-on have the landowners been in regards to how the resorts are run?

Murdock realized pineapple wasn't making money so he transitioned to hospitality and brought in a lot of infrastructure. To have someone like Ellison with renewed vision and the pockets to support that makes a huge difference. It's allowed us to do some needed maintenance, but also even in town with the community pool, sports fields and grocery stores all getting a facelift. Houses are being fixed up as soon as someone moves out. It's no longer okay to have something falling apart. The whole mentality has changed. People are considered important again. It's provided hope to the island.



"It's a different sense of place here. Pretty much everyone knows everyone. If I see someone's child in trouble, I'm going to help. A lot of people in the community would do that"

plantation supervisors.

"I remember working on the plantations in summers," recalls Lāna'i native Warren Osako of the grueling work of picking pineapples by hand. "It was hard work, but fun, because you got to work with your friends. The plantations provided a lot for the community." The entire population working together created an unusual camaraderie. "There was a whistle that blew at 6am when it was time to go to work and then again at 8pm to tell everyone to go to sleep," remembers Sammy, another Lāna'i native.

The entire population still lives in the seven square mile of Lāna'i City, an orderly grid built around Dole Park, anchored by a few grocery stores, restaurants and souvenir shops. There are no traffic lights, malls or fast food joints on the island. Most of the houses are small, square, clapboard affairs, known as "plantation houses," arranged in "camps" named after the various ethnicities who came to the island to work. *Haole* Camp (*haole* is Hawaiian for "foreigner") or more colloquially, Snob Hill, is still used to refer to the part of town where plantation managers and supervisors lived away from the workers in nicer homes.

In the mid-80s, the island came under the control of billionaire David Murdock. Foreseeing the decline of the pineapple industry, Murdock set to building two luxury hotels, effectively redeploying the entire workforce into the service industry.

"We didn't feel that it was a positive move, but we had no choice," says Warren. "When the plantations closed, if you wanted

a job, [the hotels] were it. Either that, or move away."

Constance Cabiles, born and raised on Lāna'i, was part of the group that opposed the transition from pineapples. "We were worried that our way of life would change," she recalls. "You want progress? Go to Maui or Oahu. We were worried that it would lead to stoplights, more people, and all that."

For longtime residents, there was much to lose.

Small Town Mentality

"Lāna'i is unique. It's incredibly quiet and it's slow paced. Few of us lock our doors at night. You can park your car in the middle of the street, leave your keys in and not worry about it," says Simon. "It's really community living. You went to school with the same classmates from K to 12. There was a strike in the '50s for seven months, but the people were able to sustain themselves without company pay, hunting and fishing and pooling resources together."

Warren agrees. "It's a different sense of place here. Pretty much everyone knows everyone. If I see someone's child in trouble, I'm going to help. A lot of people in the community would do that. I have AAA as my backup when I travel, but don't need it here. My friends are my AAA. When my car broke down, a friend picked me up. Another friend did the repairs. When growing up, if I did something wrong, by dinner time, my parents were going to know about it."

Mikala, a single mother of one, opines on the quality of life in small town Lāna'i. "In other large communities, you spend most



of your time stuck in traffic. Here, you walk your *okole* (butt) to work, to the store. If there are three people in line at the bank, you'd go, 'Shucks! Why so many people?' But you use the time you save to gather with friends and family, to get to know where you live."

Oahu transplant Yasha Anne agrees that Lāna'i is a great place to raise her children. "I couldn't have picked a safer place to live. This here is not real. It's overly safe. This is not reality, but it's a reality that I want for myself."

However, on an island where a gallon of gas costs USD5.80 and a gallon of milk can cost upwards of USD12, residents are keenly aware of the drawbacks to size and isolation. When the "rock fever" gets too much, residents can hop a ferry to the Wal-Mart and movie theaters that beckon seductively on Maui or take a 30 minute flight to experience city life on Oahu. "But who wants to deal with all that?" asks Auntie Irene, as she deftly strings a lei of orchids for tourists. "Anytime I go off island and come back, I breathe a sigh of relief."

On the more serious side, Simon notes that "like any community where it's paradise, it also comes with its problems." Key infrastructure is lacking. Expectant mothers must travel elsewhere to deliver their babies. The only choice for higher education is the community college in the center of town, a small building where students take online distance learning courses, often video conferencing with a handful of other kids from the neighboring islands of Maui and Kauai. "I wasn't

used to being off island," recalls Simon. "I remember feeling lost in a McDonald's on Maui. What's a Dollar Menu? Growing up on a small island, there's an unfamiliarity with the outside world. Some have trouble leaving the island or staying in college."

"You know everyone, but the downside is everyone also knows everyone's business," adds Yasha Anne.

On the influx of off-island workers, Simon echoes the sentiment of many that "as more people are coming in, that small town vibe is slowly changing. That level of trust is also changing. With many of these people who are coming now, I don't know them, or know who their families are."

The Company You Keep

The way things are headed, the people of Lāna'i may need to brace for a veritable tsunami of change. The island once again changed hands in 2012, now belonging to Larry Ellison, billionaire CEO of Oracle and the third richest man in America. In the year or so since taking over ownership, Ellison has received a mostly favorable reception from the people whose lives are so closely tied into whatever plans he may have for Lāna'i. "When Murdock was leaving the island, a lot of infrastructure closed down, lots of people were laid off," recalls Simon. "But when the island was purchased, we saw a lot more activity, landscaping, construction and renovation."

"This landowner is making a lot more changes very quickly. But it's good to see that he's putting the community before the business," says Yasha Anne. "The community

pool [which had been closed for years] was restored and the park redone before work was done on the resorts."

However, plans for the island go far beyond the cosmetic. The island's newspaper recently highlighted draft plans which include building a large research university, a tennis academy, a third resort, and a desalination plant amongst other projects, creating many more jobs and housing but doubling the island's population. The last time that many people lived on the island was before it had contact with the West.

Constance, who opposed the last major transition, admits that "after we saw how it all worked, we were grateful. People who had left the island could come back now that there were jobs. We were being trained in a new industry we could use."

"The Company has been really good about holding at least three to four very informative town meetings a month on updates," says Yasha Anne. "People feel they have a say. We can see that in the near future, so much is going to change. We just have to cross our fingers that the change will be for the good."

"The Company" she refers to is Ellison's Pulama Lāna'i which oversees development on the island, including the businesses, the water company and the wastewater treatment company. While the two luxury properties are actually managed separately by Four Seasons, many of the locals simply call all of Ellison's endeavors 'The Company'.

To most visitors, the face of The Company is the pair of five-star Four Seasons resorts, routinely garnering accolades for top resorts



Wild Coast

in Hawaii and beyond. Located 1,600 feet above sea level in the upcountry of Lānaʻi, Four Seasons Resort Lānaʻi, The Lodge at Koele is modeled after a hunting lodge, complete with wood burning fireplaces in the Great Hall and expansive grounds which feature croquet, stables, a sporting range and a Greg Norman designed golf course. Twenty minutes away is the Four Seasons Resort Lānaʻi at Manele Bay, set on a cliff overlooking a stunning bay where huge pods of spinner dolphins routinely play for hours.

With a combined 338 rooms, two golf courses and a host of restaurants including a recently opened Nobu, it's not surprising that the average visitor to Lānaʻi is anecdotally wealthier than the average Hawaii tourist, spending just over USD300 per day, compared to USD214 for Oahu and USD186 for Maui.

Off the perfectly manicured grounds of the stunning resorts, Lānaʻi's wild side beckons. With only 30 miles of paved roads (mostly between the resorts, the city and the airport), a four-wheel drive vehicle is a must to see the raw beauty of the island. The words "Not Accessible" stamped across some of the off-road routes on the Jeep Safari map from Dollar Rent A Car as well as a handwritten "Bumpy" scrawled along one particular stretch of road presages the rough driving conditions ahead. But visitors who brave the dusty, boulder-strewn paths are rewarded with some of the most stunning views of any of the Hawaiian islands ranging from totally undeveloped beaches to views of neighboring Molokai and Maui and the Pacific beyond to guava forests with the occasional Axis deer

or Mouflon sheep.

"The terrain is all dirt roads, rocks, sand and hills," says Yasha Anne of Dollar. "But other than sometimes getting stuck in the sand, visitors don't get into much trouble. Jeep rentals are expensive (starting at USD139 per day) because they have to be brought in from off island and major maintenance has to be done on Oahu, but they're the only way to see some of the sights like Polihua Beach which has some of the roughest terrain but is breathtaking."

Daredevils might brave Kahekili's Leap, a rock ledge 80 feet above the sea where warriors during King Kamehameha's reign showcased their machismo by jumping into the shallow blue waters below. Or for an otherworldly experience, Keahiakawelo (also known as Garden of the Gods) with its unusual moonscape of rich, red volcanic earth and rocks juxtaposed against a deep blue ocean backdrop is a popular stop. Lānaʻi's history can also be found along its rugged coastline - faded old churches and ancient Hawaiian petroglyphs - and its warm hospitality among the fishing shacks that dot the deserted beaches. Owned by locals, the rustic, weathered houses are left open for all to enjoy. Homemade signs welcome strangers, with the simple request to clean up afterwards.

Whether that paradisiacal spirit of community can survive with all the changes on the horizon is yet to be seen. However, Simon notes with optimism: "There's been a lot said about visitors changing Lānaʻi. But visiting Lānaʻi with its chill vibe and community ethos will change you, too." ■

WHERE TO STAY & HOW TO GET THERE

- For more on the fascinating history of Lānaʻi, visit the excellent Lānaʻi Culture & Heritage Center right in town.

www.lanaichc.org

- The only totally off road Jeep rental in the state of Hawaii, Dollar Rent A Car has Jeeps and Hummers, the only way to explore the island.

www.dollarlanai.com

- Set above the gorgeous marine preserve of Hulopoʻe Bay, The Four Seasons Resort Lānaʻi at Manele Bay is a mecca for beach lovers. With 237 oversized guest rooms decorated in tropical chic, the property features a range of water sports including stand-up paddleboard and surfing lessons and world-class dining boasting menu items from around the Hawaiian islands. Doubles start at USD449.

www.fourseasons.com/manelebay

- Just 20 minutes away and close to Lānaʻi City is The Lodge at Koele, a stunning property with expansive grounds which house lawn bowling greens, an orchid house, stables and a reflecting pond. All 101 rooms overlook The Lodge's perfectly manicured gardens, and the floral prints and jewel tones are designed to whisk guests back to the heady heights of the plantation era. Doubles start at USD349.

www.fourseasons.com/koele

- Island Air, also owned by Larry Ellison, is currently the only way to fly into Lānaʻi from Honolulu. Its 64-seat turboprops make the 25-minute flight five times a day. Return flights start at USD130.

www.islandair.com

The Case for 'Authentic Travel'

Opening yourself up to new experiences



Having visited nearly 60 countries as a travel writer and award-winning photographer, **James Pham** blogs about his adventures at FlyIcarusFly.com



'AUTHENTIC TRAVEL' HAS been a hot topic recently in the travel community. Exactly what defines 'authentic travel' and is it really superior to other forms of travel? Some say it means getting off the beaten path, interacting with locals and stepping out of your comfort zone.

Last month, I wrote about a pina colada-filled stay in an all-inclusive mega-resort on the Mayan Riviera. While it was indeed blissful and an ideal destination for a family trip, it's not what I would consider 'authentic' by any stretch. Had it not been for all the salsa and guacamole around, I might not have even realized we were in Mexico.

When I think back to some of my most memorable trips, they revolved around interactions with locals, seeing a side of the country that was totally unexpected, perhaps trying a food or doing something that I normally wouldn't back home.

One of my best travel moments came in the mid-90s, as I was traveling through Thailand for the first time. My travel companions had a family emergency, leaving me alone in a strange country. I remember the dread I felt, being on my own for the first time in a country where few spoke English. This was long before the days of the skytrain or metro, and getting from Sukhumvit to the city center involved traveling by *khlong* (canal) boats with multiple changes.

Piers were marked in Thai only and I remember desperately trying to remember landmarks at every change like a twisted version of Hansel and Gretel so that I could find my way back. After more than an hour in the heat, I was feeling pretty

low. I asked three shy teens, two boys and a girl, dressed in crisp white school uniforms, how to get to the Emerald Pagoda. Initially met with panicked looks and a flurry of Thai, one of them finally managed, "We go. You come with us." We spent the morning together, touring the huge complex, barely speaking because we had no real common language.

Afterwards, though, they took me for noodles and when it came time to pay, they refused to take my money. "You in our country. We pay. When we come your country, you pay," was the essence of what they told me, knowing full well they'd most likely never set foot in my country. It made me a believer in the Land of Smiles.

Changing It

However, with language barriers, safety concerns or even an introverted personality, those wonderfully serendipitous experiences may be increasingly difficult to come by. Many feel more secure in being part of a tour or at least having a guide and that's perfectly fine.

A growing number of travel websites, like www.withlocals.com are facilitating peer-to-peer interactions by hooking up local hosts who do everything from putting on a meal in their home to taking visitors around to their favorite places to teaching some sort of local craft. It may not be as 'authentic' as befriending a local on your own, but it's a twist on the tour concept.

Oftentimes, though, just stepping out of your comfort zone leads to a pleasant surprise. One time, I found myself in the

ancient city of Bhaktapur, Nepal, armed with a Lonely Planet walking map, bypassing the touts, fully intent on making my own way. At the last minute, though, I decided to take up a teenage boy's offer of walking me through the town. He didn't have any flashy tourist brochures and spoke halting English — exactly why I chose him. He lived in the city and wasn't interested in taking me to tourist shops. Best of all, my nose wasn't buried in a book trying to stay on a specific route. Instead, we at times deviated from the path, checking out courtyard fountains and walking through a mom-and-pop paper making factory.

The alternative is organized group tours. I have to admit that a small part of me dies every time I get on a tour bus, following a guide holding a flag like so many 'sheeple'. Whenever I can, I engage local guides on a one-to-one basis. That was the case in Luxor, Egypt, where for USD30 for a half-day, I was able to secure a driver and guide. All morning, we stayed ahead of the huge bus groups, enjoying the sites in relative quiet. The tour went beyond history and delved into politics, religion and ambitions, giving me insight on what it was to be a modern-day Egyptian. I was able to move at my own pace, lingering in deserted corridors with ribbons of sunlight streaming on millennia-old friezes.

So whether you're the type that can make friends with anyone over a pint, or a wallflower with your nose stuck in a guidebook, the next time you find yourself in a foreign land, why not try something different and open yourself up to more "local" experiences? ■

Saigon Symphony

The soundtrack of our lives



A professional artist and author of *A Week in Hoi An*, Bridget March specializes in urban landscapes and aims to reveal the hidden treasures of city life and small town cultures through her illustrations. Bridget is currently offering art classes and sketching tours in Hoi An until the summer. For more of Bridget's work including news of her upcoming book visit brushwithasia.blogspot.com.



ILLUSTRATION BY BRIDGET MARCH

ON THE DAY I took my first walk down the streets of central Saigon, I instinctively felt that this was the beating heart of Vietnam's burning ambitions.

Its sister, Hanoi, is more refined, elegant and mysterious. She sits in the shade on sultry days to preserve her beauty and, like a Mandarin's daughter, she surrounds herself with the cultural elite and the entire nation's most influential people.

Saigon, on the other hand, is a farmer's son who has come to the city to make his fortune. He is working tirelessly to carve his name in the 21st century. This boy is easy to get along with and doesn't care who you are or where you are from – he just wants to know if you can help him build that brilliant future as quickly as is humanly possible.

The spirit of enterprise is almost tangible in Saigon. Everyone is rushing around, carrying, collecting, delivering, selling, buying, building, demolishing, shouting, waving, making, mending, recycling, sweeping and, above all... smiling and laughing. People who have lived here over 10 years talk about how much the city has changed and grown. Today, it is one of the busiest

boomtowns in all of Asia.

Saigon has an energy I have never encountered before. Someone once said that you should "do something every day that scares you." Saigon will provide that daily 'scare' without even trying! If you have driven, cycled or just walked its streets, you will know exactly what I mean.

This city has a distinct sound – sometimes like jazz or rap, occasionally a concerto. In the early morning, an almost inaudible chanting and a sigh of resonant bells awakens the suburbs and city cloisters. The chatter of city birds and the echoing calls of rainforest species are pierced by the occasional buzz of an early moped.

The next overtone is of warbling bus horns and the gentle *ting ting* of neighbors clattering plates as they make breakfast. The volume gently builds as they shout goodbyes on their way to school and work. Gradually, the hum of traffic builds up in the distance and it comes rumbling slowly towards you like a herd of buffalo until 7am, where it takes residence as the backbeat to another hot, busy day. At about the same hour, the thunderous percussion of construction

commences with its ringing of pneumatic drills, clanging of scaffold poles and the roaring engines of big machinery. And so the city sounds until after rush hour as the sun begins to go down.

While the sun sets, the noise of the building sites subsides and we are left with the background accompaniment of motorbikes until the last late shift worker buzzes off into the distance. In the neighborhood, the swifts crackle as they speed after flies just before dusk, and the daily composition closes with the last yowl of a distant cat being chased to bed by a neighborhood dog. All that is left is a rustling whisper of the bamboo on the last breath of breeze.

The city center, of course, hardly takes pause for breath. The farmer's son works hard and barely seems to sleep. Music winds its way out of city doorways, and conversations continue in the alleyways and emerge from the echoey interiors of balconied rooms above the streets.

This enigmatic, exotic, energetic city gets under your skin, and its daily symphony is one of the most enduring memories you will carry with you always. ■

ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE



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TEL: (84 62) 3682 222, FAX: (84 62) 3682 333
EMAIL: INFO@PRINCESSANNAM.COM
WEBSITE: WWW.PRINCESSANNAM.COM



PRINCESS D'ANNAM
RESORT & SPA

airlines

Air China

7th Floor, Sun Wah Tower, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1
3823 3888
www.airchina.com

Air France

130 Dong Khoi, D1
3829 0981
mail.hcm@airfrance.fr
www.airfrance.com.vn

Asiana Airlines

39 Le Duan, D1
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 - Phuoc 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, D1
3829 6800
passengerservice@cs-sgn.com
www.csair.com

Emirates

15 Nguyen Hue, 14th Floor, Dist.1, HCMC
Email: ehvietnam@emirates.com
39113099
www.emirates.com/vn

Etihad

etihadairways.com

EVA Airlines

2A-4A Ton Duc Thang, D1
3822 4488
www.evaair.com

JAL Japan Airlines

4F Hotel Nikko Saigon, 235 Nguyen Van Cu, Nguyen Cu Trinh, D1
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, D1
3824 2878
www.korean-air.vn

Lufthansa

14th Floor, Bitexco Building, 19-25 Nguyen Hue, D1
3829 8529
lufthansa.vn@dlh.de
www.lufthansa.com

Malaysia Airlines

37 Ton Duc Thang, D1
www.malaysiaairlines.com

Qantas Airways

186 - 188 Le Thanh Ton, D1
3910 5373

Qatar

Suite 8, GF, Petro Vietnam Tower
1-5 Le Duan St., room 4, Floor 8, AB tower,

Singapore Airlines

29 Le Duan, D1
3823 1588
www.singaporeair.com

Thai

29 Le Duan Blvd, D1

Turkish

Sales office in Vietnam
76 Le Lai St., room 4, Floor 8, AB tower, D1

United Airlines

Unit 708, 7th Floor, Sun Wah Tower, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1
www.united.com

Vietnam Airlines

16F Sunwah Tower, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1
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

hotels

HO CHI MINH CITY**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, D7
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, D1
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, D1
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, D10
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 D1 sights. Hidden away in a quiet back alley right in the central area.
36 Bis/2 Le Loi, D1
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, D1
38224495

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

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, D1
38236167

Bong Sen Hotel

★★★
Located in the heart of D1, The Bong Sen Hotel offers luxurious accommodation for guests who wish to relax or get a little work done.
117-123 Dong Khoi, D1
38291516
www.bongsenhotel.com

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

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, D1
38296296

EMM Hotel Saigon

★★★★
The 56 air-conditioned guestrooms at EMM Hotel Saigon include laptop-compatible safes and minibars. Complimentary wireless and wired high-speed Internet access and in-room

refrigerators are provided. 32-inch LED TVs are equipped with premium cable channels. All accommodations provide desks, safes, and direct-dial phones.
157 Pasteur, D3
01663221322

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
www.ibis.com

Tan Hai Long Hotel & Spa- Nguyen An Ninh

★★★★
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, D1
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, D1
38299201
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, D1
38225914
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, D1
38239269
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, D1
38293415
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, D 1
38224866
www.novotel.com

Oscar Saigon Hotel

 French colonial hotel in District 1 offering stunning panoramic views and 4 star amenities.
68A Nguyen Hue, D 1
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, D 1
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
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
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
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
www.equatorial.com/hcm

InterContinental Asiana Saigon

***** 🍷 **Oi's Pick**
 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, D1
3520 9999
saigon@ihg.com
www.intercontinental.com/saigon

Lotte Legend Hotel Saigon

 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
www.legendssaigon.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
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
www.moevenpick-hotels.com

New World Saigon Hotel

***** 🍷 **Oi's Pick**
 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
saigon@newworldhotels.com
www.saigon.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
www.hotelnikhosaigon.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
www.saigon.park.hyatt.com

Pullman

 The 306-room hotel features a contemporary design, a wide range of technological facilities, four bars and restaurants and five meeting venues. Offers signature services including Welcomer, optimal connectivity with the Connectivity by Pullman concept (free high-speed wifi throughout the hotel, Quadriga's Personal Media Network mobile application), the Co-Meeting offer for business event and functions and Fit and Spa Lounge by Pullman.
148 Tran Hung Dao, D1

Renaissance Riverside Hotel

 A five-star hotel located in the heart of

Saigon's business and entertainment district. The hotel's 336 rooms and suites offer an incredible view of the Saigon River as well as over the city. Each guest room is designed and furnished with discerning business and leisure travelers in mind. Choose a deluxe room or suite with large desk and ample lighting, in-room coffee and tea service, high speed internet, safe, well-stocked mini-bar as well as the jack bag (connectivity kit).
8-15 Ton Duc Thang, D1
3822 0033
www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/sgnbn-renaissance-riverside-hotel-saigon

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
www.rexhotelvietnam.com

Saigon Domaine Luxury Residences

***** 🍷 **Oi's Pick**
 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
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

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
www.windsorplazahotel.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

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

Blue Moon Hotel & Spa

 Located in the heart of breathtaking Dalat, the Blue Moon Resort & Spa is designed to complement the natural beauty of the "City of Eternal Spring." Built opposite the popular and tranquil Xuan Huong Lake, Blue Moon is centrally located and convenient to Dalat's eating, shopping and entertainment spots. Much more than just a comfortable night's sleep, Blue Moon Resort & Spa invites you to experience true hospitality.
4 Phan Boi Chau, Dalat 67, Vietnam
www.blumoonhotel.com.vn/blumoon2

Dalat Green City Hotel 🍷 **Oi's Pick**

Budget hotel in the center of Dalat. Five minutes from most major attractions in Dalat. Quiet. Newly refurbished. Beautiful mountain and city views from the rooftop. Features free WIFI, TV, snack bar in all rooms. Coffee shop downstairs. Airport pickup by private car. Motorbike rental. Tour information. Laundry. Computers in lobby for public use.
172 Phan Dinh Phung, Dalat
(063) 3827 999
www.dalatgreencityhotel.com

Dalat Train Villa & Cafe 🍷 **Oi's Pick**

Located near the Dalat Train Station, the Dalat Train Villa is for short or long staying guests. The villa is a restored 2-story French colonial-era villa. Next to the villa is a French train car, which has been renovated into a bar/cafe/restaurant. Romantic venue. From the lake, take first left after Dalat Train Station.
1 Quang Trung St, Ward 9, Villa #3
(063) 381 6365 or 090 334 2442
www.dalattrainvilla.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

 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.

Trung Sa, Ngu Hanh Son, Danang
051 1384 7333

Fusion Maia

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.

Trung Sa, Ngu Hanh Son, Danang
051 1396 7999

Life Resort Danang

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.

Trung Sa, Ngu Hanh Son, Danang
051 1395 8888

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

Tuan Chau Resort is constructed in the style of classical French and modern Vietnamese architecture. 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

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

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 traveler.

Ia Nghi Tam Tay Ho, Hanoi
04 6270 8888

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.

K5 Nghi Tam, Ii Xuan Dieu, Tay Ho, Hanoi
04 3719 9000

The Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi

*****  **O!s Pick**

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

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.

1 Pham Hong Thai, Hoi An Town, Quang Nam
051 0391 4555

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

Boutique Hoi An Resort **O!s Pick**

Boutique Hoi An Resort offers 82 rooms and villas, with all rooms facing the sea with private balconies. Other facilities include spa with 3 treatment rooms and 5 massage pavilions, fully-equipped gym, restaurant, lobby lounge and pool bar and conference facilities accommodating 80 guests for dinner functions and 130 guests for cocktail parties.

Group 6, Block Tan Trinh, Ward Cam An, Hoi An City
www.boutiquehoianresort.com

HUE

Ana Mandara Hue

Located a scenic 15km drive from central Hue, this is a 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

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

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.

130 Minh Mang, Truong An, Hue
05 4388 5461

NHA TRANG

Evason Ana Mandara

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

Six Senses Ninh Van Bay

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

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.

26-28 Tran Phu, Nha Trang
05 8388 0000

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

Princess d'Annam

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

Muine Bay Resort

Located in the Mui Ne Bay and overlooking the Hon Lao pristine island of blue sea, Muine Bay Resort includes 103 rooms in 4-stars standard of which 32 bungalows designed and inspired by the Cham Tower.

Khu pho 14, Mui Ne Ward, Phan Thiet
www.muinebayresort.com
0622220222

Sea Links Beach Hotel

Located within the Sea Links City complex resort, Sea Links Beach Hotel offers 188 elegant rooms and suites, four palatial-sized pools, restaurants and bars, spa, recreational amenities and the largest meeting facilities providing modern

conveniences to every guest.

Km9 Nguyen Thong Road, Phan Thiet
www.sealinkscity.com
039304083

The Cliff Resort and Residences

Offers 128 rooms equipped with a myriad of amenities such as 3D smart TV, safe and mini bar as well as private bathroom. It boasts an extensive lap pool, a kid's pool and pool bar as well as submerged on deck swimming pool chairs. Its restaurant serves a selection of local seafood specialties and Western cuisine.

Zone 5, Phu Hai Ward, Phan Thiet
www.theciffresort-binhthuan.com
0623719111

The Sailing Beach Resort

Offers a contemporary setting in sensual tropical harmony that befits its bay host. All 192 rooms, with spacious private balconies affording stunning ocean views, are scattered across tropical vegetation, ponds and rests steps from an endless beach.

107 Ho Xuan Huong, Phan Thiet
www.thesailingbay.com

Windflower Beach Boutique Hotel

Located in the resort capital of Vietnam – Mui Ne Bay, Windflower Beach Boutique Hotel offers an intimate setting for guests to enjoy a getaway on the beach to its fullest. The hotel is home to 24 cozy deluxe rooms with services and sophistication that are expected from a beach boutique hotel.

76 Huynh Thuc Khang, Mui Ne (Vietnamese) (06) 2374 3969 / (English) 090 291 3969
www.windflowermuine.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.

Bai Xep, Phu Quoc
07 7399 5895

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

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 2888

Paris Beach Resort **O!s Pick**

Owned and managed by a friendly and hospitable French-Vietnamese woman and her French husband, the resort is located about a 15-minute taxi ride from the airport. It has an outdoor swimming pool, a private beachfront, recreation room, bicycles and a restaurant serving local and French food. Each room or bungalow has air conditioning, a mini bar, cable TV and free Wi-Fi. They also offer tours around the island.

Cua Lap, Duong To, Phu Quoc
www.phuquocparisbeach.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.

Ghenh Rang, Bai Dai Beach, Quy Nhon, Binh Dinh

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.

Hoa Loi, Xuan Canh, Song Cau, Phu Yen
05 7372 2563

VUNG TAU

The Grand-Ho Tram Strip

The Grand - Ho Tram Strip is Vietnam's first largest integrated resort and ultimately will include an 1,100-room five-star hotel, a world-class casino, restaurants, high-tech meeting space, an exclusive VIP area, as well as a variety of beach-front recreation activities. The first 541-room tower of this development opened in July 2013 with its casino including 90 live tables and 614 electronic game positions. The second 559-room tower is on track to open in 2015.

Phuoc Thuan Commune, Xuyen Moc District

Tel: (64) 3788 888

www.thegrandhotamstrip.com

serviced apartments

Avila Serviced Apartment

These serviced apartments combine an excellent location with luxurious amenities.

20-20bis Thi Sach, D 1

Bella Serviced Apartments

Affordable, classy apartment living in a tidy alleyway residence styled with white classical flourishes. Facilities include a small but well-equipped gym on the top floor and pleasant terraces on front-facing apartments.

56/4 Nguyen Thong, D3

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 1

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 1

Diamond Island Luxury Residences

Diamond Island Luxury Residences offers 68 fully-furnished apartments, ranging from two- to four-bedroom units with private balconies providing panoramic

views of the stunning surroundings. Each apartment comes with a fully-equipped kitchen, en-suite bathrooms, separate work and living areas. Each lavish space features plush interiors, modern amenities, elegant furnishings and carefully chosen trimmings and fixtures, creating a luxurious harmony of comfort and tranquility that will have you relaxed and recharged, and functioning at peak performance.

No 01 - Street No.104-BTT, Quarter 3, Binh Trung Tay Ward, D2

096 829 3388 / 3742 5678

www.the-ascott.com

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

Glenwood Serviced Apartment

A very modern property, located in the heart of the expatriate's residential area, steps away from Int'l schools and supermarket.

248A Nguyen Van Huong, D2

0944 168 568

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 Cho Lon.

126 Hong Bang, D 5

InterContinental Asiana Saigon Residences

It's a 31-floor tower with 260 rooms; the Residences offers superb panoramic views of downtown area and is part of the Kumho Asiana Plaza - the city's finest integrated complex featuring commercial, hotel, residential and a diverse choice of dining and dining outlets. They will also benefit from the preferred amenities at the InterContinental Asiana Saigon next door.

Corner of Le Van Huu & Nguyen Du
3520 8888

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

Lancaster Serviced Apartments

Lancaster Serviced Apartments Le Thanh Ton enjoys a commanding 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

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

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

Riverside Apts

Overlooking the Saigon River, the compound offers short and long term leases.

53 Vo Truong Toan, D2

www.riverside-apartments.com

River Garden Apartment

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, D2

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Somerset Ho Chi Minh City

Designed with families in mind, it provides relocating executives the space and security to build a warm and comfortable home. Friendly staff are always on hand to help with local knowledge. You can join in a wide range of social, cultural and lifestyle activities, especially designed to help you integrate into the local culture.

8A Nguyen Binh Kiem, D1

3822 8899

www.somerset.com/vietnam

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

Somerset Vista Ho Chi Minh City

It has an extensive array of modern facilities and provides convenient access to a hypermarket, international schools, a medical clinic, retail outlets and offices.

6285 Hanoi Highway, D2

6255 9900

www.somerset.com/vietnam

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

The Landmark

The Landmark features serviced apartments, offices, luxury dining, sports clubs, swimming pool at the rooftop of the building with great views of the Saigon River. It offers one bedroom, two bedroom and three bedroom units for rent. Amenities offered include wireless broadband Internet access, 100 percent power backup, room service, maid service and laundry, 24-hour reception and airport shuttle service.

5B Ton Duc Thang, D1

www.thelandmarkvietnam.com

Villa Song Saigon

Colonial-style, boutique apartments characterised by solid hardwood flooring and an outdoor swimming pool enclosed by verdant gardens.

197/2, Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien, D2

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

Aquarius Booking Office

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

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

Buffalo Tours

A premium travel agency that helps travelers customize their itinerary and destination packages. From corporate to small tour packages available.

81 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
www.buffalotours.com.vn

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

Exotissimo Travel

Exotissimo Travel offers tours to Vietnam, the region and the whole wide world!

Local and regional tours for family and visitors are quick and easy to arrange, from standard to higher-end versions. Less common requests are tailor-built for you by friendly online operators and/or the pleasant District 2 location office. A District 1 presence will re-open soon.

41 Thao Dien, D2
3519 4111
www.exotissimo.com
anphu@exotissimo.com

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

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

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

Inside Asia Travel

Inside Asia Travel is a boutique luxury travel provider of tailor made travel arrangements for English speaking expats and travelers through Southeast Asia. Guests enjoy highly personalized, bespoke travel arrangements suited to individual tastes and budget.

www.insideasiatravel.com
3844 1005 (Ext: 221)

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

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

cinemas & theatres

The Ballet and Symphony Orchestra

Ho Chi Minh City's local classical music venue with regular programs & performances.

212 Nguyen Trai, D1

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

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

Galaxy

Vietnamese cinema showing international and domestic films.

116 Nguyen Du, D1

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

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

IDECAF Drama Theatre

IDECAF is a theater holding French cultural exchanges as well as offering courses in French.

31 Thai Van Lung, D1

Le Thanh Theatre

Experimental art space for dance and exhibitions, with regular performances of leading-edge artistic theatre.

25 Phan Phu Tien, D5

Saigon Opera House

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

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

social clubs & classes

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

DanCenter

A professionally run dance studio with an international teaching team offering over 70 classes per week and workshops for kids and adults of all ages and abilities. Kids can start from age 4 with Dance Intro. Regular classes offered for kids and teens in Sing & Dance, Jazz, Ballet, Tap, Hip Hop, Break & Acro Dance. Adults of any age, size and ability are also welcomed. Come and try Ballet, Jazz, Hip Hop, Tap, Contemporary, Belly and many more.

53 Nguyen Dang Giai, D2
3519 4490 / 3519 4340
www.dancentervn.com

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

Hash House Harriers

Combining beer and running, this long-established club goes to various out of the city running areas to burn some calories. Departs from the Caravelle Hotel every Sunday at 2pm.

www.saigonh3.com

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

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).

36bis Huynh Khuong Ninh, D1

Rubber Duckies Swim Program

Group swim lessons for children ages six months - four-years- old. Parents and children participate together in songs and safe water activities. Instruction is focused on developing water safety habits, basic water skills and confidence in the water. Classes are currently located in Districts 1, 2, and 7. For more details or to reserve a place contact Katie at admin@rubberduckiesvietnam.com, Facebook @ Rubber Duckies Vietnam, or call/text 0122 3922 550

Saigon Cooking Class

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

Saigon School of Imaging

Saigon School of Imaging runs introductory to advanced photography, Lightroom and Photoshop workshops in Saigon. Courses typically run every two months on weekends at Saigon Hub in D1. One-on-one, private small groups and custom workshops are also available.

www.saigonimaging.com
012 8569 8144



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 🍴 Oi's Pick

A complete cookery center offering hands-on classes. This culinary compound introduces visitors to Vietnamese cuisine.

26 Ly Tu Trong, 4th floor, Ste 45, D1

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

sports

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

Ky Dong Swimming Pool

Great D3 outdoor family pool, ideal for the kids.

40 Ky Dong, D3

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

Lan Anh Swimming Club Pool

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

The Bike Shop

The shop is a full service shop serving the local cycling community. They offer a huge selection of kids, BMX, urban, mountain & road bikes for all levels of cyclists. Brands include: Trek, Canondale, GT, Jett, Elite & J. Wolf Custom bikes. They also stock a wide range of accessories and components from leading manufacturers, with a top-notch service center and performs world class bio-mechanical bike fittings. **Hours: Tue-Fri 12-8, Sat-Sun 9-6, Closed Monday.**

250 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
3744 6405
facebook.com/thebikeshopVN

Van Thanh Pool

A very casual swimming venue favored by younger people and recreational swimmers.

48/10 Dien Bien Phu, Binh Thanh

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

The Long Dress

In honor of the Ao Dai Museum's recent opening in Ho Chi Minh City, this month's fashion spread combines the cultural importance of the *ao dai* with the beauty of haute couture.











MAKEUP: DANG MINH
Dang Minh Makeup Academy

MODEL: TRA MY
*First Runner Up of Vietnam's Next Top Model
2011 - Business Woman - My Communications*

COSTUME : TUAN HAI

PHOTOGRAPHER : KENT

PRODUCER : DANG MINH - HOANG DAO

Living in the Past

A 400-page book about the history of Ho Chi Minh City is about to launch. We speak to its author

TEXT BY MICHAEL ARNOLD IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN

A SHORT WALK away from my own little corner of suburban Cholon stands a gorgeous old Chinese homestead. It's not a tourist attraction by any stretch of the imagination, and it's not easy to find; surrounded by an unkempt garden and fenced off from the main road, there are no signs on the gate and not a clue as to what its significance is, who lived there, or how old it is. If it weren't for its obvious historical value, it would probably have been bulldozed decades ago in the course of the city's relentless suburban sprawl – and without proper attention, that may indeed still happen.

So when the chance came to meet historian Tim Doling, author of the forthcoming book **Exploring Ho Chi Minh City**, I decided to bring up this rather obscure property, hoping to learn just how the average English-speaking person can find out more about little-known local heritage items like this one.

The short answer to that question seems to be, "Ask Tim." Rather impressively, not only could he remember the exact address based on a vague description of where it is; he could also tell me that as far as he'd managed to discover, it used to be a local administrator's residence, and that he'd often taken people past it on his weekend tours through historic Chinatown. Tim Doling, it appears, is the man to go to with any questions about the history of this city related to the architectural heritage of old Saigon – or at least, that which still exists to be appreciated and enjoyed today.

While it's often complained that most of the city's old grace has vanished in a cloud of construction dust and scooter exhaust, Tim is adamant that there's still a lot here to be witnessed for those with a discerning eye – although with accelerating municipal development, the longevity of such edifices remains uncertain. "One of the problems with doing research in a city of this kind is that

everything's in a state of flux," he says. "The book was due to be released months ago, but I've had to keep making changes as things get torn down. I haven't received the second revision back from the publisher's yet, but already just in the last couple of weeks I've seen two more structures mentioned in the book that are now building sites. So that's another couple of amendments to be made."

It's largely the rise of Ho Chi Minh City as an economic powerhouse that has been the driving force behind its reinvention as a modern metropolis, albeit at the cost of its own cultural heritage. This, however, is not something Tim blames on urban planning. "You can't actually blame anyone for knocking down old buildings if nobody even knows they're there," he says. "The real problem is that until now, no one has compiled a register of all the buildings and structures of historical value that are still standing. This is something that local architects have been asking for some time – but unfortunately, you need some serious resources to put a list like that together."

Unsung Architectural History

While the old administrator's mansion in Cholon seems safe for the time being, that's perhaps only because of the fact that it *looks* like a heritage building. There are a great number of edifices in this city with a far more subtle cultural value (a rare flourish in the eaves, for example, or because of the important historical figures who may once have lived there) and it's these that are the most at risk of being torn down. In other instances, poor maintenance can necessitate the removal of even the most beautiful structures for reasons of safety. Tim believes that this was the case with the three-arch bridge that used to stand at the end of the old Canal Brodard – once a noted landmark in the area, it was removed in 1990.

One gets the feeling that Tim's book

represents his own efforts towards taking stock of this city's unsung architectural history. At 400 pages of thoroughly-researched material, the book is possibly the first of its kind written about this town in the English language. Far from being a dry account of old homes and crumbling buildings, however, the narrative is laid out as a set of manageable walking tours that guide curious readers past some of the city's most fascinating secret places. It largely focuses on the central districts of old Saigon and the Chinese settlements in Cholon, followed by a sizeable section at the end looking farther afield.

Much of Tim's analysis is primary research. "A lot of the places I mention in the book I discovered while wandering along the back streets, taking note of anything





that looked interesting,” he says. “One of the things that helps enormously in doing research here is that in most cases, while the names of the streets have all changed, the original numbering has been preserved. If you want to find out if anything important happened at any particular venue, all you usually need to know is the current house address and the old name of the street. You can then go and look it up to see what that building’s original purpose was.”

Proper research on local history, of course, requires a grounding in Vietnamese and French, both languages in which Tim is proficient enough to hunt extensively through old records. Much of the material he uses is available in the General Science Library’s old books collection, although he’s also devoted time to searching through the

Colonial Archives in Aix-en-Provence, as well as browsing the heritage books now available online at gallica.fr.

If Tim has any concerns about the book’s publication at all, it’s that it may well put him out of his tour guide job. “Theoretically, anyone who has a copy of the book can be their own guide,” he says, a fact about which he seems only mildly concerned. “I’m semi-retired now. Originally, the tours were designed as a way to generate a little income. But ultimately, the point is to get the information out there.” Some of the material is already available, in fact, on Tim’s blog at historicvietnam.com, which serves as an appropriate teaser for the book’s content.

While Tim admits that the tours and the book are most likely to appeal to expat residents who want to know more about

their adopted hometown, it’s the foreign tourists that seem to be the ultimate target of his historical work. In essence, Tim seems to believe that it’s promoting Saigon’s heritage as a tourist drawcard that stands the greatest chance of seeing administrative measures taken to protect the vestiges of old Saigon.

“It’s usually only when an old building starts receiving interest from tourists that people start to take measures to protect it,” he says. “Right now, visitors don’t usually see Ho Chi Minh City as a cultural center. With a little more emphasis on preserving the past, that may well change.”

Keep an eye out for **Exploring Ho Chi Minh City** at local bookstores soon. More information about Tim Doling’s heritage tours (VND1 million per person) can be found at www.historicvietnam.com. ■

Girls Will Be Girls

The pressures on girls in society and in school



Adrian Watts is the Deputy Headmaster and Director of Academic Studies at the International School of Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC)



"IT'S PRETTY HARD being a girl nowadays. You can't be too smart, too dumb, too ugly, too friendly, too coy, too aggressive, too defenseless, too individual, or too programmed. If you are too much of anything, then others envy you, or despise you because you intimidate them, or make them jealous. It's like you have to be everything and nothing all at once, without knowing which you need more of." – From a 12th Grader in the book **Girls will be Girls.**

Girls are, in general, out-performing boys in school at all levels around the world. With increased gender equity, girls today have more choices and opportunities than their mothers –

while at the same time facing an array of sophisticated gender-specific issues, leading to high levels of anxiety and depression. Girls are more likely to turn inwards to solve their problems.

Technology has encouraged girls to become hyper-connected, giving great importance to large social networks while being disconnected from their real selves. Being constantly connected via Facebook, MySpace or other social network sites has created a world in which young girls live like celebrities. They feel the necessity to constantly update their profile, take photos of themselves, and report their whereabouts to their friends and followers. They are, in reality, living in front of a crowd. Through

this activity they unwittingly create themselves as a brand – just like popular celebrities but without the guidance of agents and managers. They start to live in a cyber-bubble world, one that does not represent who they really are but, unfortunately, gradually dictates who they appear to be.

It's important for parents to realize that just because their daughter has 250 friends on Facebook, it doesn't mean she really has any friends. One of the key areas that researchers have pointed out is that having a few close female friends is better than having the hundreds that the cyber bubble encourages. The core of a girl's emotional life should preferably

be founded on good friendships with two, three or four other girls.

Cyberbullying

Girls are far greater users of social networks and media than boys, and this exposes them to the insidious growth of cyberbullying. Girls aged 14-17 exchange on average over 100 messages a day. The extent of social networking makes it very difficult for anyone to escape. It is a constant barrage that can spread to thousands in seconds, with an effect that cannot be erased. With media either directly or indirectly portraying models or images where denigration of others is normal, it's hardly surprising that adolescents adopt similar behaviors.

The kind of community in which girls engage will shape the person that they will become. This unfortunately includes their social networking community as well, which is generally mostly 'girl talk', and this can be imbalanced and become toxic – because many of the conversations center on their own personal problems. This type of co-rumination leads to increased anxiety and can make problems feel worse. The one community that helps this, however, bridges generations – girls need the opportunity to talk to adult women about the issues they are facing. This isn't always going to be mother to daughter. However, parents can ensure that their daughters enter informal situations where they can interact with older female relatives or other potential female role models who can provide a perspective that is seen as wise and appropriate.

Self-Esteem

At the center of much of the pressure that is on girls today is the concept of self-esteem. JoAnn Deak, author of **Girls will be Girls**, identifies three key ingredients for self-esteem: competence, confidence and connectedness. She argues that these ingredients can't be taught but need to be experienced. They're about emotions based on doing, not reflecting about oneself or having society or social networking and the media dictate who one should be and how one should behave. This is where many girls' self-esteem collapses, because they become egocentric and anxious, losing contact with the three ingredients they need to balance and maintain their confidence in themselves.

This links to other areas of anxiety and pressure on girls that exist in school, and that is Mathematics and Science. One recent study showed a correlation between the perception of mathematical ability and self-esteem in girls. Many universities are positively influenced by a student's ability in math and scores, regardless of the main subject of the application. Employment opportunities are growing fastest in subjects related to math, and this places pressures

on girls to achieve in an area where stereotyping of gender is still prevalent. For most girls studying in co-ed schools, their role models for math and science are male, the scientists they learn about are predominantly male, and in higher-level classes the majority of their classmates are male. Although this is changing and there are more girls studying math and science at universities and colleges today, the stereotyping still exists.

Programs that have been seen to develop self-esteem for girls in schools are mentoring, outward bound experiences, co-operative learning, and single gender

"The relationship between father and daughter has been shown to play an important role in puberty. Researchers don't really know why this is the case – although there's a growing belief it's related to pheromones – but being a loving, caring dad who is affectionate and gives hugs to his daughter will on average delay the onset of puberty"

classes or groupings for certain subjects and activities. Parents can certainly build on these school-based initiatives by encouraging their daughters to pursue interests that get them outside the home and interacting with nature. Parents need to be careful, because it's clear that you cannot just give your daughter self-esteem – that has to be built – but it's equally clear that you can take it away by being too demanding and critical. Another observation from research has been that girls do better with teachers that truly care about them and their progress. Gender is

irrelevant in this regard, as girls care about the connection and will work hard so that they do not disappoint the teacher.

Early Puberty

Many girls' lives are simply out of sync. They're being encouraged to grow up too quickly, and as a result are missing out on their childhood – and chemicals such as BPA, PETE and phthalates found in our food and drink are all playing a part in this. Research clearly shows that girls are reaching puberty earlier. In the US, a girl who develops breasts at the age of seven is now considered normal, and half of all girls will develop breasts by their tenth birthday. This is a very important change, because completing puberty has been shown to affect the mental agility of children and slow down their potential to learn new things. It also has a detrimental effect upon how girls see their bodies, leading to sleeplessness and depression arising from low self-esteem.

Firstly, avoid exposing young girls to plastic containers and be vigilant about the sort of creams and lotions that they're putting on their skin. Secondly, engaging in regular exercise like swimming can protect against the early onset of puberty. Thirdly, the relationship between father and daughter has been shown to play an important role in puberty. Researchers don't really know why this is the case – although there's a growing belief it's related to pheromones – but being a loving, caring dad who is affectionate and gives hugs to his daughter will on average delay the onset of puberty. Fourthly, to help avoid obsessive behavior, parents can themselves model a life that balances physical activity, work, creativity, and connectedness. Modeling is very important, and if parents make a tradition of volunteering or giving as a family at least once a year, this will have a positive impact upon a girl's image of herself. Finally, when the onset of puberty comes, it's important that parents don't back off – because it still remains the goal of parents to help daughters find their true selves.

I would like to conclude with this quote from the book **Girls on the Edge** by Dr. Leonard Sax, because I feel it encapsulates the relationship that needs to exist between parents and daughters if it is to be successful: "Ultimately only your daughter can be the captain of her own ship. But you [parents] can be the lighthouse, warning of unseen dangers. You can be the shipwright, helping to patch holes and make the ship stronger and better. And you can be the safe harbor, welcoming the sailor home before she sets out on her next voyage." ■

The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of Oi.



MY LIFE AS... a parking attendant

EDITED BY GERARD SASGES IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to my family's motorbike parking service. Allow me to introduce myself, I'm Van, the chairperson of this 'family economic cooperative.' [Laughs]

I was born and raised in Nam Dinh. In 1979, I graduated from high school. I was 18. Next, I went to Thai Nguyen to study as a technical worker and, after three years, I was assigned to work in Tool and Equipment Factory #1 where I worked as a highly-qualified turner. Things were fine, but suddenly everything changed when I

was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Because I needed an operation, I was forced to change my work assignment. So, in 1998, I became a cook in the factory's cafeteria. I ended up working there until I was given early retirement in 2006. Since then, I've worked all sorts of jobs. I was doing some odd jobs for Al Fresco's (a chain of restaurants selling Western-style food) for a couple of years before I gave myself a 'second retirement' [laughs] and started to work full-time running this parking service out of our home.

Actually, my family's been working in

the motorbike parking business since 1996 when we started looking after customers' motorbikes for the vendors at the market beside Tool and Equipment Factory #1. After the market closed in 2002, we changed the business model a bit. It's based in our home now and, since I'm 'retired', I've changed the availability and pricing options to a 24-hour, pay-by-the-month service.

Honestly, though, I don't do this because I really want to. The income isn't that great; I get VND150,000 a bike each month, and the most I can really make a month is VND2 million because the space we've got can't



hold more than 15 bikes. Also, the cost of living goes up every day, so even if I could change my fees to account for rising prices, inflation would still make it hard for me to match income with costs. Obviously, VND2 million isn't enough to satisfy all of my family's needs.

Occupational Hazards

Aside from not earning all that much money, motorbike parking is a poisonous and generally hazardous work for anyone. Clearly, breathing gas fumes all day can't be good for you, and gas is flammable so fire is definitely a possibility too. And this is only one potential danger. There are lots of other workplace hazards like being burned by hot exhaust pipes or getting crushed by a falling bike.

My job is more than just dangerous though, it's also exhausting. You have to be strong, both physically and mentally, to arrange the motorbikes so that you can bring them in and out quickly and efficiently. It gets particularly bad during rush hour, which happens twice a day, day in day out. During rush hour, I just get dizzy and worn-out. The work pace is just so frenzied; I'm moving bikes around really fast while more and more people arrive to check bikes in or out. Still, the most difficult aspect of this job has to be the responsibility we have to our customers, to remain open and available 24/7. Because of our 24/7 pledge, my family can't ever really go out together all at once. There's just no way we can leave

the shop unattended.

Yeah, some of the neighbors have complained about the noise and the stench of gasoline during the night, but as time has

"My job is more than just dangerous though, it's also exhausting. You have to be strong, both physically and mentally, to arrange the motorbikes so that you can bring them in and out quickly and efficiently"

passed, they've all learned to live with it. In fact, they can sympathize with us now, primarily because more and more first-floor families in our apartment building have

decided to join the business themselves. Now they even try to compete with us. No, but in all honesty, the level of competition isn't that serious. It's surprising, maybe, but competition is actually decreasing. Motorbike use is increasing quickly, and so is the demand for parking space. In our neighborhood alone, for example, there are only four families who run parking services, and yet there are dozens of families and students living on the upper floors who need somewhere to park their bikes. So essentially, as long as we've got space to park, our customers are satisfied, not to mention that our family's service is 100 percent wholehearted.

No, I'm not concerned that we're ever going to run out of customers who need a place to park their bikes. But that doesn't mean I want to be doing this forever. I only want to do it until my kids are grown and my family's situation has improved, because this job is dangerous and time consuming. But for the time being, this is the work that helps me support this family, so, from the bottom of my heart I'll live up to our pledge to provide customers with "friendly, careful, and conscientious service." ■

Additional contribution provided by Mai Lan, Mai Quang Huy, Colleen Ngo and Josh Mayhew. It's a Living: Work and Life in Vietnam Today is available in paperback on Amazon or as an e-book on iTunes (scan code).



>>The List Education

education

SCHOOLS [CHILDREN]

ABC International School

Providing a caring and nurturing atmosphere for all its students, the ABC International School offers a combination of both British and international educations and qualifications.

Saigon South Campus 1 (Primary & Secondary)

#2, IE Street, Khu Dan Cu Trung Son, Binh Hung, Binh Chanh
5431 1833 / 34 / 35 / 36
abcintschoolss@vnn.vn
www.theabcis.com

Australian International School (AIS)

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

Xi Campus (Kindergarten)
190 Nguyen Van Huong, D2
Thao Dien Campus (Kindergarten & Primary School)
APSC Compound
36 Thao Dien, D2
Thu Thiem Campus (Kindergarten, Primary, Middle & Senior School)
East-West Highway, D2
3742 4040
www.aisvietnam.com



British International School (BIS)



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

An Phu Primary Campus
225 Nguyen Van Huong Street, D2
3744 4551
apprimary@bisvietnam.com
An Phu Secondary Campus
246 Nguyen Van Huong Street, D2
3744 2335
apsecondary@bisvietnam.com
Tu Xuong Primary Campus
43-45 Tu Xuong Street, D3
3932 0210
txprimary@bisvietnam.com
www.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
hibsvietnam.com

Kids Club Saigon

Early childhood centers in Phu My Hung offering creative play-based programs for children ages 2 to 5. Known for unique facilities, experienced staff, high-quality learning resources, and small class sizes

79/7 Pham Thai Buong, D7
27/3 Ha Huy Tap, D7
5412 5944
www.kidclubsaigon.com

L'atelier

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

Montessori International School of Vietnam

The school seeks to enable all its pupils to achieve their fullest potential by providing them with a nurturing and stimulating environment, and by being sensitive and responsive to their individual needs. Their curriculum is designed based on Montessori methodology and practice, and is enhanced with a variety of programs.

42/1 Ngo Quang Huy, D2
3744 2639
www.montessori.edu.vn

Noah's Club

Providing high quality care & education for kids aged 1-6 in District 2. Various creative & fun programs, beautiful outdoor space with a warm family feeling and more.

No3, Duong so 4, Nguyen U Di, D2
3744 4709
noahandmum@yahoo.com.vn

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
www.rissai.com.vn

Saigon South International School

Founded in 1997, Saigon South International School seeks to accommodate an increasing need for American education for both local residents and expatriate families. SSIS enrolls over 850 students in Early Childhood – Grade 12 from over

thirty-three countries in a spacious six-hectare, well-equipped campus.

78 Nguyen Duc Canh, D7
5413 0901
www.ssis.edu.vn



The International School Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC)

The most established school in Ho Chi Minh City is celebrating 20 years of success in 2013. ISHCMC is the only school in HCMC with full accreditation to teach all three IB programs to students from 2 to 18. ISHCMC is fully accredited by both the Council of International Schools (CIS) and the New England Association of School and Colleges (NEASC), two of the most prestigious international accreditation organisations. ISHCMC has 975 students from over 50 different nationalities enjoying recently upgraded facilities.

28 Vo Truong Toan, D2
www.ishcmc.com



Saigon Star International School

Saigon Star is a student focused international primary school offering high quality first class provision. Specializing in the British National Curriculum, all of the class teachers hold international teaching qualification. In the early years program, a Montessori specialist works closely with the main class teachers to ensure a high rate of progress. The school also provides specialists for children requiring extra support with ESL.

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

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
www.smarthkidsinfo.com

SCHOOLS [ADULT]

Cetana PSB Intellis International College

PSB College offers a suite of internationally-recognized diploma programs from business, marketing, hospitality to finance.

144-146-148 Le Lai, D1
www.psbcollege.edu.vn

RMIT International University Vietnam

RMIT Vietnam offers programs from business and management to design and micro engineering.

702 Nguyen Van Linh, D7

Universal English Center

UEC was founded in 2009. Now with 600 students drawn from 17 different nationalities, the class is served by over 35 native English speaking teachers who are committed to providing a culturally diverse and engaging classroom atmosphere. The center offers a wide range of classes from beginner levels through IGCSE, SAT, IELTS, TOEFL. UEC also provides support to students aspiring for a place in international schools.

R4-55-56-57 Hung Gia 5, D7
5412 3300
www.uec.edu.vn

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



ladieswear

Anupa Eco Boutique 🍷 O's Pick

The boutique has been converted into an eco-boutique which houses the complete Anupa leather collections and semi precious jewelry as well as up-and-coming eco designers both locally and internationally such as ready to wear mens linen shirts, ladies cotton dresses, chicken leg watch straps, bamboo glasses and scarves with pendants.

9 Dong Du, D1
www.anupa.net / facebook: anupaluxury

Axara Paris - Saigon Center

Axara may have seduced the whole world, but its 2010 launch in Vietnam at the Vincom Center is still making headway with modern young Vietnamese women entranced by its romantic, glamorous designs.

65 Le Loi, D1
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, D1
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, D1
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, D1
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, D1
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, D1
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, D1
3827 6085

Eva Gopa

Office fashion, street-style fashion, and evening dresses for women.

11E Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1
3910 3877

Fit

Caters to women in their 20s.
44 Luu Van Lang, D1

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, D1
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, D1
3936 9386

Khai Silk

Khai Silk is a favorite among local celebrities for its high quality tailoring, fabrics and service.

81 Dong Khoi, D1
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 Josphine Geralda, one of the leading designers in London.

74C-74/I Hai Ba Trung, D1
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, D1
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, D1
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, D1
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, D1
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 2F-11, 2nd floor, Icon 68, 2 Hai Trieu, D1
6266 2111

1st Floor, 65 Le Loi, D1
3914 7464

Misa Collection

Well-known for tailoring bespoke adias.

67 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
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, D1
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, D1
09 7271 7788

Shin

Vintage style ladies fashion, clothes and accessories by local designers.

122 Ly Tu Trong, D1
090 935 2369

Sifa Fashion

Known for selling office wear for women.

192 Ly Tu Trong, D1
3825 0618

Song - Valerie Grogori McKenzie

French bohemian chic designs that caters to sophisticated women.

75 Pasteur, D1
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, D1
6275 9019

Suite Blanco

Suite Blanco is a Spanish company specialized in the design, production, distribution and sale of all types of accessories and clothing for the modern woman and man looking for the latest trends at affordable prices. The chain now has 240 shops spread in 15 different countries including Vietnam.

Vincom Center A, 171 Dong Khoi, D1

Thuy Design House

A popular Vietnamese ready-to-wear designer creating seasonal collections using high quality materials with a minimalist design aesthetic. Thuy's friendly boutique carries a range of shapes and silhouettes that are often worn by the city's fashion conscious.

151/6 Dong Khoi, D1
www.facebook.com/thuydesignhouse

Umbrella

This fashion label caters to a higher end market with tailored bags to accessories.

35 Ly Tu Trong, D1
6276 2730
www.umbrella-fashion.com

Valenciani 🍷 O's Pick

Highly respected Vietnamese designer whose collections are featured in ELLE Vietnam and Vogue Vietnam.

1F/12 Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, D1
3821 2788
090 785 5788

menswear

Anna Vo Fashion Boutique

A popular designer currently in Saigon, Anna Vo produces seasonal collections inspired by her time in Europe and Vietnam as well as aiming to be both beautiful and functional. The boutique also carries pieces from her mother Thuy Nga's collections as well as high quality imported accessories. Each collection includes both menswear and womenswear.

23 Dong Khoi, D1
6675 4013

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, D1

Bonjour

A fashion boutique at the Vo Van Tan/ Cao Thang T-intersection providing an exhaustive range of one-off fashion pieces and accessories with both a modern and vintage feel. Prices are affordable for both men and women and come in a range of sizes to suit most customers.

446 Vo Van Tan, D3

Massimo Ferrari Boutique

Italiana - Americana fusion brand of impeccable quality and style. Collections are available as ready-to-wear and/or made-to-order. Sizes from 39 - 47 D and E widths available. Run by an Italian Spanish American himself, master tailor Luis Antonio Torres fits and consults all of his customers himself. Suits are the best fit and quality in Vietnam. All shirts, suits and trousers are fully bench made and the fabric selections are to die for. If you're hunting for briefcases, wallets, and accessories look no further. Massimo Ferrari carries all types of bags and accessories for the man and the lady. Brands carried are Maison Takuya and Orobianco from Italy. Luxury quality and designs are simply gorgeous.

42A1 Tran Quoc Thao, D3
www.massimoferrarioutlet.com

Maschio Shop

Colorful retro men's fashions, one of the quirkiest fine-quality local fashion stores in the central area.

168 Ly Tu Trong, D1
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 women with products such as T-shirts, jeans, coats, scarves, and much more.

105 Le Thanh Ton, D1
6673 4199

San Sciario 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, D1
3864 0800
090 316 6364

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, D1
3822 4609
090 865 4988

gyms

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

Amaryska Kamionko

Private fitness trainer, assisting in full body workouts, toning & strength training for females. Sessions often at clients' homes or at their designated gyms.

0902271830
personalfitnessathome.blogspot.com

Body By Jovie

Body By Jovie is a boutique personal training center and yoga studio, catering to individuals demanding diversity, challenge and results. It specializes in one on one session and also offer a full range of classes such as yoga, TRX suspension class, belly dancing, Zumba and outdoor boot camp.

Riverside Residence, Nguyen Luong
Bang, D7
5417 1946
info@bodybyjovie.com
7am - 9pm (Weekdays) and
7:30am - 7pm (Saturdays)

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
28-30-32 Le Lai, D1
5 Nguyen Tat Thanh, D4

Christina Eberlin Yoga Teacher

Christina graduated from Virajati 300hr yoga teacher training in Thailand. She is offering private yoga classes and group classes. For more information you can reach her at
Christinaeberlin@gmail.com
or 093 849 2461

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. **Thao Dien, D2; 094 777 1326**
www.cyril-and-you.com

Got 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

Nicky's Zumba® Fitness Studio

They offer Zumba® Fitness, Yoga, Cross Fit, Pilates Personal Fitness, Nutrition Advice and Hip hop kids, Aerobic kids, ZumbaAtomic®.

Available at: Panorama-Fitness (206 Tran
Van Tra, D7), Fit & Fun Club (Sky Garden 2,
D7), Cyril&you (49a Xa Lo Ha Noi, D2), and
Sommerset (8 Nguyen Binh Khiem, D1).
093 406 0735 or 6680 7226
zumba.nutrition@gmail.com
www.zumba-saigon.com

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.

2B1 Chu Manh Trinh, D1

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.

141 Nguyen Hue, D1

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 Bítexco

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

Spa InterContinental & Healthclub

Guests will have access to a 20-meter outdoor lap pool complete with a sundeck, a 160-square meter spacious fitness centre with the latest generation cardio and resistance equipment, plus a personal program of fitness classes.

3rd Floor, InterContinental Asiana Saigon
Corner of Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan, D1
3520 9999
spa@icasianasaigon.com
8am - 9:30pm

Thien Nga (Swan) Club

Fitness club that has training equipment and a 25sqm swimming pool
751 Xuan Thuy, D2
3899 0012

The Health Club

The Landmark Health Club is located on

the 15th and 16th floors of The Landmark serviced apartments, and offers a fully equipped gym, rooftop swimming pool, and a squash court. It also features male and female changing facilities and saunas.

5B Ton Duc Thang, D1
3822 2098
hc@thelandmarkvietnam.com

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

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
www.xrockclimbing.com

Yoga Club

Yogo fitness center for both men and women

18 Street Number 2, D2
3897 6786

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.

161-161A Hai Ba Trung, D3
3939 3930
www.acc.vn

Animal Rescue & Care

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.

31-44 Thao Dien, D2
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

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

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

David Shepherd Chiropractic Clinic

DSCC provides Chiropractic care for patients using state of the art physiotherapy equipment imported from USA. DSCC is managed and operated by American doctors who use modern and advanced technologies techniques to ensure safe, gentle, and effective treatment.

41 Noi Khu, Hung Gia 3, D7
5410 6242
www.saignonchiropractic.com

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

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

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

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

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**

European Dental Clinic

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

**17-17A Le Van Mien, D2
091 874 9204 or 090 955 1916
www.europeandentalclinic-asia.com**

German International Dentistry

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

**1489 Nguyen Van Linh, D7
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**

Naomi Dental Clinic

A full service dental clinic under the direction of Japanese dentist Dr. Nakashima Mikio.

**R4-45 Hung Phuoc 4, D7
5410 3937**

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**

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**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

nails

Classic Nails

Located near Ben Thanh Market, Classic Nails is a professional salon with staff who are trained and experienced in designing complicated pattern. The salon only uses materials from reputable companies and always update with the latest colors. They also have sofas with a massage function and adjustable posture for the customer's comfortable and relaxation.

**4 Phan Boi Chau, D1
3825 7047
9am - 8pm**

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.

214C Nguyen Trai, D1

OPI Nail Spa Nguyen Hue

Providing a full range of official products and services of the OPI brand.

103 Nguyen Hue, D1

spas



Indochine Spa

Nestled in the heart of Saigon, Indochine spa will bring you back to an ancient time with peaceful melodies and aromatic scents. With our skillful therapists, Natural products with French formulation and high class cleanliness environment, Indochine spa provides your senses with natural energy. Indulge yourself for a unique and amazing experience.

**69 Thu Khoa Huan st., D. 1, HCM
3827 7188
indochinespa@gmail.com
www.indochine-spa.com.vn
Open: 10:00-22:00**

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

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

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



Flamingo Spa

Flamingo Spa is an authentic Thai spa where all ingredients used are imported from Thailand. Guests arrive in a clean and friendly atmosphere for an optimal relaxing experience. Men, women and couples are welcome, and they offer a wide range of massages along with a sauna, jacuzzi facilities & VIP rooms.

**13B Le Thanh Ton, D1
3822 1074
091 243 9601
FlamingoSpa.vn@gmail.com**



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

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

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**

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

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



Kyoto Spa & Hair Salon

Body massage
Foot massage
Hair cut women and men
**32 Dong Du, Ben Nghe Ward, D1
(Spa & Hair Salon)
8A/4D1 Thai Van Lung,
Ben Nghe Ward, D1 (Spa)
0902 983 089
loan_royal@gmail.com
www.spakyotohcmc.com.vn**



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

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**

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
100 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
1st floor, 103 Ton Dat Tien, Tan Phu, D7**



Maison Mikio Boutique Salon

District 7's Premium Boutique Salon. Two floors providing full beauty services nestled in a quiet residential area in Phu My Hung's Garden Plaza 2 Complex. Equipped with a cafe, nail bar, 2 VIP rooms, and a spacious massage room - this boutique salon is like no other in Ho Chi Minh City.
**Garden Plaza 2 Complex
8 Tôn Dật Tiên, Quận 7
5412 4773**

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
090 387 6666**

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**

Moc Huong Spa

Moc Huong Spa is supported by top-ranking professional physiotherapists who combine Eastern with Western techniques resulting a full body wellness. Reasonably priced with a wide range of services that include manicure, pedicure, facial, both body and for your complete well being.
**9C Ton Duc Thang, D1
3911 7118**



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

Saigon Spa

Recommended inexpensive spa treatments with a full spa menu.

1st Floor, 47 Dong Khoi, D1

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

Spa InterContinental

Spa InterContinental is a contemporary spa that has two double and five single treatment rooms, each with a private bathroom, a foot reflexology area, and luxurious changing and shower rooms. Combining the fresh, local traditional herbs and plants, an ambient lighting, soft scents and soothing sounds

with the best of international brands, Spa InterContinental offers guests the professional spa expertise and a truly sensory experience. **3rd Floor, InterContinental Asiana Saigon
Corner Hai Ba Trung & Le Duan, D1
3520 9999
spa@icasianasaigon.com
8am - 9:30pm**

Thann

Thann provide a range of natural hair and skincare products formulated from botanicals derived by combining the art of natural therapy with modern dermatological science.

Level 2, Saigon Centre, 65 Le Loi, D1

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

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

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

Tri Siam

Well-respected salon on the edge of town, offering manicures & styling.
76C Hai Ba Trung, D1

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

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

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**

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

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

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

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

Catherine Denoual

Supplies blankets, pillows, mattresses, tablecloths, cushions, and other luxury linens to reputable hotels, spas, resorts, and individual consumers.

15C Thi Sach, D1

Gomo

Typical of the large furniture warehouses in North America and Europe, Gomo sells contemporary items for your home and office.

**7/30B, Road 13, Binh Hoa
Thuan An Town, Binh Duong
(0650) 376 5115
www.gomo.com.vn**

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**

Mosaïque Decoration

Mosaïque Decoration takes all the unique beauty and craftsmanship of Vietnam and adapts it to contemporary home décor. Mosaïque offers unique lighting design, decorative embroidery, silk quilts, and other home accessories.

**Ground Floor, Saigon Centre,
65 Le Loi, D1**

Premium Housewares

Providing high quality kitchenware and accessories, Premium Housewares presents its products in more than 70 countries worldwide.

77 Pasteur, D1

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

Vscential

Vscential sells aromatic French lavender bouquets, fresh flowers, silk flowers, and handmade flowers. With 45 different types of essential oils available, there's a scent for everyone.

**Vscential
2388 Pasteur, D3
www.vscential.com**

Business & Tech

IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN



Strength in Numbers

Is social buying in Vietnam a sure bet?

TEXT BY JAMES PHAM IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN

IT SHOULDN'T COME as a surprise that what we now know as social buying originated in the land where Mao once declared: "With many people, strength is great." If urban business legends are to be believed, *tuangou* or team buying started with a housewife trying to bargain her way to a discount. When the shop owner wouldn't budge, she returned with her closest friends and "mob bought" her way to a better deal.

Fast forward to the mid-2000s when *tuangou* went digital. Then, groups of strangers interacting on bulletin board sites (BBS) were able to organize themselves into virtual mobs, sometimes relying on a group leader to negotiate for big ticket items - cars, furniture and electronics - or meeting up in person to pressure vendors into the best deals. Internet videos of the early *tuangou* days show massive groups screaming, "No, we don't want it!" to a visually cowering merchant who slowly relents to a chorus of

cheers. While retailers initially resisted the trend, it wasn't long before they realized the potential of social buying. Soon, BBS and other startups were stepping up to take on the role of group leader, organizing deals themselves on behalf of users. Many estimate there are now more than 2,000 social buying sites in China alone, with companies like Groupon and LivingSocial leading the Western market.

At its core, social buying is built on the same premise as *tuangou*: The merchant agrees to sell a product for a significantly reduced price as long as a minimum number of customers agrees to buy it. The customers win in that they get a price they wouldn't have been able to negotiate on their own and the vendors win in that they reach a whole new group of potential repeat customers. At least that's the way it's supposed to work. The real story behind social buying, however, often includes just as many losers as winners.

"This type of business has a low barrier to entry. You throw up a website and start talking to merchants. They don't lose anything. You can pitch to get upfront money. For instance, if I project to sell 1,000 vouchers, I can give [the merchant] half [the money] upfront. That's the whole point of the Groupon model, to collect cash first and distribute it later. It's a negative working capital model. So you have enormous amounts of cash, do marketing, sell more vouchers. It's an endless cycle," says James Vuong, Vice President, Investment & Technology, at IDG Ventures Vietnam, which invests in Vietnamese e-commerce sites like NhomMua, Hot Deal, CungMua and MuaChung (all of which are in Vietnamese only).

Losing Money

The process usually starts off with a company representative contacting a merchant who



agrees to provide a discount (usually 30-50 percent or more) to customers who pre-buy vouchers which can be exchanged for a product or service. The Vietnamese model lags behind most other countries in that vouchers cannot be printed, but must be hand delivered, adding three to five days of wait time. From what the customer pays, the social buying site will take a commission (sometimes negotiable with the merchant for anything between 20-50 percent), leaving the business making at times as little as 25 percent or less of retail value.

That was the case with Nu Cuoi Duyen Dental Clinic, a cheery, modern facility in Phu Nhuan. "Within a few weeks, we sold more than 700 vouchers through Hot Deal and more than 1,000 vouchers through NhomMua," says owner Duy An Vo, of the VND50,000 teeth cleaning, marked down from the usual VND200,000. "We're not making any money from it, and the vouchers barely pay for the materials, but we're seeing lots of new customers who we hope to turn into regular customers and for them to tell their friends. Referral marketing is much more persuasive than print marketing. Our four dentists have had to work straight through lunch and we're staying until 9 or 10 in the evening to take care of all the customers, but we're doing this to get our name out." The clinic, open for little over a year, is trying out each social buying site once, in addition to more traditional forms of marketing.

"You're supposed to lose money at the beginning," confirms James. "You'll lose money on the first voucher but you're going to give [the customers] such a good experience that they're going to come back. The lifetime value makes up for the loss. Next time, they'll bring their friends, and that lowers the barrier of trying out a new venue. That's how it's supposed to work. The key is to be good at accounting to make sure that on a per voucher basis, you're not losing [too much] money."

Problems arise when many of the small, non-business savvy mom-and-pop venues that choose the e-commerce route don't fully think things through. A sudden massive influx of new customers may overwhelm small businesses, overtaxing staff and resources. The web is rife with cautionary stories like the London baker who ended up having to make 102,000 cupcakes to fill 8,500 orders at 75 percent off, leading to a loss of USD20,000. Or the Portland cafe who took in only USD3 for every USD13 worth of products, leaving them USD8,000 in the hole.

Banh Xeo Ba Hai, a Vietnamese eatery which looked spacious online, but in reality only had 32 seats, could barely keep up with the more than 1,000 users who purchased a voucher for a combo set which included a *banh xeo* crepe, shrimp rolls and a *che* dessert for VND54,000. "We recently opened in this new location, so we wanted to get people in to taste our food," explains Liem while his mother pours huge crepes stuffed with shrimp, squid and papaya in the background. "I didn't expect this many

"We're not making any money from it, and the vouchers barely pay for the materials, but we're seeing lots of new customers who we hope to turn into regular customers and for them to tell their friends."

A SAMPLING OF SOCIAL BUYING DEALS

| MERCHANT | DEAL | COMMENTS |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| GOLDEN ELEPHANT THAI RESTAURANT | VND130,000 vouchers sold for VND65,000 | A good reason to try out a new Thai restaurant, although menu items were pricey so the voucher wasn't enough for a full meal. |
| NU CUOI DUYEN DENTAL CLINIC | VND50,000 for teeth cleaning (reg. VND200,000) | Dreaded what a USD250 teeth cleaning would be like but was delighted to find modern, well-equipped facilities and English-speaking dentists. Have been back for a root canal and another cleaning at regular price. |
| GRILLED PORK KOREAN RESTAURANT | VND120,000 vouchers sold for VND60,000 | USD3 for a bowl of <i>bibimbap</i> and all the trimmings was a steal. Plus, it was close to work! |
| SMALL VALLEY | 40ml room diffuser (VND158,000) for VND79,000 | Nicely packaged but the smell didn't last long. Probably not a great deal, but it was nice having the merchandise home delivered. |
| BONG SEN HOTEL | VND230,000 lunch buffet for VND179,000 | This was the smallest discount of any of the vouchers at only 22 percent, but anything less than USD10 for a ritzy Dong Khoi venue was decent. |
| NOTE NHAC VUI KARAOKE | VND240,000 voucher for VND32,000 (2 hours of primetime karaoke) | A whopping 87 percent discount, but the pushiness of the staff to upsell food and drink was off-putting. One staff actually unwrapped a plate of fruit against our wishes and demanded that we pay for it (we didn't), even though it remained uneaten. After the initial bad experience, I didn't bother using the second voucher I had purchased. |
| BUN CHA HA NOI | VND52,000 for two bowls of <i>bun cha</i> and two drinks | This was only a 38 percent discount, but it was near a friend's house, which made it convenient. The food wasn't exceptional enough to make me want to go back. |
| BAT TRANG MOMENT | VND 45,000 for a pottery experience (reg. VND90,000) | Unbelievably cheap for a whole afternoon of pottery making, painting and firing, esp. with kids |
| THANG LOI BEDDING | Queen-sized bedding set (VND950,000) for VND550,000 | Happy with the quality but didn't like having to travel to the store to pick up the merchandise. Selection more limited than what was pictured online. |



people would buy vouchers."

The lure for many small businesses is in avoiding the initial outlay of any marketing costs. "We're doing it because we're a small business and can't afford TV or print ads," says Mai Hoa, owner of Bonjour Resto, a quaint cafe that serves up unusual fare like venison and ostrich. "The social buying people do all the work. They come in and take photos and do all the marketing. We only need to be concerned about taking really good care of the customers."

Therein lies another dilemma - guaranteeing a good user experience, turning the bargain hunter into a repeat customer. "Sometimes the merchant will reduce the price, but they'll also reduce the quality. When people come in and use a voucher, employees are going to look at you and judge you. So two things combined - a lower quality product with a bad attitude and overcapacity, places packed, long lines. It all contributes to a horrible experience. It's equivalent to losing money. You get people to come, then slap them in the face, and they don't come back. You don't achieve a lifetime value," says James.

"I recommend going with [an in-house] promotion instead of buying a voucher so that the servers don't look down on you," writes Luccie Nguyen, blogger and social media specialist, on her Vietnamese-language food site, meoac.info. "As soon as staff hear you're using a voucher, they treat you differently." On the issue of quantity and quality, Thu, an accountant in Phu Nhuan, is sure restaurants treat voucher users differently. "I think their portions when they

sell on e-commerce sites are smaller than their normal portions."

Hang, a housewife from Binh Thanh talks of her experience going to an all-you-can-eat seafood buffet. "We got there and each of us was given a crab. But when we tried to get more, they said they were out. But I could obviously see they had more. It turned me off to the whole thing and needless to say, I'll never go back to that restaurant again."

Dining With Farmers

Another issue to consider for both e-commerce sites as well as merchants themselves is attracting the right kind of customer. Regarding social buying sites, James says: "If you're not careful, you can create a situation that is not sustainable. Consumers are often not loyal to the group-buying brand. The customers may be loyal to the deals or the venues without caring which site actually gives you the deal. It's different if you consistently have positive experiences like with Amazon. But if a site sells discount deals, a consumer may come on to this site or go to another one, even if he's never bought from it before. It's similar for businesses. Every time you do a deal, you'll lose money or sacrifice quality or product. But when you lose money, you're hoping that person will come back. It's a customer acquisition cost. But if you have to spend money to get me every single time, that's not a sustainable business model. There are people who hunt for discounts only, so businesses will have a hard time selling to them [later] at full price. Or you may attract the wrong segment, like high-end places that have kids and farmers

coming in which dilutes the brand."

Similarly, Luccie notes that if her favorite restaurant is running a deal, she'll typically wait until it's over to revisit. "I don't want to be in a fancy restaurant and spend VND1,000,000 per person and be seated next to someone who couldn't normally afford to eat there. I think these deals are good for bistro-level restaurants and below, but not for the more upscale restaurants."

The future of social buying sites worldwide as well as in Vietnam is uncertain. US stock prices for Groupon are trading at roughly one third of the peak they achieved in late 2011 when they became the second-biggest tech IPO in history behind Google. Amazon-backed LivingSocial is also losing money, posting an estimated USD82 million net loss for the fourth quarter of 2013. "We're trying to tell them that it's not a sustainable model," says James of the group buying sites his company has invested in, "but they don't believe us."

He notes that the trend in many markets is moving from social buying to e-commerce where the sites actually sell products themselves. "When moving from group buying to products, smaller clones can sell inferior products. They buy on the cheap, put [the products] in warehouses and sell it themselves. But they're getting merchants and users from each other instead of creating new users and merchants."

In a culture where everyone is out to get the best deal, the future of social buying is anything but a sure bet. ■

Dear Hadrien,

Last week my 12-year-old son caused a small accident at his school. While playing football with the other kids in the schoolyard, he accidentally broke a window of one of the classrooms. Now the school is trying to claim USD450 from me and my husband as compensation for replacing the window. Are we actually liable to pay for this damage?



A member of the Paris Bar, **Hadrien Wolff** has been practicing law in Vietnam for more than seven years, currently as a partner of Audier & Partners based at its HCMC office. Having gained extensive legal experience in the Netherlands and Cambodia, **Marijn Sprokhereef** is an associate at the Hanoi office of the same firm. **Audier & Partners** is an international law firm with presence in Vietnam, Myanmar and Mongolia, providing advice to foreign investors on a broad range of legal issues

WHEN LOOKING AT your son's unfortunate accident from a legal perspective, we are talking about civil liability and, more specifically, about civil liability to compensate for so-called "non-contractual damages." In these cases, the Civil Code of Vietnam is our starting point to learn about your rights and obligations.

The Civil Code states that anyone harming property belonging to another individual, organization or legal entity must compensate for the damage they cause. This is regardless of whether the harm was caused intentionally or unintentionally. Even though the foregoing may seem crystal clear, there are a few complicating factors in your specific case.

First of all, it was not you who caused the damage to the school's property, it was your son. In Vietnam, anyone 18 years or older is personally liable to compensate for the damage he/she causes to others, but for minors under 15-years-old, another factor applies. According to the Civil Code, in principle the parents are liable to compensate for the damage caused by a minor. If the parents have insufficient property to compensate and the minor who has caused the damage owns property of his or her own, such property shall be used to satisfy the outstanding amount of the compensation.

Secondly, the accident happened at your son's school. From a legal point of view, this is interesting because the Civil Code states that, as a general rule, the school must compensate for the damage caused by a minor under 15-years-old during school hours. If the school, however, proves that it was not at fault with respect to the supervision of the minor, the liability to compensate would shift back to you, as the parents of a 12-year-old.

So if you are willing to challenge the claim made by your son's school,



as a first step you could inform them about their legal liability to compensate for damages caused by your son during school hours. The school would then have to prove that they were not at fault with respect to their supervisory duties, which are normally detailed in the school regulations. To further your defense, you could also argue that the school has failed to prevent something like this from happening by allowing the children to play football in close vicinity to the windows of the classrooms. This is relevant because the Civil Code provides that where the aggrieved party itself is at fault, the person having caused the damage shall only be liable for a share of the damage in proportion to the degree to which he or she was at fault.

If you don't want to put too much pressure on your relationship with the school, you can try to find a reasonable solution to this issue together with the school. The Civil Code explicitly allows parties to agree with each other on the amount of compensation, on the form of compensation, on the payment of compensation in installments, and on the method of compensation. Another possibility to avoid any quarrelling is to check with your insurance company first to see whether your son's accident is covered by your liability insurance. Good luck!

Every month, Hadrien and Marijn answer legal questions from Oi readers. If you have any legal questions you want answered, send them to legal@oivietnam.com. ■

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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

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Denmark Consulate

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Finland Consulate

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www.india-consulate.org.vn
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Malaysia Consulate

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3829 9023
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Mexico Consulate

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3844 5520
Mon-Fri: 8am - 3pm

Myanmar Consulate

50 Sam Son, Tan Binh
5449 2425
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Hon. Consulate of Portugal

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3820 0623

Russia Consulate

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3930 3936
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3822 5174
www.mfa.gov.sg

Slovakia Consulate

64-68 Hai Ba Trung, D1
3829 8888

South Korea Consulate

107 Nguyen Du, D1
3822 5757
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Switzerland Consulate

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Thailand Consulate

77 Tran Quoc Thao, D3

The Czech Republic Consulate

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25 Le Duan, D1
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Faces & Places



International Week

The gym at The British International School An Phu Primary Campus was transformed into a Global Café whereby the parents from each BIS represented country set up a market stall decorated in their country's traditional colors or themes and provided a taster of food from their respective country for every child in the Primary campus to sample.

IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN



Time to Dive In

The denizens of HCMC cooled down at the the New World's Splash Bar. This was the first of an ongoing Saturday pool party theme at the venue with DJs spinning tunes, and food stands and local artisans showcasing their ware.

IMAGES BY ADAM ROBERT YOUNG

RENAISSANCE SCHOOL & THE SAIGON MODEL UNITED NATIONS

SAIMUN 
21st - 23rd March **2014**



Renaissance International School Saigon, is hosting this year's Saigon Model United Nations (MUN) at the Saigon Exhibition and Conference Centre (SECC) from March 21st to 23rd. MUN is run internationally in High Schools and Universities whereby students, who each represent different countries in the United Nations, research and write resolutions to world problems and then go onto debate these using parliamentary procedures. This is a training ground for those future diplomats, leaders of NGOs and those who enjoy the cut and thrust of debate. The current Secretary General Ban Ki Moon was first drawn into the world of the United Nations by joining a Model United Nations conference in his early academic days. Ban Ki Moon, when addressing a recent Model United Nations conference, had this to say to delegates "I have met countless people over the course of my career whose dedication to public service could be traced back to when, at your age, they attended a conference where students debated international issues under the blue UN flag."

At SAIMUN 2014 schools from across the city, and beyond, will send the best of their students to participate. Schools involved include the host school, Renaissance International School Saigon, the International School of Ho Chi Minh City, British International School, Saigon South International School, Australian International School, Vientiane International School, American International School, Anglophone British Curriculum International School and the Korean International School.

The 3 day event will kick off at Renaissance International School Saigon, in District 7, on Friday afternoon for the formal opening. The afternoon will also see student delegates begin to start the lobbying process so crucial to the debates that begin on Saturday morning at the Saigon Exhibition and Conference Center. The debates commence on Saturday the 22nd March and continue through until Sunday.

Leading the conference is one of the International Baccalaureate (IB) students from Renaissance International School Saigon. Ji Hoon Yoon takes on the role of SAIMUN 2014 Secretary General and had this to say when interviewed recently about himself and the MUN in Saigon.

So how did you personally begin your involvement in MUN?

I joined the programme at Renaissance, when there were only about 12 students. We attended the MUN conference at the United Nations International School Hanoi (UNIS).

Has the Renaissance MUN developed since you first joined?

Every year we run one training MUN for internal students, an invitational MUN (RENMUN) where we host other schools from Saigon, we also attend UNIS MUN and The Hague International MUN (THIMUN) held in Singapore which is the largest and most prestigious MUN in the region. I think we might have one of the strongest MUN programmes in the city.

What do you do in MUN?

Last year with two of my fellow classmates, Ye Lim Yu and Phuong Hoang, we led the MUN programme in our school which involved training new students, writing resolutions, preparing them for debates and helping to lead them at overseas conferences.



This year Ye Lim, Phuong and I all hold senior leadership positions at SAIMUN.

If I want to know more about SAIMUN 2014 where can I get further information?

You could always drop by our school at 74 Nguyen Thi Thap and ask for me or you could go directly to the SAIMUN website <http://saigon-mun.weebly.com/>



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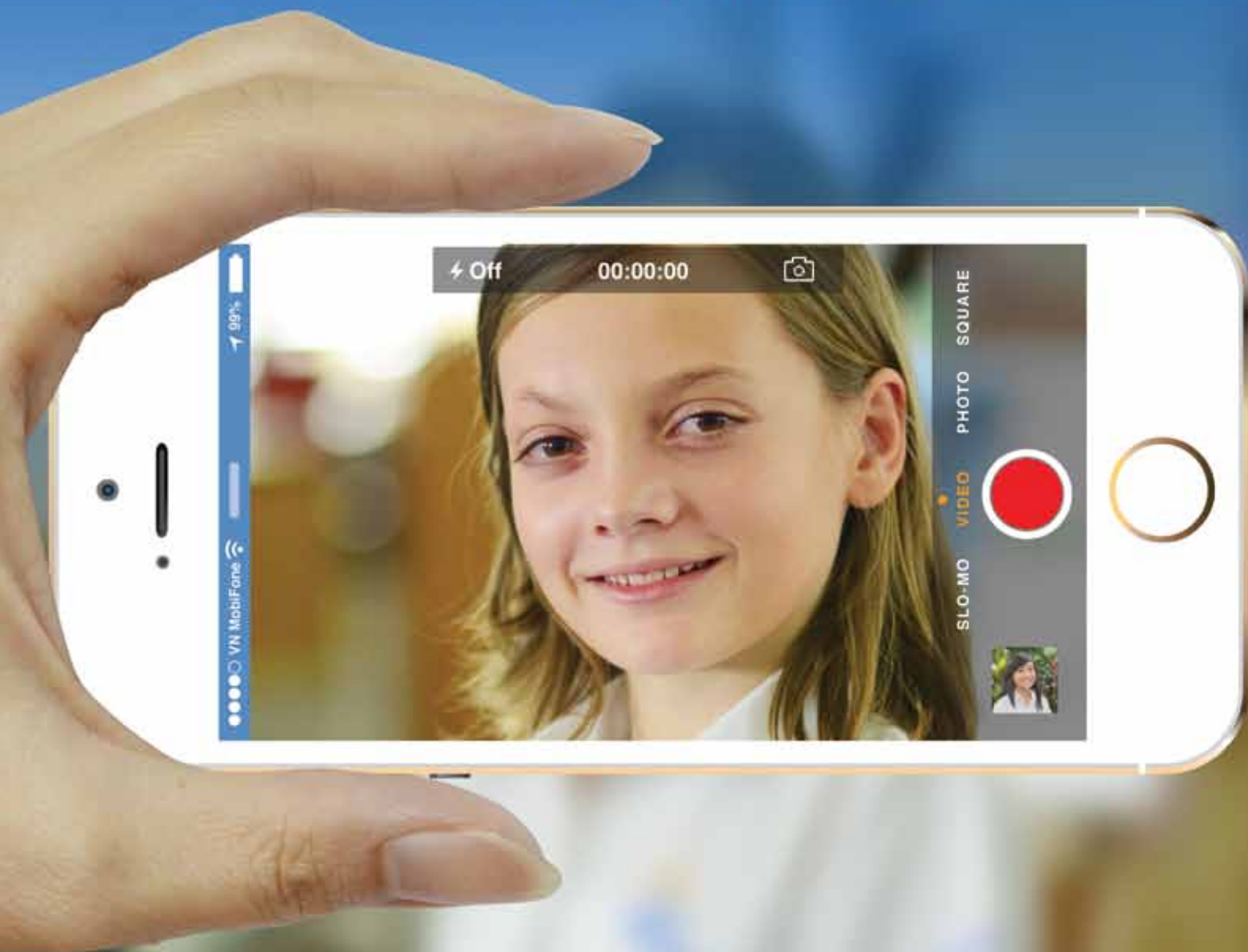
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