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VIETNAM

8-2017

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Giám đốc, Tổng biên tập  
Nguyễn Xuân Trường  
Biên tập: Tạ Quang Huy

Thực hiện liên kết xuất bản:  
**OI VIET NAM MEDIA & ADVERTISING CO.,LTD**  
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## ANA MANDARA VILLAS DALAT THE ELEGANT COLONIAL FRENCH HERRITAGE

Text and Images Provided by **Ana Mandara**



**WHY GO FAR FOR FRENCH**  
Style vacation when you can experience it right in Vietnam. Escape from the heat of crowded city, head to the southern part of the Central Highlands region, you can discover a fresh highland atmosphere for summer vacation in Dalat – The City of Eternal Spring. Dalat is located 1,500 meters above sea level, the temperature weather stands in contrast to Vietnam topical climate, with cool weather all year around.

Lying on the hill, overlooking the city and surrounded by pine trees, Ana Mandara Villas Dalat Resort & Spa's 17 former colonial French homes were built in the late 1920's and 1930's and have been redeveloped into luxury resort with a touch of modern elegance. The original structure and decoration is preserved while maintaining the style of late Art Décor and espoused curving, aerodynamic surfaces, geometric forms, long, horizontal edges, nautical inspiration and subdued color palette. The sophisticated interior design of the bedrooms with claw-foot bathtubs, four-poster wooden bed covered with mosquito net and dark wood furniture elaborate with the warm polished wooden floor. Rooms are provided with antique electric heaters and fireplace for cold nights.

The spacious cozy living room with working fireplace connects with the dining room, perfect for group or family gatherings. Furthermore, couple can enjoy the dreamy romantic atmosphere while standing on the balcony patio or hand-in-hand walking under the pleasant atmosphere of pine forest in the evening.

If you love cooking, you can spend your afternoon in a cooking class with Executive Chef – Mr. Huong - of Ana Mandara Villas Dalat. He will help you hand-pick your own ingredients for Vietnamese signature dishes before turning them into delicious appetizer right in the resort's organic garden with various herb and vegetable. It creates green space where guest can cook and enjoy the meal after preparing. Or, you can enjoy Ana Mandara Villas Dalat signature's restaurant,

Le Petit Dalat, where East Meets West. The salad with various organic local vegetable topped with salad dressing of strawberries; followed by the Spices Dalat Sturgeon grill with lemongrass alongside with Duo of Veal Tenderloin char-grilled with two recipes in one dish.

In the late afternoon, guest can relax and sunbath by the pool before immersing yourself in a tranquility of the East in the award-winning La Cochinchine Spa. Set in its own villas beyond lush green garden with spring flowers, one of four finely detail replica Villas, La Cochinchine Spa has full menu of treatments including body and beauty care and holistic healing as well as more traditional options, using natural ingredients. It provides relaxation to balance the senses and against the rapid change of temperature of Dalat during the day.

If you want to explore the beauty of Dalat, there are plenty of sightseeing places in Dalat. Start with the art deco train station, modeled after the Deauville-Trouville station in the seaside resort of Normandy, signaling that travelers had sights of Dalat, including waterfalls, flower gardens and craft shops. Finally, you can wrap up your tour with 2.3km cable car ride for bird's eye view of Dalat's famed pine forest.

This summer, Ana Mandara Villas Dalat offers an attractive promotion for families. Package 3 days and 2 nights only VND6,990,000/family 3 adults, includes benefits as 2 nights stay at Villa Studio with daily breakfast for family; credit of VND800,000 for FB service; one-way airport transfer for family; early check-in (subject to availability), discount of 30% off the spa and 10% off food, drinks and excursions from now to 20 December 2017. For more info, please contact via hotline 0164.525.9977 or via email [reservation-dalat@anamandara-resort.com](mailto:reservation-dalat@anamandara-resort.com)

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# Datebook

What's on this month...

## AUGUST 12

**What:** Charity Cricket Night

**Where:** Saigon Opera House (7 Lam Son Square, D1)

**About:** Pullman Saigon Centre (148 Tran Hung Dao, D1), 6:30pm, VND2.2 million

**About:** Merv Hughes and Geoff Marsh, two of Australia's legends of cricket, are coming to Ho Chi Minh City for a sports dinner in aid of children's charity, Loreto. The pair will be familiar names to fans of the sport, and the event promises to be an entertaining night full of tales from their storied careers. Merv "Fruitfly" Hughes played 53 test matches for Australia taking 212 wickets, and is known as an outgoing character and entertaining talker. Geoff "Swampy" Marsh played 50 tests for Australia and scored nearly 3,000 runs. He went on to coach the Australia, Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka sides at test level, and Pune Warriors in the Indian Premier League. Ticket includes a buffet dinner and free-flow beer, wine and soft drinks.

**Contact:** For more info, email [brett.malcolm@ceaprojects.com](mailto:brett.malcolm@ceaprojects.com) or [lincoln.saunders@abmauri.com.cn](mailto:lincoln.saunders@abmauri.com.cn)

## AUGUST 17 & 18

**What:** Southeast Asia Brewers Conference 2017

**Where:** Saigon Prince Hotel (63 Nguyen Hue, D1)

**About:** ASEA Brew 2017, now in its third year, is the region's only annual conference and trade fair for the brewing community, and the place to gain such insight. The conference will once again attract brewery owners, brewers and distributors from across Asia looking to understand the latest innovations in ingredients, processes and equipment. Interactivity is where the true value of attending SEA Brew 2017 lies, and that's delivered across multiple sessions, including workshops, round tables and panel discussions, all lead by industry experts. In addition, the attached trade fair provides the opportunity to meet current and prospective providers offering the latest production and distribution solutions.

**Contact:** Visit [sea-brew.com](http://sea-brew.com) for more info

## AUGUST 19 & 20

**What:** Addays Conference

**Where:** Saigon Prince Hotel (63 Nguyen Hue, D1)

**About:** With 20+ industry speakers and 600+ delegates the Addays event offers an information exchange platform which will provide insights on leading digital innovations, efficient monetization and transformation strategies. This event will gather the world's most dynamic digital leaders from a number of industries to discuss innovative ways to improve digital transformation efforts to ensure success.

**Contact:** Visit [addays.com/digital-marketing-conference](http://addays.com/digital-marketing-conference) for more info



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## AUGUST 23

**What:** Dangerous Woman Tour - Ariana Grande  
**Where:** 7th Military Region Stadium (202 Hoang Van Thu, Tan Binh)

**About:** Vietnam is one of the four countries in Southeast Asia to welcome Ariana Grande on her third world tour Dangerous Woman. Ariana Grande quickly became famous as a singer after selling 138,000 copies of her debut album *Your Truly*. The Way, in collaboration with American rapper Mac Miller, has brought her three platinum, top 10 on Billboard 100 and top 1 on iTunes Music Chart.

**Contact:** Visit [addays.com/digital-marketing-conference](http://addays.com/digital-marketing-conference) for more info



## AUGUST 19-27

**What:** Autumn Melodies 2017

**Where:** Saigon Opera House (7 Lam Son Square, D1)

**About:** Organized biannually by the Ho Chi Minh City Ballet Symphony & Orchestra, *Autumn Melodies 2017* will deliver a total of 11 performances by local and international artists from Germany, Russia, Japan, France, Macedonia and Vietnam, in the three disciplines of opera, symphony and orchestra, and contemporary dance. Opera lovers will want to check out Johann Strauss II's *Die Fledermaus* on August 19 and 20, while chamber/orchestra enthusiasts will be treated to *8 Seasons* on August 24, a tribute to both A. Vivaldi and A. Piazzolla's four seasons, and *Journey Through Europe: People And Landscape* on August 25, featuring debut performances of classical and modern pieces by European composers.

**Contact:** Visit [www.hbso.org.vn](http://www.hbso.org.vn) for more info



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# The Bulletin

Promotions and news in HCMC and beyond...

## Boutique Cam Thanh Resort Opens

Starting this month, Boutique Cam Thanh Resort will launch its soft opening. Situated on Cam Thanh Township, Hoi An, about 3 kilometers southeast of Hoi An Ancient Town, the resort, located in a coconut forest, has 40 rooms and villas. All rooms and villas are in three distinctive areas, each with their own swimming pool. Designed to reflect Vietnamese traditional architecture and to be eco-friendly, each guestroom is equipped with modern amenities for convenience. Guests can wind-down at Ngon Café or relax at Nón Bar while enjoying tropical cocktails and comfort foods with unparalleled views of green coconut palms along the waterway. The Lúa Restaurant can host up to 300 guests. In addition, the resort has a public exhibition area that will walk guests through the rich history and culture of the Cam Thanh region. During its soft opening, Boutique Cam Thanh Resort is offering a Stay-3-Pay-2 package deal, along with other promotions. The promo starts August 15 and ends December 31, 2017. For more info, call 028 3939 0899.



## Ember's First Anniversary Promotion

August 1 marks the first anniversary of Ember - Burger & Steak Bistro (Level 1-07, Saigon Center, No 65 Le Loi, D1) and to show their appreciation diners who visit during the month of August will be rewarded with some delightful wines and three "Happy Anniversary Special Mini Set Menus." The mini set menus feature appetizers that have never been on the menu before and include dishes such as Australian rib-eye steak 200g with black pepper sauce, bolognese pasta, grilled salmon with cream sauce served with grilled corn, crunchy garlic bread and more. Sets start at VND399,000.



## Golf Summer Deal in Laguna Golf Lăng Cô

The 18-hole, 71-par golf course designed by Sir Nick Faldo plots its way through the changing landscape framed by the mountain range on three sides and the East Sea to the east. During the summer promotion, all golfers will have a chance to experience the challenging golf course with the following rates: VND1,400,000 per 18 holes (applies from Monday to Thursday) and VND2,500,000 per unlimited holes (applies on Monday only). Rates include green fee, caddy fee, shared golf cart (compulsory) and all taxes, and are valid until the end of August 2017. For more info, email [golf@lagunalangco.com](mailto:golf@lagunalangco.com).



## A Love Affair with Martial Arts at AVANI Quy Nhon

If a pre-wedding martial arts retreat sounds like an unlikely recipe for a happy ever after, leave it to AVANI Quy Nhon Resort & Spa to conjure up a romantic experience proving that couples who practice tai chi together stay together. Quy Nhon and its environs are the birthplace of Viet Vo Dao—a practice focused on achieving moral refinement and promoting a sense of love through physical movement and exercise. Drawing on these ancient traditions, AVANI's pre-wedding martial arts retreat, conducted by a certified instructor, combines physical training with mindfulness practices. Daily tai chi, Viet Vo Dao, yoga classes and soothing spa treatments work their magic helping to release tension and steady the nerves for the big day. Monogrammed martial arts belts for him and her add a personal touch and make for a quirky souvenir to take back home. Nestled against a hillside in an awe-inspiring feat of architecture, AVANI Quy Nhon is hugged between the powder white sands and crystal clear waters of blissfully quiet Bai Xep Bay and vast mountains. For more info, call 056 384 0132.





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## STUDY IN VIETNAM, OBTAIN AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Students of International Schools of North America (SNA) can acquire the American High School Diploma after graduation. Interview with Mr. Dominic - Principal of SNA's USA Program



Dear Mr. Dominic, after receiving the USA High School Diploma at SNA, what are the advantages that SNA's students have over those graduating from any other international programs in Vietnam?

Students who achieved the degree in the USA program at SNA can enroll in any university or college anywhere in the world without having to undergo any re-examination.

In Vietnam, other international schools are also increasingly competitive when incorporating standards from Canada, England or Australia and this also prepares students better for future study. However, SNA has a dual curriculum, which will award students with two baccalaureates (Vietnam and US). Therefore, if they do not study abroad, they can still continue at prestigious universities in Vietnam.

California has always been a leader in adoption and improvement of education quality in the United States. The curriculum is always up-to-date, with a wide range of knowledge and resources

available to students. In addition to academic quality, teaching quality is also an important element that California standards effect, where teachers achieve high standards and rapidly update world knowledge as well as modern teaching trends.

Secondly, students will not have to waste time in transferring to overseas study at the high school level, for the transcript can be converted compatible to the school they want to move to.

Most notably, students in Vietnam can also benefit from American education standards, which helps them adapt quickly to the American environment. I have seen many students come back to SNA after study abroad. They are very happy and grateful that they have been equipped with enough knowledge and skills to adjust easily to the new environment. This is also a reward for our teachers' efforts and dedication.

What is the US standard, when applied to Vietnamese students at SNA, and how do teachers have to adjust?

All learning programs are discussed with students to outline which results should be achieved since the beginning of the school year, helping them to grasp the clear detailed objectives toward the end of the year. According to the process, learning standards are also enhanced, helping students achieve better results than the previous school year, always progressing over time, suitable for all students.

Like other schools, SNA also has a diverse student population and also faces certain challenges, especially the ability to acquire foreign languages. In order to improve our students' language proficiency, SNA has created an ELD Department. This department helps students to link their knowledge in Vietnamese with similar content in English, thereby improving the quality of learning and they can also access bilingual material at the library.

SNA also takes care of academic quality, helps students develop their reading skills, or designs lessons that fit in with each individual learning style, as well as listening to their unique needs. Of course, it is indispensable to mention cultural and sports activities regularly held at the school.

In particular, SNA also supports each class with a five-member Class Management Team (CMT), including a coordinator, an expatriate homeroom teacher, a Vietnamese homeroom teacher, a manager and a supervisor. CMT closely monitors students' activities, learning progress as well as thoughts and aspirations, helping them to achieve the best possible results while studying at SNA.

What plans will SNA have to expand the institution and what enrollment targets do you have for next year?

Nguyen Hoang Education Group has built a new campus in Trung Son (HCMC), three times as large as the current campus to accommodate more students and better serve them.

SNA intends to develop further advanced courses, create a better performing arts program and strengthen the student advisory board. In addition, SNA still focuses on teaching life skills, lessons of sustainable human values such as love for the homeland, people, cultural identity, filial piety and compassion. Possibly, SNA will upgrade to a bachelor degree in the near future.

Currently, we SNA have nearly 500 students at 2 campuses. The enrollment target for the following year is expected to be higher than last year. We will publish the numbers in the next issue, after making the final decision. SNA wishes to create more learning opportunities for Vietnamese students with the best educational environment. It is the mission of all our teachers.

Thank you! ■

# TROI OI!

## The country in numbers



65-year-old

has stood high in Tinh Son Commune, Son Tinh District, Quang Ngai Province for the past 39 years. He recalls the mountain and the surrounding wooded patches provided him and his fellow soldiers with an effective sanctuary from the enemy troop's attacks. His heart ached at the sight of the once verdant expanse being indiscriminately felled for timber and firewood. Minh went to great lengths to visit the villagers in their homes, convincing them to stop their logging, which would only hurt their long-term livelihood given that they would be unable to irrigate crops if their water supply was depleted. With one tree felled every 15 minutes on average, the forest soon became bare of trees. Two of Minh's wartime comrades then also joined him. The trio formed a forest protection team assisted by residents committed to the cause.

**WAR VET HAS SPENT MOST** of the last four decades preserving a forest in central Vietnam. Residents consider Minh the 'savior' of a pristine forest that spans 36 hectares around Nhan Mountain, which

~VND938 billion

The Chau Doc Bridge project will connect Tan Chau Town and Chau Doc City in An Giang Province.

The structure is expected to replace the Chau Giang ferry service, which has been the main form of transport across the Hau (Back) River. According to the design, the bridge will be 667 meters long and 12 meters wide, including two car lanes and two motorbike lanes.

in capital investment has been proposed for the construction of a bridge deemed essential in the southern province of An Giang.



12-month

Authority of Vietnam. The man was later booked for violating aviation security regulations and airport rules, besides causing public disorder. All the domestic and international carriers with operations in Vietnam have been notified of his no-fly ban. Law enforcement agencies and customs officers across the country have also been briefed of the ban and tasked with preventing him from boarding by any means necessary.

**FLIGHT BAN ISSUED TO A** Vietnamese man for throwing a cardboard box in the face of a check-in attendant at Noi Bai International Airport. The ban will be effective from July 10 to July 9, 2018, followed by a six-month probation period ending January 1, 2019, according to the Civil Aviation

USD4.4 million

signs of deterioration. Multiple parts of the cathedral, including its roof and windows, and the wooden structure holding the bell, have suffered damages and will undergo either reparation or replacement. The massive restoration this time will also repair both the interior and exterior of the walls, all the iron and wooden doors, the floors, the lighting system among other units. The restoration process is scheduled to last three years.

restoration project is scheduled for the Saigon Notre-Dame Basilica because several parts of the 137-year-old architecture are showing







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**BOYS IN NORTHERN** Hung Yen Province have allegedly developed genital warts after undergoing circumcisions at an unlicensed clinic. The boys, all under 15, are receiving treatment at the National Hospital of Dermatology and Venereology in Hanoi for the condition. The underage patients were all admitted to the hospital between May 1 and July 17, after developing genital warts following treatment for phimosis—a condition in which the foreskin of the penis cannot be pulled back past the glans. According to a representative from the Hung Yen Department of Health, a team of health inspectors was dispatched to the private clinic where the boys had allegedly been treated for phimosis. L, the sole doctor responsible for the clinic's operations was not present at the time of inspection. L is employed by a public hospital, but runs the clinic at home outside of her normal working hours without obtaining a permit from the local health department, the representative said. "As the clinic is not licensed, there's no permit to be withdrawn and we don't have the authority to terminate its operation either," the health official said. "We will ask the police and local administration to step in if violations are discovered."

~50,000

a meeting on dengue fever prevention last month at the Pasteur Institute in Ho Chi Minh City, chaired by the Ministry of Health. The southern metropolis together with neighboring provinces Dong Nai and Binh Duong boast the highest number of dengue fever infections in southern Vietnam. The trend can be explained by better access to transportation in industrialized areas, meaning citizens are more capable of moving in and out of areas with dengue fever outbreaks. In 1999, adults accounted for 18 percent of dengue fever patients across Vietnam, that number has since risen to 47 percent.



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Happiness Saigon Cofounder and CEO Alan Cerutti speaking at Happiness' 1-2-3 Creative Innovation event

**HAPPINESS SAIGON** (*happiness-saigon.com*) is leading Vietnam's agency landscape. What the agency does is a sophisticated weaving of digital tools, traditional marketing instruments and the language of human emotions to imprint a brand into the lives and experience of its audience. This approach proved to be successful, garnering the agency an impressive portfolio—having designed and carried out many successful campaigns for big clients such as Coca-Cola, NIVEA, Bosch, UNICEF—along with several awards for both Happiness Saigon and its co-founder Alan Cerutti.

For the future, Happiness Saigon looks forward further its presence globally as well as proving its unique responsiveness to changes. *Oi* speaks with Alan to find out more.

The past few years have been very exciting and full of "happiness" for Happiness Saigon. Last year your team's #NoFilter campaign for UNICEF won many prestigious awards—Cannes Lions, Spikes Asia, London International Awards, Eurobest, and D&AD—how does it feel to receive such international recognition, especially for a young company as yours, which started just over two years ago?

When we started Happiness Saigon at the end 2014, our vision was to lead the industry by leading the way, and with this we set the goal to be Vietnam's most creative hub in 2017, and to be regarded globally as the company that helped put Vietnam on the map when it comes to creativity. It feels incredibly satisfying as a young company to achieve this status. It's especially important as we rely on people to further build on our success. This recognition, this status, is driving our reputation, and helps us to attract talent organically.

However, we continue to be ambitious,

# Creative Connectivity 3.0

How an agency reinvented the advertising business in Vietnam

Interview by **Christine Van**

Images Provided by **Happiness Saigon**

and re-invent ourselves. Consumers are adopting new behaviors, channels and trends fast, and we want to be the agency that is also recognized for its ability to adapt to change.

Describe the creative process behind the #NoFilter campaign. Why do you think it resonated so well with the public?

For the creative idea, it's sophisticated in its development but instant in the story it wants to tell. It hits you, it's arresting. The visual is thought provoking, and this is when advertising becomes effective. I believe there are various others reasons why it works, for instance, I believe that Vietnamese people relate to the subject—the child—and have empathy for the situation.

The company was awarded "Agency of the Year" in Southeast Asia last year, quite a milestone. What do you think attributed to this recognition?

The people make an agency. We rely on talents, talented commercial, and creative and strategic individuals who are committed to innovation, and achieve the same goals and vision. Day in, day out they make the difference.

Every person working at Happiness is hired based on their match against our values, every letter in Happiness represents a value: Hunger, Agility, Professionalism, Plus, Insightful, Nouveau, Exact, Sexy and Strong. We use this in our evaluation forms.

We aim to do everything to make people happy because happy people make great work, and great work is what makes people happy. This is true for our clients, and the industry. That, and relentlessness. We say that the will is more important than the skill. We are indeed hungry.

You were also recognized as one of "Asia Pacific's 40 Under 40" talents by Campaign Asia Pacific recently. Tell us what drives you to reach such an achievement in your career.

When entering advertising, my ambition was to run or co-own an advertising company at 30. Don't ask me why, but it seemed like an achievable milestone then. Years later the dream faded after a stint at Ogilvy & Mather London, where 1,600 employees work. It felt like such a challenge to achieve the dream somehow until one day my former employer Happiness Brussels, and co-founder of Happiness Saigon Karen Corrigan, asked me to open up Happiness in Vietnam. It really felt like destiny because of the way it happened (I called Karen for a coffee as I was in Belgium, while moments earlier she had received a formal request to start working on NIVEA in Vietnam).

I'm passionate, ambitious... and paranoid. This makes for a dangerous combination. I also believe that great things happen autonomously and I've been fortunate to have a business partner like Karen who believes in me and the team, and gives me the room to lead the company based on our vision and decision-making.

During our first year—ahead of the recognition—we had to accelerate for growth on a business level, creative level and reputation, and we did. Happiness Saigon had that year been appointed as lead agency for Bosch in five markets. We released a successful Share of Choice campaign for Coca-Cola with 7million



Image from the award-winning UNICEF #NoFilter campaign







NIVEA Vietnam brand teams attending the 1-2-3 Creative Innovation event



views in less than one week... this underlined Happiness Saigon's freshness and drew attention from the Campaign Asia Pacific team, I believe.

In a recent online article in [campaignlive.co.uk](http://campaignlive.co.uk) you said, "We're not a fully Western agency coming in with lots of ego. We are going to listen through local people to get a better understanding [of the market]." What are the locals saying about this market? Are there differences in marketing strategies between East and West? What strategies are unique to Vietnam?

Yes, and that's true. We are not a company that comes and dictates how it should be done based on foreign experiences. We believe in East meets West, and our 52-people agency consists of only six Westerners.

We put our ears to the ground—research is essential. Vietnam is one of the Southeast Asian markets with the highest internet penetration with substantial weekly online duration at almost 25 hours. Together with low access costs and reasonable smartphone prices, the internet is becoming an inseparable element in Vietnamese consumers' daily activities: conveniently checking news while still in bed, choosing the most convenient transportation option just before stepping out of their home, or self-indulging at night

with a huge collection of recreation choices. Vietnamese consumers have become more and more open to new things, especially the ones delivering "convenience" to their lives. On the other hand, thanks to the boom of social networks and user-generated content platforms, specifically Facebook and YouTube, Vietnamese consumers are now freely expressing their thoughts. Indeed, I have seen a big transformation of free expression in Vietnam, from long content on Yahoo! 360 in late 2000 to now, the era of bite-sized content. Thanks to that, it is now literally "all" Vietnamese consumers creating content, not only adults but also young children who now have their own YouTube channels with more than a hundred thousand views per clip.

No one can deny digital marketing works and is the future, but is traditional marketing, such as billboards and print ads, really dead? How does Happiness Saigon balance old and new marketing tools, or if at all?

We know we are in a strange world—a highly connected world. On the one hand, we see that nothing has changed: It still is about building businesses, where fundamentals on how to build brands remain. It's about finding the right positioning, the right creative idea. It still is about finding content, which is right and amplifies the brand.

It's always been like that so, as such, nothing has changed, but everything is different. We live in a new era, a 3.0 world: A world that is dominated by connectivity, digital, social and BIG DATA, where people have the power in their own hands. There is where the fundamentals have not changed, however, the landscape, behaviors and amounts of information and content changed.

We have evolved from media scarcity and attention abundance to attention scarcity and media abundance. This means that brands and agencies need to move from consumer centricity to consumer-journey centricity. Traditional media is part of a consumer journey, it just can no longer be the only channel a brand is present on to get a message across.

This is why we believe in Creative Connectivity—we use creativity along the consumer journey to connect with the audience. In addition, what is important is that our content needs to adapt to the moment, the channel, and the context in order to be ultra-effective.

Do you think Vietnam is seeing a creative revolution now, where before it was locked down by age-old traditions and fondness for copying? Where does Happiness Saigon stand in leading this creative revolution?

Yes I do. I see creativity around us, it's omni-present. Youngsters, especially, are embracing creativity as a reflection of their personality. You see it increasingly.

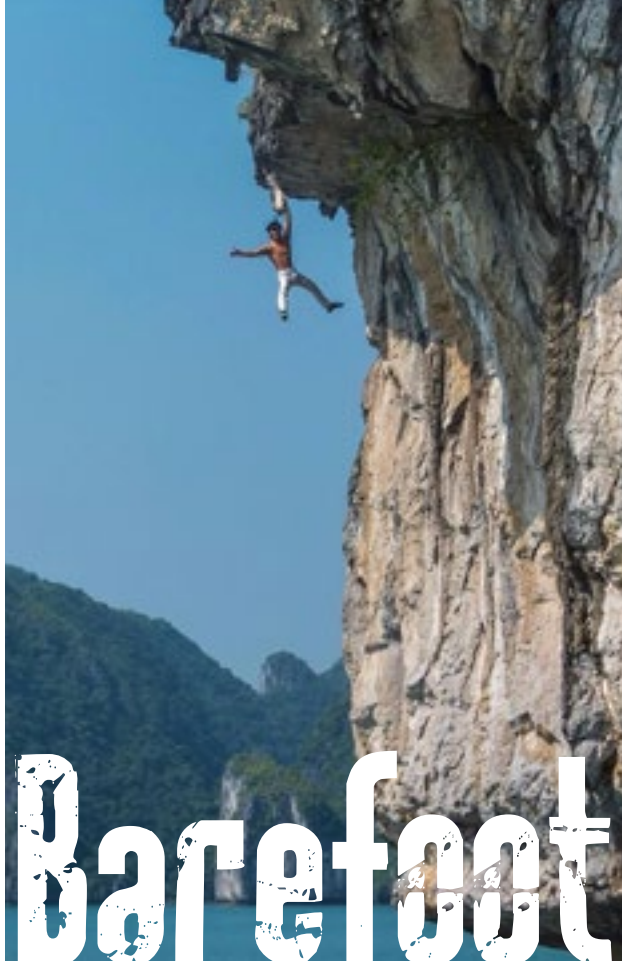
In our industry, we do too. As a matter-of-fact, Happiness organizes a 1-2-3 Event every year, a means for us to share our vision with clients and partners. Last month, June 30, we organized the 1-2-3 Creative Innovation event where 92 top marketers attended. With the invitation process, we asked guests to rank their most important output from agency partners; from strategy, creativity, innovation, value for money, service to execution, etc. Creativity is the most important expected output. We also saw an increase where last year 55 percent ranked creativity as number 1, this year 63 percent did.

They know that creativity and innovation leads to success. I think more and more marketers are realizing the importance to embed creativity and innovation in their daily organization, to make it part of the agenda and conversation, and to implement it with speed. For this we have introduced a new tool to measure the impact of a creative idea—we call the Never Finished scale ranging from 1 being damaging to the brand, 2 being invisible, 3 being noticed, 4 being thought provoking, 5 being behavioral changing, and a 6 being a Never Finished / Legacy building idea.

In an age of noise, brands need to make music to be noticed. To make music we need creativity. There's no way around it. And now we're happy to bring a tool to the discussion to speak the same language. ■



1-2-3 Creative Innovation event attendant trying the Virtual Reality equipment



# The Barefoot Rock Climber

For Vietnam's best rock climber, no shoes are no problem

Text by **Wes Grover**

Image by **Ngoc Tran**

**WHEN I ARRIVE AT PUSH Climbing**, the rock climbing gym located within Saigon Outcast in Thao Dien, Vu Nguyen is nimbly shimmying his way up a pole, utility knife in hand, and securing a safety pad as a group of the city's most experienced climbers, young and old, put the finishing touches on the gym's new bouldering facility. Seeing the bewildered look on my face, he cracks a smile before returning to the ground.

A man of humility with a wide grin perpetually on his face, you would never know it talking to Vu, but the 26-year-old is broadly considered the best Vietnamese rock climber. He cannot hide his talent, however, as he tests out the routes he has been working to setup on the wall, body contorting and comfortably

hanging by the tips of his fingers as he methodically raises a leg above his shoulders, somehow finding a way to lock his heel into place and take a moment of rest. To watch it is to see poetry in motion, and yet this is not Vu at his best.

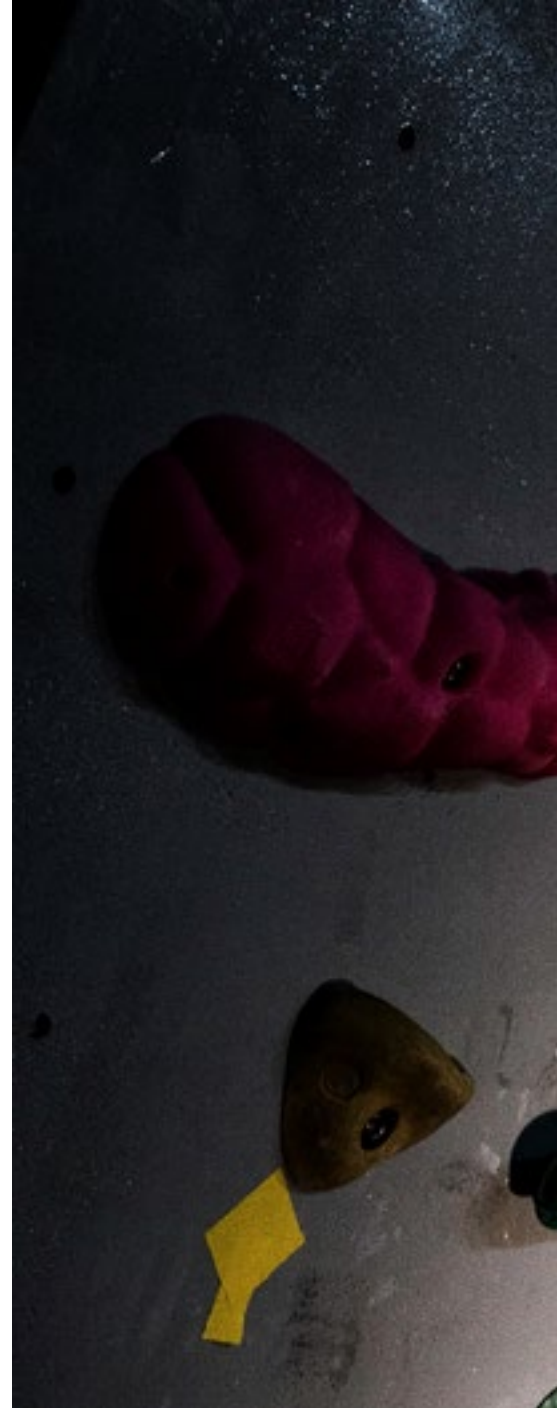
Where he truly sets himself apart from the crowd is on a real outdoor rock wall, where he prefers to scale cliffs without an essential piece of equipment: shoes. "Outdoors, I always climb barefoot, but at climbing gyms, the managers don't like it," he says, explaining the presence of his footwear this evening.

In the climbing world, it's not really up for debate, but rather accepted as a fact that barefoot climbing is a disadvantage. Shoes increase grip and provide protection when standing on

sharp, jagged rocks, balancing all of your weight on your toes or jamming your feet into tiny crevices. This is what makes Vu an anomaly.

Asked about how his feet fare on the unforgiving limestone karsts of Cat Ba Island, Vietnam's most established rock climbing destination where he was first introduced to the sport seven years ago and worked as a guide for Asia Outdoors, his face instantly lights up and he proclaims "I love limestone!" before nonchalantly adding, "I get small cuts on my feet sometimes."

Sharing that the most challenging route he has completed barefoot is graded 8A—a reference to the French rating system that measures difficulty, and a level that, according to the International Rock Climbing Research Association, is classified as elite—it







prompts the question: is there anyone else in the world who can do that without shoes?

"I don't know. There's one guy from Germany. I used to watch his videos, but I forget his name," he says, referring to Bernd Arnold, the now 70-year-old mountaineer who is credited as the pioneer of barefoot climbing. Essentially, what Vu is reluctant to admit, though I'm hearing nonetheless, is that right now, no, there is probably no one else in the world who can do what he does.

Taking the challenge to another level—and the challenge is what he finds to be the biggest draw to the sport—is that on Cat Ba Island, and other places that will allow it, he frequently climbs above water without a harness, engaging in what is known

as deep-water soloing. With little room for error, he casually describes climbing a 17-meter rock face and, once atop, plunging into the water below. Another time, he recalls, while deep-water soloing, he was given the shock of reaching for a ledge above his head only to find that his hand was on a large, venomous snake. "You're not supposed to touch that kind of snake!" he says laughing, but luckily for him, the serpent was just as surprised and slithered away as Vu clung to the rock and managed to maintain his grip.

In Vietnam, rock climbing is still in a fledgling state, though there are indoor bouldering competitions in Hanoi, where climbers scale short but intensive walls without a harness. Requiring shoes, however, they aren't exactly what Vu finds himself attracted

to. "I like outdoor competitions, but they don't have them in Vietnam," he explains.

Nevertheless, he's done his part to advance the sport in his home country, helping to setup bolts on outdoor rock faces, most recently in Mai Chau, which allows climbers to safely ascend by clipping the rope attached to his or her harness into the bolted wall. The sport, too, has given him opportunity to travel abroad, climbing in such places as Thailand, Singapore, Laos and Cambodia.

When asked where his favorite place to climb is, Vu takes only a quick moment to think before conceding, "I don't have a favorite." The world's best barefoot rock climber simply and indiscriminately loves to climb, anywhere and everywhere he can. ■



King Duy Tan and Madame Ho Thi Chi



King Khai Dinh

# House of Nguyen II

A solo exhibition of oil and lacquer paintings on wood  
by Saigon-based artist Tran Minh Tam

Text and Images Provided by **Craig Thomas Gallery**

**THE FIRST TIME ART LOVERS** and collectors became familiar with Tran Minh Tam's portrayal of royal characters from the past was in 2013 when he introduced his *House of Nguyen I* series at Craig Thomas Gallery. The Nguyen Dynasty has a long line of historical personages

who, according to the artist, "are already very famous in Vietnamese history." Even so, during the four years between House of Nguyen I and today, Minh Tam never stopped conducting research on Vietnam's final dynasty. He continues to produce art through the medium of wood, oil and lacquer

as a means to make tangible his research; thus comes his latest series *House of Nguyen II* this year.

In its essence, *House of Nguyen II* is part of Minh Tam's continuing effort to capture a royal past that is now far removed from the memory of most modern Vietnamese. But in





Empress Nam Phuong



King Gia Long

all fairness, Minh Tam is not just an artist inspired by history. On the micro level, he seeks to achieve accuracy through attention to minute details such as the anatomy or the clothing of his characters; something he accomplished successfully in the first series. However, he has since experimented much further with story-telling, maneuvering different aspects of a painting from the obvious use of characters to the subtle hints found in decorative devices.

The legacy of the *House of Nguyen* is felt most strongly today in the city of Hue; its imperial capital from 1802 to 1945. On multiple visits to the ancient city, Minh Tam never ceases to marvel at the magnificently complex royal architecture from the emperors' time. "The relation between human and landscape is irrefutable. In a way I feel a profound melancholic longing for the now-absent human presence

that used to occupy those spaces." He instinctively tries to fill the void of those uninhabited spaces, but saying Minh Tam relies solely on mythical narratives from his research to do so would be incomplete.

Straying away from their political legacies, a version frequently told in mainstream history textbooks, the artist honors his royal subjects by emphasizing their human experiences, which include the universal emotions of grief, love and loss in order to instill an empathetic wonder in the viewer. King Duy Tan and Madame Ho Thi Chi exemplifies this method and even shifts the typical focus from the emperors to make central an ostensibly peripheral female character. While emperor Duy Tan is only portrayed as a shadow over her shoulder, Madame Ho Thi Chi catches the eye in her green gown and in the gentle embrace of a peacock. The peacock has always

been a symbol of elegance, grace and virtue, and was believed to be the manifestation on Earth of Fenghuang, the mythological bird that controls all celestial bodies. The painting demands of the viewer sympathy for the tragic life of a dignified woman whose virtue, intelligence and beauty could not save her from being a victim of her time.

"Perhaps this series can be understood as a modern reckoning with our history," says the artist reflecting on the *House of Nguyen II* collection. Looking forward, Minh Tam wants to challenge himself with even more ambitious projects, such as painting the earliest emperors of the Nguyen Dynasty, with folk art being the only available source for references, or the wedding of emperor Bao Dai and empress Nam Phuong.

*House of Nguyen II* is showing at Craig Thomas Gallery (27(i) Tran Nhat Duat, D1) until August 26, 2017 ■

# Have You Heard?

13 podcasts every designer should listen to

Text by **Michael Abehsera**



*ShopTalk*

ShopTalk is a live design and UX podcast hosted by Chris Coyier and Dave Rupert. Each week, the duo are joined by a special guest to discuss front-end web design and development and to answer questions submitted by listeners. There are over 260 episodes of this podcast, so it should keep you busy for a while.



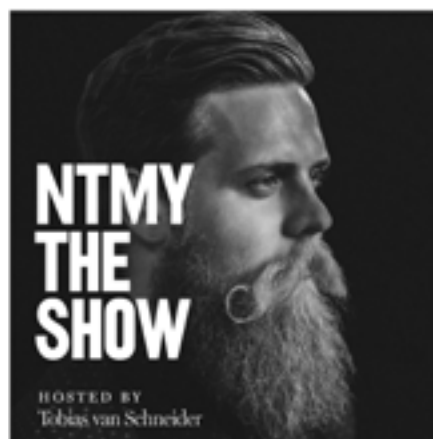
*User Defenders*

Another great UX podcast, User Defenders is hosted by Jason Ogle. Jason offers up “inspiring interviews with UX superheroes.” The idea behind the podcast is to help newer designers learn from the best by getting at what makes these leading UX superheroes tick, what inspires them, and how they gained success.

**EVERY DESIGNER HAS A DIFFERENT** way of “plugging in” when they start working on a new design. Listening to music is probably one of the best options when you go on a design sprint. You might prefer putting on a guilty-pleasure TV show in the background. But once in a while, you might want to switch it up and learn something new while you design your upcoming masterpiece.

So I compiled a list of every great design podcast to help you focus, gain inspiration and stay entertained while you design. We’ve got everything from funny shows related to the industry to the best tech podcasts about design to podcasts that will help you look at your designs in a new way.

Let’s dive in.



*NTMY the Show*

Hosted by Tobias van Schneider, NTMY stands for “Nice to Meet You.” The show is a personal conversation-based podcast in which Tobias meets a new creative type each week. Past guests have included clothing designers, a designer-turned-comedian and an artist. This one is a newer podcast, with just sixteen episodes so far.



*Design Details*

Hosted by Bryn Jackson and Brian Lovin, this design podcast lets you learn from the best in the industry. As they put it, the hosts talk to the people who design their favorite products. In recent episodes, that includes interviews with a product designer at Slack, a creative director at Google, and the design lead at Shopify.





#### Design Review

Design Review is posted twice a week and focuses on different aspects of product design. Chris Liu and Jonathan Shariat talk about design thinking, tools, user experience and more. There are already 53 episodes, and they are still making new ones.



#### Obsessed with Design

This podcast takes a broad view of design, not just focusing on web development but on all types of design. Host Josh Miles interviews a different designer in each episode with focuses ranging from illustration to branding to architecture.



#### Creative Honey

If you are interested in other designers' approaches, Creative Honey is definitely for you. Great interviews, talks about design community and a little bit of psychology. Unfortunately, they haven't added any new episodes for a while, but there is still a lot of valuable content in their archives.



#### The Hacking UI podcast

An offshoot of their popular Hacking UI newsletter, the Hacking UI podcast features creators Sagi Shrieber and David Tintner discussing their passions: design, development, entrepreneurship, time hacking, and tech. Episodes regularly feature interviews with some of the top designers working today.



#### The Deeply Graphic Design Cast

This design podcast keeps its focus on graphic design. A nice departure from the interview-based podcasts above, Deeply Graphic instead focuses on a different design topic each episode, taking a deep dive into subjects like designing with SEO in mind, working with subcontractors, and using mood boards.



#### Adventures in Design

If you're looking for something to start your morning with every day, Adventures in Design has a new episode Monday through Friday. With nearly 600 episodes to date, this podcast covers "the reality of trying to live your creative dreams." Topics run the gamut, and you'll find a lot of fun banter with this daily dose of design.



#### Design Matters with Debbie Millman

This podcast claims to be the world's first podcast about design. Episodes are composed of conversations with designers, writers, artists, musicians, and other creative types who have unique perspectives on modern design.



#### UI Breakfast: UI/UX Design and Product Strategy

A top UI/UX podcast, UI Breakfast is hosted by independent consultant Jane Portman. Originally from Russia, Jane brings in industry experts to share their knowledge and insights about UI/UX trends, products, marketing, and more.



#### Code podcast

Code podcast—Sounds like something for developers? It is, but they also cover some design topics as well. This podcast is a great opportunity to learn about design from a developer's perspective with design knowhow. ■



# Kiss You 1,000 Times

*Reliving love and war through letters*

Text by **Michael Arnold**

Images by **The Anh**

**FEW ACCOUNTS OF LIFE IN** northern Vietnam as it was during the wartime era are available in English, and those that have been published are usually political in nature. The book we officially released early in June at an intimate launch party, held in the original L'Usine on Dong Khoi (where the book is available on sale), is an exception to this rule.

*Letters in Love and War* was written by Vu Tu Nam and Thanh Huong, who were war journalists at the time they met; they are now regarded as distinguished literary figures in Vietnam. The book, published for the first time in English, is certainly not apolitical—and yet it has nothing of propaganda nor any agenda; its contents are merely letters exchanged between husband and wife, not originally written for anyone else to see. They are thus inherently honest representations of everyday life as it was in that time and place, windows into the age that are entirely trustworthy.

The world of *Letters in Love and War*

spans 18 years of Vietnam's wars of resistance. It is a world in which death is constant and unsurprising, of total immersion in the wartime environment. War affects everything; as a young mother, Thanh Huong must visit the markets at night to avoid the bombs; Vu Tu Nam, convalescing in a "jungle" hospital far away from military targets, is nonetheless "bothered" by bomber planes and alarms on a nightly basis.

Yet this is not a book about the war or death; it is a simple record of an unfolding love between two writers whose letters are a means of expressing their devotion to each other during times of separation; first as lovers, then as newlyweds, and then as the parents of two young children.

At the same time, this book is not a romance in the conventional sense—the beauty in these letters lies not so much in their extremes of passion as it does in their universal familiarity. Nam and Huong's love is not at all difficult to relate to; their exchanges

focus on common concerns that young couples might face in any age—the welfare of their children, news of close friends, worry for each other's health and wellbeing. In as such, they present their world unintentionally and in surprising detail, rendering life in war comprehensible even for those who have always lived in times of peace.

Vu Tu Nam and Thanh Huong lived through important and interesting times; they knew and met with Ho Chi Minh, they were involved in supporting key victories, and they continued to write for the people of Vietnam through the years that followed the wars. Still together and in love almost 70 years after exchanging their first letters, they still have much to teach new generations about the nature of war, struggle, and lifelong love.

*Copies of Letters in Love and War may be ordered online at [goo.gl/GIFYPG](http://goo.gl/GIFYPG). Search Amazon for international orders.*

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*(excerpts from Letters in Love and War)*



Phat Diem, 7.10 pm, January 12th 1955

Huong, my very beloved lady officer:

Do you feel what I feel? Listening to the chanting of the children and the elders feels a bit sad and touching. The house I'm in, there are only two elders left, one of them is 83, maybe you already know her, they are chanting before they sleep. I'm sitting here alone, the night is quiet, the soldiers are all on their way to some activity somewhere, the clock is frozen. It is supposed that at this time, I have the right to have you by my side, just as our people around here, who have their whole family united and working together. Our 'sacrifice,' as you say, has no meaning to compare with the extreme suffering of our people caused by the enemy. For the whole afternoon, I spoke with the old woman, my hands are still full of words. She cried many times, missing her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She mentioned a 'lady officer' who laughed when she said that a soldier told her that it was only 16 months until they withdraw. H, why did you laugh and didn't clarify it for her?

Today, both morning and evening, I recorded some good material. The afternoon felt joyful, delightful, walking by the river bank, I wished I could see you just for a little while, to talk freely. Do I not affect your business while I'm so close to you like this? Your mind is forbidden to be distracted! Each of us has our own business, right? Don't you feel 'sorry' for me, too? Do you agree that we will just keep it secret so that no one knows we are a 'couple'?

Is it beneficial or harmful?

So since the day I saw you (November 13th), Brother Can had to evacuate, it has already been two months so far! I just hope you are well, very well. I took all the fish oil you bought, and am taking Calcitol. Back at the commune, I had pickles, rice and porridge, I ate well and ate much. Maybe it's because I don't have to stay up late at nights, and am able to sleep in cosiness. I have been recording quite a lot, it's good progress. Also I want to write poetry but no ideas have occurred yet.

I'm supposed to give you some books, but there was a wedding in the commune, so I gave them to the young couple. They love them, is that ok, H? It means I'm just writing to you! Do you think I was 'indifferent'? I repeat: we cannot see each other due to business, it's normal, why do we have to wonder, right? It's called self-mastery!

These two days, I feel like we haven't married, and don't really know each other either. It's so funny, who on earth is writing to each other like a boy and girl while staying close to each other! Shake your hand 100 times, kiss you 1,000 times, 10,000 times.

This is the first letter of the new year (1955) and the last letter of the lunar year. Forever remember last Tet when I felt both happy and sad, but maybe felt sad more because of my health. This year, I'm healthy, still happy even if away from you-of course, it's just relatively happy.

Love you,  
Nam







*Afternoon, April 4, 1955*

*My dear Nam,*

*This afternoon, I want to write to you so much. It should be short, but it must be written.*

*Last night, our meeting came to a close quite early. It was 9 pm or so. I kept regretting not having made you stay here. The room was so bright, and there was a rose in a white cup upon which was printed the word 'peacekeeping'. We have too few chances to be together, don't we? Yesterday when I was beside you, I felt sad that we can't completely enjoy our just-married days together. And now, we spend even more time chasing our work and have no reason to be together for three or five days at a time. I think that there are so many stories that we would have to tell each other in the afternoons, and that we would read books together in the evenings. Brother Thanh once said: "That's what married life is supposed to be like." I smiled alone, having no idea when we can live that life. Yesterday when we said goodbye, I felt so sad.*

*Sometimes when I'm in bed, I lie still to listen to 'her' movements inside of me. After a working day, such moments give me a strange, peaceful feeling. Maybe you can never feel that, only mothers can feel their child's presence right from the moment they start to move in their wombs. Actually, I didn't think about having the baby before now. But over the past few months, I've been realising that I'm definitely going to have a baby very soon, and this gives me those touching and joyous feelings that only a mother can experience. There are difficulties, but I still think that when someone loves something and appreciates its purpose, she can endure, sacrifice normality and simple happiness, and overcome every trouble. I have no parenting experience, but I gained other experiences during those days of mobilising the masses, of campaigning against migration. During those days in Phat Diem, after I found out that I was pregnant, I didn't feel like eating anything and I was extremely tired. I could still run all day long, on average staying up until 1-2 am. There were nights of extreme cold, without comfortable blankets. We had to get up every two or three hours for meetings in Ba Lang. I didn't consider it tough. Just like the days when we were on a 'three togethers' movement in Thai Nguyen, I once carried 25-26 kg on a 10-kilometer journey under the hot sunshine. That was a job that I really never thought I could ever do. At those moments, I thought that what I was doing was something natural. So I think that later on when I have our baby, when I go through those common difficulties and worries of a mother, I can do it easily, and nothing will be 'terrible'. All the other sisters here who have children said as much.*

*I promise you that I'll perform a mother's duties faithfully, but in the meantime I will keep working, moving forward as hard as I can. I just hope I'm fine, and that our baby will be fine too.*

*And so you also, you must stay healthy. Recently, I noticed that you look healthier, but too thin. I don't know what else to tell you, but please take care of yourself.*

*We see each other pretty often, but I just keep writing letters to 'hand' them to you. How unrealistic I am. One embarrassing thing is that at times I still have those feelings of the days when we'd just started our love, I still have such emotions. The urge of writing to you sometimes is also a form of fresh and young love at the very beginning.*

*Together we will do our best to avoid letting our love grow 'old' after having a child. Some time when we can have our baby looked after, we will ride a bicycle around the lake ... at night!*

*I love you very much, my N.!*

*Kiss You  
Huong*





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

# Friends with Benefits

Having a pet is good for you



**IF YOU'VE EVER SHARED YOUR** life and home with a pet, you already know the love and companionship that they bring. Did you know that they are also protecting you against heart disease, stress and helping you live longer?

There are a number of ways that your pets help keep you healthy—some of them more obvious than others. A study by the American Heart Association showed that there was a significant association with pet ownership and reduced heart disease and greater longevity.

Having a pet keeps you more active—walking your dog daily can help you meet your daily exercise requirements, as can running around and playing ‘chase’ with your cat. In Japan, dog owners exercised 54 percent more than non-pet owners over a regular basis, leading to lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels. In addition to the exercise, the very act of going outside increases

social interaction and the sense of ‘community’ in your area.

It's not only the physical—pets also reduce stress and prevent loneliness. Our pets are often among our best companions, always greeting us with a friendly face and a wagging tail after a long day at work. Stroking and cuddling our pets also helps to increase oxytocin release, a ‘happy hormones’ that has a calming and soothing effect and is part of the development of bonds between both pets and human relationships.

It's shown that children in households that own a pet have both a reduced risk of asthma and allergic rhinitis as well as improved physical and psychological wellbeing. In addition, growing up with a pet appears to create well-balanced young adults and the prevalence of depression in these individuals is lower.

What's really very special about our furry friends is that there is no link

between the benefits they give us and our economic situations—their love really is unconditional. It's no surprise how much joy our pets can bring to tough emotional situations, and in some cases can be literally ‘life-saving’ as they can detect an approaching seizure and can even ‘sniff out’ cancer before we are even aware of it.

And, of course, there is always the ‘intangible’ benefit of pet ownership—the love and joy that our pets bring to our lives. It's truly heartwarming that more and more pets are seen as part of the family and we are responsible for investing in keeping them as happy and healthy as they do us.

So, the next time your children are pestering you to get a family pet, remember that while it may need toilet training and will scratch your sofa, it could also help reduce the number of sick days for you and your family! ■

# Acquisition Conditions

Knowing the difference between term-life insurance and investment-linked insurance can protect your family's future



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

*We receive many questions from readers about setting up a business in Vietnam. The procedures for setting up a company often appear burdensome and, sometimes, discouraging for those with a 'small-size' project. However, an alternative is to purchase a pre-existing company instead of setting up a new one. Here's how to purchase a pre-existing company in Vietnam and how it could be easier than setting up a new one.*

**IN LEGAL TERMS, THE PURCHASE** of a pre-existing company is referred as the "acquisition" of such company. Acquisition appears in Vietnam to be an effective way for you to step into the local market, as the procedure for acquisition by foreign investors in Vietnam may (in certain cases) be much more straightforward than the procedure to establish a new company.

Take for example a company for computer programming. Under the WTO commitments of Vietnam, foreign investors are permitted to provide computer and related services in Vietnam. In order to do that, they are permitted to establish a company in Vietnam that will actually provide such services to customers. However, the establishment procedure may prove to be a bit burdensome and time consuming in practice, even if this sector is totally 'open' for WTO purposes.

If a foreign investor wishes to establish a computer programming company in Vietnam, the first step is to find the proper premises. It means that in the application file for the establishment of the company, the investor must already include the lease agreement signed with the landlord (or simply the in-principle agreement on leasing the facilities). The leased premises have to be suitable for the project contemplated by the investor, with regards to the estimated number of employees, annual volumes of production, etc. Furthermore, the investor will have to provide information on the amount of capital it intends to invest (even if there is no minimum), and to prove its financial capacity (its capacity to actually disburse such amount) by submitting supporting evidence from the bank or (for corporate entities) the annual financial accounts from the country of incorporation etc. There are also a number of official documents from the investor's home country, which must be "legalized" in the home country, and then officially recognized by Vietnamese authorities. Even in the best case, it could take around three months or more to gather all the required documentation and to complete the official registration of the company, and even longer before it is

actually operational.

In comparison, if a foreign investor finds an existing computer programming company, it may sign an agreement with the current owners to purchase it. The current owners might be Vietnamese rather than foreign investors, but this won't change much: the important point is that the acquisition of such pre-existing company is more a matter of private agreement between the seller and the purchaser. Because in this case the purchaser is a foreigner and will acquire more than 51% of the company, a specific procedure will have to be completed to acquire an "in-principle approval," and this is described below in more detail. The in-principle approval procedure is not related to procedure described above for the establishment of a new company: it depends on each case of course, but to give you an idea, a month and half might be enough to actually become the owner of the purchased company. After acquisition, the seller will have to pay tax on the acquisition. But that's not your concern (as the purchaser) in most cases.

The in-principle approval procedure applies if you wish to acquire 51% or more of the pre-existing company, but also (in the case of companies operating in certain sectors) if you only wish to acquire part of the company or to invest as a new shareholder in the company (we call it "increase of capital").

Let's be a little more specific about this procedure. If you, as a foreigner, acquire or invest in the company and as a result (1) hold 51% or more of the company or (2) hold any percentage of a company operating in some specific sectors (called "conditional sectors", such as the retail sector or the banking sector), then you have to obtain an in-principle approval from the relevant local authority beforehand. Such authority is the department of planning and investment of the province in which the target company is located. You will have to submit to this authority (1) a standard form providing information on the acquisition and (2) a copy of your passport (or the certificate of incorporation for foreign companies, to be legalized as in the case of establishment of a new company mentioned above). The department of planning and investment shall give its

in-principle approval within 15 days from the date of submission. Once you obtain the in-principle approval, you may proceed with the acquisition (or increase of capital), which means pay the price and register it with the local registry of corporate entities (a simple process).

If you are contemplating to hold less than 51% of the company (not operating in a conditional sector), then the procedure will be even less complicated. You will only have to register the transaction with the local registry of corporate entities—and there is no step that is applicable only to foreign investors, such as the in-principle approval requirement mentioned above.

In any case, you will have to refer to the WTO Commitments of Vietnam, because if Vietnam has not committed to open the sector at the WTO (unlike computer programming mentioned above), then the applicable procedure may be more complicated.

Finally, keep in mind that the first step before acquiring a company or investing in it (and even before paying any money or signing any binding agreement) is to carry out a proper "due diligence." This is advisable even for small-size companies. It simply means that you should take the appropriate steps to be fully aware of the legal and financial situation of the target company, including its situation with regards to tax obligations, book-keeping (accounting), debts, etc. This is not a legal obligation, but common sense: before buying any goods, you should check that it is in good condition—every reasonable person would do that, and if you don't, you should not expect to have any claim to rescind the acquisition or to compensation.

Do not invest more than you can afford to lose. Things may go wrong, and in this case, it may be unlikely that you will be able to recover the money you have invested.

So, you think that investing in the restaurant at the corner might be cost-efficient? Or your friend's start-up is awesome and you want to be part of the adventure? Do it, the legal framework gives you some flexibility to invest and I wish you good luck! ■





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

# Die Another Day

Knowing the difference between term-life insurance and investment-linked insurance can protect your family's future

*I'm an expat living in Hanoi, Australian by birth, with a wife and two young kids. I've been thinking about what would happen to my family if I were to pass away as I do not have enough money saved up to take care of them if something were to happen to me. My financial adviser mentioned I should consider either investment-linked or term-life insurance. I don't know where to begin. What are the differences between the two, and how would they solve my problem?*

**AS AN EXPAT YOU SHOULD** be pretty familiar with the concept of insurance—a contract you sign with an insurance company that states the insurance company will pay you a specific sum of money if something where to happen to you, in return for paying the insurance company a specific sum each year. This is basically how term-life insurance works, and it's a pretty straightforward, binary relationship where you pay an insurance company a certain sum each year, and in return the insurer will pay your family a fixed sum as agreed upon in the contract if you die during the term you are insured for. If you die during your insured term, your family will receive an amount that is often far greater than the total amount that you paid to the insurer. If you don't die during the time that you are insured, your policy expires and you receive nothing from the insurer. Either your family wins or the insurer wins. Simple.

Investment-linked insurance is far more complicated. It is essentially like a life insurance policy where you will be able to get some money back from the insurer if you don't end up dying during the time you own the policy. This is because the money you pay to the insurer will be "invested," usually into a pool of mutual funds.

This may sound enticing because on

the surface it looks as though you will get the best of both worlds: a large lump-sum paid to your family by the insurer if you pass away; and if you don't a nice savings pot at the end of the contract.

The problem is that the above can be misleading due to the following factors: 1) Cost of managing investment portfolio. The maximum amount you should ever pay annually for management of your investment portfolio is 2% of the portfolio's value. Running an investment portfolio in an insurance-linked policy can often cost you up to 6% of the total value in the first few years, with many other hidden fees and terms, which makes it incredibly difficult to earn any return on your investment. 2) Untrained staff selling policies. Buying an investment-linked policy will mean that an investment portfolio will have to be put together and managed for you. Investment-linked salespeople often have no financial training or have been on a two-week sales training course. Managing an investment portfolio effectively requires a university degree and postgraduate studies. 3) It's complicated. The terms and conditions can often consume more than 20 pages. Some of the most complicated financial contracts I've ever seen have been insurance-linked policies. 4) Premiums are usually higher than straight term-life. Insurers put a premium on your annual

payments for the benefit of cashing in your policy before you pass away because they lose out on that extra bit of revenue as each policyholder survives. 5) It's risky. With straight term-life insurance the risk rests with the insurer. You might only pay USD200 to the insurer and pass away early into your contract, which could lead to your family being paid USD1 million, for example. With an investment-linked product, the risk lies with you and there are no guarantees of what you might get in return. Everything depends on the performance of the investment portfolio.

What is the best option to consider? Most of the time, it is more appropriate to own your investment and insurance policies separately. Owning a straight term-life policy is easy to understand, very affordable, if you are healthy, and will be of great reward to your family if you pass away prematurely. There are a number of great providers that issue policies to expats globally.

Have your investments managed in separate accounts where you can manage your own portfolio through multitudes of online brokerages and platforms that exist globally, or hire a professional portfolio manager. It might seem inconvenient, but you will save loads of money, hassle and have far more assets in the long run. ■

# *Lam's Ladies*

Li Lam designs for the modern woman who is passionate, free and also in control. Lam's clothes aim to bring not only the beauty but also comfort and style to the wearer.

*Photographer:* Cao Trung Hieu

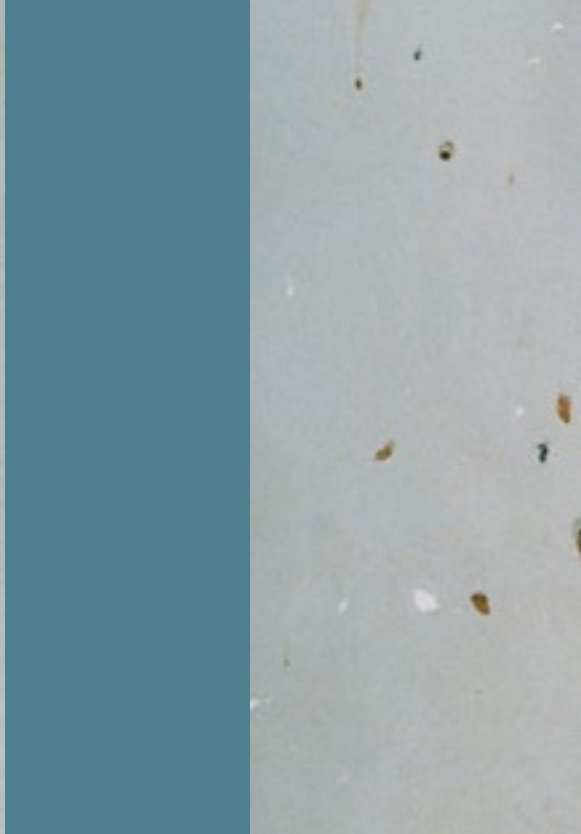
*Clothes:* Lam Boutique  
(98 Mac Thi Buoi, D1 & 63 Xuan Thuy, D2)

















# On Tour

This month, visit the bustling district of Cho Lon at dawn to capture everyday life as it begins to wake up to start the day, and take a slow boat to the mangrove forest of Can Gio for a bit of nature, monkey spotting and crocodile fishing. Afterwards, enjoy a strong blend of local coffee while attempting to perfect that stroke with a calligraphy brush. Get picked up from your house and head around the city to learn and, of course, drink in Saigon's craft beer culture, and where your designated driver is already booked far in advanced. Crank up your road trip songs and hit the road for the best tours in and around the city.



IMAGE PROVIDED BY VESPA ADVENTURES







# Getting From Pint A to Pint Z

## An evening of Vespas and craft beers

Text by **Wes Grover**

Images Provided by **Vespa Adventures**

**MY DRIVER FOR THE NIGHT**, Long, picks me up from District 2 promptly at 5pm and the tour begins by weaving our way through traffic to Café Zoom in the Pham Ngu Lao area. My first observation is that the Vespa's passenger backrest is quite comfortable—a feature that I will be increasingly thankful for after each of the 17 brews enjoyed during the Vespa Adventures Saigon Craft Beer Tour.

Generally speaking, I'm not a big fan of tours, but an evening spent drinking good beer and eating delicious food around the city is a little different than what typically comes to mind when you hear the word "tour." There are only a handful of cities in Asia that could offer such an experience of local microbrews, and in Saigon, where the craft beer scene continues to grow at breakneck pace, it's a subculture worthy of exploration for all local and visiting beer enthusiasts alike.

As the group trickles in to Café Zoom, the drinking commences with a citric Te Te White Ale—an appropriate choice to start things off with one of the original players in the city's beer movement—and our convivial guide, Lunar, informs us of the lineup we'll be visiting: BiaCraft, Heart of Darkness Brewery, East West Brewing Company and Rogue Saigon.

What becomes clear as we all become acquainted is that beer is the common denominator bringing people together from all walks of life. There are two middle-aged

American men, the sort you would expect to find on such a tour, one woman from Brunei (coming from a country where alcohol is banned, the irony of her passion for beer is not lost), and three 30-something ladies from Saigon, who, as it is later revealed, are scouting the tour for a possible partnership with the high-end travel outfit they work for. We are a motley crew and, yet, with the help of hoppy libations, it quickly feels as if we've known each other for some time. Of course, learning the local culture is an important part of any tour, and Lunar makes sure all are aware of the customary *mot, hai, ba, do!* as we drain the first round and soon head out in a swarm of rumbling Vespas.

Each of us has already selected a flight of four beers from BiaCraft's extensive selection, accompanied with food pairings that complement the flavor profile, but first we are greeted with a welcome beer and spend a few minutes chatting with owner Mark Gustafson. It's hard to go wrong navigating the beer menu here and even harder to choose a favorite, though, for me, the combination of the crisp *Xau Ma Chanh* (Ugly But Vain) IPA and a Reuben risotto ball was a revelation.

Quickly taking a step back to my reluctance toward group tours, one of the causes of this condition is a dislike of the small talk that comes with it. On this tour, however, the flow of craft beer makes for a flow of entirely more entertaining conversation among strangers. It's about





halfway through our visit to BiaCraft, for example, when one of the Americans begins explaining, in perhaps slightly too much detail, just why he loves the *ao dai* so much, and then insists that we “do a *mot, hai, ba, do* for the *ao dai*,” to which the three Vietnamese women can only giggle.

Before long, it's time to saddle up and the gang of Vespas is back on the road, headed for Heart of Darkness Brewery. A relative newcomer to the scene, they are making up for lost time with a seemingly endless list of offerings (according to their website, Heart of Darkness has 33 beers on rotation).

Just in case anyone became thirsty during the ride, we are again greeted with a welcome beer to hold us over while selecting a flight of three. At 7.1% ABV and 102 IBU (International Bitterness Unit) Kurtz's Insane IPA is a must-try for any hops lover, but if you're looking for an unconventional tipple, Charlie's Chocolate Chili Stout, made with local chili and cacao nibs, is like a dessert with alcohol. The feeding continues here, as well, accompanying beer with its old best friend: pizza. But, not just any pizza, Pizza 4P's.

Our next stop takes us down the street to East West Brewing Company's decidedly upscale location. The only bar in town where the brewing actually takes place, large copper brew kettles are on full display so that everyone knows beer is priority number one. Here, our flight of four consists of a Pale Ale, Saigon Rose, Summer Hefeweizen and Coffee Vanilla Porter. Each is delicious, paired with equally pleasing food, and pushes us all closer to inebriation. We must press on, though. And having devoured the fish tartine, chicken wings, BBQ pork ribs and pork sandwich, it is time to make way to our final stop: Rogue Saigon.

Arriving at Rogue just before a light



rain begins, we ascend to the rooftop, where yet another welcome beer awaits us. By this point, the group is all well acquainted and we take our time as the evening winds down, sipping Fuzzy Logic APA, Original Apple Cider and Devil's Lake APA while we share travel stories and exchange contact information. If memory serves right, potato wedges were involved, too.

Lunar and the team of drivers have seamlessly guided us through a night of nonstop consumption, leaving us all in the know of Saigon's craft beer community and feeling good (until morning arrives). My final thought as Long drives me back to District 2 is that this is a tour I would gladly go on again.

*The Saigon Craft Beer Tour is operated by Vespa Adventures and runs nightly. To book or for more info, visit [vespaadventures.com](http://vespaadventures.com) or call 0122 299 3585.* ■





# ESCAPE to nature

Get lost in the palm-fringed island of Can Gio with its maze of inlets and diverse species of animals

Text by **Tasso Dattenberg-Doyle**

Images by **Ngoc Tran**

**IT WAS 8:15 IN THE MORNING** when my group, composed of myself, a sun-punished Englishwoman, a very tall Kiwi and two younger daughters set out towards the mangrove forests of Can Gio, a short 45 minutes to an hour boat trip along the many aquatic arteries that surround Ho Chi Minh City. The trip, organized by Les Rives, was to take us on an air-cleaning trip outside the city. As the city skyline started shrinking above the humming motor of our speedboat, buildings, cars, noises et al cleared too, until we were surrounded only with the water and the thickets lining the banks.

As we left Saigon behind, it was time to get some restauration before we hit our first destination of the day trip: Can Giuoc Market, a short half hour away. We were given *banh mi*, fruit, *ca phe sua da*, soft drinks and water to kick us off before alighting our boat and heading into the riverside market. Like the markets in Saigon, this was the site of huge variety of stalls where you could buy anything from skinning equipment to the paper iPhones that are burned as an offering to one's ancestors in the afterlife. Our guide very helpfully pointed out the many different objects and foods that we may not be accustomed to as we meandered through the tight little alleyways on our way back to where the boat was docked, ready for our next destination.

The destination in question was the Giant Bat Lagoon, situated within the mangrove forest that superseded the palm trees as we got further and further out. As a fan of all of David Attenborough's output, I was ready to sink my teeth into some animal sightseeing. At the behest of our hosts we quietened down as we got into the small boats that would take us around the

lagoon, past mud-skippers, water striders and a menagerie of other lagoon-dwellers, some of whom were fixing a pipe or some such thing behind an outdoor toilet.

The lagoon itself is an impressive sight: a thick, dark green mass of waterweeds with small fish ducking in and out of its cover. As we floated silently across this verdant mirror, we were all struck by the stillness of the area. Apart from the occasional animal sounds, the lagoon is completely quiet, the atmosphere heavy with the humidity that rose from the lagoon mingled with the beating sunlight. As we moved around the lagoon we approached the banks near where the bats roost their days away to be in fighting form for the night. The sleepy bats were a bit of a struggle to spot, hidden behind thick foliage at first, but soon one lumbered into sight, unwieldy and encumbered as it climbed through the branches on hooked claws. It looked out of place, this swooping animal struggling slightly even to move a few feet but it persevered, dangling and hopping its way slowly out of sight and marking our imminent departure.

We wound our way back around from there and got back on dry land where we began a small trek through the mangrove forest towards a tower viewing post. From the top of the tower we were awarded a 360-degree view of the canopy and the birds that made it their home. The variety of different species we found up there was quite astounding and we took the opportunity to take a breather and enjoy the sumptuous sights.

From there we moved to our penultimate destination: the place where the monkeys dwelled. On the way, our guide explained that the monkeys had a big chief, like many a barrels of monkeys, and

that we were to watch out for him. Looking him straight in the eyes, he said, had a chance of coming across as a challenge and could lead to a fight. We arrived before I had time to conclude weighing up the pros versus the cons of challenging this big cheese for supremacy of the tribe, but I was tempted. The wilderness of monkeys was called forth from the forests by expert howlers who signalled for them that it was time to feed. Twenty or 30 of them came charging out of the trees and the undergrowth, eager for some bananas and we were only too happy to oblige. I spotted the main honcho easily, a hulking (by monkey standards) mass of testosterone and fur, but decided against trying to stage a coup against the monkey king.

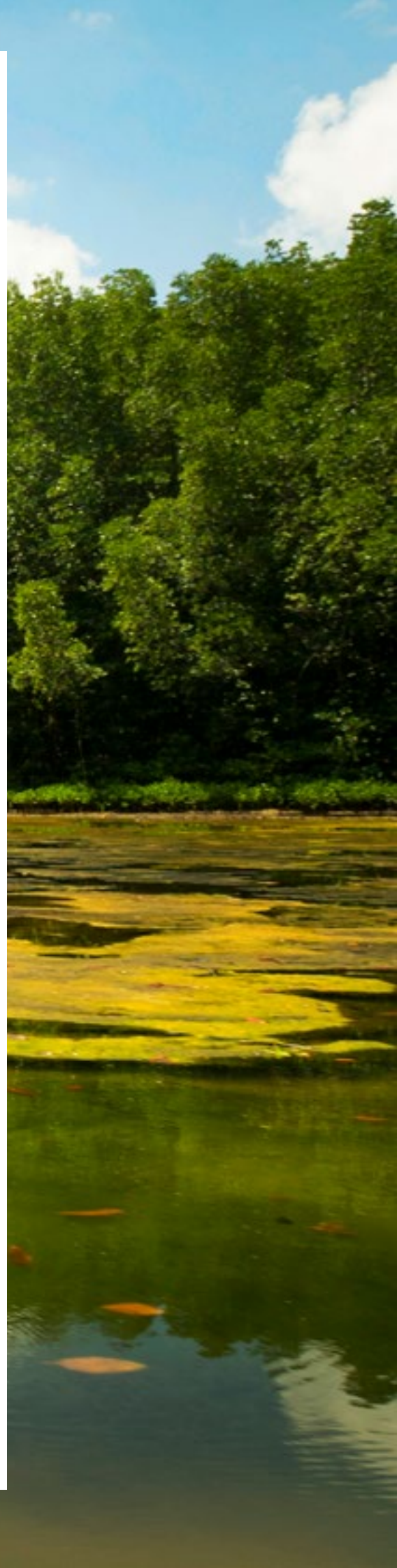
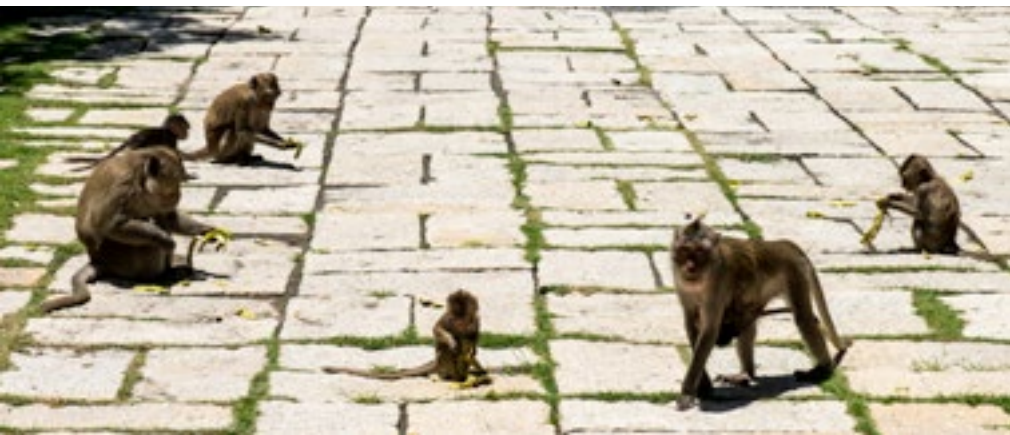
The real jewel of the trip was our last stop at a half-wild alligator farm (half-wild being when animals are kept in an area that is otherwise wild and are fed). We took a float out onto the waters and the scary ancient lizards followed. They knew the score already and snapped up the first pieces of fish we dangled over board on our rods with ease. Soon, however, we became adept at this sport, prompting the alligators to surge higher and higher out of the dark waters, their heavy jaws snapping shut with a crack as they vied for altitude and the bait.

After seeing the alligators, it was sadly time to have our own meal and have a wander through the forests one last time before heading home over a new stretch of water.

*Operated by Les Rives, reconnect with nature on this eco-adventure riverboat tour to the mangrove forests of Can Gio UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. Booked through [lesrivesexperience.com](http://lesrivesexperience.com) or +84 128 592 0018 (Call, Whatsapp or iMessage). ■*









# Capture and Release

Explore the city with a different focus

Text and Images by **Rebecca Jones**



**THERE ARE FEW THINGS THAT** will get any reasonable person out of bed at 6am on a Sunday morning. For the keen Saigon street photographer, however, this is the sweet spot. As Quinn Ryan Mattingly, owner of Saigon School of Imaging and local tour leader explained to me, it is the early morning light that affords the best photo opportunities and why he almost always runs his tours at such ungodly hours—although on request you can push for the ‘golden light’ of late afternoon.

Scooping my tour companion Terrence and I up from Liberty Central in a private car, Quinn and fellow local photographer Chris ferried us to District 5 to capture the dappled morning light illuminating market traders in Cho Lon (Chinatown). As is usual for his bespoke tours, Quinn had designed today’s itinerary around Terrence, a visitor from Hong Kong who was keen to shoot typical Saigon street life outside of the city’s usual tourist destinations.

Binh Tay Market proved rich pickings. Arriving at 7am we were privy to intimate scenes among local workers—from the setting up of food stalls to produce laden delivery bicycles to wizened market hawkers crouching over steaming bowls of breakfast *pho*. Quinn took a hands-off approach with both Terrence and I, allowing us to freely explore both the market and our cameras, while keeping an eye out for the perfect photo opportunity.

As a novice photographer, I was personally keen for a little more direction, and so Quinn ran me through some of the finer points of the Sony A7II Mirrorless camera I was using today, including how to adjust shutter speed for lighting conditions—which I discovered is the most important factor in a crowded and shady market—and how to scope out the right light, background and subject for that perfect shot.

## Out Of The Tourist Position

Having lived in Saigon for over ten years, Quinn has seen his fair share of markets, but he remains an avid observer:

“Wider shots of stalls or busy alleys are not so interesting for me. Instead I’m looking for unusual lighting or interesting characters,” he explained. Getting closer to local characters is made easier by Quinn’s easy manner and good Vietnamese, which he uses to gently cajole subjects into posing for photographs.

This allowed both Terrence and myself the opportunity to observe and capture locals in private moments with ease. One middle-aged Vietnamese man, reclining in the early morning sun on a weather beaten wooden cart, initially declined a photo shoot, however after a little banter Quinn and Terrence were able to photograph him in a relaxed, natural pose. In my six months in Saigon I hadn’t felt so comfortable as I was walking around with a bulky camera and three tall Western men.

Quinn’s approach also exploded my former notion of the skulking street photographer—crouching unseen in alleyways attempting to capture hidden moments. Instead, I realized that the secret to good street photography is to engage and interact with the people around you, particularly in Saigon. “Whatever you give out to the Vietnamese you get back tenfold,” explained Quinn. He did add, however, that you should adapt to your environment, stating that in New York, for example, he might stick to skulking.

As we approached a group of children playing a game of cards, Quinn also gave some technical direction, explaining that for smaller subjects, or indeed those sitting or lying, it is important to adjust the camera angle: “Photos taken from above generally don’t look great: you need to come down to your subject’s level, get out of the tourist position,” he quite rightly remonstrated as I squatted down on my haunches.

## Right Place, Right Time

While technical ability, a ‘good eye’ and a friendly approachable manner are all key attributes for a good street photographer, simply finding yourself in the right place







at the right time often makes for the most interesting shots. We found this as we stopped mid-way through our tour for a well-earned *ca phe den da*—included in the tour package—which turned into a photo shoot of the owner's impressive full back dragon tattoo and many shots of curious café goers sporting Chris's Oakley shades.

Moving on to District 8, we got another golden opportunity at the river in the form of a barge transporting coal, from which blackened, wiry men were ferrying laden baskets across a precarious wooden plank. Here I also learned the importance of patience. Crouching in the blistering midday sun, Terrence, Chris and I waited for the perfect shot of a worker mid-plank. However, getting a little bored, I began flicking through my pictures and, of course, I missed the shot. "We call that chimping," Quinn told me through a laugh, "as a street photographer sometimes you just have to sit and wait."

Thankfully our last stop was more of a known quantity, with Quinn taking us to a local knife sharpener famous for his pet monkey. Clearly on friendly terms with Quinn, the characterful man—sporting a wide toothless grin and russet, leathery skin—was happy to bring his pet out for us to photograph. Hopping around manically, the lively monkey grasped and chewed everything in his path, from a mango to a screwdriver, while his affectionate bond with the man made for a set of touching photographs.

With warm smiles, many thanks and, notably, no money changing hands, we left and headed back to our car. The experience, alongside the many unique moments of the morning, had given me an entirely new perspective on Saigon; one that had I stayed even another year I don't think I would have gained on my own.

To book a tour with Quinn see: [www.saigonimaging.com](http://www.saigonimaging.com). Prices range from USD200 for a private tour to USD400 for a group of six including pickup and drop-off in District 1, transport, drinks and photo tips and guidance. Both high tech cameras and smart phones are welcomed. ■







# Write to Live

Leave the world  
in a few fluid strokes

Text by **Rebecca Jones**

Images by **Ngoc Tran**

## I MET THE INDOMITABLE BARBARA

Adam, local author, founder of Saigon Street Eats and organizer of the Calligraphy and Coffee Trail tour I was about to embark on, on the steps of Saigon's iconic Opera House on a bright Saturday morning. Having never tried Vietnamese calligraphy before, or indeed even thought to, I was unsure what to expect; however Barbara was quick to brief me and my two classmates on our tutor, Hoang, and the plan for the day.

Having piled into a taxi to take us to Hoang's studio in District 3, Barbara, a bubbly Australian expat that has made Saigon her home since 2007, gave us first a brief overview of the history of calligraphy in Vietnam. We learned that, like so much in the country, calligraphy is a long established tradition that has evolved numerous times to reflect the cultural influences of invading nations.

Transported initially from China over one thousand years ago, it has moved through ancient Chinese Han Script to the Vietnamese Chu Nom script, to the Latin-based Quoc Ngu that is used today. While some practitioners still use Han or Nom script for official or ceremonial purposes, Barbara explained that Hoang uses and teaches modern Quoc Ngu—a blessing for English speakers. She added that he had been practicing since the age of 12 and he is now 33.

Arriving at his unassuming studio, tucked away in a typical Saigon *hem* off Nguyen Thong, it was clear that Hoang takes calligraphy very seriously indeed. Seated cross legged on the tiled floor, we began with a traditional tea service in which our teacher carefully poured us each a cup of a delicious oolong blend while running us through some further history and theory.

## Rough With The Smooth

So in-depth was our history lesson, enabled through our translator—named Hoan—that we didn't in-fact begin any calligraphy until around 11am. This did, however, give Barbara time to prepare us all glasses of the delicious Vietnamese coffee she had brought along—purchased in a café cum sake bar run by an eccentric Englishman in District 1, and made painstakingly in Hoang's kitchen using traditional Vietnamese drip cups.

Bringing low level tables into the main studio, Hoang arranged the three of us around the room and handed out the tools of today's trade: two sheets of white A3 parchment paper, two rectangular mahogany paper weights, an ink well and fine hair ink brushes. As Barbara had alluded to earlier, he explained that unlike in Chinese and Korean traditions, in Vietnamese calligraphy the rough side of the paper is used, rather than the smooth side.

In many ways this encapsulates the form, which is more focused on fluidity of movement rather than precise, uniform lines. As Hoang explained, the real work of Vietnamese calligraphy is the meditative thought process that comes before writing, which for him is a daily practice that culminates in perhaps just one or two words written in a few fluid strokes. "I am inspired by daily life; walks, visits to coffee shops, conversations with friends. I then use calligraphy to express my thoughts on these things and to de-stress. When you do calligraphy, you are out of the world," he explained.

## The Rule Of Writing

This is not, however, to say there are no rules to the Vietnamese tradition. Indeed, the English translation of the



Vietnamese word for calligraphy—*thu phap*—is ‘the rule of writing.’ Most important is positioning: Hoang explained that we should be sitting crossed legged, backs straight, with our bellies 20 centimeters from the table. Our brushes should also be held precisely: directly in the middle between thumb and first and second finger, with the fourth and fifth fingers supporting.

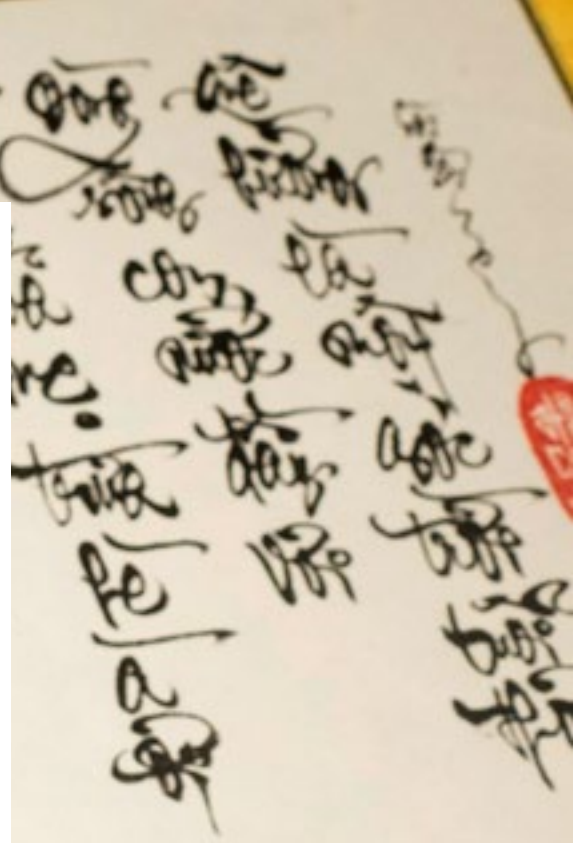
We began by drawing straight, horizontal lines across the parchment—a surprisingly challenging task in terms of maintaining the correct pressure and distance for an even line. Left to right is the strict rule, while top to bottom is the only way to draw vertical lines. Soon we moved on to swirls—which I was more enthusiastic about but which, as ever, I was drawing much too fast with a deplorably slovenly posture. “You must draw slowly, breathe in and out, take your time—be calm,” Hoang reminded me.

After plenty of practice we moved toward our goal: writing the word of our choice on a piece of red silk affixed to an ornamental bamboo wall hanging.

While my classmates had opted for more ambitious words, such as “Saigon” and “gia dinh (family),” I decided to play it safe with “vui (happy).” After a few practice rounds on a piece of parchment, however, I confess that I decided I’d prefer to have something of accomplished beauty to take home, and so Hoang kindly obliged and drew it for me.

Observing his quiet distraction as he smoothly painted the word onto the silk in what seemed a single flourish, I could see immediately why Hoang had decided to dedicate himself to calligraphy. Like so many Asian art forms, both the practice and the finished product exude a peaceful, unassuming beauty that is accomplished only through dedicated, meditative practice. For the casual visitor, it is a fascinating process to observe and, in this case, a very relaxing way to spend a Saturday morning in Saigon.

*To book your place on the Calligraphy and Coffee Trail contact Barbara at [saigonstreeteats@gmail.com](mailto:saigonstreeteats@gmail.com). The tour includes transport to and from the tour area, the calligraphy class, an English-speaking guide, coffee and lunch. ■*





# Wine & Dine

ONTOP BAR/NOVOTEL SAIGON CENTRE / IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN









# It's Better At The Top

OnTop Bar is a sky-high oasis with a winning combination of signature cocktails, delicious BBQ dishes and spectacular views

Text by **Wes Grover**

Images by **Ngoc Tran**



*Lighting Ball*

**IT'S YOUR TYPICAL RAINY** season evening when we go to visit **OnTop Bar at Novotel Saigon Centre** (167 Hai Ba Trung, District 3). Thunder roars through the city as lightning fills the sky and, naturally, it has us a bit concerned that the inclement weather will detract from the experience of a rooftop bar. Nevertheless, we ride the elevator to the 20th floor of the hotel and are greeted by the swanky interiors of OnTop Bar, only to quickly realize this will be the perfect place to take shelter from the storm.

Large sliding glass doors lead to an expansive, wraparound terrace and frame the view of the city skyline, while the inside maintains an intimate aura with dim lighting and cozy lounge furniture. Centered around a large bar, the extensive wood detailing gives the feel of a ritzy, old-fashioned watering hole with elegant modern touches. It's the sort of place one could disappear for a boozy evening above the city, but don't be fooled by the fact that it's a bar—they're taking gastronomy to new heights with a creative menu that blends Vietnamese and international inspired tapas.

A large chalkboard showcases the extensive list of craft cocktails, from the Vietnamese Mojito with chili and lemongrass to a Spritz made with sparkling wine, Aperol and soda. We settle in with two Lighting Balls (VND195,000++), which arrive looking like a work of art that one can drink. Poured into a light bulb, the alcoholic elixir is made of gin, pineapple jam, passionfruit syrup and basil, with a top layer of salted milk foam that mixes

in for a creamy twist. It's a sweet and salty combo that instantly has us primed for the feast that is to follow.

Delving into the food, we start with a platter of BBQ Skewers (VND259,000++) that delivers a mouthwatering combination of surf and turf. Comprised of two lamb, two beef and two fish skewers, all with bell peppers and a creamy sauce on the side, the plate hits all the marks for any BBQ lover. The beef is tender and lightly salted, the fish is moist and flaky, and the lamb is a blast of savory meat.

Before we can polish off the skewers, we are presented with sizzling Pineapple Teriyaki Chicken Wings (VND199,000++). As a self-proclaimed wings aficionado, these can be described as nothing short of excellent. A bit tangy, a little spicy, the taste is balanced just right on these crispy chicken morsels.

With the thunderstorm continuing outside, we decide it best to order another round of cocktails, because we won't be going anywhere anytime soon. For this round, we decide on the Pork Ribs Combo (VND799,000++) that includes six pork ribs, sweet potato chips, garlic bread, a decanter of Luxury Gin Tonic cocktail and one bottle of French wine (perfect for small groups). The Luxury Gin Tonic is a refreshing take on the classic cocktail, infused with rosemary and aloe vera. The massive rack of ribs was seasoned with a peppery rub, it is a true test of will to finish, but made easier by the fact that the meat simply falls right off the bone.

Fortunately, the rain lets up right at this time and we're able to step out onto



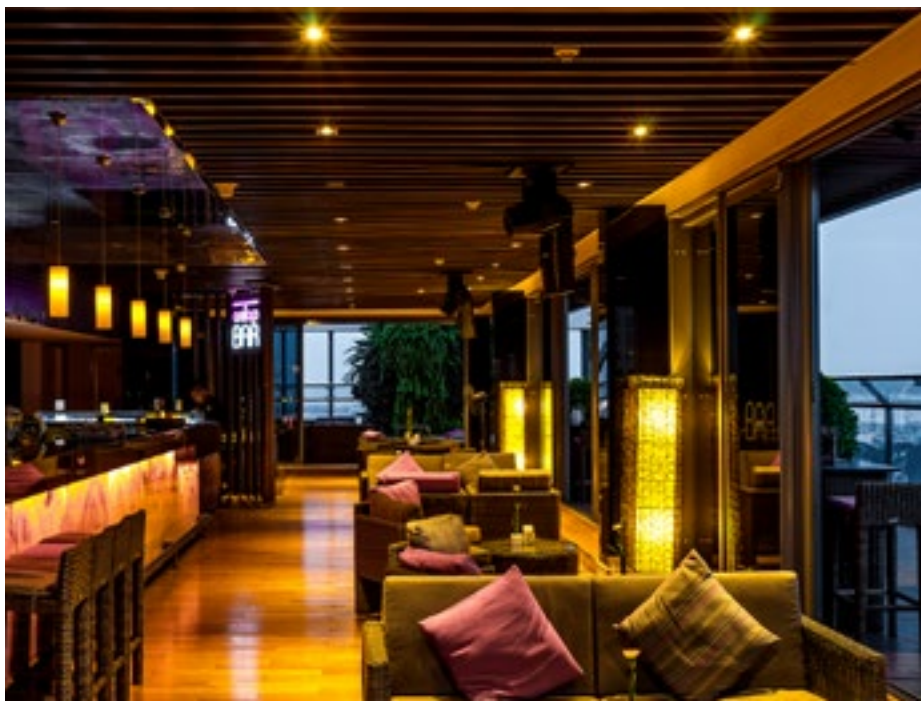


the terrace and sip one last cocktail—the Smoke Bomb (VND195,000++). An intricate blend with a long list of ingredients that includes scotch, gin, tequila, Campari, and pineapple, the mix is stored in barrel for one week before serving to produce a unique, fruity flavor that proves an ideal way to finish our meal. The drinks arrive artistically presented inside a glass dome billowing dry ice and we enjoy it while taking in the glistening cityscape.

From great cocktails and food to lively ambient music and set against the beautiful skyline, OnTop Bar is a great way to spend a night with friends, family and that significant other. ■



*Clockwise from top: Smoke bomb, Pork ribs combo, Teriyaki chicken wings and BBQ skewers*







*Giverny's Kitchen, Pan-fried salmon over baby corn*

# Eat, Drink, Man, Woman

## A look into Taiwan's fascinating food culture

Text and Images by **James Pham**

**“TELL ME WHAT YOU EAT** and I will tell you who you are,” wrote 19th century gastronome Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin. So it is that I find myself in Taiwan, the home of bubble tea and instant noodles, the world's lowest fertility rates and highest math scores, in a quest to eat my way to a better understanding of this intriguing island nation.

I begin my mission in the shadow of Taipei 101, at the 2017 Taiwan Culinary Exhibition. There, amongst Papuan warriors in full face paint, an avalanche of colorfully wrapped pineapple cakes and 800 raucous exhibitors, I meet up with Ms. Lee Mei, Director of the Department of Commerce. “Taiwanese food is just so unique, inherited from traditional Chinese cuisine with a touch of Japanese influences and using local ingredients very creatively,” she says. When pressed for her top three dishes that every visitor should try, she responds rather surprisingly with braised pork over rice, beef noodles and rice porridge—some of the humblest, simplest comfort food around.

Once voted the top food destination on the planet in a somewhat controversial 2015 CNN reader poll beating out the likes of Italy, Japan and France, I have a feeling there's more to Taiwan's food scene than just bubble tea and rice porridge, evidenced by the USD2.3 billion that tourists spent on food here last year. As a guest of the “Old Restaurant Story Marketing

Program” organized by the Department of Commerce, Ministry of Economic Affairs, I set off on a two-city, three-day, 10-restaurant whirlwind culinary tour of Taiwan to see what this little-known cuisine has to offer.

### *Children of the Sweet Potato*

The tuber-shaped island of Taiwan has a total area of just over 36,000 sq km, putting it somewhere between Belgium and the Netherlands in size. Dominated by five rugged mountain ranges in the east, 90 percent of the population lives on the island's west side, leaving less than a quarter of the island for farming. Even so, subtropical Taiwan proves true to its moniker of “Ilha Formosa” or “Beautiful Island,” a name given to the heavily forested island by Portuguese sailors in the mid 16th century, which now produces a cornucopia of tea, fruits, vegetables and more rice than its citizens can eat.

In Taichung, Taiwan's third largest city, we stop in at Giverny's Kitchen, a small, cheery restaurant decorated in old-timey clocks and French country aesthetics. Open for 23 years, it's dominated by a massive chef's table with a built-in range where Chef Yang cooks everything to order as diners crowd around. We sip on red cabbage juice with pineapple, apple and lemon while he carries on a running commentary on what he's doing—sous viding the duck breast to seal in the

moisture, flash cooking mushrooms to retain their flavor and steaming shrimp in a dash of white wine. “We're all about teaching our customers about ingredients and cooking techniques,” says owner Debbie Lo. “Modern life is busy, so people got used to adding MSG and instant seasoning to food, but I think we're in the middle of a food revolution. People now want to know what they're eating,” she says as she delicately arranges baby corn, pan-fried salmon and sweet potato chips onto a plate. “Taiwan produces such beautiful products that you don't need to add a lot of heavy sauces and spices. Just let the real flavors come through.”

Surrounded by water, Taiwan is also blessed with an abundance of seafood thanks to a healthy industry of distant water fishing and aquaculture. The country manages to export USD2 billion of seafood per year, even after its residents consume 35 kg of fish and seafood per person, almost twice the global average. At Taichung Dan Zai Noodles, a seafood restaurant and banquet hall started by two brothers 30 years ago, we're greeted by a gigantic display of freshly caught seafood packed in ice. Soon, dishes begin streaming to the table, a showcase of local products including pan-seared scallops and steamed local abalone in tomato sauce, followed by ponyfish, of which Taiwan has one of the richest concentrations in the world,





*Clockwise: Sea Bass Soup with Pickled Baby Watermelon, Squid Salad, Blooming Tofu Soup, Grilled Eel Platter*

steamed with salted plum infusing the firm, flavorful flesh with a sweet-sour punch.

At our next stop, Shian Yuan Seafood Restaurant, all of Taiwan's bounty is again on display. Opened in 2002, the restaurant began as a Chinese herbal soup shop but now specializes in seafood and other Taiwanese products. We feast on sea bass soup with pickled baby watermelon, a by-product pruned from the vine and often pickled when there's more than one fruit, along with a ridiculously pretty seafood salad showcasing the colors and flavors of Taiwan including strawberries, candied radishes, asparagus and squid. Even scrambled eggs get a makeover when topped with locally-sourced abalone and crab meat. For dessert, we enjoy pineapple cheesecake, a deliciously creamy nod to Taiwan's famed pineapple cakes which became popular in the early 1970s when the country was the world's leading pineapple producer. Local bakers used surplus fruit to make a jam-like filling for shortbread cakes, now one of Taiwan's best-selling souvenirs.

### One Day, Every Week

With 13 percent of its population claiming to be vegans or vegetarians, Taiwan has one of the highest vegetarian rates in the world. Partly due to a syncretic mix of Mahayana Buddhism, Taoism and traditional *bai-bai* ancestral worship, many islanders refrain from eating meat, with some also abstaining from strong foods like onions, garlic and chili. Even local government and schools have gotten in on the action, calling for a vegetarian diet "one day, every week," making Taiwan a vegetarian's paradise.

In 1983, when a young doctor couldn't find a vegetarian restaurant to cater his wedding, he decided to open his own,







Counter clockwise: Ms Chen Wei Chu, Mizumami shaved ice, Xiaolongbao



just the second vegetarian restaurant in Taipei. Now there are more than 6,000 across the island. Specializing in banquets and weddings, Guan Shi Yin Vegetarian Restaurant has mastered the art of fooling the palate and the eyes with their no-meat offerings. Chewy king oyster mushrooms resemble stir-fried river snails, and soybean is turned into tasty sweet and sour chicken. Pressed tofu passes masterfully for grilled eel while shredded Japanese yam mimics cold soba noodles with a dab of wasabi and a dipping sauce of slow-cooked celery, seaweed and ginger. “Taiwanese used to look down on vegetarians who they thought were too poor to afford meat,” explains the restaurant manager. “Now, that thinking is changing and people are turning towards a healthier diet which is perfect for Taiwan where creativity and great products are our ingredients.”

### 50 Years of Japanese Rule

Following China's defeat during the First Sino-Japanese War of 1895, Taiwan was ceded to Japan who would rule the island for 50 years until the end of World War II. Along with colonization came Japanese influences on Taiwan's language, arts and cuisine. At the very retro Sing Fa Ting Shaved Ice, adorned with hanging colander lamps, vintage tiles and antique hand-cranked shaved ice machines, we meet Ms. Chen Wei Chu, the third generation owner of this shop opened in 1938. At its peak, the store sold upwards of 10,000 plates of shaved ice a day, a luxury originally reserved for royalty in imperial Japan.

“My real customers are 70-80 years old,” says Ms. Chen. “They come to taste the ice of their youth. I sometimes see them crying as they eat their memories.” The shop specializes in traditional *mizumami*-style shaved ice topped with candied and fresh fruit and a dash of banana syrup as well as snow ice, a fluffy, creamy, chewy ball of goodness in flavors like vanilla or green tea, often topped with red beans or mochi rolled in crushed peanuts and sesame, the perfect antidote for a muggy Taiwanese afternoon. “My grandparents and parents supported our whole family selling this ice,” says Ms. Chen. “But it’s

not just the memories of my family. It’s the memories of all the local people. That’s why we can never close. The old people come here to introduce these flavors to their grandchildren. You can say their memories are frozen in time.”

However, it’s not just the old who are enamored by all things Japanese. According to a 2013 survey, 43 percent of Taiwanese (and 54 percent among young people) named Japan as their favorite foreign country, while Singapore, the US and China only garnered single-digit responses. On a humid afternoon tailor-made for ice-cold Asahi, we make our way to Kanpai Yakiniku Restaurant. Opened in 1999 as Taipei’s first Japanese-style grilled meat joint, the chain now has seven locations in Taipei and Shanghai with plans to expand to London. Amid blaring Japanese punk, exposed pipes and rustic brickwork, we sit down to gorgeous cuts of meat grilled tableside including beautifully marbled Australia wagyu and heavenly Iberico pork nurtured on a diet of acorns and so beef-like that it can be served medium-rare. It’s almost enough to tempt me to join the hundreds who have lip-locked with a fellow patron for 10 seconds to earn a free plate of meat, evidenced by the Polaroids that plaster the walls.

### Migration Nation

The space left by the Japanese after World War II was quickly filled by a mass migration of Chinese mainlanders following the Chinese Civil War. As many as two million people, mostly soldiers, intellectual and business elites aligned with the defeated Kuomintang (KMT)-led government of the Republic of China, retreated to Taiwan, bringing with them dishes from all corners of the mainland.

Established almost 70 years ago by a wealthy family from Wuxi, just northwest of Shanghai, Qin Yuan Chun Restaurant was once a meeting place for businessmen and politicians hungry for a taste of home. As we slurp down iconic Shanghai favorites like *xiaolongbao*, everyone’s favorite soup dumplings, and tangy triple-cooked spare ribs, we listen to the story of how the restaurant’s owner was briefly accused of being a Communist spy when Chairman





*Wensi tofu, Bombs Over Tokyo*

Mao happened to write a poem with the same name as the restaurant. Nothing like a bit of political intrigue to go with your dumplings.

At Chen Family Restaurant, opened by a former cavalryman with the KMT from the northeastern region of Dongbei, we sample the unique cuisine from this area formerly known as Manchuria. Bordering Russia, Mongolia, and Korea, short growing seasons and harsh winters meant families often pickled their vegetables in giant clay vats to accompany hearty, meat-heavy dishes. Representative of the region, we gorge on giant Lion's Head Meatballs (so named after their resemblance to Chinese lion statues with stylized curly tufts of hair), a pickled cabbage hot pot and an omelet with three kinds of chili nicknamed "Tear Gas," guaranteed to keep diners warm during long Dongbei winters.

One of the oldest restaurants we visit is Yin Ye (Silver Wings), originally established in 1932 by the KMT to serve their Air Force Academy in Hangzhou, China. When they retreated to Taiwan in 1949, they conveniently brought the restaurant with them. "Even though we're private now, the restaurant is still run like the air force. I only got this job when the former general manager died," laughs Mr. Lan. "Like army food, our dishes might not be much to look at, but it's food with a history," he says as he regales us with the stories behind the restaurant's specialties from Sichuan and Huaiyang. There's *wensi* tofu, made famous by Qing Emperor Qianlong more than 300 years ago, and revered for its paper thin threads. Yin Ye's chefs can hand-cut an incredible 5,000 threads from a 20cm x 20cm block of tofu. "Bigger threads mean the chef stopped mid-way and lost his concentration while threads that are too thin shows he was in a hurry," Mr. Lan tells us. We look into our bowls and see perfectly-uniformed threads almost too pretty to eat. We then take notice when the next dish is introduced as the "Number One Dish in the World," a grand name for a dish of humble origins. According to food lore, a government official of the Ming Dynasty found himself in a remote village one lunch time. With no restaurants nearby, he settled for an

impromptu meal at a local family's home. But with no real ingredients to cook with, the family scraped the crust from their rice pot and threw it into a wok with some oil. They then made a simple sauce of tomatoes and shrimp, which sizzled when poured over the puffed rice. The hungry official promptly declared it the "Number One Dish in the World," and we are hard pressed to disagree with this wonderfully rustic dish accompanied by dramatic smoke and crackle, cheekily dubbed "Bombs Over Tokyo" by the Chinese during World War II.

### *Tigers and Dragons*

While fascinated by Taiwan's many historical influences, I find myself wondering what the future holds for this unique island nation with a complicated past and an even more puzzling present. At the elegant Chiou Hwa Restaurant inside of Taipei's posh Gloria Prince Hotel, I get glimpses of an answer in between bites of crispy Peking duck and spoonfuls of goose liver flavored soup surrounding a beautiful block of tofu cut to look like a blooming flower, all topped with foie gras. Established 45 years ago, the restaurant specializes in traditional Cantonese and Hong Kong-style cuisine. I can't help but think of how similar these two Asian tigers are, Hong Kong and Taiwan, both economic powerhouses sharing ties with the mainland but developing their own cultural identities. While always under the watchful eye of Red Dragon Brother, these two nations in some ways identify more with the West than with the East, especially with regards to civil liberties and democratic values. What's next for the beautiful island nation once known as Ilha Formosa, whose history, culture and cuisine have been shaped by so many foreign powers?

Unfortunately, my present food coma fueled by virtually non-stop eating over the past three days renders my brain all but useless to pontification. I decide to leave the matter in the hands of the political pundits and instead, reach for another steamed lava bun oozing with black sesame paste to be washed down with a bubble tea and accept that this is what I eat and this is who I am. ■

## If You Go

### In Taichung

Giverny's Kitchen  
Wuquan 7th Street, West District  
+866-4-2376-9755

Qin Yuan Chun Restaurant  
No. 71, Zhongzheng Rd., Central District  
+886-4-2312-3288

Shian Yuan Seafood Restaurant  
No. 288, Section 2, Huanzhong East Road, Beitun District  
+886-4-2437-6588

Sing Fa Ting Shaved Ice  
No. 127 Section 1, Taiwan Blvd, Central District  
+866-4-2229-3257

Taichung Dan Zai Noodles  
215 Section 2, Huamei West Street, Xitun District  
+866-4-2312-3288

### In Taipei

Chen Family Restaurant  
No. 154, Section 3, Muxin Road, Wenshan District  
+886-2-2937-4644

Chiou Hwa  
2F, No. 369, Linsen North Road, Zhongshan District  
+886-2-7721-6619

Guan Shi Yin Vegetarian Restaurant  
No. 29, Section 2, Minquan East Road, Zhongshan District  
+886-2-2596-3488

Kanpai Yakiniku Restaurant  
No. 17, Lane 236, Section 1, Dunhua South Road, Da'an District  
+886-2-8773-1150

Yin Yi (Silver Wings) Restaurant  
No. 18, Section 2, Jinshan South Road, Da'an District  
+886-2-2341-7799





# Holey Bagels!

Stuffed, saucy or schmeared—have them however you like them at Saigon Bagel

Text by **Joel Zorrilla**

Images by **Ngoc Tran**

**OF ALL ITS SIGNATURE** foodstuffs—pastrami sandwiches, New York pizza—bagels are arguably the most synonymous with Gotham, and the best bagels in NYC are now being duplicated in Saigon. Originally brought over by Eastern European Jewish immigrants, the bagel is a round piece of dough that is

briefly boiled in water before baked, producing a wonderfully dense and chewy texture. As I have experienced first-hand the proper New York bagel I can say that **Saigon Bagel** (27/4 Do Quang Dau, D1 & 38 Nguyen Cu, Thao Dien, D2) does it spectacularly, from the bagels themselves to the schmears and toppings. Andrew

Fitanides, an expat from Maine, decided to quit his stressful job in law and his Vietnamese wife Van convinced him to fill this essential gap in the Saigon food market, and they did so amazingly well. They offer a wide variety of bagels, from plain, sesame, poppy, onionm cinnamon raisin and, of course, the “everything”





bagel topped with onion, poppy and sesame. There are two ways to top the bagel: sandwich style (gravlax, smoked salmon, pickled herring, salted beef, breakfast, smoked ham or honey rocket) or schmear (sundried tomato and basil, chives, chives and bacon, pineapple and strawberry or smoked salmon). Bagels with schmears are priced between VND45,000 and VND65,000 each.

As a regular customer to Saigon bagel I'm a fan of the pickled herring (VND100,000), served on a toasted bagel with cream cheese, sliced tomatoes and sprinkled with capers. The pickled herring, a fantastic combination of delicate fish and sweet vinegar from the pickling process, complemented the cream cheese and vegetable toppings wonderfully.

Our next order of smoked salmon (VND130,000), gravlax (VND130,000) and smoked ham (VND100,000) sandwiches were also served with a similar arrangement of cream cheese, tomato, basil leaves, olive oil and capers. Gravlax is sugar-salt-dill-cured salmon and had a dainty texture that went well with the cream cheese, and should not be missed when stopping by Saigon Bagel.

We also tried the salted beef and the unconventional honey rocket (both priced at VND100,000). The salted beef was served in a closed bagel sandwich accompanied by layers of mustard, mayonnaise and dill pickles. The sandwich was a festival of flavor that easily made it into my world-class comfort

sandwich list. As for the honey rocket, there is nothing I like more than experimenting with food and this was a pleasant surprise. It comes with ham, rocket, honey cream cheese schmear, apple slices and cinnamon. Sweet yet savory, the apple and the smoked ham worked together for that Mediterranean-like summery taste.

Andrew and Van pickle, salt and cure the herring, beef and salmon, respectively, themselves. The bagels are also made from scratch, which involves boiling the ring-shaped dough in honey-infused water before baking them to perfection—a testament to their dedication to quality and freshness. In the near future the couple plan on opening their Thao Dien location in the evening to serve wine and charcuteries. ■



# GA TAN

**GA TAN, STEWED SWEET HERBAL** chicken soup, is a Hanoi specialty and a deeply-guarded traditional recipe incorporating a special mixture of secret herbs and spices handed down from parent to child over generations. The result is a quarter of chicken bobbing in a tasty broth, which is believed to be something akin to a health tonic by Vietnamese connoisseurs. A bowl will impart energy and vitality;

give strength to your tendons and bones; help you sleep better; and ease backache and asthma. Preparation centers on choosing the right chicken for the job. An old chicken will be too tough and a spring one may not impart the right flavor. But once the perfect chicken has been found, it is drawn, quartered and marinated in salt and spices for about 30 minutes before being simmered with medicinal herbs, nuts and seeds.

## Ingredients

- Chicken (Vietnamese chicken) half (600g)
- Wormwood 200 g
- Chinese herbs (available from Asian supermarkets and Chinese pharmacies) 1 package
- Turmeric 1
- Vietnamese wine 20 ml
- Salt, pepper, seasoning enough

## Dipping Sauce

- Salt 1/2 tbsp
- Pepper 1/8 tbsp
- Lemon 1
- Chili 1







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



**1.** Wash the chicken well. Rub with salt, pepper, seasoning. Marinate inside and out for 30'



**2.** Wash the fresh green wormwood, removing any wilted leaves.



**3.** Prepare the chicken, Chinese herbs, turmeric, wormwood leaves.



**4.** Place the wormwood layer in the bottom of a clay pot, adding the chicken, Chinese herbs, and turmeric. Top with another layer of wormwood leaves, add 100ml of water, and cover with lid.



**5.** Put the clay pot into a larger saucepan with water. Steam over medium heat for 30'. After that, turn off heat but leave the clay pot for another 30'.



**6.** 10' before serving, bring this mixture to a boil again and add 20ml of rice wine, continuing to steam for another 5'.



## Dipping Sauce

Mix the pepper, salt, chili and lime juice well. This dish is good for your health, especially when you have the flu.





# The Home Plate

*How banh khot represents family, comfort and childhood*

Text by **Tasso Dattenberg-Doyle**

Images by **Ngoc Tran**



**“HOME IS WHERE THE HEART is,”** that’s what they say. For most people the aphorism is applied to an actual home but for restaurateur Ms. Dung Pham home can come to you one spoonful (or chopstick-load) at a time.

Tucked away in a small street in District 9, her restaurant **Quan Banh Khot Yoyo** (40 Duong 4, Phuoc Binh, D9; 2pm-9pm Monday-Sunday) has recently opened for business selling some of the most authentic *banh khot* (VND35,000 a dish) in the city. The small crispy rice cakes, topped with whole shrimp and shrimp gratings for extra punch, are a delicacy with many iterations found across the country but Ms. Dung Pham recipe is based on her mother’s cooking. That’s why the food is so special to her, she explains. *Banh khot* is a family matter, not just a business, and she hopes others will enjoy the dish as much as she does.

It’s a common trait among chefs that they wish to pour some sense of warmth into their creations. The feeling seems perfectly natural, after all most people on *Chef’s Table* and the like say that they started out watching their mother’s cooking and go to great lengths to describe the satisfaction they feel when a dish is just right. Like a parent, food is a source of comfort. There are, of course, exceptions to the rule. Gordon Ramsay seems to bully food till it yields its best flavors and Nigella Lawson has made a business out of soaking her food in titillation.

Ms. Dung Pham belongs to the more orthodox school of cooking. To her, *banh khot* is family, comfort and childhood. Her memory is jogged by her cooking, she explains, and she takes great pleasure in reminiscing about the occasions when she enjoyed the food that was made for her when she was young. The association has been well documented. Marcel Proust famously managed to set off his magnum opus *In Search of Lost Time* with a simple catalyst: a madeleine dipped in tea. From there, from that one instant when the small pastry touched his tongue, a deep well of memories opened up and flooded the narrator’s senses, sending him spiralling through childhood traumas, loves and hopes.

I think of this beautiful image as I slosh my *banh khot* about in chilli flakes and fish sauce. I sadly have no associations with *banh khot*, having grown up on a diet of cream-meat-and-potato German food, but even without the boon of a trip down memory lane, I can attest that the food at Quan Banh Khot is delightful.

For those willing to make the trip, Quan Banh Khot will prove its quality from the first bite. Ms. Dung Pham’s entrepreneurial spirit and her prowess in the kitchen have produced an establishment with a different sort of flavor. They have their specialty (like all good restaurants) and though you may leave satisfied after one meal you’ll be sure to be back again. ■



# Wine & Dine

## ROOFTOP BARS

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### Liquid Sky Bar

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

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



### Rex Hotel Rooftop Bar

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

141 Nguyen Hue, D1



Thao Dien

### Tropicana

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

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

## SUNDAY BRUNCHES



### Hotel Equatorial

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

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



### Indulgent Sundays @ Nineteen

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

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



### Le Meridien

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

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

## BARs & CRAFT BEER BREWERIES



### Acoustic Bar

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

El Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3



### Aperitivo

Cosy, friendly, and chic, with a quality cocktail and wine list, delicious deli sandwiches by day and night, Aperitivo is a great place to relax and unwind after work.

80b/c Xuan Thuy, Thao Dien, D2.



### BiaCraft

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

90 Xuan Thuy, D2



# CHINESE

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## Dragon Court

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

11-13 Lam Son Square, D1  
3827 2566



## Dynasty

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

New World Hotel  
76 Le Lai, D1  
3822 8888  
[www.saigon.newworldhotels.com](http://www.saigon.newworldhotels.com)



## Kabin

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

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



## Li Bai

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

Level 2, 88 Dong Khoi, D1  
3827 2828  
[www.libaisaigon.com](http://www.libaisaigon.com)



## Ming Court

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

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



## San Fu Lou – Cantonese Kitchen

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

SAN FU LOU 1  
Ground floor, AB Tower, 76A Le Lai St., Dist 1, HCMC  
(+2848) 38239513  
SAN FU LOU 2  
195-197 Phan Xich Long St., Phu Nhuan Dist, HCMC  
(+2848) 35176168  
SAN FU LOU 3  
24 Ba Thang Hai St., Dist 10, HCMC  
(+2848) 38620920



## Also Try...

### Hung Ky Mi Gia

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

20 Le Anh Xuan, D1  
3822 2673

### Ocean Palace

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

2 Le Duan Street, D1  
3911 8822

### Seven Wonders (Bay Ky Quan)

The brainchild of an overseas Chinese/Vietnamese architect who wanted to build something extraordinary in his home town, this venue combines the architectural features of seven world heritage structures blended into one. The cuisine is just as eclectic with representative dishes from several major Chinese traditions.

12 Duong 26, D6  
3755 1577  
[www.7kyquan.com](http://www.7kyquan.com)

### Shang Palace

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

dishes to choose from, Shang Palace is an ideal rendezvous for any dining occasion.

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

### Yu Chu

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

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





## Bach Dang

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

26-28 Le Loi, D1



## Café RuNam

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

96 Mac Thi Buoi, D1  
www.caferunam.com



## Chat

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

85 Nguyen Truong To, D4



## K.Coffee

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

Opening time: 7AM- 10PM.

Sunday closed.

86 Hoang Dieu, D4  
38253316 / 090 142 3103



## La Rotonde Saigon

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

77B Ham Nghi, 1st Floor, D1



## The Workshop

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

27 Ngo Duc Ke, D1







## Le Terroir

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

30 Thai Van Lung, D1



## Le Bacoulos

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

13 Tong Huu Dinh, D2

3519 4058

www.bacoulos.com



## Le Jardin

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

31 Thai Van Lung, D1



## Long Phi

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

207 Bui Vien, D1



## Ty Coz

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

178/4 Pasteur, D1

www.tycozsaigon.com



## Also Try...

### La Cuisine

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

48 Le Thanh Ton

2229 8882

### La Nicoise

A traditional 'neighbourhood' French restaurant, La Nicoise serves simple, filling French fare at exceptional value in the shadow of the Bitexco tower. Most popular for its steak dishes, the restaurant has an extensive menu which belies its compact size.

56 Ngo Duc Ke, D1

3821 3056

### La Villa

Housed in a stunning white French villa that was originally built as a private house, La Villa features outdoor tables dotted around a swimming pool and a more formal dining room inside. Superb cuisine, with staff trained as they would be in France. Bookings are advised, especially on Friday and Saturday evenings.

14 Ngo Quang Huy, D2

3898 2082

www.lavilla-restaurant.com.vn

### Trois Gourmands

Opened in 2004 and regarded as one of the finest French restaurants in town. Owner Gils, a French native, makes his own cheeses as well.

39 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2

3744 4585





# INDIAN

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## Ashoka

A small chain of slightly more upscale Indian restaurants serving both Northern and Southern Indian cuisine including curries, naan and tandooris.

17/10 Le Thanh Ton, D1  
33 Tong Huu Dinh, Thao Dien, D2



## Ganesh

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

38 Hai Ba Trung, D1  
www.ganeshindianrestaurant.com



## Natraj

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

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



## Saigon Indian

Saigon's original Indian eatery is still going strong, located in a bright, roomy upstairs venue in the heart of District 1.

1st Floor, 73 Mac Thi Bui, D1



## Tandoor

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

39A - 39B Ngo Duc Ke, D1  
39304839 / tandoor@tandoorvietnam.com



## The Punjabi

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

40/3 Bui Vien, D1



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## Ciao Bella

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

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

*Ciao Bella*



## La Forchetta

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

24 Hung Gia, PMH, D7  
3541 1006



## La Hostaria

Designed with an intimate atmosphere invoking something like an Italian town, this venue focuses on traditional ethnic Italian cuisine (rather than the ubiquitous pizza and pasta), creations of the skillful executive chef – straight out of Venice. The place lights up on romantic Thursday evenings with candlelight and light music.

17B Le Thanh Ton, D1  
3823 1080  
www.lahostaria.com



## Portofino

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

15 Dong Du, D1  
+84 28 3823 3597  
info@portofinovieta.com  
http://www.portofinovieta.com/



## NO.1 Pizza In The World

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

August 7th to 31st from 14:30 - 21:30

30% discount for meat orders ( Rotisserie Chicken and Beef Steak)

Lot L5-18, 5F Saigon Centre, 92-94 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia St., D.1, HCMC  
(028) 3821 8319  
pizzalogic.hcm@gmail.com  
http://pizzalogic-hcm.com/index-vn.html  
Fest.vn or call 1900636997



## Also Try...

### Casa Italia

Filling, hearty Italian fare served with a smile in the heart of District 1. Authentic pizza and a comprehensive range of pasta, pork, chicken and beef dishes offers something for everyone. Located a stone's throw from Ben Thanh Market.

86 Le Loi, D1  
3824 4286

### Opera

The luxury Park Hyatt Saigon is home to Opera, an authentic Italian dining experience open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Try their famous lasagna and tiramisu. Head chef Marco Torre learned his craft in a number of Michelin-star restaurants throughout different regions of Italy during a 14 year career. Dine on the deck alfresco or inside in air conditioned comfort.

2 Lam Son Square, D1

### Pendolasco

One of the original Italian eateries in Ho Chi Minh City, Pendolasco recently reinvented itself with a new chef and menu, and spawned a sister eatery in District 2. Set off the street in a peaceful garden with indoor and outdoor eating areas, separate bar and function area, it offers a wide-ranging Italian menu and monthly movie nights.

87 Nguyen Hue, D1  
3821 8181

### Pizza 4P's

It's too late to call this Saigon's best-kept secret: the word is out. Wander up to the end of its little hem off Le Thanh Ton for the most unique pizza experience in the entire country – sublime Italian pizza pies with a Japanese twist. Toppings like you wouldn't imagine and a venue you'll be glad you took the time to seek out.

8/15 Le Thanh Ton, D1  
012 0789 4444  
www.pizza4ps.com

### Carpaccio

Often unfairly mistaken as a purely tourist dining destination, Carpaccio offers an extensive range of Italian fare, especially seafood and beef dishes. The dining area is in a distinctively curved brick 'tunnel' opening into a large room at the rear, making it ideal for couples or groups.

79 Hai Ba Trung  
3823 8998





# JAPANESE

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## Gyumaru

Gyumaru is a quintessentially minimalist Japanese dining experience rotating around the style of meat meal Westerners would be quick to link to a gourmet burger, but without the bread. Fresh, healthy, innovative cuisine in a relaxed, cozy environment and regular specials including quality steaks.

8/3 Le Thanh Ton  
3827 1618  
gyumaru.LTT@gmail.com



## Ichiban Sushi

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

204 Le Lai, D1  
www.ichibansushi.vn



## Kesera Bar & Restaurant

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

26/3 Le Thanh Ton, Ben Nghe Ward, Dist 1  
028 38 270 443



## SORAE Sushi Sake Lounge

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

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

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

028 3827 2372

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

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

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## Sushi Dining Aoi

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

53-55 Ba Huyen Thanh Quan, D3

3930 0039

www.sushidiningaoi.com



## Yoshino

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

2A-4A Ton Duc Thang, D1

3823 3333





# KOREAN

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## Galbi Brothers

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

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



## Lee Cho

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

**48 Hung Phuoc 2, D7**  
**5410 1086**



## Seoul House

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

**33 Mac Thi Bui, D1**  
**3829 4297**



# THAI



## Koh Thai

Supremely chic Thai venue with all the authentic burn you need – or without if you prefer. An opulent, fashionable decor with the cuisine to match – often reported to serve dishes comparable with those of Thailand itself.

**Kumho Link, Hai Ba Trung, D1**  
**3823 4423**

## Lac Thai

Hidden away down a narrow alley in the heart of downtown this unique Thai restaurant boasts authentic flavours and surprising character. Eat downstairs at tables in a cosy, themed environment - or be brave and climb the narrow spiral staircase to the attic and crouch on cushions in true Thai style while attentive staff serve plates to share.

**71/2 Mac Thi Bui St. D1**  
**3823 7506**

## Thai Street

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

**26 Thao Dien Road, Thao Dien, D2**  
**02866549525**

## The Racha Room

Brand new fine & funky Thai venue with kooky styling and a great attitude – and some of the most finely-presented signature Thai cuisine you'll see in this city, much of it authentically spicy. Long Live the King! Reservations recommended.

**12-14 Mac Thi Bui, D1**  
**090 879 1412**

## Tuk Tuk Thai Bistro

Kitch and authentic, Tuk Tuk brings the pleasure of street-style Thai food into an elegant but friendly setting. Now a fashionable venue in its own right, Tuk Tuk's menu features some unique dishes and drinks you won't see elsewhere.

**17/11 Le Thanh Ton, D1**  
**3521 8513 / 090 688 6180**



# STEAKHOUSE

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## B3 STEAKHOUSE & CRAFT BEER

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

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



## Corso Steakhouse & Bar

The steakhouse boasts an open kitchen with private dining areas. With an extensive wine menu, contemporary Western and Asian cuisines and a wide range of sizzling steaks cooked to your liking, this is the ideal choice for a special celebration or formal business dinner.

Ground Floor, Norfolk Hotel, 117 Le Thanh Ton, D1  
3829 5368  
www.norfolkhotel.com.vn



## El Gaucho Argentinian Steakhouse

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

74/1 Hai Ba Trung, D1



## Nossa Steakhouse

A stylish restaurant featuring Italian cuisine and Western steaks with a wide selection of imported steaks from Australian and the US. Nossa brings food and decor together to create a cozy ambience. With an attention to bringing authentic flavors, we provide good food, good prices and good taste.

36 Pham Hong Thai, D1 / www.nossa.vn



## New York Steakhouse

New York Steakhouse is definitely in the upmarket category and serves exclusive American imported beef dishes, with a whole range of steaks from rib eye, New York strip steak and tenderloin being popular options.

25-27 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D1



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SASCOVietnam

www.sasco.com.vn





## Five Oysters

Five Oysters serves authentic and excellent Seafood & Vietnamese food with SG Green beer at VND12,000 as well as a promo of VND10,000 per fresh oyster daily. There's also a rooftop, a great place to start or end the night! Recipient of Certificate of Excellence 2014-16 from TripAdvisor and Top Choice 2015 by Lianorg.com. Recommended by VNexpress.net, Lonely Planet, Utopia and Saigoneers.  
**234 Bui Vien, D1**



## Mountain Retreat

Home style cooking from the Vietnamese north in a quiet alley off Le Loi, Mountain Retreat brings a rural vibe to busy central DI. The breezy and unassuming décor nicely contrasts the intense northern flavors ideally suited for the international palate.

**Top floor of 36 Le Loi, D1**  
**+84 90 719 45 57**



## Nhà Hàng Di Mai

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

**136 - 138 Le Thi Hong Gam St., Dist. I, HCMC**  
**028 3821 7786**  
**nhahangdimai.com/**  
**https://www.facebook.com/nhahangdimai/**



## Red Door

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

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



## The Hue House

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

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



## Also Try...

### 3T Quan Nuong

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

**Top Floor, 29 Ton That Hiep, D1**  
**3821 1631**

### Banh Xeo 46A

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

**46A Dinh Cong Trang, D1**

### Cha Ca La Vong

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

**36 Ton That Thiep, D1**

### Com Nieu

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

**59 Ho Xuan Huong, D3**  
**3932 6363**  
**comnieusaigon27@yahoo.com**  
**comnieusaigon.com.vn**

### Cuc Sach Quan

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

**10 Dang Tat, D1**  
**3848 0144**

### Hum

Hum is a vegetarian restaurant where food are prepared on site from various fresh beans, nuts, vegetables, flowers, and fruits. Food are complemented with special drinks mixed from fresh fruits and vegetables.

**2 Thi Sach, D1**  
**3823 8920**  
**www.hum-vegetarian.vn**

### May

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

**19-21 Dong Khoi, D1**  
**3910 1277**

### Nha Hang Ngon

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

**160 Pasteur, D1**  
**3827 7131**  
**www.quananngon.com.vn**  
**8am - 10pm**

### Temple Club

Named after the old-style Chinese temple in which the venue is located, the ancient stylings of this impressive restaurant make for an unforgettable evening spent somewhere in Saigon's colonial past. Beautiful oriental art that will please all diners and great local cuisine.

**29-31 Ton That Thiep, D1**  
**3829 9244**  
**templeclub.com.vn**





## Bamboo Chic

Bamboo Chic serves an inventive menu of Japanese and Chinese dishes and creative cocktails. Open for dinner, the contemporary space features modern velvet chairs with purple and plum pillows and dramatic beaded chandeliers inspired by the Saigon River along with live music from the house DJ.

**Level 9, Le Méridien Saigon Hotel**  
3C Ton Duc Thang, D1

6263 6688

[www.lemeridien.com/saigon](http://www.lemeridien.com/saigon)

For restaurant promotions go to [fest.vn](http://fest.vn) or Call 1900636997

**BAMBOO**



## BoatHouse

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

**40 Lily Road, AP5C, 36 Thao Dien, D2**

[boathousesgn@gmail.com](mailto:boathousesgn@gmail.com)

+84 8 3744 6790

[www.boathousesaigon.com](http://www.boathousesaigon.com)

[www.facebook.com/boathousevietnam](https://www.facebook.com/boathousevietnam)



## Noir: Dining in the Dark

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

**178/180D Hai Ba Trung, D1**



## Latest Recipe

Latest Recipe invites diners to an international culinary experience set against views of the Saigon River. An open kitchen is the focal point of this contemporary space, with chefs preparing an array of dishes to order. Every Sunday Latest Recipe serves an elaborate brunch buffet filled with tantalizing dishes from around the world.

**Level M, Le Méridien Saigon Hotel**  
3C Ton Duc Thang, D1

6263 6688

[www.lemeridien.com/saigon](http://www.lemeridien.com/saigon)

For restaurant promotions go to [fest.vn](http://fest.vn) or Call 1900636997

**Latest Recipe**



## Panam - The Backroom

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

**12pm-1am / Tel: 0122 733 0235**

**91 Pasteur, D1**

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



## Poke Saigon

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

**Tue-Sun 110am-8pm**

**2nd Floor, 42 Nguyen Hue, D1**

**0902474388**

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



## Stellar Restaurant

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

**9:00am-10:30pm**

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

**02837445115**

[reservation@stellar.com.vn](mailto:reservation@stellar.com.vn)

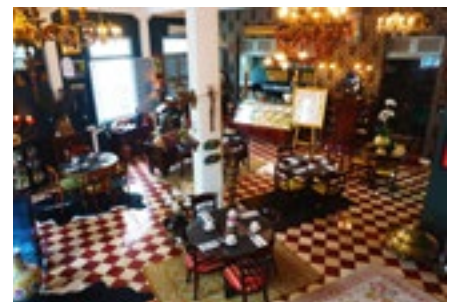


## twenty21one

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

**21 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3**

**TWENTY21ONE**



## Villa Royale Downtown Antiques & Tea Room

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

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

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

Opening Hours 10am -10pm everyday

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

**028 3821 0088**

[www.villaroyaledowntown.com](http://www.villaroyaledowntown.com)





# Travel & Wellness

CEBU / IMAGES BY NGOC TRAN









# CEBU

Images by **Ngoc Tran**

Crowned as the Queen City of the South, it is here where business and leisure breathe together. As the oldest city in the Philippines, its past is also firmly entrenched in the annals of the Spanish conquest. A handful of historical remnants recall those missionary days - Magellan's cross and the Basilica Minore del Santo Niño. Cebu has an abundance of beauty, from the central mountains to the coral sands, the island is a natural wonder and is never too far for as a getaway destination.



















# Hall of Fame City

Canada's largest city swirls together a vibrant mix of music, nature, museums and more

Text by **David Muller** and **Julian Ajello**  
Images by **David Muller**

**TORONTO, CANADA'S LARGEST** metropolis, sits on the banks of Lake Ontario. True to Canada's ideals, it's a multicultural melting pot where fifty percent of the population can trace their origins to an ethnic minority. The city also has close ties with Vietnam and its people, and since 2006, it has been a Sister City with Ho Chi Minh City. This year marks the 150th anniversary of the Canadian confederation, making it an opportune

time to visit with many events marking the official milestone.

Because of a 13-hour time zone difference, I was 28 hours into the longest Saturday of my life when my flight finally landed 3pm at Toronto's Pearson Airport. A friend tipped me off about a big concert at the Air Canada Centre. Last minute tickets, mid-section sold for only CAD50.60. Abel Tesfaye, aka The Weeknd as he prefers to be called,

performed for his hometown of Toronto on the Starboy: Legend of the Fall Tour. It was a pretty laid back atmosphere. I sat down to devour a plate of chili fries while catching the opening acts: Belly, Rae Sremmurd, and 6lack. The brother duo of Rae Sremmurd bounced up and down the stage belting out their hit Black Beatles, when one of the brothers, Slim Jxmmi, pulled off his t-shirt to display his six-pack abs while the crowd roared in delight.





The accompanying light show and trendy graffiti and mural graphics were dazzling and well choreographed. At 9:30pm the crowd stood on their feet and teenage girls screamed wildly as the main act popped up onto the stage. The Weeknd performed his big hits Starboy and I Can't Feel My Face. His vocals were smooth and strong, and didn't waver in the slightest delivering the songs. In what was a monumental surprise, Drake joined him onstage, driving the throngs into delirium and eliciting ear-splitting screams from a cadre of young women directly behind me. Drake, another Toronto talent whose shows typically price out at CAD150 or more, showed up to support The Weeknd in their hometown. It was a real bonus to hear him perform. Drake intermittently stopped singing to let the crowd chant the lyrics. Drake finished the concert by congratulating the crowd's participation, shouting out, "That is why you'll forever be the greatest city in the mother\*\*\*\*in' world!"







While Toronto has its fair share of musical talent, it will forever be a hockey town. An American friend, who happens to be a faithful supporter of his hometown's St. Louis Blues, introduced me to NHL hockey. I remember watching the games live, meaning we were up at ridiculously early morning hours in Vietnam to see Blues goalie Brian Elliot's valiant, albeit unsuccessful, effort minding the nets during the 2016 playoffs. Further cementing Toronto's love affair with ice hockey is that it's the home of the Ice Hockey Hall of Fame. It's a bucket list attraction for both die-hards and those new to the game. Inside its halls are photos, trophies and equipment that once belonged to the game's titans. Every team's jerseys, from the NHL to the Asian leagues, are on display. The walls are decorated with plaques honoring the games luminaries, including those that sit atop the pantheon such as The Great One, Wayne Gretzky. The Great Hall's ornate ceiling is beset with beautiful stained glass that casts a glow upon the NHL's most sacred treasure—The Stanley Cup. If you aren't a hockey fan yet, then the Hall of Fame might just make one out of you.

### Sake to Me

There is plenty to do for nature lovers as well because Toronto boasts some spectacular vistas. When cruising Lake Ontario visitors can drink in the skyline with the CN Tower lit up while coasting towards another jewel, Niagara Falls. The pride of Canadians and the envy of Americans, the town of Niagara Falls, Ontario, seems to outshine its New York neighbor, the city of Buffalo. An entire town centered on tourism, souvenir shops, restaurants, bars, five-star hotels, and even a few casinos were founded here and now thrive because of the Falls. On the bus to the Falls our tour guide told us how Toronto was home to many Hollywood blockbusters and how in his younger years he was an extra in *X-Men* and *The Corruptor*. Although he had only one line in the former, he still receives royalties every year for his role.

Upon arrival at Niagara Falls, we sauntered down the hill and took elevators even further down to board the famous Hornblower ferry. Every visitor receives a bright red rain poncho not unlike those bought in desperation on Saigon sidewalks during rainy season. The brilliant summer sun caused a spectacular rainbow, arching up out of the cascades. The ferry lurched into the mist of North America's most impressive Falls, which rendered our ponchos as ineffective as those in Saigon during a heavy rain. Everyone retreated in haste to the cover of the lower decks, their clothes and shoes saturated and smelling of river water.

My final day in Toronto found me



strolling through the distillery district, built on the site of the legendary Gooderham and Worts distillery. This hip, new area, still under development, already hosts many trendy bars, restaurants, art houses and antique stores. The first stop was the Ontario Spring Water (Izumi) Sake Company with its array of sakes brewed on site. Still enjoying a sake glow, I ambled up and down the cobbled streets browsing a number of antique stores while keeping an eye open for an appealing eatery. I happened upon a trendy Mexican restaurant called El Catrin on Tank Street and sidled up to the bar. Behind it, rows of spirits spanned floor to ceiling necessitating the use of a ladder to reach the tequila on the top shelves. Foregoing the infamous agave-spawned spirits, I settled on fish tacos and a local, craft wheat beer recommended by the waiter.

Something about the fish tacos and a beer put me back in a sporting mood. Major League Baseball's Cincinnati Reds were in town to take on the hometown Blue Jays at the Roger Centre. My plan was to catch the last few innings, however, I never made it to the game. A mysterious force intervened and lured me into the newly-opened Spirit of York Distillery, Co.

A group of young entrepreneurs invested in state-of-the-art equipment from Germany to craft a new series of premium gins.

Being an enthusiast, I sampled their flavorsome, juniper-infused gins. One in particular was contained in a clear, spiral-shaped crystal bottle made by an artisan in Vancouver. It was both unique and flavorful, and soon CAD70 of my hard-earned money was parted from me. By this time, it was obvious the baseball game wasn't an option so I decided to finish the afternoon by returning to the sake bar: Another round of the sake samplers and some green tea ice cream to finish an intoxicating afternoon. What better way to get ready for a trans-continental, trans-pacific flight than to induce a hangover?

The return flight to HCMC was very different from the outbound trip. Instead of gaining a full day, I lost one. Despite the hellish jetlag and the remnants of a sake/gin hangover, Toronto left a memorable impression. It's a trendy, vibrant city that caters to the world: Whether you fancy big league sports, international cuisine, a trendy nightlife, or awe-inspiring natural beauty, Toronto is a destination that should be near the top of your list. ■





# >>The List Business

## INSURANCE



### Pacific Cross Vietnam

Pacific Cross Vietnam is a specialist provider of global health and travel insurances, designed to provide not just basic cover, but also a wide range of benefits providing peace of mind for you, your family and your employees.

4th & 12th Floor, Ruby Tower, 81 - 83 - 85 Ham Nghi, D1, HCMC  
(+84 28) 3821 9908

19th Floor VCCI Tower, 9 Dao Duy Anh, Dong Da Dist, Hanoi  
(+84 24) 7308 6699



## Also try ...

### ACE Life Insurance

One of the world's largest multiline property and casualty insurers, insurance products include universal life insurance, term life, whole life, riders, and global personal accident.  
21st Floor, 115 Nguyen Hue, D1

### Baoviet Insurance Corporation

BaoViet is now the leading financial insurance group in Vietnam with more than 145 branches across 63 provinces.  
23-25 Thai Van Lung, D1

### IF Consulting

IF Consulting has for 20 years provided advice to individuals and businesses in assessing health/accident risk and finding the best suitable solution. The company is independent and Vietnam-based.  
90-92 Dinh Tien Hoang D1  
www.insuranceinvietnam.com

### Liberty Mutual Insurance

Liberty Mutual is a 100% US-owned general insurer licensed to provide insurance services directly to Vietnamese individuals and state-owned enterprises as well as motor insurance.  
15th Floor, Kumho Asiana Plaza, 39 Le Duan, D1  
3812 5125

### McLarens Young International

McLarens Young International is a global claims service provider that helps our clients achieve timely and equitable claims resolution.  
9th Floor, Yoco Building  
41 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1  
3821 3316

### Prudential Vietnam

Prudential Vietnam is one of the leading life insurers nationwide, also providing a variety of financial solutions, with over 200 customer service centers, branch offices and general agency and business partner offices.  
Unit 25F, Saigon Trade Centre  
37 Ton Duc Thang, D1

## RELOCATION



### SEAL Logistics

Saigon Express Agency Limited (SEAL) is an experienced and versatile relocations and logistics company. SEAL staff are experts in relocations and pet transportation and can deliver all your logistics requirements to your satisfaction at a competitive price!

+84 28 39432853  
sgnexpress@seal.com.vn  
www.seal.com.vn



## Also try ...

### AGS Four Winds (Vietnam)

Global leader in international removals & relocations, with 128 offices in 78 countries, they can move you to/or from any location worldwide.

5th Floor, Lafayette De Saigon,  
8A Phung Khac Khoan, D1  
3521 0071  
ags-vietnam@agsfourwinds.com  
www.agsfourwinds.com

### Crown Line

Crown Line is a well-known Japanese moving firm now operating out of Ho Chi Minh City.  
7th Floor, HPL Bldg  
60 Nguyen Van Thu, D1

### Logical Moves

They offer your belongings the best protection available with the latest technology, experienced staff and equipment. With door to door services, Logical Moves is all about quality service, best prices and well-arranged time.  
3941 5322  
www.logicalmoves.net



## VETERINARY CLINICS

### Animal Doctors International

Offers the very highest levels of compassionate, competent and professional veterinary medicine and surgery to all pets in Ho Chi Minh City with international veterinary surgeons. Upholding international standards, the team works tirelessly to help clients with the support of a dedicated surgical suite, digital X-Ray and comprehensive diagnostic facilities.

1 Tran Ngoc Dien, Thao Dien, Q2  
6260 3980  
www.animaldoctors.vn

### K9

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

### AEC Pet

Opened since 2012, the clinic staffs a team of specialized veterinarians who are committed to offering professional, caring and personalized services to their patients.  
A12-A13 Nguyen Huu Tho,  
Kim Son Project, D7  
6298 9203

### New Pet Hospital & Spa

The clinic has two locations and offers boarding, 24-hour emergency care and grooming services such as washing and nail trimming.  
53 Dang Dung, D1  
www.newpethospital.com.vn  
6269 3939

### Saigon Pet Clinic

Founded in 2008, Saigon Pet Clinic's goal is to open the best animal welfare veterinary clinic in Vietnam. They combine skill and technology to ensure your pet gets the best possible care.  
33, 41 street, Thao Dien, D2  
www.saigonpethospital.com  
3519 4182

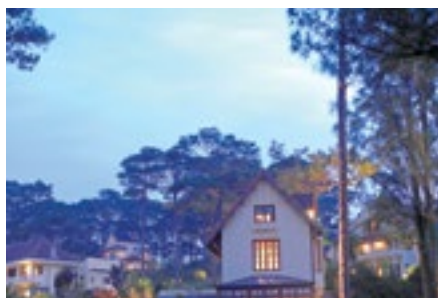
### Sasaki Animal Hospital

The hospital is managed by a team of skilled doctors from Japan and Vietnam. Services include grooming and general care.  
38-40-42 Nguyen Thi Thap,  
Him Lam, D7  
www.sasakihospital.com  
2253 1179





# >>The List Travel



## Ana Mandara Villas I Dalat

Ana Mandara Villas Dalat comprises 17 restored French-style villas from the 1920s and 1930s, preserving the original design, décor and charm; and set in the cool climate of the rural highlands of Central Vietnam. Striking views of the surrounding town and countryside abound from all areas of the gently sloping hillside property. Some of the villas have been converted into 65 guest accommodations, with each villa comprising between three and five ensuite rooms.

[www.anamandara-resort.com](http://www.anamandara-resort.com)



## Boutique Hoi An Resort

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

34 Lac Long Quan, Cam An, Hoi An  
+84 (0)235 3939 111  
[www.boutiquehoianresort.com](http://www.boutiquehoianresort.com)



## Cham Villas - Boutique Luxury Resort

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

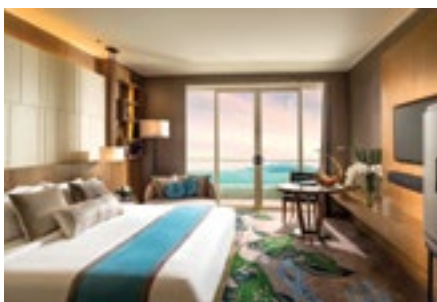
32 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, Phan Thiet  
+84 252 3741 234  
[www.chamvillas.com](http://www.chamvillas.com)



## Cham Garden Restaurant

Cham Garden Restaurant is located inside Cham Villas Boutique Luxury Resort. Set in the midst of a lush tropical garden, this cozy and quiet restaurant serves Asian Fusion, Vietnamese and Western Cuisine. The ideal place for a romantic and exquisite dinner.

32 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, Phan Thiet  
+84 252 3741 234  
[www.chamvillas.com](http://www.chamvillas.com)  
[www.facebook.com/chamgardenmuine](https://www.facebook.com/chamgardenmuine)



## InterContinental Nha Trang

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

32 - 34 Tran Phu, Nha Trang  
(0258) 388 7777  
[www.nhatrang.intercontinental.com](http://www.nhatrang.intercontinental.com)



## Mia

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

Bai Dong, Cam Hai Dong, Cam Lam, Khanh Hoa  
02583 989 666  
[www.mianhatrang.com](http://www.mianhatrang.com)  
[info@mianhatrang.com](mailto:info@mianhatrang.com)



## Pullman Danang Beach Resort

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

Vo Nguyen Giap, Khue My, Ngu Hanh Son, Danang  
0236 395 8888  
[www.pullman-danang.com](http://www.pullman-danang.com)



## Sheraton Nha Trang Hotel & Spa

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

26 - 28 Tran Phu, Nha Trang, Khanh Hoa  
0258 2220 000  
[www.sheratonnhatrang.com](http://www.sheratonnhatrang.com)



## The Island Lodge

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

390 Ap Thoi Binh, Thoi Son, My Tho  
0273 651 9000  
[www.theislandlodge.com.vn](http://www.theislandlodge.com.vn)



# Health & Beauty

## DENTAL



### Dr. Hung & Associates Dental Center

A centrally located dental center that uses the latest modern equipment with a team of skilled specialists. Services include cosmetic, implant, braces, prosthodontics, pedodontics and more. Expect high quality service at a reasonable price.

**Building 244A Cong Quynh, D1**  
**028 3925 7526**  
**028 3925 7528**  
**info@nhakhoadrhung.com**  
**www.nhakhoadrhung.com**



### New Dentist



**Dr. Adrian Sinanan**  
 General Practice & Cosmetic Dentistry

Dr. Adrian qualified from King's College London School of Medicine and Dentistry, University of London in 1997. Over the last eighteen years he has practiced both in the UK and Australia, giving him the opportunity to experience a wide variety of clinical treatment philosophies and the latest in postgraduate training.

**2 Bis Cong Truong Quoc Te, D3 / 3822 6222**  
**24 Thao Dien, D2 / 6282 8822**  
**www.starlightdental.net**

## HEALTH



### CMI

Since 1992, CMI has been delivering high international quality medical services in HCMC. Our doctors and health professionals are highly skilled, to deliver the best healthcare to foreigners and local patients. Our specialties are: general and tropical medicine, pediatrics, cardiology, gynecology, osteopathy, acupuncture, psychomotor therapy, speech therapy, psychology, child birthing classes-breastfeeding support and more. CMI reverses all its benefits to the Heart Institute of HCMC & A. Carpentier Foundation. By coming to CMI you help poor children suffering from heart diseases to have access to cardiac surgery. Open from Monday to Saturday.

**1 Han Thuyen, D1**  
**028 38 27 23 66/67**  
**www.cmi-vietnam.com**



## SKIN CLINIC



### Stamford Skin Centre

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

**99 Suong Nguyet Anh, Dist. 1, HCMC**  
**(028) 3925 1990 or 0908 453 338**  
**www.stamfordskin.com**

## SPA & WELLNESS CENTERS



### Moc Huong Spa

Moc Huong Spa is supported by top-ranking professional physiotherapists who combine Eastern with Western techniques resulting a full body wellness. Reasonably priced with a wide range of services that include manicure, pedicure, facial, both body and for your complete well being.

**9C Ton Duc Thang, Dist 1, 02839 117 118**  
**2A Chu Manh Trinh, Dist 1, 02838 247 433**  
**61 Xuan Thuy, Thao Dien, Dist 2, 0283 519 1052**



### Mandala Wellness

Mandala Wellness is an environmentally conscious, holistic health platform in cooperation with its cold-pressed juice enterprise, Mandala Juice. We provide health-related services such as: osteopathy, acupuncture, rehabilitative & therapeutic bodywork, reiki, reflexology, yoga, meditation, qi gong, ballet body classes; weekly events and workshops focusing on themes related to fitness, holistic medicine & healing, nutrition and better well-being.

**41 Tran Ngoc Dien, Thao Dien, D.2**  
**www.mandala-wellness.com.vn**  
**info@mandala-wellness.com.vn**  
**0902 744 58**  
**Facebook@mandalawellnessvn**



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# Kids & Education





# PARENTS BEHAVING



**IT'S FRIDAY NIGHT, AND DARLING** Stephanie has stomped in home from school—nanny in tow.

“Muuuum?”

“Yes, darling.”

“Mrs. X did...”

You don't hear the rest of it. It doesn't matter. You're one glass of wine down already—hey, it's Friday—and the iPad is on the table, looking at you lingeringly. Pick me up, it taunts. Go on—you know you want to... Sod it, you think. I do want to. I'm allowed to—it's my kid and I'm paying for it. So you bash out an angry email to Mrs. X telling her exactly what you think of her. You sign off, “I shall expect to hear from you first thing tomorrow morning.” You delete the “or I'm pulling Stephanie out of school and then write it back in. It'll be fine.

We've all done it: fired off an email after a glass of wine or two, not thinking

of the consequences. Of course, a parent-to-teacher communication is not the only scenario in which this kind of behavior goes on. Whatever industry you're in, whoever it is you need to be annoyed with in that split second, the invention of email has created an environment for passive aggression that can so easily go awry.

But according to member of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), helicopter parents are increasingly inflicting grievances on their children's independent school teachers via email. These missives range from “WHY HASN'T SALLY BEEN MADE A GOALIE???” to “HOW DARE YOU ACCUSE JOHNNY OF SKIPPING GAMES!” with everything in between. Teachers tell of having their bosses copied in—heads of year, head teachers, heads of houses—and some of other parents being added to the conversation to stir up a

gang. Some teachers have described these emails as akin to road rage—taken out on whoever happens to be in the way at the time, projecting their own stressful lives onto the teacher. The teacher is often an innocent bystander, and always the one tasked with putting up with the horror-child in question. And skiving games is just not on.

The recent summer holidays presented another sort of crisis. You're glad they're over because not only has Cynthia now gone back to school but you can get your educational woes answered again on demand. School holidays are hell for badly behaved parents, because teachers—rightly—won't respond to emails while they're not being paid to. Of course, the problem, whatever shape it may take, hasn't gone away in the meantime.

Guidance in these areas depends to a degree on your child's school. A



# BADLY

Keyboard warriors, leave those teachers alone

Text by **Amanda Atwood**



housemaster or housemistress at a boarding school may well have a different schedule to your Year 4 math teacher. But whatever the age of your child, parents, your pain is felt. You work full-time so after dinner, with kids' bedtime and other assorted chores completed, 9pm (or, let's be honest, later) is the only time at which you are able to pick up any personal jobs. And, you might add, trying to get hold of Mrs. X is difficult; during school hours she's doing the teaching that you're working so hard to pay for.

But that 'pay for' bit doesn't mean you can send angry, snappy emails just because something hasn't gone your way. If you feel there's been an actual miscarriage of justice, then fine—email. Politely. Which we're sure you'd do anyway, but just for the avoidance of doubt, the answer, as with everything, lies in good manners. Most people are grown-up enough to

understand that the time you send the email doesn't necessarily dictate what time you'll be expecting a response. No one is so cross about a lost football match that they want a reply immediately, and anyway, not everyone checks their work emails out of office hours. Quite rightly. You just wish you could stop yourself.

So, the rules for communicating with your child's actually quite wonderful and not at all mean or Miss Trunchbull-like teachers? Be kind. Don't drink and type. Be realistic about how quickly you expect a response. One to two working days is probably fine, unless it's really urgent, if you send an email on a Friday night, you're looking at Tuesday. Don't be too keen. Consider your child. No, it's not fair for the teacher at the end of your irritation to penalize your child for their overbearing circling-like-a-helicopter parents, but it's only natural that they might feel a little

resentful if you've been a total nightmare. We're not saying any teacher would take action to that effect, but it's probably best to play it safe, eh?

Equally, play the long game and pick your battles wisely. Complaining about prefect selection probably isn't the most important thing in the world. For senior school parents, come GCSE and A-Level results you want a good relationship with your child's teacher. For prep schoolers, your time is only just beginning. If you were in a restaurant, you wouldn't complain during the starter, in case the waiter spat in your pudding. As one teacher put it, school lasts a lot longer than one bad dinner. You don't want to become that parent.

If you're feeling on the edge, step away from the iPad. You know it's the right thing to do. Whatever it is can wait until tomorrow morning. ■



# Reach For The Stars

Oi speaks to Janine Gordon Principal of EtonHouse International Pre-School Franchise • An Phu about intentional play, the child as a creative learner, and what a "remida" is.

Interview by **Christine Van**  
Images Provided by **EtonHouse**

Can you tell us a bit about yourself, and how you and EtonHouse International Pre-School Franchise • An Phu partnered up?

I am a passionate advocate of child-centered, play-based learning. While working in the Middle East a number of years ago, I was fortunate enough to lead a study tour of my entire Early Years Team to Reggio Emilia. It was there I learnt about the Singapore-based EtonHouse International REACH program (Reggio Emilia in Asia for Children).

I was subsequently working in China with a team opening up a Western Pedagogy & Chinese Culture-based school, which led to a desire to further my work in education within Asian cultures. Thus, I was naturally attracted to looking for an opportunity to work with EtonHouse.

I have been fortunate enough to enjoy doing exactly that here in HCMC for the past two years, at EtonHouse International Pre-School Franchise • An Phu.

You've worked in countries such as France, US, England, UAE, NZ, China and your home country of Australia. What experiences from each would you be bringing to EtonHouse International Pre-School Franchise • An Phu in Vietnam?

If I could unpack the multitude of experiences that have shaped my current (and ever-developing) approach to and philosophy of education, and assign each to its national source, this issue of *Oi* would be more than full... and not nearly as interesting!

As a teacher, trainer of other teachers and educational leader I am learning constantly when I'm working with children/students, parents and other teachers. I began working in education

at a time when Western education was evolving from the traditional and teacher-centered didactic ('chalk and talk') approach to an understanding of learning being a 'hands on' experience for all students. Today we work with learners taking responsibility for their own learning—problem solving and self-directing. We now teach understanding of how to find out, how to know and how to learn as we prepare our learners for their future.

The Reggio Emilia Approach was developed after World War II by psychologist Loris Malaguzzi, has its educational philosophy, where it's student-centered and constructivist, changed over the years?

Essentially your very correct description of the Reggio Emilia approach as child-centered and constructivist continues in Reggio Emilia. However, as the culture in the city and amongst the people evolves and changes, so does the experiential approach within the pre-schools. The Reggio Emilia philosophy is respectful of the community and reflects the thinking of the families of the children within the commune of Reggio Emilia. One small example is the central "Remida" or recycling center, a foundational concept of respecting the environment in Reggio Emilia inspired schools. The collected and recycled donated materials, that would otherwise be thrown away, are imaginatively and creatively used



Clockwise from topleft: Janine, Excursion - Discovery, Rock Climbing Wall, Learning time with teacher





*Clockwise: Indoor Playground, Sandpit in Playground, Classroom*



and safety.

Our pre-school is designed with an Early Childhood education and environmental focus. We 'bring the outdoors in' with vertical gardens and natural wood furniture. Our classrooms are open and well equipped with lots of open-ended materials, many from nature, for our creative children to use imaginatively.

We have also just set up a new classroom to welcome toddlers from 12 months old to 18 months old, accompanied by a parent, to our new "Early Learners Group" every Tuesday afternoon starting from August 15, 2017.

Our teachers design interesting, purposeful play areas. These are stimulating to our children and appeal to their natural curiosity. They encourage the children from 18 months to 6 years old to engage in what we term 'intentional play'—play that is constructed to elicit goal-oriented learning.

We are deliberately located further away from the majority of pre-schools in D2 that attract international children, as we are in An Phu. Thus we happily bring the opportunity for families in our area, particularly those in the Vista, to experience the joy of EtonHouse Early Childhood Education at EtonHouse International Pre-School Franchise · An Phu.

*Oi readers are warmly invited to visit our beautiful center here at the Somerset Vista, An Phu. Please phone us on (028) 6287 0804 to arrange a time. I look forward to welcoming you personally, showing you around our pre-school and further introducing you to what we do by answering all of your questions.*

*EtonHouse International Pre-School Franchise · An Phu  
2nd Fl., Somerset Vista, 628C Hanoi Highway, D2  
etonhouseanphu.com* ■

The best way I can respond to this is by paraphrasing from Loris Malaguzzi, founder of the Reggio Emilia schools project: "There are hundreds of different Images of Child. Each one of us has a different Image of the Child that directs us as we begin to relate to a child. In turn, the environment we construct around us, along with the way we interact with children, reflects the image we have about children."

At EtonHouse International Pre-School Franchise · An Phu, we have a shared Image of Child and Image of Teacher which reflects how we relate and interact with each other. We believe that children are curious, independent, capable, reflective and intelligent. Thus as teachers we foster children's independence and curiosity, creating intentional play spaces and stimulating learning experiences. We work alongside our children and support them directly while talking with them about their learning and understandings. Aligning with the Reggio Emilia approach, we see parents as the child's first teacher, ourselves as the second teachers and the environment as the third teacher.

**Tell us about the school's facilities and its location inside the Somerset Vista.**

The Somerset building is well-maintained, so our pre-school is very well-served. Feedback from visitors to EtonHouse International Pre-School Franchise · An Phu is that it is modern, fresh and very clean.

We have an entire floor on the second floor of the Somerset Vista building. This enables us to enjoy a huge, naturally-lit Indoor playground space. We have an exciting adventure playground, an obstacle course, a rock climbing wall and many activity areas where the children learn through purposeful play.

The advantages of this air conditioned multi-purpose area are self-evident, given our weather here in HCMC (sudden tropical downpours; heat and humidity)! Our teachers can plan for experiences there and use the space at any time.

Our location also enables us to use the outdoor area, pool complex and playground at The Vista, weather permitting, giving us the best of both worlds. We access the pools twice a week for swimming fun—water familiarization



# Fever Fears

You can't take chances when your child has a fever, but you shouldn't panic either



**WHEN A CHILD IS FIGHTING** off an infection, one of the most common side effects is fever. As the body's natural immune response gets to work, the heat given off and the energy expended in the defense effort will raise a child's body temperature and cause significant drowsiness and suffering. As the mercury rises, parents will often become greatly distressed and seek to treat the fever as quickly as possible. It's a pity that sometimes, despite their best intentions, these efforts can end up being contrary to the needs of the child, and can even make the symptoms worse.

Firstly, it's important to remember that fever is not a disease, it's just a symptom. Although a child may be suffering during an episode

of fever, it's really a positive indication that the body is actively fighting off an infection. There are many root causes that can bring on a fever—including viral, bacterial, and sometimes even parasitical infection. Sometimes a fever is caused by other more serious diseases such as cancer, while at other times it's the result of taking medication for another illness.

While it's certainly important to monitor your child during a fever, parents are sometimes overly concerned when their child has a temperature, and they will try to do everything within their power to reduce it. Sometimes the fever is brought on by taking unnecessary or inappropriate medication, leading the parent to think that the fever was caused by the original illness

rather than the attempted cure. Bronchiolitis in children under two, for example, is mostly caused by viruses—which as most parents should know cannot be treated with antibiotics (in fact, we do not yet have a medicine that kills viruses within the body). In some cases, if antibiotics are given for bronchiolitis, they can inadvertently cause excessive coughing and difficulty in breathing.

Some parents will wake up their child to give medicine or apply wet towels to reduce a fever. In fact, if a child has fever during sleep, everything is already being managed by the nervous system, so there is no need to wake them up to do anything at all. The fact that a child can sleep during fever is an indication that





The only Vietnamese national on Family Medical Practice's pediatrics team, **Dr. Truong Hoang Quy** has core medical competencies in internal medicine, nutrition, vaccination and infectious disease. He studied at Thai Binh Medical University, Hanoi Medical University and at the Queensland University of Technology in Australia.



everything is under control—if not, the child would certainly wake up independently.

Another common mistake parents make is to use medicine to prevent the onset of fever. Medicine taken to reduce fever is only effective if the temperature is higher than 38.5° Celsius. Lower than that, and it doesn't work at all. Some mothers administer the medicine out of concern that the child's temperature may be about to rise, but there is actually no medical benefit to the child in doing this.

It's important to pay attention to what other symptoms the child has, such as a runny nose, coughing or diarrhea. If the child is coughing a lot, has a rash, finds it difficult to breathe and also has a fever, or if a

fever lasts longer than three days, then that's certainly a cause for concern. That is the point when a child should be taken to see a doctor for an assessment. A baby under three months old who has a fever at any stage should be taken to see a doctor immediately, as fevers can be very dangerous at that age. Otherwise, especially if a fever is the only obvious symptom, it's best to let the child relax and wait until the symptoms subside, providing plenty of rest and water.

If you do see a doctor regarding a fever, it's still not always necessary to prescribe medicine. According to information I have learned from my colleagues in local Vietnamese hospitals, when a child is taken to see a doctor for symptoms of upper

respiratory infection (such as cough, runny nose and/or fever), antibiotics will be prescribed 99 percent of the time. This is despite the fact that antibiotics are only effective against a limited number of the illnesses that cause fever.

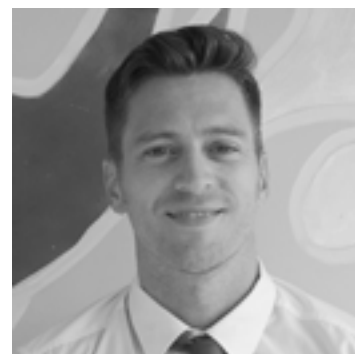
Many doctors feel a sense of obligation to provide medication rather than send a child home without it. Parents can be very upset if a doctor examines their sick child and then sends them away without drugs. Unfortunately, this practice has given rise to very dangerous levels of antibiotic resistance in Vietnam—and this is a very serious issue, as a child who has developed resistance to antibiotics may not be able to benefit from them at later times when they are urgently needed.

This problem is compounded by the fact that antibiotics are easily available over the counter in Vietnam, meaning parents who do not want to take their children to see a doctor will go direct to a pharmacy or a private clinic for their medicine. If the child's problem is not resolved within a couple of days, the parent may then decide to take him or her to hospital—but during the intervening time, the antibiotics may have altered the symptoms of the illness, making it far more difficult for the doctor to diagnose.

Sometimes I tell Vietnamese parents who go to a public hospital or clinic that a very good question is to ask the doctor is whether their child needs antibiotics or not. If the parent asks this question, the doctor will consider whether this case can perhaps wait.

In any event, it is certainly counterintuitive for a parent to try to persuade a doctor to give medicines, making them feel that they must prescribe something that may make matters worse. Sometimes, the only fever medicine necessary is simply to wait for it to go away. ■





**James Quantrill** is the Deputy Headteacher at Saigon Star International School. He moved to Vietnam in August 2014, having previously taught at an outstanding school in the UK.

# Banishing The Back To School Blues

After all the fun in the sun of summer, heading back to school doesn't have to be a chore

**I CAN RECALL (NOW MANY** years ago) as a young learner, the awful dread and 'knot' in the stomach I used to feel with the impending doom of a return to school after a prolonged summer break. No more sport with friends until a late darkness arrived, no more quality time with my Mum, Dad and sister. The fear had truly set in.

I can recall one older teacher, whom it seemed had neither the enthusiasm nor commitment anymore to help a child progress, who would greet me on that first school day in September, stone-faced and worksheet ready. Clearly, they were as excited as I to be returning. The transition could not have been less invigorating; from fresh air and sunshine to gray walls; from happy, playful families to rigid timetables with stressed teachers. Joy!

After teaching for seven years in the UK primary school system, at both a tough urban primary school and in a more rural setting, it was clear that a shift in teacher mindsets had occurred during the 20-plus year span from my childhood, to working within the sector. Teachers (generally) had become more aware of their learners, more empathetic to their various learning needs and more determined to positively impact their growth. The educators I had learned from, worked and collaborated with in those seven years, returned to school after their summer break having rested, reflected and been reinvigorated in their love for teaching.

While the misinformed might argue that it matters little what happened in the year past, it is quite the contrary. Effective teachers will spend a significant amount of time during this summer break thinking about what was successful and why, as well as what could be improved for the upcoming academic year to ensure the maximum amount of progress for their learners. The time spent on reflection is perhaps an aspect of the job that many leaders would admit isn't focused on enough during the school year; considering what is truly inspirational teaching and how it can be emulated across the school.

This focus on the art of reflection has had a knock-on effect for our learners. Since the turn of the year, our teachers have allocated roughly 20 to 30 minutes every Friday afternoon so that children reflect upon the learning that took place over the course of the school week, what they retained and how it might help them make further progress in the future. This ownership and 'mindedness' towards their learning saw an increasing ability to confidently express themselves and raised levels of self-esteem. Soon, they saw classmates identify with the same achievements and struggles, realizing that learning is not one fixed point of success, but more a journey we all embark upon.

So if the teachers and children return to school in a far more positive and enthusiastic mindset than years gone by, what of the parents? It's quite possible that they are mistaken by others as 'celebrating' their child's

return to school after a long period at home, when really, fears and worries also creep into their minds. Is my child happy, eating well and drinking enough? Are they learning at the 'right level?' Are they making friends?

The nature of education today is far more transparent and open than it certainly used to be when I was at school. Rather than call days ahead to make an appointment to meet the teacher, parents are encouraged to be a regular voice within the community, help identify improvements where required, and see the effective teaching and learning taking place. Not only are they more welcome on site, but by using advancements in technology, such as apps like Class Dojo, parents can receive regular updates of their child's lessons, learning and social development.

Now, in my fourth year overseas in an international school in Vietnam, I am fortunate enough to work again with talented, dedicated professionals who I am certain will have also reflected upon their children's progress in depth. In doing so, they will have already mentally planned and prepared lessons for the upcoming year, lessons which no doubt reignite a child's hunger and passion for learning after the holidays. As they attempt to do so, they will do it in an environment that protects, nurtures and stimulates the learner, ensuring they return with a smile on their faces and the 'blues' are left at the school gates. ■





Emma Cohen-Joppa is currently a music educator at International School Siagon Pearl. Emma holds a bachelor's degree in Music Education master's degree in International Education from Endicott College.

# Beyond the Expected

Cultural exploration through music

**WHEREVER THERE ARE PEOPLE** in the world, there is music. It truly is the global language. Growing up just 65 miles from Mexico, my own childhood was spent singing songs I loved in languages I did not fully understand—it was only years later that I realized I had been singing happily about a cockroach the whole time. When I was getting my undergraduate degree in music education at The University of Miami, much of my clinical experience was working with large populations of English language learners. I was learning how to modify and adapt my lessons in order to reach students with varying levels of English comprehension.

Students who are learning English as an Additional Language—and therefore may feel challenged during classes instructed through English—have been shown to experience more success in music classes, where everyone is learning the same new language together. My first job after graduating brought me back to Arizona, 97 percent of my students were English language learners. I was using the differentiation skills I had learned during university daily. I searched for ways to make music class relevant and meaningful, not just another place where they didn't always understand what was being said because of the language barriers. I incorporated numerous songs in Spanish and stressed that music was a new language that we were all learning together.

When you think back to your own elementary school music classroom, memories of playing recorders,

grammatically incorrect mnemonic devices for note names, and learning to sing the national anthem might come to mind. Maybe on special days, the dusty TV/VCR cart would come out and Disney's *Fantasia* would shower classical music and animation into your rapt eyes, or a grainy PBS video lecturing about Beethoven would lull you to sleep. I knew that my classroom would be different. Through these experiences, my philosophy of education developed into one that is inclusive and encouraging of the multicultural opportunities naturally available in music.

When I moved to Panama in 2011 as an elementary music teacher at The International School of Panama, every month I asked my students to bring me our welcome song in their first language and teach it to the class. Students loved this opportunity to share their culture with their classmates, and happily sang along, even if they didn't always understand what else was going on in class.

When a group of capoeiristas (people who practice the Brazilian martial art of capoeira) was traveling through Panama, I jumped at the opportunity to invite them into my classroom. Music is a large part of the capoeira art form, and the capoeiristas demonstrated how they use their instruments to practice this unique martial art. My students were then allowed to play these instruments while our visitors showed us some of the moves used in capoeira. This experience allowed students to gain a closer look at the way music is used in different cultures. Even my Brazilian students were learning things about this art form from their own country.

After five years in Central America, I moved to Vietnam, a country with a rich musical history and many unique instruments. While my repertoire of songs and materials includes songs from many different countries around the world, I wanted to bring music into the classroom in a way that was unique to where I was living and teaching. My goal was to find a way to expose my students to traditional Vietnamese instruments and music. After the Tet holiday, this was achieved when a group of four musicians brought six different instruments and performed workshops for my students. The classes learned how each instrument is played and heard it featured in a song, accompanied by the other instruments. The teachers and students loved the workshops, and it is something I hope to bring to the entire school next year.

While my music classes would include activities from different cultures no matter where I was teaching, the unique opportunities that are available due to our location are invaluable. They provide the students with an experience that would not be possible elsewhere in the world. My students gained a deeper understanding of how music is used in different cultures and were able to make connections between what we were learning in class and the instruments that they saw. As you and your family continue living in Vietnam, or wherever your life takes you next, I hope that you look for ways to make connections like this with your community and seek out unexpected multicultural experiences. ■



# Boarding School Life

A glimpse into the life of an international boarding school student

Text and Images by **Nhu Vo**, a 17-year-old junior at Pomfret School

**ONE DAY MY PARENTS TOLD** me that I was going to move to the US and complete my high school years there. I was 15 years old and in 9th grade at the time. My parents never really gave me any specific reasons why they wanted me to do so. Whenever I asked, they replied that studying abroad in the US would be a better educational opportunity for me, as it have been for their friends' children. I decided to give it a chance and proceeded with the application process. After many test practicing sessions, interviews, application essays, SSATS and TOEFLS tests, I was finally accepted to Pomfret School in the US.

As my 2015 summer days went by quickly and approached closer to my first day of school, the fears I had anticipated about leaving home to study abroad grew bigger. I had spent my entire childhood and then teenage years in Ho Chi Minh City and I was afraid that I was going to miss home too much, or perhaps would not adapt well in the new environment. Pomfret School, located in Connecticut, is more rural than Ho Chi Minh City. Images of traveling halfway across the globe to live in a completely different place, surrounded by strangers, haunted me until I arrived at the school on the hilltop.

During my first week, I wandered around the campus, trying to familiarize myself with this 500-acre land. Pomfret looked exactly like the pictures in their brochure—a vast green plain with lots of green hills and plants. As I was heading to the dining hall, three boys were walking in the opposite direction and as we got closer towards each other, one of the boys walked up to me and started barking at me: “Woof! Woof! Woof!” I froze for a second then, out of nowhere, my instincts made me raised my hands, clawed my fingers, swung my arms down with a scratching motion and shrieked “Meow!” We all laughed at this strange exchange. I don't remember who the boy was, or recall what happened after our zany ‘conversation,’ however, it was a thing between us that we would do at a distance occasionally. I never found out who the mysterious barking boy was. Although the incident might have seemed odd to some, to me it was a warm welcome to Pomfret because it made me noticed how comfortable people were

when interacting with each other. It was true when the seniors told me how Pomfret School was known for its caring community and kind culture, because its students and faculties had been striving to build and cultivate a friendly environment for everyone at the school.

I am a visual and kinesthetic learner. My first two years at Pomfret, I've learned valuable things from people by watching and helping them. Students at my school are unique individuals who aren't afraid of expressing themselves. For instance, in school meetings every Tuesday, it's common for students to voluntarily run on stage to dance whenever music starts at the beginning of the meeting. Students at Pomfret are courageous and ambitious. Besides working hard on their academic commitments, they also manage their own independent projects or clubs: the book club, ski club, investment club, etc. Before I came to Pomfret, it had never been clear to me that good academic results aren't the only thing that were going to help a student become successful, it's also the things they engage themselves in outside of the classroom. I discovered that there were so many ways for students to pursue their passion. For example, a group of students initiated and ran their own thrift shops, and even put on a Tedx event. I also learned that along the way of pursuing one's passion, the process is much more fun and productive when there are friends

to help. Therefore, building connections with students and faculties are very beneficial. Every student at Pomfret has an interesting story to tell because of the things they do outside of class.

## A Winter's Tale

I never would have thought that I could lead a group of students, but during my sophomore year, it was thanks to these brave students that inspired me to lead my own project. In the winter, I did a two-week project with a group of 12 students on helping the homeless. From this project, I learned that each homeless person has their own different problems and it is difficult to solve all their problems, or it might even be considered rude to them if you try to help them with every single one. I learned that a







considerate way to facilitate their lives without intruding too much is to simply provide them with basic needs, such as money, clothes, shelter or food. Another big takeaway from leading the project was that no matter how well prepared I was to head it wasn't so effective when I was not confident. I tend to be timid and quiet when communicating in front of groups and as a result the instructions I planned to give were not well delivered. Optimism is also indispensable along with confidence. Whether it is speaking to the group, directing or encouraging them, confidence and a positive attitude makes you look professionally presentable and charismatic. When I grew more comfortable with my group, I became more confident and my team worked more efficiently.

Another favorite thing about living as a boarder is that I am surrounded by bright, young people from many different backgrounds, and I get to live with some of them. Some of the best things about living under the same roof with your best friends are movie nights, late night conversations and snacks, dance parties, spa sessions and more. School boarding with my best friends feels like I'm having a sleepover at their houses every day.

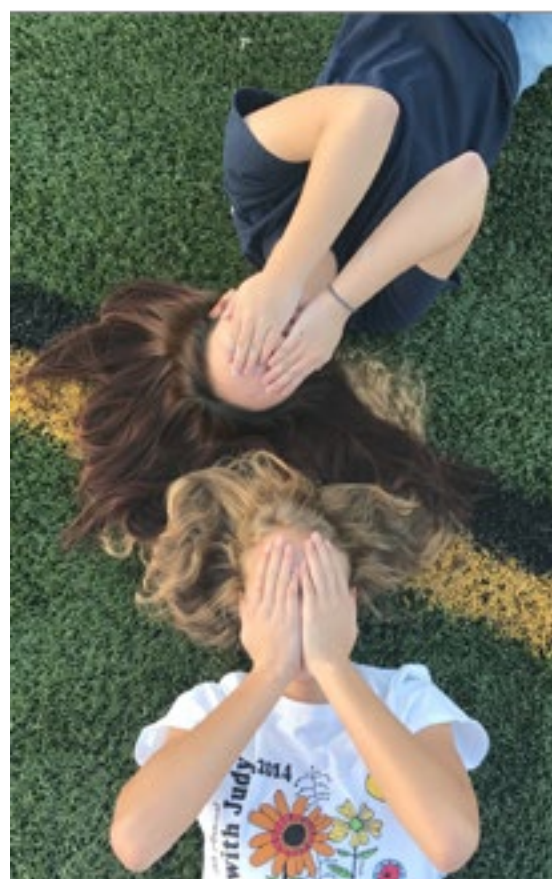
My favorite memory so far at Pomfret happened during a bitter cold winter night. Coming from Ho Chi Minh City, I found New England's weather very different, especially in the winter where the temperatures can drop to as low as -17 degree Celsius. Winter isn't my favorite season because I wasn't used to the cold. The snow was fun for a few days until it grew extremely thick and made it difficult to walk around the campus. Winter days were shorter as well and the skies were almost-always gray. I was depressed throughout the winter season. On one snowy day, when it was -8 degree Celsius and the snow was approximately four inches high, my friends decided to go snow sledding down the school's hilltop. I wasn't so excited about the idea initially; nevertheless, I gave it a try.



Nhu (pictured with glasses)

We ended up sledding for three hours straight. The cold didn't bother me at all because I had a blast with my friends. That day made me realize that whatever the circumstances are, regardless of how bad things may seem, instead of anticipating the negatives; I can be optimistic instead because I can't control the future. In any circumstances, I get to decide whether I want to suffer or make the experience worthwhile. My lessons at Pomfret went beyond the classroom and I am grateful, for it helped me to become the person I am today.

*If you're interested in learning more about the application process, students' boarding school lives, or just to get different perspectives on this topic, visit US Boarding School Conference Ho Chi Minh City's (UBSC HCMC) Facebook page. UBSC is a non-profit organization founded to provide insightful information and stories about US boarding schools. UBSC also holds annual conferences in HCMC every summer for prospective boarding school students and parents. ■*





# Education

## INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS



### ABC International School (ABCIS)

Inspected and judged an outstanding school by British Government Inspectors (January 2017), the ABCIS is one of the few schools worldwide awarded this Department for Education rating. Progress of students puts the ABCIS among the top 8% of schools in the world. Providing education for 2-18 year olds in a supportive and friendly environment, it delivers a culturally adapted version of the British National Curriculum supported by Cambridge & AQA IGCSE and AS/A levels. Students are prepared for Universities in the UK, USA, Australia, Korea and Canada.



**Foundation & Early Primary Campus:**  
4, IE Street, KDC Trung Son, Binh Hung, Binh Chanh, HCMC

**Primary & Secondary Campus:**  
2, IE Street, KDC Trung Son, Binh Hung, Binh Chanh, HCMC

**84 28 5431 1833/34/35/36**

**office@theabcis.com**

**www.theabcis.com**



### At EtonHouse International Pre-School Franchise - An Phu,

children aged 18 months to 6 years experience a Reggio Emilia style, play-based early childhood education. The progressive Singapore-based EtonHouse **Inquire - Think - Learn** curriculum, delivered by dedicated international teachers, enables pre-schoolers to enjoy fun and hands-on learning in Somerset Vista, An Phu.

**Level 2, Somerset Vista, 628C Hanoi Highway, D.2, HCMC**

**028 6287 0804/ 0904 938 666**

**www.etonhouseanphu.com**



### International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP)

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

**92 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh**

**+84 (28) 2222 7788/99**

**admissions@issp.edu.vn**

**www.issp.edu.vn**



### Kinder Academy

Kinder Academy is a Reggio Emilia approach and STEM concept inspired preschool, where you can find the best integration of the above philosophies and practices.

Our Vision: "Inspire and nurture your child to be a thinker with a global mindset"

Our Mission: "Passionate about the development of your child, we provide the right environment to play, learn and grow. Our team is child centric."

**47/11/09 Quoc Huong, Thao Dien, District 2**  
**093 878 00 76**



### Saigon Star International School

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

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



### The International School Ho Chi Minh City - American Academy

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

**16 Vo Truong Toan, D2**

**+84 (28) 3898 9100**

**admissions@aavn.edu.vn**

**www.aavn.edu.vn**







### The International School Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC)

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

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



## Also...

### Australian International School (AIS)

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

### British International School (BIS)

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

### Renaissance International School Saigon

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

### Saigon South International School

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

### The Montessori International School of Vietnam

For children 6 months to 9 years old. A registered member of the American Montessori Society. Montessori uses an internationally recognized educational method which focuses on fostering the child's natural desire to learn. The aim is to create a sense of self and individuality through an encouraging and learning environment. Available are Extra-curricular Activities, Summer camp and immersion programs in Vietnamese, French and Mandarin.  
**www.montessori.edu.vn**



### The American School

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

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



### WONDERKIDS MONTESSORI SCHOOL (WMS)

School ages: 18 months to 9 years old. WMS is a standard international Montessori school offering nursery, kindergarten and lower elementary program by North America Montessori Curriculum covered with 100% English environment (for children from 18 months to 9 years old). Where the best integration of this philosophy and practices happen, we are proudly an active member of American Montessori Society. "Free the child's potential and you will transform him into the world." Maria Montessori

**Campus 1:**  
**3A Tong Huu Dinh, Thao Dien, D2, HCMC**  
**0938 909 268 / 028 22534999**  
**montessori-office@wonderkids.edu.vn**  
**www.wonderkidsmontessori.edu.vn**

**Campus 2:**  
**4-6 Road No.20, My Gia 1, Tan Phu, D7, HCMC**  
**0977299288 / 028 54141416**  
**info@wms.edu.vn**  
**www.wms.edu.vn**







**4-7 & 11-14 October 2017**

**Ticket prices (VAT included)**

**1.200.000 VND (Wednesday & Thursday)**

**1.400.000 VND (Friday & Saturday)**

### **Early Bird Discounts**

	<b>Wed &amp; Thu</b>	<b>Fri &amp; Sat</b>
<b>01/06 – 31/07/2017</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>01/08 – 30/09/2017</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>20%</b>

**Booking tickets now at: [oktoberfestvietnam.com](http://oktoberfestvietnam.com)**

**Hotline: 0908 477 489**

**From 18:00 until midnight**  
**Oktoberfest Vietnam is strictly for adults 18 years and older**



# ISHCMC-AA EXCELLENCE

Van, Grade 11 student



**International School  
HO CHI MINH CITY  
AMERICAN ACADEMY**

**POSITIVE • CARING • ENGAGING**

**POSITIVE  
CARING  
ENGAGING**

Welcome to the leading American curriculum secondary school in Ho Chi Minh City, inspiring and challenging students aged 11 to 18 years old to achieve personal excellence.

**[www.aavn.edu.vn](http://www.aavn.edu.vn)**

**COGNITA**  
TEACHING EXCELLENCE

**CIS** WE ARE AN  
ACCREDITED  
SCHOOL

**NEA  
SAC**  
Accredited

16 Vo Truong Toan, An Phu Ward,  
District 2, Ho Chi Minh City  
Tel: (84-28) 3898 9100  
Email: [admissions@aavn.edu.vn](mailto:admissions@aavn.edu.vn)





## CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2017!

FROM ALL YOUR FRIENDS  
AT ISHCMC

Congratulations to the Class of 2017, the 17th cohort of students to graduate from ISHCMC.

The Class of 2017 scored well above the world average and furthermore, 60% of this class received the prestigious IB Bilingual Diploma, upholding the school's reputation as a truly international school with over 50 nationalities represented school-wide.

In addition to these resounding results, the Graduating Class Valedictorian, Yeji scored a perfect score of 45 out of 45. Only 218 other students around the world achieved this top score out of the 159,400 students who sat the IB DP examinations globally in May 2017. Yeji joined the ISHCMC community in Grade 8 in 2012.

Furthermore, we congratulate the Class of 2017 for their acceptances to top universities all over the world including Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, India, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the United States.

98% IB DP  
PASS  
RATE  
ALL STUDENTS STUDY THE IB

15 NATIONALITIES  
REPRESENTED  
IN THE  
CLASS OF 2017

IN ADDITION,  
60% OF STUDENTS  
AWARDED  
THE  
BILINGUAL  
DIPLOMA