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VIETNAM

11-2017

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*It's Made*



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NHIỀU TÁC GIẢ, TẬP 08/2017



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## This Month's Cover

*Bamboo bike parts, read about the production process on page 44*

Photo by **Ngoc Tran**

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NGOC CHAU GARDEN / IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN

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# GASTRONOMY

## Seafood Buffet by River

Nestled under a shaded tropical canopy, Tram's Cookery features Monthly Seafood Buffet Night highlighting the theme of fresh seafood and assortment dishes from Vietnamese and Asian cuisine by overlooking the peaceful Saigon River

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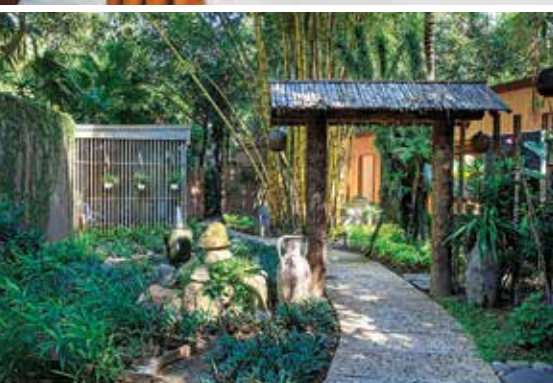
- 90-min Body Massage at your choice and 30-min of Facial or Foot Massage
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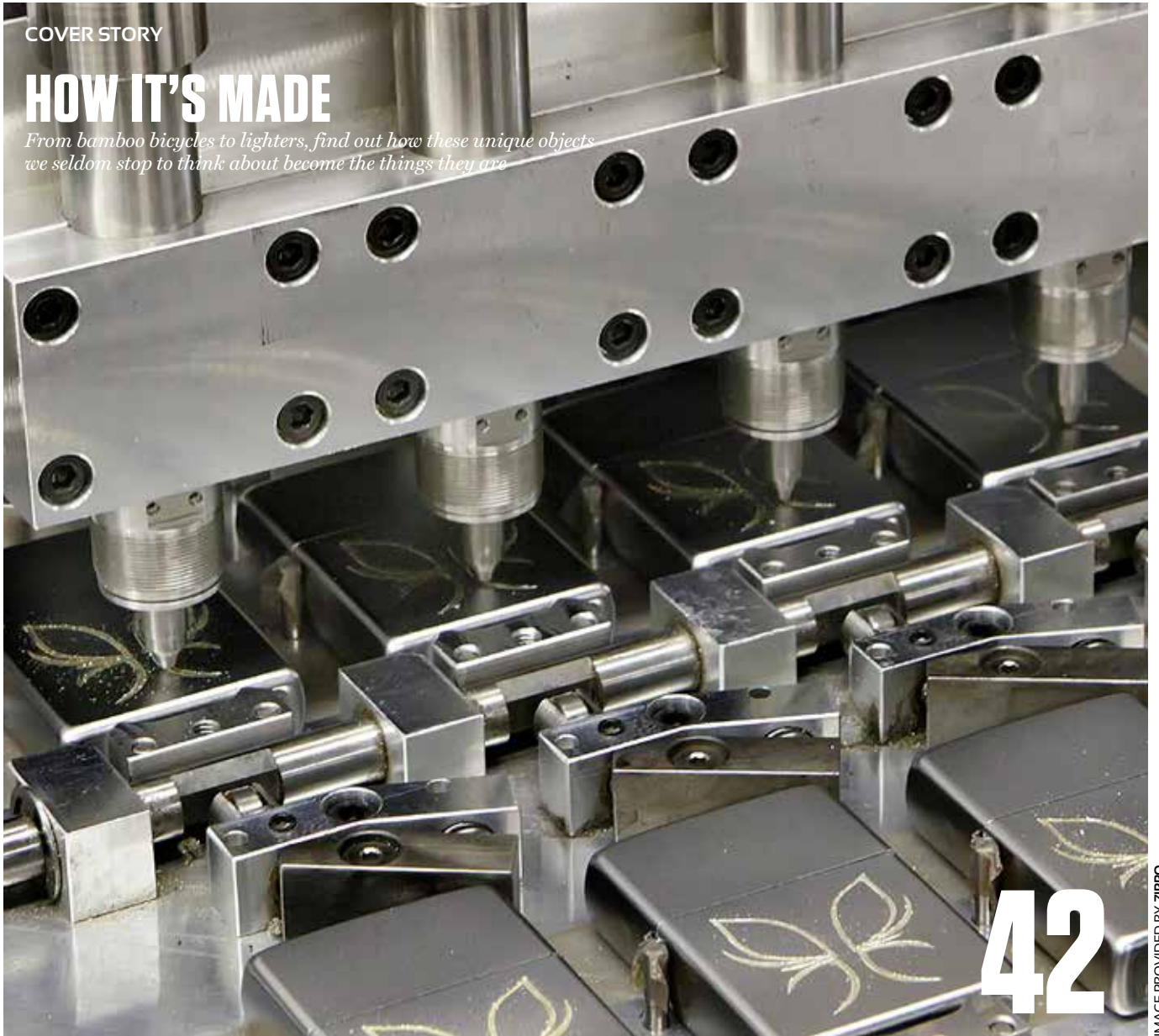


IMAGE PROVIDED BY ZIPPO

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## BOUTIQUE CAM THANH RESORT



## BOUTIQUE HOI AN RESORT



### **SPECIAL OFFER** **30% DISCOUNT ON ACCOMMODATIONS**

The Boutique Hoi An Resort is running promotion which gives travelers who book a room on website [www.boutiquehoianresort.com](http://www.boutiquehoianresort.com) with a special discount of up to 30%, applied for new booking from November 1<sup>st</sup> 2017 to February 28<sup>th</sup> 2018 for all room categories.

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\* For more information or booking, please contact our reservation call +84 (0) 235 3939111 or email: [reservation@boutiquehoianresort.com](mailto:reservation@boutiquehoianresort.com)



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# Datebook

What's on this month...

**NOVEMBER 11-12**



**What:** Andre Hommen

**Where:** The Lighthouse (104 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, Floor 6, D1), 9am-5am

**About:** Andre Hommen started mixing by himself, at first in his bedroom but soon at underground parties in his home region of western Germany. Andre's life script has always had house music at its center. For over five years

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now, he has played an important part within the creative and administrative team behind Dennis Ferrer's New York City-based Objektivity imprint and has had the opportunity to develop projects by artists including Ferrer, The Martinez Brothers, Loco Dice, Henrik Schwarz and more.

**Contact:** Call 0120 388 3712 for more info



# HAPPY VIETNAMESE TEACHER'S DAY



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## NOVEMBER 12-15

**What:** XXII World Congress on Parkinson's Disease and Related Disorders  
**Where:** GEM Center (8 Nguyen Binh Khiem, D1)

**About:** The motto of the event is "A Century of Movement Disorders: Transformation of Clinical Care." True to the overarching mission of the organization, they strive to create a milieu for the free exchange of knowledge, to bridge the divide between basic science and clinical care, and to forge the future by coalescing an understanding of the etiology and pathophysiology with treatment of the manifold motor and behavioral features of these disorders. It is their hope that this Congress facilitates the global sharing of therapeutic strategies to enhance the quality of life of patients worldwide suffering from movement disorders. This Congress aspires to reach this goal by bringing together a diverse, equi-gender, international faculty of dynamic scientists, seasoned clinicians, and dedicated allied health experts. The Congress will include thought provoking plenary lectures, cutting edge scientific symposia, interactive forum discussions and practical workshops. Equally important, it will offer numerous slots for oral presentations of ongoing research and 'hot topics.'

**Contact:** Visit [www.iaprd-world-congress.com](http://www.iaprd-world-congress.com) for more info



## NOVEMBER 16

**What:** Vietnam Salmagundi Book Launch

**Where:** inpages (4 Le Van Mien, D2); 6pm-8pm

**About:** Development worker and writer Dana McNairn has a new book out. Originally written for her sister, Vietnam Salmagundi is a collection of sketches chronicling her early observations of a rapidly changing country. Written in English and translated into Vietnamese, these vignettes are meant to resonate with the men and women of Vietnam—foreigner or national.

**Contact:** Visit [inpages.org](http://inpages.org) or [danamcnairn.com](http://danamcnairn.com) for more info



## NOVEMBER 17

**What:** Inter-Corporate Urban Challenge

**Where:** District 1, VND990,000 per person, 3pm-6pm

**About:** Compete with other companies and try to win the prize of the best corporate team 2017. Is your company brave enough to participate in this urban challenge? So you think you have the best team? Test your team's skills to find a hidden box in the city.

**Contact:** Visit [ubi-quest.com/inter-corporo-2017](http://ubi-quest.com/inter-corporo-2017) for more info



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### NOVEMBER 24 & 25

**What:** International Conference On World Interdisciplinary Fellows In Tertiary Education 2017 (IC-WIFE 2017)

**Where:** Aristo Saigon Hotel (3A Vo Van Tan, D3)

**About:** IC-WIFE 2017 will serve as a platform for inter-regional exchange of ideas, collaborations and cooperation among academicians, postgraduate students, educators, industry researchers and other practitioners. IC-WIFE 2017 invites all research entities to present their research idea, commentary and research findings. Only English language is accepted at this conference.

**Contact:** Visit [icwifessr.wixsite.com/icwife-ssr](http://icwifessr.wixsite.com/icwife-ssr) for more info



### NOVEMBER 27 & 28

**What:** 8th International Conference on Language, Education, Humanities and Innovation 2017

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

**About:** The conference is a multidisciplinary forum discussing theories, research findings and new advancements in the areas of language, education, and innovation. After successful events in cities such as Singapore, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur, the series moves to Vietnam with a two-day event.

**Contact:** Visit [icsai.org/iclehi8](http://icsai.org/iclehi8) for more info

### NOVEMBER 28

**What:** Digital Transformation: How To Get Started Right Away?

**Where:** Check AMCHAM website for location, 8:30am-10:30am

**About:** We've all heard about Technology and Innovation as a driving force behind Industry 4.0, the Fourth industrial revolution. Digital Transformation is just a matter of when and no longer a choice for organizations. Imagine if you could get started on your journey right away? Imagine if you could see how organizations in Vietnam are already reaping the rewards? Imagine if you can start to see how you get from here to where you want to be? Join this AMCHAM event to learn how to start your digital transformation

**Contact:** Visit [www.amchamvietnam.com](http://www.amchamvietnam.com) for more info

### DECEMBER 10

**What:** Dog's Christmas Event

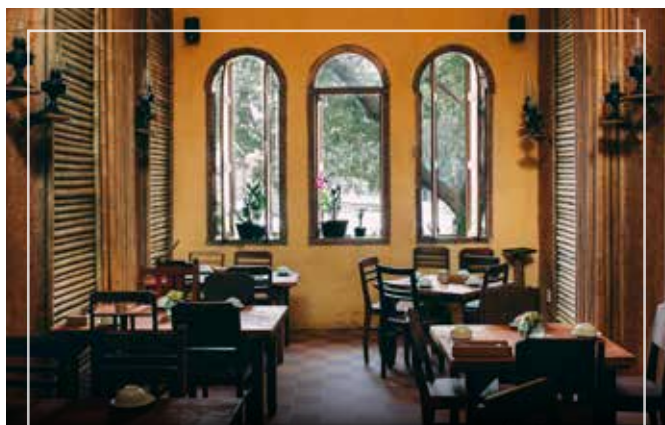
**Where:** Bed & Pet-first (14A6 Thao Dien, D2); 10am-2pm; VND50,000

**About:** An exclusive event for dogs and their owners that includes: a health check, 50 percent off on bathing service, dog biscuits and snacks, a photoshoot with Christmas costumes, a lucky draw and, for dog-owners, milk tea. And because the Christmas holiday is all about caring and giving, the event highlights pet adoption—give a dog a forever home by adopting from ARC. All proceeds from the entrance fee will be donated to ARC.

**Contact:** Call 093 408 0186 for more info







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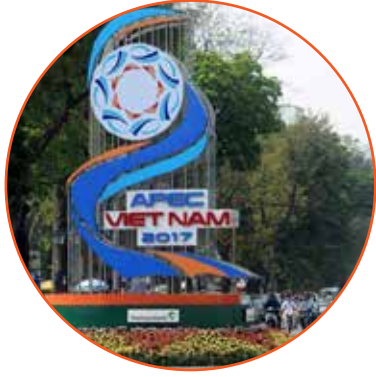
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# TROI OI!

## The country in numbers



800

**POLICE OFFICERS FROM ALL PROVINCES AND CITIES** across Vietnam will be mobilized to ensure traffic safety and escort delegates during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit week in the central city of Da Nang this November. Some 20 female police officers will partake in the welcoming of APEC delegates at local event centers. Police and military units must work with one another to ensure absolute safety during the APEC summit week, Col. Gen. Nam asserted, adding that they have to be on high alert to deal with any potential sabotage or terror activity.

A command center will be established and stationed in downtown Da Nang to assign tasks to the traffic police units. Hundreds of cars will be used during the 2017 APEC Economic Leaders' Week. The APEC is a regional economic forum established in 1989, comprising 21 member states, including Australia, China, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, the US, and Vietnam among others. The Economic Leaders' Week is scheduled to take place from November 6 to 11 in Da Nang.

\$188 MILLION

**NEW SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PARK WILL BE BUILT IN HO CHI MINH CITY NEAR AN EXISTING HI-TECH PARK AND**

Vietnam National University-Ho Chi Minh City in District 9. This will be the city's second science and technology park. Once finished, the area will serve as a workplace for approximately 15,000 employees. As a whole, the entire development will focus on computer science, renewable energy, automation, biotechnology and other science- and tech-driven fields. Start-up development and hi-tech workforce training are also expected to be amongst the park's main draws.



~10,000

**CYBER ATTACKS HAPPENED IN VIETNAM**

in first nine months of 2017. These included 4,595 malware attacks, 3,607 defacing incidents and 1,762 phishing attempts, the Vietnam Computer Emergency Response Team (VNCERT) has reported. VNCERT

noted that 16 government-run websites using the ".gov.vn" domain name had fallen victim to malware attacks but only two-thirds of the infected systems had since been fixed. Twenty-one government websites were also defaced, or had their interfaces altered by hackers, however, most of them had recovered.

VNCERT said that more than half of the victims of the phishing attacks, in which hackers attempt to obtain sensitive information such as usernames, passwords, and credit card details by disguising themselves as trustworthy entities, had also secured their systems. VNCERT also warned against the rise of ransomware, another type of malicious software that blocks access to, and threatens to destroy, victims' computers unless they pay a ransom.





## 3,750 PIGS WERE INCINERATED IN HCMC AFTER THEY TESTED POSITIVE FOR SEDATIVES AT A MAJOR SLAUGHTERHOUSE.

The process took approximately 14 days to complete. A police raid on the slaughterhouse in Cu Chi District uncovered thousands of pigs being injected with sedatives shortly before being slaughtered. The slaughterhouse is the largest in the southern metropolis, capable of processing over 5,000 pigs each night in order to supply local markets and supermarkets the following morning.

A source close to *Tuoi Tre* (Youth) newspaper revealed that the entire incineration process will cost nearly VND4.5 billion and will be carried out at the expense of the violating slaughterhouse. With the price of pork currently at VND30,000 per kilogram, the violators are on the line for VND10 billion in damages.

The use of sedatives on animals to keep them calm during transportation is allowable by law in Vietnam, though there is typically a week-long waiting period required between sedation and slaughter in order to allow the animals to discharge the drugs.



## 500 VIETNAMESE YOUTHS COLLECTED GARBAGE ON BINH CHAU BEACH IN VUNG TAU LAST MONTH.

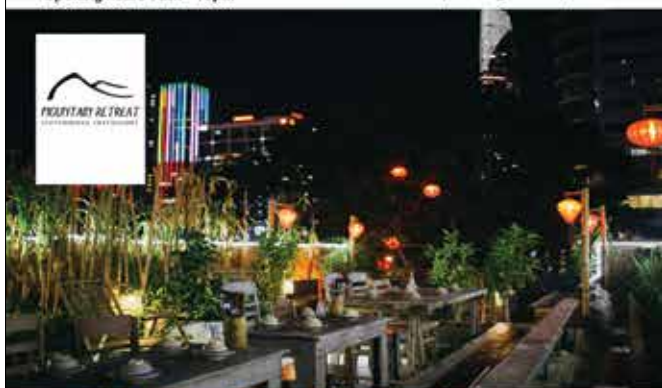
The group, calling themselves “O! Phuot di!” (Yea! Let’s Go Backpacking), are determined to take action in protecting, preserving and restoring the country’s natural beauty. “Collecting plastic bags and recycling” is the group’s slogan. The participants created a long line, resembling a conveyor belt, to their van parked near the beach. Over 600 garbage bags worth of trash were collected and taken away on the day.

Nguyen Tuan Anh, administrator of the fanpage “O! Phuot di!” with over 95,000 members, said that this was the third time the community had held a movement to collect garbage while backpacking. On their last trip in June 2016, the group went to Ba Den Mountain in Tay Ninh Province. At the top of the mountain they collected over half a ton of garbage including bottles and leftover food. Later they brought the garbage down the hill on the 1km-long road.



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Lunch - Dinner / Opening hours 10am - 10pm

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# THE BULLETIN

Promotions and news in HCMC and beyond...

## ISHCMC Welcomes The New Academic Year With Renovated Learning Areas

International School Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC) opens the new academic year with renovated learning areas in their current campus located at Vo Truong Toan Street, District 2.

ISHCMC's brand new state-of-the-art Secondary Campus is due to open in the 2017/18 academic year. In addition to this, the school has also committed to a refurbishment to the current campus, soon to become the Primary School Campus after the Secondary School transitions to its new facility.

The refurbishment plan is part of ISHCMC's long-term goal to ensure the current campus is equipped to facilitate the learning experiences taking place. This, paired with ISHCMC's commitment to specialized International Baccalaureate educators ensures that every child receives an individualized learning experience equipping them for the 21st century.

The Primary Campus Refurbishment Plan commenced in 2016 with the development of new learning areas and breakout collaborative spaces for Grade 4 and 5 students. In addition, primary students also welcomed a new makerspace and green room designed to inspire and develop creativity and innovation skills.

The recent summer vacation has seen the second phase of this renovation project completed in which the Information and Media Center, previously known as the Library was relocated and received

an entire makeover. Plus, new learning spaces for Grade 2 and Grade 3 classes featuring large collaborative corridors and learning lounges to facilitate group study and self-directed learning were created.

The new Information and Media Center is a unique space for primary-aged children. Offering more than just books, this new area encourages reading, self-study and teamwork with specialized areas such as individual inquiry pods, study pods and collaborative zones. Partnered with multi-purpose tiered landscapes that boast seating areas, storage and book shelves to ensure differentiated spaces. The area has been designed to ensure study areas that allow connectivity and can also be moved and recreated swiftly and with ease to enhance investigations relating to units of inquiry. A serpentine feature wall allows for multiple experiential spaces while a bean bag wall allows students to have flexibility and ownership of the areas.



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# The Sky is the Limit

Text by **Michael Arnold**  
Portrait by **Ngoc Tran**

Cathay Pacific's new country manager discusses expansion, their customer-centric approach and living a #lifewelltraveled



**2017 MAY HAVE BEEN A** difficult year for the aviation industry in general, but Cathay Pacific's new country manager Lance Kwong has arrived in Vietnam to oversee exactly the opposite of what you'd expect at times like these—an expansion of the airline's services. Last July, Cathay Pacific ([www.cathaypacific.com](http://www.cathaypacific.com)) added an extra flight to the 18 already departing weekly out of HCMC, while at the same time increased services out of Hanoi every week from 10 to 12. Many of the planes serving these routes have been upgraded during this period, bringing the average age of Cathay's aircraft flying into Vietnam substantially below the fleet's total average of 7.7.

"We do see very much potential for growth here in Vietnam," says Kwong, "so that's the primary reason why we're adding all these frequencies and capacities. We're still looking at some growth in terms of capacities and number of seats next year, pretty much reflecting our confidence in the market. This is not only happening on the passenger service side; we've also added







one more freighter service per week out of Hanoi starting from September.”

Cathay’s broadening commitment to Vietnam is based on solid financial forecasts for the local economy’s likelihood of sustained growth over the next five years and beyond. “We do see a huge potential here and continue to have very strong confidence in the Vietnamese market,” affirms Kwong, “including both outbound tourists, which is the major target audience we’re looking after, as well as passengers who are coming to Vietnam from other parts of the world. Tourist numbers have been on the rise for a very long time.”

While competition from low cost carriers and other full service airlines is high in this market, Cathay Pacific’s premium long-haul network (reaching 198 destinations across the globe) continues to rate highly among increasing numbers of Vietnamese residents going abroad. The airline added connections to Tel Aviv and Barcelona this year, while services to Copenhagen, Brussels and Dublin are due to commence shortly.

Working with Cathay Pacific for

the past eight years, Kwong’s previous posts in the US and China have given him plenty of opportunity to reflect on what is distinctive about the airline. “We launched a marketing campaign about two years ago, Life Well Traveled,” he remembers. “That really goes back to the values of the company. A life well traveled eventually leads to a life well lived.”

“The question is, how do we enable a life well traveled?” continues Kwong. “The corporate, philosophical way is essentially how much do we understand our customers and how do we put them at the center of everything that we do? There are different aspects, starting from the hardware—it’s a really young fleet. When you go into the cabin, it’s well-maintained. More importantly, the maintenance and reliability of the aircraft is much better, meaning more reliable operations. Then there’s the software, the service. If you talk to any service staff from Cathay, they’re all working around our principle of Service Straight From The Heart. It’s not only about fulfilling a job, it’s more about delivering the service, not just following the standard operating procedures. If

you treat people the way you would like to be treated and are able to take care of the passengers even during very difficult situations, that is really key.”

Kwong’s tenure in Vietnam coincides with a moment of change and transformation for Cathay Pacific, a strengthening of its customer-centric approach. With such unreserved confidence in the Vietnamese market, passengers can expect to see services continue to expand in this country and an increased focus on flyer comfort and convenience.

“A lot of things are related,” says Kwong. “The way we maintain our aircraft, how we do the checks, maintaining a very good safety record—the best among all the airlines. And even for the very small things that we do in-flight, no matter whether it’s our entertainment system, our cuisine partnering with hotels and chefs to make something different and special for the passengers, we don’t give in on any single detail. We just make sure it’s a great journey experience for customers, so that they’re well taken care of and travel well, in order to live life well.” ■

# Down to A FINE ART

Zunk, a central figure in Hanoi's street art scene, discusses hip-hop, supporting the community and the future of Vietnamese graffiti

Text and Images by **Chris Humphrey**



## **I MEET ZUNK BY THE CORNER**

of the Cuban Embassy. We walk together down a few alleyways, heading to his studio for the next few months. As we walk, something about him immediately strikes me. He has a way about him that few people have. There is a lightness to his being, an ease in the way in which he talks about his life and his work. It's something I've come across only a few times, and almost always occurs when someone has found their calling at a young age and has therefore never been expected to make personal compromises to achieve someone else's ambition. Zunk, I feel, has been able to follow his own path from very early on. The result is this lightness; there's no bitterness to speak of, no complaints, no furrow in the brow.

We head up a dusty old wooden staircase and into his studio, a compact room with just a few chairs, books and a laptop open on his desk. Graffiti art covers the walls, including canvases for sale, and a large, somewhat imposing impression of Bart Simpson. One of the books on his desk is a copy of *Dunkare*, the hip-hop magazine he's recently edited and published. I wonder if it was hip-hop or street art that first drew him in?

"I got involved in street art first, in 2006," he says, with a slow grin, "but both scenes started at the same time, in early 2000. And then, in 2010, which was 1,000 years of Hanoi, the government became strict. They wanted to keep everything clean, so we had to stop painting on the





streets for a few years. Later on, when foreigners from the UK came to live in Hanoi, they started painting things like flowers or about the environment. They painted things that were easier for people to understand. They brought up the spirit of street art in Hanoi."

He goes on to mention some of the best street artists in the city, including Mate (pron. Ma Tay), who happens to be from Bristol. Considering the artistic heritage of this particular British city (the home of Banksy, among many others), it's curious to hear how Mate became ingrained in the scene here. "It's special because he started painting in Vietnam, not in the UK. He's only

been painting for five years, but he's the one who has the most paintings on the street. He's not only good at tagging but also painting portraits as well."

Graffiti is considered one of the four hip-hop elements, and it's clear the mediums are intertwined in Hanoi. To Zunk, the hip-hop scene is 'bigger' than street art; "Hip-hop includes graffiti, and also break-dance and rap," he says as he lights a cigarette. "With graffiti you learn when you paint. There aren't as many opportunities. With break-dance or rap you just take your time and train with your friends. With graffiti you have to invest more money. You can dance without money."





## Supporting the Community

That said, it was Banksy himself who said that "graffiti is one of the few tools you have if you have almost nothing." And as with other outsider art forms—hip-hop, parkour, skateboarding—street art offers a chance to get involved in something not only creative but subversive, and a community in which introverted artists can feel a sense of belonging. On the surface, Vietnam seems an ideal place for it. In a country where generational differences are so pronounced, many young people are trying to find new ways to express themselves. And besides, *Khoan Cat Be Tong* stencils have already covered Hanoi's streets for years. Bare concrete walls dominate cityscapes, a myriad of canvases waiting to be painted. But it also depends on the society that supports it. Graffiti only really exists here in Hanoi and Saigon, and even in those cities, it took time for the scene to develop and take hold. Zunk freely admits that their work then was "not very good," which didn't help the public perception of street art in Hanoi.

Hunter S. Thompson memorably said that graffiti is beautiful in the way that 'a brick in the face of a cop' is beautiful. In Vietnam, it doesn't always seem to be the edgy subculture it is elsewhere. There are aspects of it that are, with illegal tagging becoming more commonplace, but at the same time, much of the art is actually designed to support the community. Some of Zunk's latest work, for example, is on the wall of an orphanage in Ba Vi. A lot of the paid work available is for businesses—restaurants or coffee shops—who want their establishments to be more appealing to Vietnamese youth or foreigners. The intention is to create "meaningful" art that has a "good impact" on the community.

He points to a book on the table. It's a collection of art collected from temples and other religious sites around Vietnam and East Asia. "I'm interested in traditional art," he says, as cigarette smoke coils over his flat peak cap. "I like to paint traditional styles, but with graffiti. I use the detail from traditional art and make it modern. Because you

have to find a new thing. That's why the title of my magazine is 'the art of being unique.' If you copy somebody, you will never have the respect of the community—you'll be dissed by everyone."

The scene, he says, is improving and becoming more communicative thanks to the internet, which is "like a dictionary for people who want to know about hip-hop and street art." Online forums have connected artists, and they also travel to other cities now and share knowledge. "In 2012, we were sponsored by a tourist group in Ha Long Bay. They organized the painting of a 160-meter wall, which became the longest graffiti wall in Vietnam. That's the only opportunity graffiti writers from the north and south have had to work together. There were 21 artists from Hanoi and another 21 from Saigon."

"I think street art is developing quite quickly. Nowadays, the number of artists is going up. But they bomb so much I'm worried about the communities' reaction to so much bombing. In Hanoi, the bombing is developing also, but not as quickly as in Saigon because in Hanoi there are police going around every night. But we have more permission walls now where we can paint and make art work without any confusion."

For the uninitiated, 'bombing' is when an artist heads out and quickly paints numerous areas or walls. This might include painting tags, which is a kind of stylized signature. Tags are the simplest and most prevalent type of graffiti. It's the entry point for many artists, but there are, of course, many other skills that follow, which Zunk and other artists are learning as they go. "We didn't know about stencilling in the beginning. We used to think using a brush is not street art—you should use a can. But that's changed now."

It's not the only thing in flux. He adds that many artists are now trying to find a way to adapt graffiti into "real life," with many becoming tattoo artists or being commissioned to paint spaces. Around the world, many graffiti purists might protest at the idea of working with businesses. The phrase 'selling out' comes to mind. But, then again, this isn't the rest of the world.

Later on I catch up with Zunk at an exhibition he's working on, at the Vincom Center for Contemporary Art in Royal City. He's creating graffiti art on the gallery walls, clearly inspired by the kind of traditional fine art he showed me in his studio. Each weekend, a number of graffiti artists live in the space, so visitors can see the process and not just the finished piece. It sounds like a logical progression, a stepping stone from unbridled passion to actually making a living. One would hope it's also a way of working that's relatively free of compromise. And if this is the case, Zunk's lightness and carefree manner, that quality I so admire, will remain undimmed. ■





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# Just the Two of Us

Ditch work and check in for a date night staycation in Saigon

Text by **Nick Piggott**  
Images by **Ngoc Tran**



*Yakuzaaa cocktail*

**WE HAD BOTH BEEN BUSY AT** work and we really needed a break, but neither of us could spare two nights out of town. We thought about Vung Tau, but after living in the city for three years, we've both been there too many times to count, and we couldn't face the long journey.

So, we decided on a staycation for a night and I hadn't realized what great value you can get for a five-star hotel in Vietnam. We booked **Le Méridien Saigon** (3C Ton Duc Thang, D1; [www.lemeridiensaigon.com](http://www.lemeridiensaigon.com)) based on the great facilities (we'd used the spa there before) and choice of restaurants. Our plan was to check-in and not leave the hotel until it was time to re-enter the real world again.

As soon as we walked into the room the familiarity of the ice cold air conditioning, the robes (who doesn't love a good hotel robe?), and the fancy chocolates on the pillow automatically flipped a mental switch to 'holiday mode,' and the needle on my internal pressure





Premier Classic River View Room



9th Floor - Pool

right next to the fitness center (which we guiltily ignored), the two levels of loungers let you choose between the sundeck and the poolside shade. We stayed there until the orange-red sun dipped below the horizon—adding another touch of romance to our ‘getaway’ stay.

After ditching the monsoon shower for a luxurious hot, bubbly soak in the freestanding bathtub, we headed down for dinner at Bamboo Chic, one of the hotel’s three restaurants serving Asian fusion cuisine. The contemporary decor and lounge music set a relaxed tone, and the discreet seating and

low lighting ensured a truly romantic ambiance. Usually wary of signature cocktails we started with a ginger gin fizz (VND180,000++, which was excellent, spicy ginger with a little tickle on the tongue) then took a gamble on the house sake-based Yakuzaaa (VND220,000++, breaking my own decades-old rule. It arrived in a small, shallow bowl, and oh my god it was amazing! I now understand that some rules really are made to be broken.

The wakame salad (VND180,000++) was fresh, crunchy, and well-dressed, and a good size for two to share. It arrived at the same time as the spicy salmon uramaki, a personal favorite of mine. The combination of flavors and textures were well balanced, with lightly flavored sushi rice. Our second starter, Chinese spring rolls and softshell crab (VND290,000++) followed quickly, despite the restaurant being full. Stuffed with whole prawns, the spring rolls were juicy and flavoured, and the softshell crab was wonderfully crisp, and equally tasty.

We thought we were full when the Wok-fried Australian beef tenderloin (VND380,000++) arrived, but the elegant presentation and powerful aroma convinced me otherwise. The imported beef was as tender and juicy, as the locally-sourced capsicum were crunchy, with everything tossed in a black bean and fresh chilli sauce and served piping hot.

We managed to squeeze in a single dessert between us (because we’re on holiday, right) and opted for the gold-leaf chocolate lava (VND140,000++)—oozing hot chocolate fondant served alongside a scoop of delicately flavored matcha ice cream. After we rolled ourselves into the lift and back up to our room, I couldn’t stop myself from wondering whether the breakfast (included in the room rate) would live up to the dinner—which we discovered the next morning after a wonderful night’s sleep—it did. The extensive breakfast buffet was the perfect way to end a wonderfully peaceful, and romantic, break from the ongoing chaos outside. Le Méridien Saigon is an oasis of calm and romance that we will definitely stop in at again. ■



Bamboo Chic

gauge immediately began to fall. We recognized that this was the only real quality time we’d spent together just the two of us in ages, and the setting was perfect. Floor-to-ceiling windows boasting a view right across the city to District 7, and a huge, invitingly soft bed littered with pillows.

After checkin and taking advantage of the comfy bed, we spent the rest of the afternoon at the pool. It’s a unique layout—carved out of the river-side of the building on the 9th floor—so its open-air infinity pool looks across Ba Son shipyard and the Saigon River to District 2. Located





**Dr. Van Anh**, a member of Animal Doctors International team, has a special interest in veterinary internal medicine and hematology. She graduated from Nong Lam University, her graduation research has been conducted at a veterinary referral hospital in Brisbane, Australia.

# See the Signs

Seven common signs of a sickness in kittens and puppies

*Unhealthy puppies and kittens can be difficult to deal with and one of the trickiest parts is to find out whether they are sick or not because they cannot tell us how they feel. This knowledge can be obtained through careful observation of their behavior. Here are seven common signs for you to know if it's time to bring your little buddy to the vet:*

## Lethargy

Just like babies, puppies and kittens need a lot of rest because it is a part of their development. However, they will not take a nap all day long, they should be playful, energetic and noisy (some are more active than others). If your little friend tend to be too lazy, or exhibits lack of activity, this is the time for you to consider taking them to the vet, as this could be a sign of an illness.

## Decreased Appetite

Your pet may experience inappetence for many reasons, like being stressed out from moving to a new place, or being worried about an absence of their family member. Unfortunately, the reason can be more complicated. You should try coaxing them to eat their favorite foods; if they still refuse to eat it can be a symptom of an illness.

## Diarrhea

Diarrhea is not fun for anyone, especially for pets. It can be caused by anxiety or a change in diet, or it could come from a parasite, bacteria or virus. Head to the vet immediately and if possible take pictures of the stool or, even better, provide the stool itself to the vet to analyze. Simply seeing the texture, content and color (if there is blood or strange things in it) and help

the vet diagnose the problem. Severe diarrhea in kittens and puppies can quickly lead to dehydration and even to death—it should never be ignored.

## Vomiting

Same as diarrhea, vomiting can come from a nervous reaction to changes in living environment. However, it could also come from something more serious. In some cases, your little buddy has consumed food too quickly, then you should consider giving them smaller meals split to several times a day to prevent them from taking too much at once. If vomiting is still going, or change in content or color (red, green, yellow etc.) you should take them to the vet right away.

## Whimpering

Pets can't talk, but it doesn't mean they don't try to communicate with us. If you notice your puppy or kitty is making strange noises, or whining, that can be because they are hurting somewhere or they are trying to tell you something about their health. Sometimes they whimper comes they want you to notice them, but if it is unusually persistent then it might not just be about getting attention anymore. Whimpering can come when they are hurting or suffering from internal pain.

## Licking or Scratching

Scratching or licking themselves are normal behavior, but if it seems like they are hurting themselves, especially when the scratching or licking results in hair loss, redness or foul smell in the area then there might be something more serious happening to their little body. Note to the vet the time and length the licking or scratching occurred and any change in their diet; this would help the vet greatly.

## Coughing or Sneezing

Similar to licking and scratching, coughing or sneezing is sometimes a normal reaction to the environment, but if it is sudden and often then it could be more serious, especially when nose discharge or strange breathing noises are present. In some cases, puppies and kittens can be allergic to smells like perfumes or deodorant sprays which can make them feel uncomfortable. If you see your pet with these symptoms, talk to your vet.

When adopting a puppy or kitty, it's your responsibility to take care of them and their health is just one part of it. Take some time to keep your eyes on them and you will receive more than what you give because your little buddies are the only things on earth that loves you more than they love themselves. ■



# Home for Thanksgiving at EON51

Images by Ngoc Tran

Oi speaks to the team behind EON51 to discover what they have planned for this holiday

## Where did Chef Cuong Do get his inspiration for the Thanksgiving menu?

About 20 years ago, a young junior chef named Cuong Do was working at different kitchens in many hotels so he can learn about Western cuisine as well as how to operate a professional commercial kitchen. There weren't many decent chefs in the restaurant scene back then, unlike today, where Saigon is flooded with talented, experienced chefs.

Cuong started working with an American chef who also became his mentor. The gentleman was from the Southwest and he introduced Cuong to traditional dishes from Louisiana and Texas, and even Tex-Mex food. This was the first time Cuong encountered traditional American food. He remembers them quite well and put them—Louisiana Crab Cake and Tex-Mex Soup—on EON51's Thanksgiving menu, as a tribute to his former mentor. You can see some very unique ingredients from the South (especially Louisiana) like Spicy Creole Tomato Sauce. Roasted Scallop served with Green Risotto and Mushrooms is another home meal inspired dish. This dish is evidence that America is a melting

pot with all cultures blending into something new.

## Let's talk about the star of the event - the turkey - tell us more about where the turkey is sourced, how it's being prepared and all the fixings with it.

Turkeys will be imported directly from the States. They will be roasted in the traditional way with herb stuffing. However, there is a twist, the thigh fillets will be taken out and marinated in a special (chef's secret) way—an elegant twist on the traditional. Chef Cuong ensures us the menu will make "Americans feel like home again" and this "twist will excite diners."

The dessert is a mixed berry baked cheesecake - a moist and richly baked cheesecake, New-York style, topped with a mixed berry sauce.

## Thanksgiving brings memories of leaves turning hues of red and oranges outside, while inside an elaborate table is set up for a big family dinner. What decorations are planned at EON51 to create the same festive atmosphere?

There will be a large pine tree imported from northern America. Along with laurels, the centerpiece is a turkey made from pinecones, sunflowers and candles. In addition to this, there will be a display table with an entire roasted turkey with pumpkins, corn, wine, candles and flowers surrounding it.



## Tell us about the collaboration between EON51 and the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture), and how the two are working together to create this Thanksgiving celebration?

EON51 is proud to cooperate with the USDA to help spread America's unique culture to the public. That's why we offer a 50 percent discount for 2 dishes from the set: Louisiana Crab Cake & Oven Roasted Turkey as well as American Wines.

## Along with the spectacular panorama view of the city, what special musical entertainment do you have for that week?

EON51 Fine Dining will have two live violinists to set the ambience on 21st, 24th and 25th of November. ■



EON51's Thanksgiving Set Menu, from November 21-26, (VND1,450, 000++) includes: Pan fried Louisiana Crab Cake (avocado tartar, sour cream and spicy creole tomato), Tex-Mex Beef Soup (pinto beans and parmesan crispy), Roasted American Scallop (green risotto and mushrooms), Roasted Turkey with Glazed Beetroot and Vegetables; and Mixed Berry Baked Cheesecake.

EON51 is located at Level 51, Bitexco Financial Tower, 2 Hai Trieu, D1. For reservations, call 028 6291 8751.





# School for The Dogs

Meet dog trainer Ian Harris, he provides training for both ends of the leash

Text by **Johnny Tran**  
Images by **Melissa Agustina**

**“BAD DOG! DON’T PEE ON THE couch! Stop biting my shoes! Don’t poop there!! Bad dog, bad dog! Argh!!!”** Any of these sound familiar? Perhaps, then, Ian Harris is here to your rescue.

Ian Harris was born in Southhamilton, England, and ever since his childhood living along that southern coastline, he knew he wanted to do something with dogs one day. He didn’t know exactly what, so he also dipped his toes as a “blacksmith and farrier, making horseshoes and shoeing horses,” as he eloquently states. His first experience working with dogs was as a dog walker in England.

A case of the travel bug bit him, and he left home, and he moved to London and various parts of England, as well as Nice in France and Sydney, Australia. He also visited Central and South America (once on a bicycle). He wanted one more grand final trip before heading back to England: To traverse throughout Asia.





Ian and Lou

receives are injured and/or have bad skin conditions. Besides tending to them and training them, he also walks them twice a day.

Whatever time he has left is for his private business of trying to help dog-owners raise more understanding and awareness of our favorite canine companions. "My private business includes obedience training, correcting behavioral issues and aggression, separation anxiety, and house training," says Ian. He accepts dogs of all ages and sizes. No matter the issue, Ian only "trains through the positive reinforcement method, which means absolutely no punishment." He uses the clicker training method, which uses a clicker to make a sound and reinforces with a treat when the dog does something desirable or in the positive direction. This style is a science-based and proven method and is one of the most effective. Ian is trying to teach dog-owners to be aware of being a loving owner without punishing their furry friends. He says "the key is to get the dog to want to do what the owner wants." Sounds simple enough, right? A usual housetraining program takes an owner only two weeks after an initial hour-long session with Ian to teach them. More serious behavior issues may take longer.

Here are some tips and advice Ian would like to impart on you:

- "Dogs don't literally understand words, but they do understand gestures and reinforcements," explains Ian. If you want to teach them something, use your hands or with gestures. Then reinforce positively with treats. You can then further reinforce using words, and your dog will associate the word with the gesture.
- Dogs learn best without distractions. Therefore, don't teach them somewhere outside or noisy. "The best place is your kitchen—simple, uncluttered, and no distractions," he says.
- When meeting a dog for the first time, if it is happy, it will turn its head

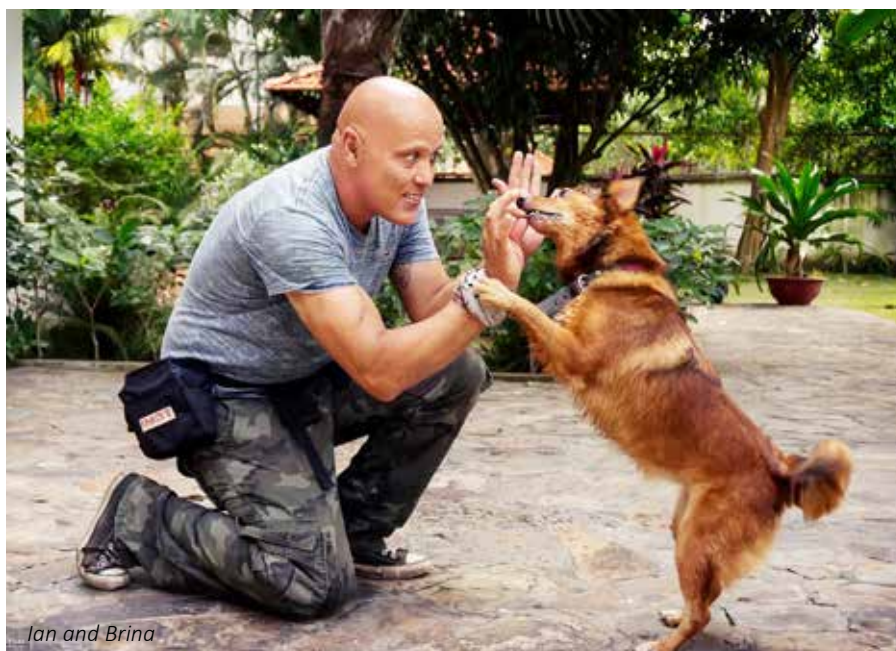
on you to allow you to pet or rub it. If it applies big licks to its nose, it is under stress. And if its ears are perked upright and gives you a stare, then it is showing aggression. A growl would be the ultimate indicator. When meeting a dog for the first time, Ian advises to "crouch down to the side of the dog and extend your hand low with your palm up to allow it to sniff you. Turn your head away from it to show you mean no aggression." You should not extend your hand in an overhand motion on top of its head, as this mimics a striking motion.

In addition to helping dog-owners understand and communicate with their four-legged love ones better, Ian hopes to raise awareness and help change people's mind of the dog culture here in Vietnam. Some of his challenges are a certain mentality by many people that dogs are no more than a security device for the home, or worse yet, a delicacy. Animal rights laws in Vietnam do not exist, so the change must start from within each of us. The ultimate goal would be achieved when Vietnam progresses to the point of treating dogs as a member of the family as many Western countries have done. Other obstacles include a lack of leisure space for dogs to enjoy, and our sidewalks were not made for walking dogs in mind. And never mind dedicated dog parks, just finding any park for walking dogs in Ho Chi Minh City can be a challenge.

"My life is dogs, dogs, and more dogs – dogs 24/7!" Ian exclaims. He even attends to dogs in his dreams. So it is a challenge to find free time. Past hobbies include white water kayaking and mountain and wall climbing. He also used to be a chef in England, and tries to cook when he has some free time. So perhaps one day if he opens up his own pub or bar, you should request the fan favorite spotted dick special. *For more info on dog training and obedience classes, visit "Ian Harris Dog Trainer." on Facebook at: [www.facebook.com/buddygoodboy2](https://www.facebook.com/buddygoodboy2)* ■

The plan was to start from Cambodia, to Vietnam, heading up to Hong Kong and throughout China, and finally to Russia. However, there was a hiccup in Vietnam as he fell in love with Ho Chi Minh City, and has been here since January of 2017. He loves the bright lights, the sights and sounds, the hustle and bustle, the warm climate, the energy, and even the smells of the vibrant cosmopolitan city.

Ian is a certified dog trainer, having received his credentials from the Institute of Modern Dog Trainers in England. There are only two other certified dog trainers in Ho Chi Minh City that he knows of, so the opportunities and growth potential are there to carve out a business. Even so, Ian spends most of his days as a volunteer for ARC (Animal Rescue & Care) in District 2. A typical day for him is 8am-11am, and 4pm-5:30pm, Mondays through Saturdays, where he tends to dogs who are abandoned and/or mistreated. Most of the dogs ARC



Ian and Brina

# Abandoned Heaven

by

Text by Craig Thomas



Where is Vietnamese society heading if it fails to cultivate and nurture its centuries-old traditional folk art and cultural practices?

**AT FIRST GLANCE, THE PAINTINGS** of Bui Thanh Tam's *Abandoned by Heaven* collection project an air of innocence and a pollyanish sense of contentment. The doe-eyed figures in the paintings look to be in the midst of living happy and prosperous lives, but there is something amiss lying just underneath the surface of the paintings. The most easily distinguishable signal is given in the form of the twisted branches of the peach blossom trees featured in many of the paintings. They are in full bloom, which brings associations of spring and renewal, but the unnatural positions of the branches suggest a conscious contortion that has distorted what was once beautiful and pure.

The central question Tam is asking with his latest series is: Where is

Vietnamese society heading if it fails to cultivate and nurture its centuries-old traditional folk art and cultural practices? The material progress the country has made over the past two decades is undoubtedly a profoundly positive development for the great majority of its citizens, but it also comes with certain costs that can be measured and quantified in terms of environmental degradation and other negative side effects. In his role as a contemporary artist, Tam feels a responsibility to do a more abstract calculation of the cultural costs that have been associated with Vietnam's recent period of rapid urbanization and economic development.

Tam says, "In terms of tangible culture, many historical monuments

and artifacts of historical importance have been renovated, or, in some cases, completely destroyed. We have lost whole lines of folk art and many traditional craft villages have disappeared without a trace. In terms of our intangible heritage, the loss and deformation of our culture is happening at an alarming speed. Our young people no longer have the desire to preserve our unique forms of poetry, music and theater; our traditional culture is simply being replaced by that of the West. The resulting confused mixture has many negative effects on the behavior, morality and spirituality of our people leading to a loss of identity and what makes us special. The more 'modern' our world becomes, the more jealousy, insincerity and cruelty enters into our daily life. I



attribute this to a method of teaching culture that is incorrect, and, ultimately, failing us.”

While there is an earnest moral lesson at the heart of his work, Tam leavens the potential didacticism through the use of parody and humor. His often whimsical paintings focus on the ridiculous contradictions between his subjects’ contemporary lives and his view of a more traditional Vietnamese existence. Tam has spoken of the influence that the Cynical Realism of Chinese painters has had on his work. Arising in China in the 1990s, the work of the Cynical Realists used humor and irony in confronting their society’s socio-political issues through their art. Featuring characters that often shared the exaggerated grinning face of the artists themselves, the art of the Cynical Realists focused on the transition from the old to the modern that China was experiencing and the



confusion arising therefrom. In a similar way, Tam’s paintings can be seen as cynical commentaries on the state of contemporary society in Vietnam.

Tam chooses to use *Dong Ho* folk paintings in the background of many of his works as an over-arching symbolic representation of traditional Vietnamese culture.

The traditional themes of *Dong Ho* paintings include good luck signs, historical figures, folk allegories and popular stories. The compositions tend to reflect the lifestyles and concerns of a rural people living in close commune with nature. Most commonly associated with *Tet*, *Dong Ho* paintings have long been used in Vietnam by craftspeople to express their concerns about social, political and cultural issues.

As a metaphor for cultural loss, Tam’s choice of *Dong Ho* paintings is an apt one. Once produced by hundreds

of craftspeople in a number of villages of Northern Vietnam, the practice has all but died out. Once a proud piece of Vietnam’s cultural heritage, *Dong Ho* paintings are now likely to be produced on printing presses and sold as kitsch to foreign visitors to the country.

Tam says, “Once there was a fine culture, rich in identity and tradition, made up of Vietnamese men and women who held high standards of humanity, but they are quickly disappearing with time! Even heaven, which lives for all human beings, will eventually abandon us when we are unable to appreciate and protect our own values. Today we tread roughly over the world built by our forefathers through the millennia and destroy their beautiful traditions that have sustained our society since time immemorial. Instead of caring for this invaluable legacy which we have inherited, we care only for personal gain—money, status, and power—with no regard for the negative future consequences this selfishness will reap.”

While Tam’s is an essentially conservative vision, his work should not be viewed as an indictment of Western culture, which he calls “civilized, progressive and compelling.” Tam is disturbed by the less positive side effects of Vietnam’s modernization including the rampant consumerism and narcissism the process has engendered. His ideal result would be a synthesis between the traditional and the modern that would allow the country to flourish and prosper, but would also retain what is unique and special about Vietnam. Tam says, “if we can manage to preserve the roots of our traditional Vietnamese culture as we modernize, in my opinion, the Vietnamese people will be purer and better.”

*Bui Thanh Tam currently resides in Hanoi. He is a 2009 graduate of the Vietnam Fine Arts University. Abandoned by Heaven is Tam’s second solo exhibition at Craig Thomas Gallery ([www.cthomasgallery.com](http://www.cthomasgallery.com)).* ■





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.

# THE GOLDEN YEARS

## Visa requirements to retire in Vietnam

Dear Antoine,

*I'm a French retiree who had recently visited Vietnam as a tourist for three weeks and I'd really love to go back. I heard that in Thailand there is a special long-stay visa for retired foreigners; is there a same arrangement in Vietnam? If not, how can I get a visa to stay for a longer period than a usual tourist visa?*

**AS FAR AS I KNOW, YOU ARE** right about Thai regulations: In 2016, the Thai government allowed issuance of 10-year retirement visas for foreign seniors with several conditions that include age, monthly income and health insurance. Unfortunately, Vietnamese regulations do not have a similar kind of visa for foreign seniors. According to the current law, there are 20 different visa types that are available but these do not include a "retirement visa," therefore, you must have a specific reason if you want to stay in Vietnam for more than the length of a tourist visa.

Here are some things to consider if you want to enjoy a peaceful retirement in the country you love:

### Is there another kind of visa that is more suitable than the tourist visa?

If you wish to have a longer visa than three months, you may look at obtaining a visa as a family member coming to Vietnam to visit his relatives. Foreigners may obtain a visa for up to 12 months if they are the parents, spouse or children under 18 years old of a Vietnamese citizen residing in Vietnam or of a foreigner having a temporary residence or permanent residence card in Vietnam. Your relation residing in Vietnam will have to 'invite' you to Vietnam and you will need to prove familial ties with proper documents.

If you do not have a family member in Vietnam, you may look at another kind of visa, which is said to be for "personal affairs." The duration will be up to six months only. This type of visa may be used for other kinds of family relationship than the ones mentioned

above. You will also have to submit proper documents to evidence such familial ties.

Well, I am not sure that the two above visas may allow you to achieve your objective, which is to enjoy a peaceful retirement in this beautiful country. As you can see, these visas have a relatively short duration (12 months is the best case if you have a family member in Vietnam).

### Is acquiring real estate in Vietnam the right option?

It might be, but in the future...

As you may know, Vietnamese law has come through an important change in 2014: The law has finally allowed foreigners to acquire real estate in the country. Not all kinds of real estate: only certain apartments or villas in so-called "housing construction projects." Basically, this refers to apartments or villas in new housing projects, such as new serviced apartments. Unfortunately, you can forget about charming colonial-style houses in the center of Hanoi or Saigon. However, some new real estate projects in these cities, although modern, are not without any charm. I am sure you may find the perfect place for your retirement.

The important point is that acquiring real estate should (this is common sense) allow you to enter Vietnam as much as you wish to enjoy the place you have acquired. However, the abovementioned 2014 law reform has not provided for a specific kind of visa allowing foreigners having acquired real estate to enter and stay in Vietnam. This is unfortunate and I heard that some proposals for such a type of visa are being made with the competent

Vietnamese lawmakers. If the law should change on that point, I will not forget to keep you updated in a future column.

### Investing some of my assets in the Vietnamese economy?

This sounds like a win-win option: you invest in Vietnam and in exchange you have the chance to enjoy your retirement in this beguiling country.

As you know, Vietnam's economy is continuing to develop at a fast rate and needs capital and investments to push its economic growth. It, therefore, welcomes foreign investors very warmly. As an investor in Vietnam, you may obtain a specific investor visa that has a maximum duration of up to five years. Moreover, this visa is renewable and after 10 years of residence, you may have the chance to apply for a permanent visa.

So, how to become an investor in Vietnam? Investor means that you invest to create a business or acquire shares (or make a capital contribution) of a company in Vietnam. Buying shares might be the right option for you because you may choose to invest in a company that already has a successful track record: you avoid the first year of activity, which are often the most stressful.

Of course, you should consult with a local advisor to confirm all the obligations and rights that will apply to you before going ahead.

I hope that the above could be helpful. I know that Vietnam is a wonderful country and I hope that you will be able to enjoy it during your retirement! ■





**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.

# Money

## ON MY MIND

### Tips for saving money when starting your career in Southeast Asia

**SAVING MONEY IS ONE OF THE** major benefits of living and working in Southeast Asia—professionals in countries such as Vietnam are fortunate enough to earn high salaries, while benefiting from low cost of living at the same time.

According an HSBC survey, expats in Vietnam earn between USD103,000-USD200,000 annually, which is around 50 times higher than the annual income average for Vietnamese locals. Clearly, this presents a ripe opportunity for expat professionals to save money, and even set themselves up for an early retirement.

With simple financial planning, you can develop a savings routine and reach your financial goals. Here are the top six strategies you can develop for savvy saving:

#### 1. Bid Farewell To The Monthly Budget

Yes, you read that correctly. Although conventional wisdom states that you should budget on a monthly basis, this is a financial planning fallacy. A month is a long time-frame, too long for an inexperienced saver to avoid spending money on things that don't actually enhance their wealth (see tip 5).

Rather, set a daily budget to avoid pricey pitfalls:

Step 1: Calculate how much money you have at the beginning of every month

Step 2: Deduct your living expenses and savings (see tip 2)

Step 3: Take this amount and divide it over the number of days in the month

Voila, you have your daily budget! If you start early enough and never spend a cent more than this allocated daily amount, take our word for it—you will be able to retire by the time you are 40.

#### 2. Savings Should Be Factored Into Your Daily Budget

Too many people only take living expenses into consideration when calculating a budget and don't factor in monthly savings. One of the key principles of personal finance is "pay yourself first." Get into a routine (and set up automatic payments) to save money at the beginning of every month, before calculating how much money you have to spend.

#### 3. The Quicker You Can Pay Off Student Debt, The Better

Yes, your qualification may have helped you land a job in the first place, but you may end up paying double the amount of your original student loan simply because of the interest you will accumulate.

Pay off as you can afford towards your student loan before accounting for any other regular expenses. In the long run, you will beat the bank and save yourself a vast amount of money in the process.

#### 4. Learn To Manage Your Own Investments

We live in a digital era, where almost anything we want is accessible at our fingertips. If you are able to master the basics of investing from a young age

(which is really not that difficult with sources like [www.investopedia.com](http://www.investopedia.com)), you will improve both your business skills and your bank balance.

You can open your own stock brokerage account through platforms such as Interactive Brokers, Charles Schwab, TD Ameritrade and buy shares in companies anywhere in the world with minimal funds.

#### 5. Do Not Give In To Frivolous Fancies

When starting your career, it's easy to become over-excited as those first salary checks start coming in and you may be tempted to spend money on things that you don't actually need. The only items that should be on your list are:

1. Tailored suits
  2. A Dale Carnegie book
  3. A decent haircut
- Save the rest.

#### 6. Take Out Health Insurance - Now!

Proper care and hospitalization is incredibly expensive. Even if you are fit, healthy and feel invincible, the truth is that you are not. Undergoing serious treatment or being involved in a serious accident could easily bankrupt you and your family, and ruin your life.

The frightening reality is that most governments are enormously indebted and simply don't have the means to take care of their citizens adequately. The onus is on you to take care of yourself by taking out good, comprehensive health insurance. ■

# *Lot Luck*

A day of unpredictable and exciting results with raku firing

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



## **I ARRIVED TO THE DAT POTTERY**

([www.facebook.com/datpottery](http://www.facebook.com/datpottery); 093 342 1987) workshop, located on the edge of District 2, on Sunday morning pleasantly surprised by my surroundings. I am in a quaint, open farm-like space and there are already a few people working on their creations. The owner, Dat and teacher, greets me and shows me around. I'm here to try out raku firing, a traditional firing technique that originated from Japan. In raku firing all of nature's elements are used, earth, fire, air and water. The earth is used to make the pot, then it's put into a reduction chamber kiln, then plunged into cold water, which halts the firing process. A lovely fact about raku is that its name literally translates as "happiness in the accident."

Dat tells me that he previously worked







in a bank but four years ago decided to leave to follow his passion. Fond of pottery, he learned the trade in Binh Hoa. Raku firing specifically caught his eye and six months ago he started teaching himself the method.

Dat asked me to choose an unglazed pot from a selection and I pick a classic round one. Next comes picking the glaze: white crackle, red copper, lustre, blue or turquoise. At first I am confused because the finished pots on display showed a lot more colors than the five on offer. Dat explains that the kaleidoscope of colors I see are the results of the raku firing technique, and that he wasn't hiding any from me. I am immediately fond of the white crackling glaze, which gives the pot an instant vintage feel, and to keep it simple I choose the red copper to match.

I take a seat at a workbench and begin to apply my two coats of glaze. The glaze dries instantly, it is a fairly quick process because I want to keep it simple and not attempt any patterns. I help myself to coffee and refreshments while I waited for the rest of the group to finish glazing.

I ask Dat what piqued his interest in raku firing. He found raku on the internet,

he explains, and became fascinated with the unique method of submerging the crockery in cold water directly out of the kiln without cracking or damaging them. He researched everything, from the type of clay used to the glazes needed and how to master the technique. It turns out that the clay and glaze were easy to source, however, when it came to finding the right kiln, this was a bigger challenge. So, what do you do when you don't have enough money to buy a kiln? You build one yourself, of course.

Soon I am called over as our pieces are ready to be placed into the red hot kiln. I carefully look inside after 20 minutes and can see that the matte surfaces on the pots were already starting to have a shine to them. An hour passes and they're ready to be taken out of the kiln, half of the group is given thick white gloves (I discover why shortly), and as the pots are taken out they're placed into tin cans and those wearing gloves are told to quickly smother the pots with sawdust. The result is a lot of flames, some fast moving hands and then everything quickly covered with damp newspaper. This is where the chemical reaction from the ash, sawdust and smoke create the final look.

After several minutes, each piece is carefully taken from the ashes and plunged into cold water. I scrub my pot and I am happy with the outcome—a great white crackle with blue trim around the top. As I had chosen red copper this was a surprise but exactly what Dat said would happen—that the colors will vary because of the nature of the process. As everyone is looking at their finished creations I ask Dat if everyone is always happy with their final results.

“Raku means happy and is an adventure, the Raku Workshop is for anyone who really loves pottery and handcrafts and wants to try something really special and unique. After the kiln is open some will feel sad, others happy—all of the feelings you have with raku is what I want the customer to try,” he replies. ■







# Make A Run For it

Images Provided by **Sporting Republic**

Jody O'Dea, Head of Hanoi Red River Runners, and David Shin, Race Director of Sporting Republic, share tips for the upcoming Hanoi Half Marathon on December 10

**Sporting Republic is a Hong Kong-based company that organized, amongst others in the past, the HCMC SKYRUN at the Bitexco Financial Tower last month and the Hanoi Half Marathon next month, what does Sporting Republic hope to achieve from these events and why choose Vietnam to hold them?**

*David:* Running fever is sweeping across Vietnam. The emergence of these types of events are symbols of the growth of the country and the middle class. Hanoi is one of the fastest growing cities in the world and developments of running events like the Hanoi Half Marathon is emblematic of Vietnam's emergence.

Running is a mass sport, and the people who are engaged come from various backgrounds. For now, we're just happy to be part of this development and promote a healthy lifestyle and fitness amongst the local and international community.

**Why did you choose Ciputra to have the marathon?**

*Jody:* Ciputra have hosted all our previous half marathons (10 in total!) and have been our partner since the beginning. Ciputra Estate is perfect for running with wide open avenues and minimal traffic, and they have always encouraged and supported Red River Runner's events over the years. The opening of the Ciputra Club two years ago took our event to the next level giving us access to all their excellent facilities and making the race day experience professional and with a great atmosphere.

*David:* The Hanoi Half Marathon will be another great event for Hanoi and the community. The 21km race, in particular, will allow participants to enjoy some of the best of what Hanoi has to offer – a scenic route along West Lake.



### How many participants are you expecting?

*Jody:* About 1,000 participants, including both locals and foreigners, are expected to take part in this historic event. They will have the option of running one of five race distances: the featured race, a 21km Half Marathon, or two shorter races, a 10km, 5km, 3km and 800m kids sprint.

### What training advice (leading up the race and on the day of) can you give the runners?

*Jody:* Participants can join one of our upcoming training runs which will take place on November 4 and 25 where our elite runners will be available to offer advice on pace and race strategy. On the day, it's important not to get caught up in the excitement of the race and start too fast. Stay focused, stay hydrated and remember to enjoy yourself.

### Any tips about the race courses runners should know? Bumps or hidden turns they should know about?

*Jody:* Half marathon participants need to be wary of the pedestrian bridge over Vo Chi Cong highway—we call it the stairway to hell!

Otherwise, just be sure to follow the directions of our course volunteers and remember that the runner next to you might be running a different distance to you... so don't just follow them!

### Will the marathon still go on if it rains?

*Jody:* Yes indeed, the race will take place regardless of the weather, luckily December is one of Hanoi's cool and sunny times so we are hopeful of perfect race conditions.

### Are there plans to hold more events like this in Vietnam next year?

*Jody:* The race calendar in Vietnam is looking busier every year due to the growing popularity of running in Vietnam and the increased demand for high-quality race experiences. We'll continue to organize this event for many

years to come and, hopefully, this can become one of the 'must-do' events on the Vietnam running calendar.

We are pleased to be partnering with Sporting Republic for the first time as we look to grow the scale of the event significantly in the near future. The buzz around the race is being felt within the sporting community. We are anticipating a sell-out and encourage runners to sign up now so they don't miss the chance to be a part of the incredible celebration. To register and more info on the Hanoi Half Marathon, visit [sportingrepublic.com/hanoihalfmarathon](http://sportingrepublic.com/hanoihalfmarathon). ■





A woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a large white feathered hat and a white dress with intricate lace and sequin detailing. She has her arms crossed and is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is dark.

# *The* *Liberated* WOMAN





Taking the traditional Vietnamese silk brocade well into the modern age is Thuy Design House. Dubbed “the woman of brocade,” designer and painter Thuy Nguyen experiments with traditional materials and shapes to arrive at her signature bold and resplendent designs. By reinventing traditional forms of dress, such as the *áo dài*, Thuy liberates women to find freedom in their fashion choices and beyond.





Photographer: Milor Tran  
 Stylist: Mi Goi  
 Make up: Quan Nguyen  
 Hair: Pu Le  
 Clothes: Thuy Nguyen








# How

*It's Made*





Pencils, beef jerky, whistles, flip flops—until the show *How It's Made* came along, the average citizen had no idea how everyday products like these were created. Now they do, and I think we can all agree the world is a much better place. As a tribute to the show, here's our version of "how it's made" on bamboo bikes, *Do* paper, backpacks and Zippos.

IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN



# CATCH A RIDE

Text by Jonnie Emsley  
Images by Ngoc Tran

## Bamboo bikes that put social change in the frame

**WHILE KNOWN MOSTLY** for their premium handcrafted quilts, Saigon-based social enterprise Mekong Plus ventured into uncharted territory in 2010 with a radical new concept: bamboo bikes. Combining local craftsmanship with a Vietnamese commodity, the bamboo bikes are taking hold globally.

A seasoned humanitarian worker with experience in Bangladesh and further afield, Belgian-born Bernard Kervyn was central to the establishment of Mekong Plus in 2001. Having an intimate understanding of labor exploitation and the desperate situations that exist in much of rural Asia, the vision of the organization is clear: to provide fair income streams to those most in need; specifically those living on less than a dollar per day.

Each bike provides 50 hours of work for its artisan; the purchase of one effectively funds a week's worth of living costs for a disadvantaged family in Vietnam or Cambodia. What's more, any profits generated by the bikes are re-invested into the communities, where they facilitate education, scholarships and much-needed infrastructure.

So... bamboo bikes? That's right, with bamboo helmets and all the fixings to match. The kinks have been ironed out in the production process and these uniquely

Vietnamese bicycles are now a global export with enthusiastic owners as far as France and Bernard's own Belgium.

Bamboo has a unique combination of strength and flexibility, making for a softer, supple ride that aluminum frames simply don't offer. The bikes are respected for their natural shock absorption on rough terrain, even on models without suspension. That said,

the range has all its bases covered, with a Fixie, Mountain Bike, Hybrid, and more. With the lightest model (the

Fixie) hitting the scales at 9kg, bamboo bikes weigh in roughly the same as conventional models.

Talking safety, bamboo frames are truly resilient—bamboo breaks extremely slowly over months or years, unlike metallic frames such as







*Bamboo has a unique combination of strength and flexibility*

carbon that can fracture in an instant (to the dismay of its rider). Bernard has tested the physics, having (snugly) accommodated three adults on one of the bamboo machines.

All technical perks aside, the bikes are simply beautiful; there's something undeniably endearing about their glossy bamboo frames, a true feat of ingenuity.

### Made to Order

In accordance with an altruistic mission, the manufacturing process provides some



*The workers are skilled, resilient people that have honed their craft*

20 Vietnamese and Cambodians with steady, critically needed income. With two factories in Vietnam's Binh Thuan province and one in Rumdoul (Cambodia), the workers are skilled, resilient people that have honed their craft. The current rate of production sits between 6-12 bikes per month, with a focus on premium quality (versus quantity). Bikes are only made to order, and thus the higher the demand, the more profound the outcomes of Mekong Plus's projects.

Naturally, the bike frames are composed of Vietnamese bamboo canes. While Mekong Plus first opted for the more romantic option of forested bamboo, the logistics soon proved difficult—the bamboo's sheen became tarnished in the process of being dragged out of the forest. The bamboo's sleek appearance is one of the bike's biggest selling points, and thus untarnished bamboo is now sourced from an export plantation in Binh Thuan.

The bamboo is subsequently treated with boric acid to kill insects, and dried in a low-humidity glasshouse. Bernard

admits that one of the biggest difficulties was finding a suitable means to join the frames, however, they soon found success using an epoxy to link and adhere the lengths of bamboo.

With the Vietnamese bicycle parts market being somewhat barren, the team was faced with a significant hurdle. Bernard equates this problem to building a car—purchasing and assembling one piece-by-piece would be financially unfavorable. Instead of opting for the unaffordable imported components on offer at local stores, fully assembled bikes are imported new from Taiwan. The team then relieves them of all useful components (gears, cables, sprockets, brakes, etc.), sells the remaining frame and affixes all new parts to the completed bamboo frames.

The bamboo bike is in itself a tool to educate, support and facilitate grassroots development—engaging global citizens with the concerns of the impoverished—the product itself is just the tip of the iceberg. ■

The biggest difficulties was finding a suitable means to join the frames



*The bike frames are composed of Vietnamese bamboo canes*

Mekong Plus also facilitates bicycle tours throughout Vietnam and Cambodia. These are educational experiences for its foreign riders, taking them through many of Mekong Plus's development projects in poorer areas. The workers of Mekong Plus are always invited to join, with seven local Vietnamese team members joining the next 450km tour. Visit [www.mekongplus.org](http://www.mekongplus.org) or [mekong-plus.com](http://mekong-plus.com) for more info on bamboo bikes and bike tours.





# a Paper Trail

A visit to Suoi Co in Hoa Binh to find out how to make artisanal Dó paper using traditional techniques

Text and Images by **Chris Humphrey**

**DÓ PAPER HAS BEEN MADE FOR** centuries in Vietnam. It's part of the country's rich heritage of traditional craft, dating back as far the Ly Dynasty in the 13th century. More recently, it was made in Buoi Village close to Westlake in Hanoi, but such artisans are nowhere to be found in this area now. There are only two families throughout the nation who still make *Dó* paper using original methods.

Since 2013, however, a social enterprise named Zo Project ([zopaper.com](http://zopaper.com)) has helped to revive the skill. Founded by Tran Hong Nhung, they aim to create a sustainable business model to support disadvantaged communities and keep the art of paper-making alive. Working with the family in Suoi Co, Nhung and her team help them to





Mixing the pulp

*Mo*. What's collected must be evenly spread out to ensure the symmetry of the paper. As it rests, the fibers interweave and meld together to create a sheet, which is then pressed to remove excess water. Amazingly, piles of wet sheets can be separated, but they must spend weeks drying naturally in sunlight.

This lengthy, manual process produces beautifully soft but resistant

and rustic paper that doesn't smudge ink, is highly resistant to humidity, totally acid-free, and, most surprisingly, can last for centuries. The paper made from *Dó* bark is very smooth and absorbs ink easily, so it's suitable for calligraphy or painting and plays an important role in folk art. Paper made from *Duong* bark is rougher and more suitable for craft products.

Zo Project uses the paper to create the items they sell in their store in Hanoi. They make everything from notebooks, cards and calendars, to posters, lamps, fans and necklaces. I can see why it resonates with people. There is a kind of organic purity to it that helps you understand and appreciate its origins. The aesthetic is infinitely more satisfying than that of bleached white paper we all find in office printers. It is as if you can feel the paper's history when you touch it.

That heritage is now under threat, with so few skilled workers producing *Dó* paper in Vietnam. Thanks in part to Zo Project, however, this particular craft may be protected for many years to come. More recently, they've even been training new families in Suoi Re, a nearby village, in an effort to expand and sustain the tradition and, hopefully, pass on the skill to younger generations. ■



Draining the pulp

improve the quality of their paper and expand production. Part of the challenge, she says, was convincing the villagers the tradition was "worth saving."

Making the paper isn't easy. In fact, it's quite a laborious process, taking around one month to go from bark to paper. It's made using bark from *Dó* (Rhamnoneuron Balansae) and *Duong* (Mulberry) trees, which must be stripped from the trunk and soaked in limewater. It's then boiled for 24 hours until soft, and what remains is beaten to a pulp (hence the expression.)

The next step depends on the kind of paper you want to make. If it's white paper you're after, then adding some Javen (a type of sodium) helps to purify the pulp, giving it a white appearance. Alternatively, you could dye the pulp gray by adding some *Chàm* leaves. In Suoi Co, they use different proportional mixes of *Do* and *Duong* pulp, depending on the kind of paper they want to create.

In order to create sheets of paper, the pulp must be removed from liquid suspension using a bamboo screen. It's such a tricky task that only one worker in Suoi Co, Miss Hoang Thi Hau, is trusted to do it. She uses the screen to sieve through the pulp, which is mixed in with water and natural glue from a plant known as



Boiled bark



Pressing the bamboo screen



Bark after boiling



Beating bark to a pulp



Sheets of Do Paper



# Carry On

A travel bag company  
that's thinking outside  
the bag



Text by **Jonnie Emsley**  
Images Provided by **Kosan**

**THE CONCEPT OF TRAVEL IS** evolving so quickly the world can barely keep up, with the popularity of travel agencies and package tours plummeting faster than Trump's approval rating. Long gone are the days of travel being preordained; a one-size-fits all product to be bought like a TV dinner. Independent travel is fast becoming the only conceivable choice for millennials, and Vancouver-based Kosan Travel ([kosantravel.com](http://kosantravel.com)) sees this truth. Equipped with a radical vision of the future of travel, they may just be redefining the concept of a travel company.

As founder Alex McAuley puts it, "Once you've traveled, you know you'll never stop." The 12-month-old startup has been made by travelers, for travelers. With decades of experience (both

business and travel) between the three founders, their insights compel them to enable others to travel.

To Kosan, travel is not so much a leisure activity as it is an education. A form of education that replaces bigotry and prejudice with empathy, awareness and insight. Throughout the trio's travels, one recurring truth became glaringly obvious; that those with the strongest, most bigoted ideas about 'the other' had never left their community, let alone their country. With this in mind, Kosan settled on one goal: to make travel easy. How will Kosan achieve this?

Alex, Karyna and Joel began this journey with a question: When you're about to depart where do you go to get everything? With no apparent answer, the trio forged their vision: a one-stop-shop for millennial travelers. The essence



of their mission can be found in their tagline: "clothing, gear & inspiration for those who travel the world."

While in their humble beginnings, Kosan has a clear, actionable plan to take their identity well beyond a travel gear company. They envisage a total travel service; providing everything you could ever need (or want) for your voyage: gear, travel insurance, vaccinations—the whole nine yards, and then some. This is the ultimate goal, yet the company's current





culture and context into consideration when choosing products.

#### 4-in-1

The drive and vision of Kosan come through not only in their products but also their processes, committing to “ethically and socially responsible sourcing,” also expressing desires to become involved in philanthropic projects.

Scheduled for November this year, the launch of a Kickstarter campaign will see their flagship backpack come to fruition: the ultimate 4-in-1 “convertible carrying system.”

The 4-in-1 has been made for rugged encounters; Kosan have chosen some seriously hardy materials, including Cordura ballistic nylon (originally used for military body armour) and a tarpulin with matte finish. Both fabrics are abrasion and water resistant, making them incredibly durable.

Kosan has partnered with Aerotech for this product, a Cu Chi-based factory specializing in paragliding equipment. With experience manufacturing in almost every continent, Alex explains that manufacturing abroad usually requires huge efforts to find production quality that’s up to spec, and even harder to maintain it. Yet, Alex stands by the Vietnamese manufacturing plant as being the cream of the crop.

He explains that owing to the intense quality-control standards associated with paragliding, naturally Aerotech’s production standards are simply world-class. If you can put your life in the hands of a paragliding harness, you can rest assured you’ll have durable travel gear.

Although in their infancy, Kosan Travel has all its i’s dotted and t’s crossed—with both a groundbreaking destination and a roadmap firmly in hand. The company’s concept goes well beyond the skin-deep, with a challenge to transform the whole notion of conventional travel. ■



dynamic still sets it aside from others.

What makes Kosan different? Their products are organic outcome of the founders’ travel experiences having undergone field testing; this gives them an immediate relevance and practicality, and sets them aside from other travel companies’ preconceived notions of what might be useful on a journey.

Kosan clearly endeavors to recognize that every journey is different, and offer an innovative solution to ensure you have all your bases covered before you board the plane. They verge on travel consultancy with this idea; offering gear that is tailored to the exact dynamics of your trip. In purchasing a Kosan package, you are not so much a customer as a client, having your specific requirements catered to with expertise.

After providing Kosan with the rough plan of your trip, they will assemble and deliver a customized kit in time for your departure date. A three-week trip to south Vietnam in monsoon season? No problem. Your kit will leave no stone unturned, while taking a minimalist approach that takes







# Fueled by Tradition

George Duke, owner of Zippo and the grandson of the lighter company's founder George G. Blaisdell, talks about brass, flint and its new clothing line

Interview by **Christine Van**  
Images Provided by **Zippo**

For our readers who don't know, tell us the origin of the Zippo and how it got its name.

The name "Zippo" was originally created by George G. Blaisdell, the founder of the brand. He decided to create a lighter that would not only look good but also be easy to use. He was fascinated by the recent invention of the zipper so formed variations on the word until he settled on "Zippo," which he felt sounded more modern. The name has stood the test of time and is now synonymous with quality American goods.

Since it was first introduced, has the design of the lighter changed in any way?

The original Zippo lighter was created in 1932 and was a reconstruction of the Austrian style of lighter. Blaisdell redesigned the lighter to his requirements, fabricating a small rectangular case and attaching a lid with a hinge. He preserved the chimney design, which protected the flame, and the result was an attractive lighter that was easily operated with one hand. With the exception of improvements to the flint wheel and modifications in case finishes, the product remains unchanged.



**What are the main materials used to make Zippo's and how are they sourced?**  
Stainless steel is used for the inside unit. Brass is used for a flint tube. Cases for lighters are formed from brass strip stock. Cases are nickel and chromium plated. Zippo metal products are made from only high quality materials combined with rigid quality control standards.

We work with, and have longstanding relationships with, some of the best brass and steel mills in the US. It is because of these characteristics that Zippo can confidently stand behind its unsurpassed lifetime guarantee: "They work always or Zippo fixes them free."

**Has modern technology replaced any steps in the production process that was once done by humans?**

The production process for lighters has remained largely unchanged in the company's 85-year history. We continue to innovate and implement new technology for decoration of the lighters.

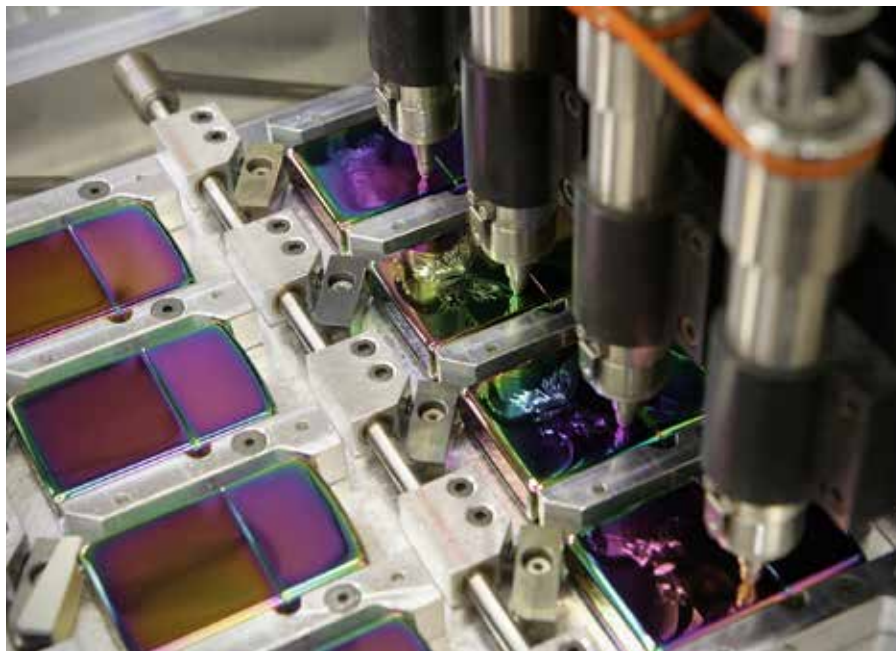
For decades, designers have brought unmatched levels of artistic talent to the smallest of canvases—from the early years of etching and hand-painted details to today's cutting-edge 360-degree MultiCut engraving. With over 300,000 designs created since 1932, Zippo continually push the boundaries of design.

**How long does it take to make one lighter?**

We produce over 70,000 lighters per day at the Zippo factory in the US. Decoration of a single lighter varies from a few seconds to as many as 20 days depending on the process used to create the art.

**Zippo's are still manufactured in Bradford, Pennsylvania (US), why hasn't the company moved production overseas to lower cost?**

Zippo prides itself on its American heritage. All of the parts of Zippo windproof lighters have been manufactured in the US since the brand's inception in 1932. We think it's important to champion great American manufacturing and value the quality of work that our American workforce produces. Zippo is committed to keeping 100 percent of the Zippo lighter production in Bradford, PA.



**With people lighting up less because of health reasons and the ban on indoor smoking, how has the company managed to stay in business?**

At Zippo we are constantly challenging ourselves to create innovative and beautiful designs to ensure there is always a lighter for every personality. We also remain committed to delivering a quality product with a lifetime guarantee so when people purchase a Zippo they know they are getting a reliable and durable brand as well as a stylish one.

However it's not just the product benefits and design that keep people buying, it's the heritage and the story behind the brand that give it its enduring appeal. Zippo has transcended its functional benefits to become a cultural icon, when people buy a Zippo they buy a slice of American history and become part of our story in the process.

Collectability is a key factor to our success. The unique designs, date stamping, affordability and rich history make Zippo lighters a great item to collect.

**The company has recently expanded into a clothing line and camping gear, can you tell us more about these.**

With over 85 years of history, Zippo has an influential and dedicated fan base. During this time the brand has transcended its functional benefits to



become a cultural icon and we continue to find new ways for our customers to enjoy the brand.

Our apparel range has been available in China since 2013 and continues to be a popular choice with consumers in the region. We are currently examining other markets where Zippo apparel makes sense for the brand and our dedicated fans.

Zippo Outdoor products were launched in 2010 with an all-metal hand warmer, which uses Zippo premium lighter fluid and provides a steady source of heat longer than any other product on the market. The range was then expanded in 2011 to include an emergency fire started kit and flex neck utility lighter. Most recently, the range was expanded in 2013 with robust Zippo-branded camping gear and fire accessories. With the superior quality of our iconic windproof lighter in mind, the Zippo Outdoor products are built for superior durability and reliability, and designed with a purpose – so you can get outside and push your boundaries. ■

*The official Zippo retail shop in Saigon is located at 4 Tran Hung Dao, D1.*



# Wine & Dine

MARCEL GOURMET BURGER / IMAGE BY HUDEN DANG









*Le Signature*

# Who is Marcel...?

... and why are his burgers so delicious

Text by **Grant Hawkins**  
Images by **Huden Dang**

**MARCEL GOURMET BURGER** (132 Calmette, D1,) occupies a small space on a busy street between a construction site and a Vietnamese spa, but step foot inside and you'll swear you've fallen asleep and woken up in a Wes Anderson film. Subtle pink and orange furniture with natural wood accents are offset by a wall of green plants, and classic French pop music gives voice to the rich smells emanating from the small windowed-off kitchen.

While the dining room is relatively small, a large upholstered bench with modular tables can accommodate several small groups, while smaller tables are perfect for couples. Comfortable, inviting and unique: a Parisian café in Saigon.

Our drinks, Tê Tê's Draught White Ale (VND90,000, 330ml) were accompanied by Alex Halbers, a longtime Saigon resident and the owner and visionary behind Marcel Gourmet Burger. Earlier this year, Alex hosted

two old friends who operate a traditional Bar à Manger in Paris. Over the course of several festive evenings and one morning of earnest calculations, the idea for a Parisian café in Saigon was conceived and refined, and ultimately the three threw their lot in together and Marcel was born. According to Alex, in France the name Marcel is associated with the older generation, maybe a grandfather, and you go to his house and he brings you some special dish





*Le Crumbly Fish*



*Flaming Wings*

that he just made, fresh from the oven. "Marcel's house," the friendly old man who lives next door who has you over for a home-cooked meal.

At its core, Marcel is about French, gourmet burgers made with homemade ingredients. Nowhere is this concept better embodied than Le Signature Burger (VND180,000), the clear favorite among patrons. Marcel starts with an Australian grass-fed beef patty and raclette cheese. This savory and creamy cheese mixes with sweet balsamic caramelized onions and crunchy gherkin relish for a meticulously-balanced flavor and texture palette. Add cognac pepper sauce, tomato and lettuce, and set it on a homemade brioche bun, and you have a sumptuous, dynamic burger unlike anything else you're likely to find in Vietnam. "And here, for the customer who know their stuff," says Alex as he set down a plate of Allumettes Fries (VND40,000). Crunchy and flavorful, they are accompanied by a butterless béarnaise that Marcel Gourmet has developed to offset (only slightly) the decadence of the rest of your meal.

Next, we were treated to Le Spicy Pork Burger (VND140,000), a portion



*Le Spicy Pork*

of slow-cooked pork shoulder with Mykes mild cheddar, spicy mayo and coleslaw, along with Le Crumbly Fish Burger (VND120,000), a fillet of deep fried panga with housemade tartar sauce, red onions and arugula served with a slice of fresh lime. In both cases, the flavors (spicy/savory and sweet/sour, respectively) and textures (crunchy and creamy on both counts) are carefully measured and balanced. Both also come on the same homemade brioche bun, which, as far as this writer is concerned, is the golden-toasted standard of burger casings.

Marcel's delectable quality is no accident. Alex worked with a team of French interior designers to craft the ambiance, and spent three months working with a French chef to develop the menu. Speaking with Alex, it's apparent how much thought and care went into developing each burger. Le Signature Burger, for example, was inspired by ski resorts in the French Alps: raclette, or "melted cheese," is a favorite cold-weather snack typically served with a baked potato that's otherwise difficult to enjoy in the heat of Saigon. With a steady supply of French gourmet ingredients and a

rooftop herb garden next door, Alex plans to continue experimenting and innovating with occasional specials, as inspiration dictates.

Satisfied but not satiated, we continued with the Flaming Wings (VND110,000, six pieces), crispy chicken with tangy asian dressing, honey and a dusting of spring onions and sesame seeds. This delightful meal ended the way any gourmet experience should, with a classic Crème Brûlée (VND80,000). Marcel's traditional take on the French dessert is just what were looking for, and perfect for sharing.

Driving to Marcel Gourmet Burger, I struggled to imagine what vacancy it meant to occupy in the throng of burger-and-fries upstarts in Ho Chi Minh City. The answer, I now realize, is in the name: gourmet. This is not just a fresh take on an old favorite; it's one connoisseur's personal interpretation, seriously considered and painstakingly executed. The attention to detail and pursuit of excellence is apparent in every bite, and the flavors are bold and unique. Marcel Gourmet surely stands apart, and I'll be happy to stand in line when people start to notice. ■



*Crème Brûlée*



# Sushi, Sake, Lounge & More

For year-end celebrations, private events and,  
of course, mouthwatering food, it's gotta be SORAE

Text by **Brian Jung**  
Images by **Ngoc Tran and SORAE**

## SORAE SUSHI SAKE LOUNGE

(Level 24, AB Tower, 76A Le Lai, D1) is a popular place and has been the go-to place for diners looking for Japanese food. The intimate setting and low lighting as well as the versatile food choices just got better. Unlike many restaurants, Sorae is not targeting the mass and instead want to maintain their select and slightly upscale clientele by offering year-end event hosting packages and other deals. Their goal is to be the space for special occasions and celebrations. To this end Sorae will even redesign the table layouts both below in the dining area, and above at the bar to allow for private booths, private rooms and even much more intimate settings. Sorae offers several types of workshops as well. From learning how to make maki rolls to whisky tasting and decorations and party planning, they are going far beyond just the food.

With that said, however, they have reorganized their current a la cart menu into several easy to choose Chef Choice sets. While all the items in the sets can be found in the a la cart menu, the sets offer a better deal and value than ordering each



item separately. Since Sorae is well-known for their fresh seafood and fish, both imported from Japan as well as locally sourced, a lot of the menu emphasizes this along with dishes from the grill, tempura and sushi.

Set B (VND1,390,000++) offered three kinds of appetizers: Nasu Dengaku which was a roasted eggplant in a sweet miso sauce, Shirauo Salad—tiny crispy white baitfish salad dressed in a sweet soy mayo, and the Maguro Truffle, an interesting and rich earthy glaze that flavored the tuna. Sushi & Sashimi was a mix of three kinds of Japanese fish, and two kinds of local fish (the idea here is to introduce diners to more than the standard Japanese fish and to help them appreciate what Vietnam has to offer.) A Spider-Maki, taking its name from the spider softshelled crab, was lightly fried then touched with unagi sauce, giving it a rich and crispy texture.



For the mains, a Pork Rib Teriyaki was tender as the caramelized pork ribs melted to the fork's touch, it was accompanied by sansho pepper and glazed with a teriyaki sauce. The Angus Gyu Sirloin was perfectly cooked medium rare and needed only a slight touch of the peppery wasabi ponzu sauce. Rice and soup was an interesting garlic stir fried rice with garlic shrimp. Depending on the set one may get a rice or a soup in the menu. To finish things off, the Atatakai Chocolate Cake was a sweet finish of soft chocolate cake, salted caramel ice cream, drizzled with a warm chocolate sauce a perfect way to end the set.

It seems that the refocus on private occasions and events is a calculated strategy sure to set it apart from its competitors and with delicious set menus, the ambiance it's famous for, and the amazing location, Sorae is sure to soar. ■







Center - Vietnamese patties on citronella stalks



Cha gio

**SERVING UP FRESH AND** traditional Vietnamese fare since September 2015, **Ngoc Chau Garden** (116 Ho Tung Mau, D1) is a centrally located gem in District 1, just a stone's throw from Nguyen Hue. The extensive menu (with almost 100 dishes) is loaded with local favorites, ranging from Vietnamese Grilled Pork Patties With Citronella (a signature dish of the Royal Capital in Hue) to fan favorite Ngoc Chau Garden Pork Ribs, that draws a healthy mix of locals and foreigners who seek a relaxing environment. The menu and decor reflect Vietnam's countryside where the space is distinguished by its vintage window shutters crisscrossing the walls, which are made from mud and straw with oil lamps and old photos hanging from them—giving the restaurant a charming, homely atmosphere. ■

# Countryside Cuisine

Text Provided by **Ngoc Chau Garden**  
Images by **Ngoc Tran**

## Must-try dishes at Ngoc Chau Garden



NC pork ribs

### THIS MONTH'S HIGHLIGHTS:

**The Vietnamese Grilled Pork Patties With Citronella** (VND110,000) is ground meat rolled around a citronella stem then baked and accompanied with different kinds of herb, rice paper and a peanut sauce made especially for the dish. Another must-order when dining here is the **NC Pork Ribs** (VND110,000), the restaurant's chef created the recipe (the ribs are rubbed with honey and secret seasoning before roasting). The results are soft, sweet ribs that are tender and juicy. Just as delicious as the food are their drinks: Lemon-grass tea (VND35,000) and Peach tea (VND45,000), both cold and refreshing.

Ngoc Chau Garden is an unpretentious, authentic Vietnamese restaurant serving simple family style food.





*Phu Quoc Signature Seafood Platter*

**ONE OF THE JOYS OF ISLAND** living is the availability of fresh seafood, and **Novotel Phu Quoc Resort's** ([www.novotelphuquoc.com](http://www.novotelphuquoc.com)) fine dining venue simply called "Seafood Restaurant" delivers in spades.

There's something to be said for enjoying the bounty of the sea, just steps from the water, the ultimate in tracing your food right to its source.

Seafood Restaurant's earthy-chic decor highlights its ties to Mother Nature through simple yet beautiful design features—gray slate floors, plushly cushioned wicker chairs and a jewel-tone color palette of rich maroons and dark wood. Flickering candles and soft lighting cast a romantic glow on the two-story space, while simple centerpieces of freshly cut bird of paradise or just the prickly green tops of pineapples bring the outside in. Seafood Restaurant thoughtfully has a kids' playroom stocked with toys and games to keep





*Deep-fried squid with aioli and plum chilli sauce*

the youngest guests occupied while the adults dine.

Ambiance aside, diners come here to enjoy Phu Quoc's freshest seafood which is delivered daily from the fishing village of Ham Ninh. Drive there yourself on the island's east coast and see the floating farms stocked with everything from giant grouper to spiny lobster, or save yourself the trip and view the catch of the day in Seafood Restaurant's impressive wall of tanks, waiting to be given the fine cuisine treatment.

The restaurant's lunch and dinner menus are similar, with the dinner menu just a touch more extensive. Both showcase a plethora of seafood dishes cooked in a myriad of ways: grilled, prepared locally including steamed in beer or stir-fried with tamarind, in colorful salads or Japanese-style rolls, or paired with more traditionally Western flavors like pesto or fruit coulis.

We start with a Blue Lagoon (VND250,000), one of the restaurant's signature drinks. The electric blue cocktail reminds us of the ocean while citrus flavors from lemon and pineapple juices and Blue Curacao and triple sec refresh the palate for the seafood feast to follow.

We start with a plate of beautifully trimmed, deep-fried squid with aioli and a tangy salty plum chilli sauce (VND170,000) that manages to stay light, thanks to just a dusting of batter. This was followed by pan-fried scallops (VND310,000), their mild flavor a decadent vehicle for the sweet mango coulis, with red and green caviar providing bursts of briny saltiness. In addition to the fresh seafood, Seafood Restaurant excels in its sauces which ably complement the delicate seafood without overpowering it.

For a main, we share a Phu Quoc Signature Seafood Platter (VND780,000 for 2), a culinary journey through some of the island's best offerings, including prawn, crab, sea bass and calamari in addition to oysters smothered in melted cheese and scallops simply grilled with

scallion oil and crispy bits of lard, all accompanied by a side of tossed greens. It truly is a feast for the senses as well as the palate, with each cooking method bringing out the naturally sweet flavors

of Phu Quoc's premium seafood. The signature sauces of red and green chili are thick and intense, made richer with an unexpected and barely noticeable touch of condensed milk.

We finish by sharing a wonderfully light passionfruit cheesecake (VND190,000) both sweet and tart, the impeccable presentation once again reminding us of our tropical environment—the strawberry coulis radiating out like rays of the sun while the robin's egg blue dollops of meringue recall the sea.

Seafood Restaurant is also open for a la carte breakfast in the weekend for those who prefer a quieter, more refined alternative to the resort's buffet breakfast with selections ranging from local vegetables in a curry sauce and Vietnamese pho to Turkish poached eggs and smashed avocado with goat cheese on toasted sourdough. If your room rate already includes buffet breakfast, pay a VND180,000 supplement to enjoy a full breakfast with freshly baked pastries, fresh fruit, freshly squeezed juice and two a la carte selections. ■



*Pan-fried scallops with mango coulis*



*Passionfruit cheesecake*



*Cocktails*





*Stewed Lamb Shank With Tomatoes, Mushroom Sauce and Fresh Pasta*

# *Pommes* **and** *Circumstance*

French cuisine amidst palatial Indian surrounds

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

**LET'S NOT PRETEND THAT TAJMASAGO CASTLE** (6 Phan Van Chuong, D7) is the kind of place you'll be visiting first and foremost for its cuisine. Of course I'm going to take you through the menu, and of course I'm going to tell you that the food on offer is good, because it is. The point is that the fine fare is all quite secondary to the venue itself—put simply, the reason why anyone would come here for dinner is not so much because it's five star dining, but because this venue looks like nowhere else in Vietnam.

Visually, TajmaSago is a palace adjacent to the Cham Charm restaurant, and both are Khaisilk properties designed to bring the exotic architecture





*Roasted Lobster With Sauteed Mushroom,  
Champagne And Baeri Caviar Sauce*



*Crème Brûlée with Pistachio & Baileys Wine  
Burned Brown Sugar With 24cr Gold Leaf*

of the greatest structures of the Middle East—think the Taj Mahal and the Indian Maharajah palaces—to the shore of the crescent lake in Phu My Hung. The property is in fact a boutique resort, unique in Vietnam for offering guests a distinctly non-Western luxurious experience that does not draw explicitly from the Vietnamese culture itself. Its restaurants however (there are three distinct offerings) are predominantly Occidental affairs, with French (Trois Pommes), Italian and BBQ menus (BBQ Garden) to select from.

Our evening meal was French, taken outdoors by a decorative pool that resembles the cloisters of a grand mosque. Looking out over the balcony, it's difficult not to catch a taste of a deliciously romanticized colonial conceit, a rarified glimpse into the way the imperialists saw themselves in a bygone age. To enjoy the moment is to be swept away in TajmaSago's fantasy, which is perhaps the point of the entire structure.

We were served a complimentary smoked salmon and caviar to set the mood, plated flawlessly on fine period crockery. This swiftly gave way to a Périgord truffles consomme with beef wagyu ravioli and goose liver, a curious dish that is prepared to resemble a Chinese wanton soup, with each dumpling filled with delicate French ingredients. The full, weighty beef broth is so rich in *umami* you're tempted to chew it.



*Mille Feuilles of Goose Liver and Barberie  
Duck with 24Cr Gold Leaf*

The first course was similarly intriguing, given on the menu as a "mille feuilles" (which usually refers to a French pastry that resembles a layer cake) of goose liver and barberie duck with 24cr gold leaf.

What we were presented with was an exquisite jellied meat served cold and capped by a quail egg with a flake of gold. Portions of the jelly melted like milk with the foie gras on the tongue to release their clusters of poultry.

Our menu offered a selection out of two main courses, a roasted lobster with sauteed mushroom, champagne and Baeri caviar sauce; or a stewed lamb shank with tomatoes, mushroom sauce and fresh pasta. These were enormous creations and the best of their kind—the flesh of the lobster creamed in the shell, and that of the lamb served heavy on the bone as if for a medieval banquet. These were set to rest with a particularly flamboyant dessert that nicely matched the ornamentation of the restaurant environs: a crème brûlée with pistachio & Baileys wine, and burned brown sugar with 24cr gold leaf.

TajmaSago as a palatial edifice plays its part as the backdrop to a house cuisine that is presented with a certain poise. Come here to be caught up in the pageantry of it all. ■









# Ca Phe Trung

Back in the 1940s Mr. Nguyen Giang, a resident of Hanoi, was working as a barman at the Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi Hotel. The story goes that, one night, Mr. Giang ran out of milk to serve with the coffee. Instead he used a concoction of egg yolks and condensed milk to make, what is known today in Vietnam as *ca phe trung*, or egg coffee. This is going to be one of the richest, sweetest, coffee-based beverage you are ever going to drink.

Such a success was Ca Phe Trung that Mr. Giang opened a cafe and egg coffee has been a part of Hanoi ever since.



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



## INGREDIENTS

SERVES: 3

- |                   |         |
|-------------------|---------|
| • Coffee powder   | 10 tbsp |
| • Egg             | 5       |
| • Sugar           | 30g     |
| • Fresh milk      | 40 ml   |
| • Condensed milk  | 15 ml   |
| • Vanilla extract | 1 drop  |



**1** Crack an egg, keeping only the yolk.



**2** Beat the yolk, put it into a container in the oven at 800 degrees Celsius for 40 seconds



**3** Put the yolk and the sweetened condensed milk, fresh milk, sugar, vanilla in a bowl and whisk vigorously until you end up with a frothy, fluffy mixture.

## IN A SERVING CUP



**4** Warm up the fluffy egg mixture in the oven for 40 second before serving.



**5** Make a cup (50ml) of filtered coffee.



**6** In a glass, add the hot brewed coffee to the fluffy egg mixture. ■



**Alfredo de la Casa** has been organizing wine tastings for over 20 years and has published three wine books, including the Gourmand award winner for best wine education book. You can reach him at [www.wineinvietnam.com](http://www.wineinvietnam.com).

# Liquid Gold

Should you invest in wine, or perhaps rather just drink it?

## BECAUSE OF MY BACKGROUND

in finance and wine, I am often asked my thoughts about investing in wine. My answer usually starts with a question: Why do you want to achieve by investing in wine? The reason I do this is because, although the base of almost all investments is to gain a return on investment, many people consider 'investing' in wine for other reasons.

If you check the many companies facilitating investments in wine, all of them will tell you that the returns on wine are higher than those of bonds, gold, stocks and, obviously, banks. What they don't tell you is that investing in wine is more like gambling rather than investing.

Firstly, there are only a few wineries and wines—mostly from France, Italy and Spain—that qualify for a "solid" investment; for example, they have a track record of prices increasing with time. Secondly, you must invest in cases, not in bottles, and what they always seem to forget to tell you is that there are many good fakes of such wines.

In addition, you need to keep the wine in perfect conditions (temperature, humidity, etc) and be sure that such conditions have also been met before you buy. Plus the demand of these very expensive wines

have been mostly fuelled by China, and it is calming down, so take your bet!

I, however, 'invest' when I find a good offer in the market, or before I know that wine prices are going to increase. For example, this year the harvest has been bad in Champagne, and it has been terrible in Rioja and Ribera de Duero, two of my favorite areas, therefore I know that prices of these areas will increase by 20 to 50 percent soon. Some wineries have already increased their prices, as much as 45 percent, this will take a few months to reach Vietnam, as importers keep prices as they have stock now, but I am already buying, or let's say investing in my good Rioja wines, as I will be saving considerably compared to what I would need to pay next year.

Something else to consider when you invest/stock wine, especially in places like Vietnam, is whether you can keep the wine in good enough conditions (some wines suffer much more than others in heat). Also, you should consider if the wines you stock will have a decent long life.

With very few exceptions, forget about keeping whites or rosés for more than a year. Reds tend to last longer, two to three years for entry level wines, unless they're very low quality, which would be gone in less than a year, a bit

longer for medium quality.

I am currently buying Rioja Crianza and Gran Reserva, from a good winery, which I know I can keep for 15 to 30 years, and wines will even improve with time. Some good Bordeaux, Barossa, Brunello di Montalcino, Amarone, Toro, Chianti, Ribera and Burgundy tend to age very well, and can be kept for decades. ■





# Wine & Dine

## ROOFTOP BARS



### 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 / 028 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**



### Social Club Rooftop Bar

Part of the Hôtel des Arts Saigon, Social Club Rooftop Bar is a great place to overlook Saigon's glittering skyline sipping on a cocktail and unwinding. Things become more vibrant with the ambient music and DJs at sunset. Social Club Rooftop Bar has the highest rooftop infinity pool in the city.

**76 - 78 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, Dist.3**  
Tel: (+84) 28 3989 8888

## SUNDAY BRUNCHES



### 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](mailto:hotel@caravellehotel.com) / 028 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**  
**028 6263 6688 - ext.6930**  
[www.lemeridiensaigon.com](http://www.lemeridiensaigon.com)



## BARs & CRAFT BEER BREWERIES



### Acoustic Bar

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

**E1 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3**



### Aperitivo

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

**80B/c Xuan Thuy, Thao Dien, D2.**



### BiaCraft

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

**90 Xuan Thuy, D2**

# CHINESE



## 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  
028 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  
028 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  
028 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  
028 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 I  
Ground floor, AB Tower, 76A Le Lai, D1  
(+2848) 38239513

## 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  
028 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  
028 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  
028 3755 1577  
[www.7ryquan.com](http://www.7ryquan.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  
028 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  
028 3520 9099  
[www.intercontinental.com/saigon](http://www.intercontinental.com/saigon)



# CAFÉS



## Bach Dang

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

**26-28 Le Loi, D1**



## Café RuNam

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

**96 Mac Thi Buoi, D1**  
[www.caferunam.com](http://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**



# FRENCH



## 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  
028 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



## 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  
028 2229 8882

### 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  
028 3898 2082  
www.lavilla-restaurant.com.vn

### 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  
028 3821 3056

### 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  
028 3744 4585





# INDIAN



## Ashoka

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

17/10 Le Thanh Ton, D1

33 Tong Huu Dinh, Thao Dien, D2



## Ganesh

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

38 Hai Ba Trung, D1

[www.ganeshindianrestaurant.com](http://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

028 6679 5267 - 028 6686 3168

[www.facebook.com/natrajindiancuisine](http://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 <sup>®</sup>

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

028 3930 4839 / [tandoor@tandoorvietnam.com](mailto: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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📷 [instagram.com/fitmeal.vn](https://instagram.com/fitmeal.vn)  
✉ [fitmealvietnam@gmail.com](mailto:fitmealvietnam@gmail.com)



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# ITALIAN



## Carpaccio

Rebranded "Carpaccio" after many years under the name Pomodoro, this Italian restaurant still has a simple, unpretentious European decor, sociable ambiance and friendly welcome. A small corner of Italy in Saigon.

**79 Hai Ba Trung street, D1**  
**+84 90 338 78 38**



## 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**  
**028 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**  
**028 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**  
**028 3823 1080**  
**www.lahostaria.com**



## 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**  
**028 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**  
**028 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**





# JAPANESE



## Gyumaru

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

8/3 Le Thanh Ton  
028 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/>  
Weekend Brunch at only VND 680,000  
Fest.vn or call 1900636997  
www.libaisaigon.com



## Sushi Dining Aoi

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

53-55 Ba Huyen Thanh Quan, D3  
028 3930 0039

www.sushidiningaoi.com



## Yoshino

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

2A-4A Ton Duc Thang, D1  
028 3823 3333



# KOREAN



## Galbi Brothers

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

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



## Lee Cho

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

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



## Seoul House

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

**33 Mac Thi Buoi, 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**  
**028 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 Buoi St. D1**  
**028 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**  
**028 6654 9525**

## The Racha Room

Brand new fine & funky Thai venue with rooky 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 Buoi, 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**  
**028 3521 8513 / 090 688 6180**



# STEAKHOUSE



## Corso Steakhouse & Bar

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

Ground Floor, Norfolk Hotel, 117 Le Thanh Ton, DI  
028 3829 5368  
[www.norfolkhotel.com.vn](http://www.norfolkhotel.com.vn)



## El Gaucho Argentinian Steakhouse

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

74/1 Hai Ba Trung, DI



## New York Steakhouse

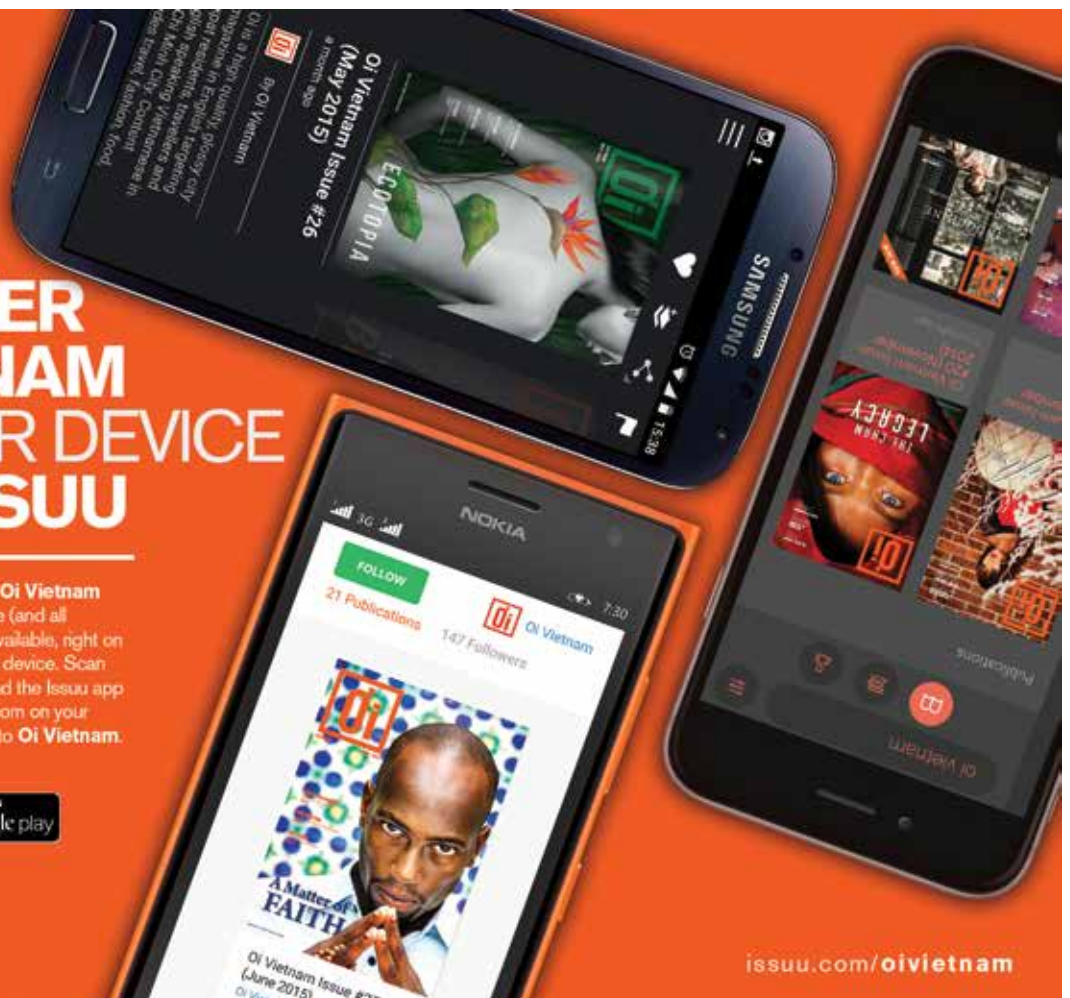
New York Steakhouse is definitely in the upmarket category and serves exclusive American imported beef dishes, with a whole range of steaks from rib eye, New York strip steak and tenderloin being popular options.

25-27 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, DI



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# VIETNAMESE



## Five Oysters R

Five Oysters serves authentic and excellent Seafood & Vietnamese food with 5G Green beer at VND12,000 as well as a promo of VND10,000 per fresh oyster daily. There's also a rooftop, a great place to start or end the night! Recipient of Certificate of Excellence 2014-16 from Tripadvisor and Top Choice 2015 by Lianorg.com. Recommended by VNexpress.net, Lonely Planet, Utopia and Saigoneers.  
234 Bui Vien, D1



## Mountain Retreat

Home style cooking from the Vietnamese north in a quiet alley off Le Loi, Mountain Retreat brings a rural vibe to busy central D1. The breezy and unassuming décor nicely contrasts the intense northern flavors ideally suited for the international palate.

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



## Ngoc Chau Garden

Generally, Ngoc Chau Garden is genuine authentic Vietnamese Restaurant with simply beautiful food. They concentrate on traditional food of South Viet Nam, especially home-cooked, value for money. There for, the food, drink and the atmosphere make you comfortable during family's meal time. It's a really nice blend as you're setting into Ho Chi Minh City and Viet Nam.

116 Ho Tung Mau, phuong Ben Nghe, quan 1, Tp.HCM.  
028 6687 3838

<https://facebook.com/ngocchaugarden.hotungmau>



## Nhà Hàng Di Mai

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

136 - 138 Le Thi Hong Gam St., Dist. 1, HCMC  
028 3821 7786

[nhahangdimai.com](http://nhahangdimai.com)

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



## Red Door R

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 fish 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  
028 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

028 3932 6363

[comnieusaigon27@yahoo.com](mailto:comnieusaigon27@yahoo.com)

[comnieusaigon.com.vn](http://comnieusaigon.com.vn)

### Cuc Gach Quan

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

10 Dang Tat, D1

028 3848 0144

### Hum R

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

028 3823 8920

[www.hum-vegetarian.vn](http://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

028 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

028 3827 7131

[www.quananngon.com.vn](http://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

028 3829 9244

[templeclub.com.vn](http://templeclub.com.vn)

 For full review, please visit: [www.oivietnam.com](http://www.oivietnam.com)



# INTERNATIONAL



## Bamboo Chic

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

**Level 9, Le Méridien Saigon Hotel**

**3C Ton Duc Thang, DI**

**028 6263 6688**

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

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



## FORK Restaurant

Open from 11 am till 11 pm everyday, Fork Saigon gathers Spanish tapas and asian one going from 50.000 VND to 160.000 VND. It offers an expensive list of international wine and 16 available by the glass. A mixologist corner is also present with Gin and Vodka base in addition to local craft beers and seasonal white or red sangria. A set lunch at 190.000 VND served Monday to Friday from 11 am to 3 pm is also available. It allows you to pick any 3 three items between a large selection (Montaditos, meat, fish and vegetable), iced tea and dessert of the day included.

**15 Dong Du, DI**

[info@forksaigon.com](mailto:info@forksaigon.com)

**028 3823 3597**

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



## Hotel Equatorial HCMC

New Vietnamese Bistro & European Grill Menu At "Chit Chat at the Café"

The new menu features the Chefs' flair for creativity with international inspiration from Europe and Asia. This special execution can be experienced in the new a la carte menu which includes imported steaks, meats, and seafood.

**242 Tran Binh Trong St, Dist. 5**

**028 3839 7777**

<https://hochiminhcity.equatorial.com/>



## Hungry Bunny

Hungry Bunny is a new American Bistro situated in the heart of Thi Nghe neighborhood in Binh Thanh district. The restaurant's main focus is gourmet Burgers such as the Bacon Clubhouse and Bacon & Blue burger. Other offers include breakfast, soups, salads, sandwiches and pastas. There is one main dining area downstairs with two smaller rooms upstairs that offer guests with more privacy and great views. Come enjoy our great selection of American diner food with a glass of cold beer.

**8am-10pm / Tel 028 2229 0011**

**01 Nguyen Cuu Van street, Binh Thanh district**

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

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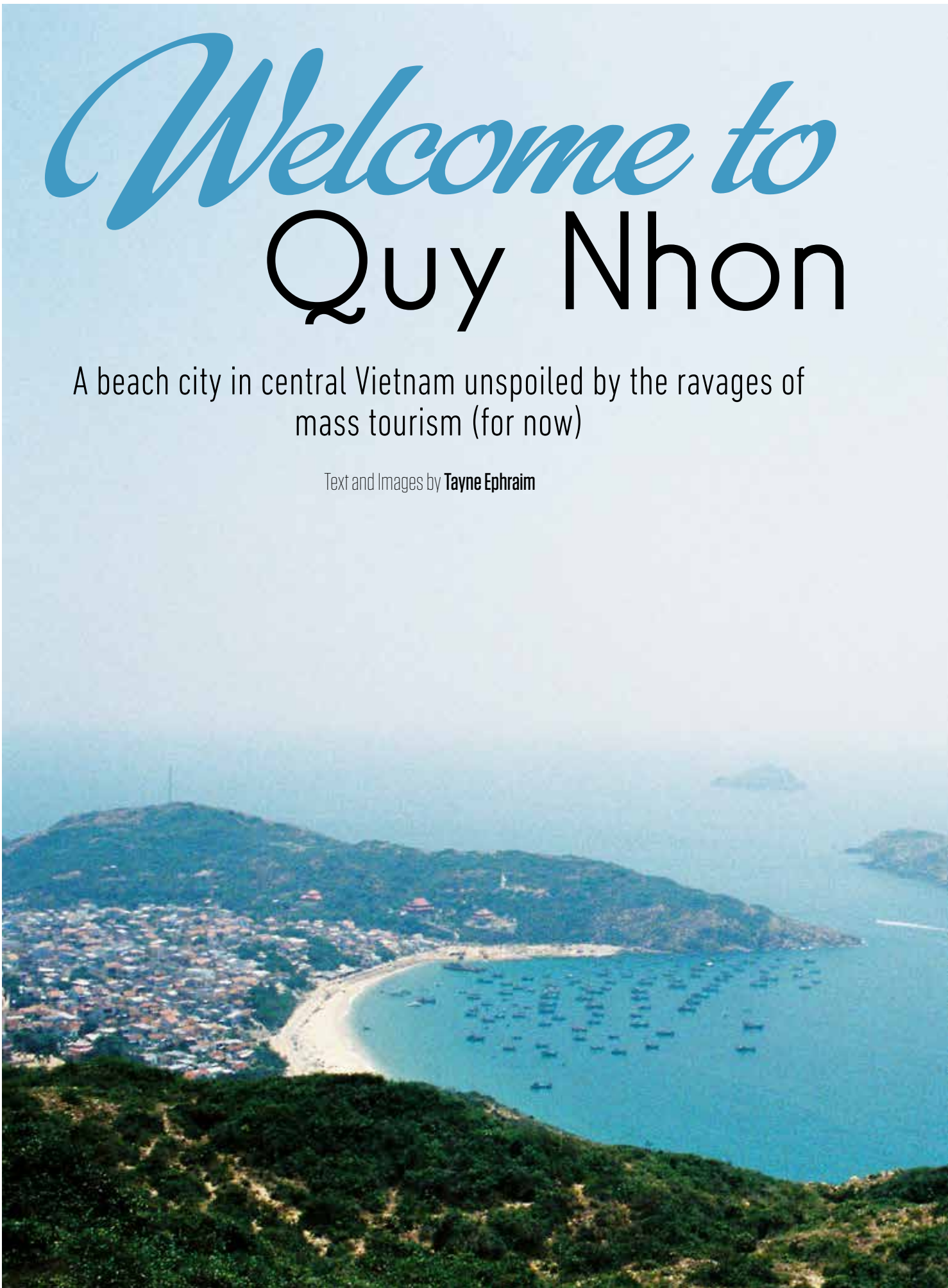




# *Welcome to* Quy Nhon

A beach city in central Vietnam unspoiled by the ravages of mass tourism (for now)

Text and Images by **Tayne Ephraim**





**LIKE A GOOD MANY PEOPLE,** my first impressions of Vietnam and the Vietnamese landscape before ever placing foot on this soil were informed by images of helicopters flying low over a patchwork of rice paddies with jade-hued ranges of mountains looming in the distance, as conical-hatted villagers worked the fields and pitched stalks of rice into bullock carts and water buffalo grazed lackadaisically in the reeds. The Arcadian illusion, of course, is quickly razed over upon leaving the terminal at Tan Son Nhat and being thrown headlong into the crazed dodging and weaving of traffic that is the everyday reality of cities like Hanoi and Saigon.

However, there remain some places where a semblance of that evocative tableau may be found. Quy Nhon and its surrounds is one of those places.

Before getting too carried away into hyperbole, let's take a little step back for a moment. The charms of Quy Nhon do not make themselves so immediately apparent to the new and unsuspecting arrival as they step off the bus. On surface level, Quy Nhon city is your fairly interchangeable provincial metropolis. You've got your shoebox-stacked houses, your motorbikes zipping haphazardly to and fro, countless varieties of things cooking and frying on the street, and typically horrendous instances of advertisement typography plastering billboards and storefronts. But that's not to be disingenuous. There is, beating under the humdrum of local life, that unhurried and good-humored small-town vibe that one might argue is being slowly pushed out to the margins in the bigger cities, but which here still holds true. Things seem to flow at a slower pace in Quy Nhon, mornings feel more drawn-out, more leisurely, with perhaps a deeper appreciation for the smaller

pleasures of life. Then again, you could attribute this to the sea breeze.

We check ourselves into a family-run hotel near the main strip of beach and waste no time in renting ourselves a set of wheels. Within easy reach of Quy Nhon is Eo Gio (Vietnamese for "wind strait") a mountainous finger of coast protruding from the tip of the Phuong Mai Peninsula. And windy indeed it is. In order to reach it, we cross the Thi Nai Bridge just outside of town. Clocking in just over 2km, it is by far the longest in the country, spanning the Thi Nai Lagoon, and with a near-continuous howling gale whipping across the top of it. It is this, the blowing of this very same gale, which also strips away the pall of humidity that makes for such an uncomfortable feature of cities like Saigon.

On the other side of the lagoon we pass through sandy tracts of sand dunes and developments along a new and oddly wide length of road until reaching the fishing hamlet of Nhon Ly. A new hotel and golf course development occupies a space of land abutting the town that almost equals the size of the hamlet itself, making for a strange juxtaposition. After asking directions in Nhon Ly, we locate the gap in the wall of sea cliffs, which gives access to the rocky cove of Eo Gio below, but to our dismay it turns out the aforementioned development has taken over what was previously a natural land feature. They have installed a modern boardwalk that leads down to the sea and charge a VND30,000 fee for the convenience, to which we grudgingly accede. Along the new boardwalk young couples and families compete for the best vantage points with their selfie phones, while a small entourage of wedding photographers wend their way up the precipitous goat tracks in the cliffs above with a bride-to-be in a red dress, but even phone screens can't properly distract from the need to ogle at the raw natural beauty of the scene. The cliffs of the peninsula reach out their arms towards opposing ordinals in the fading light, as white walls of wash break and spray over the iron-like formations of sea rocks. We race the light to scramble

up the paths above and away from the boardwalk, on the saddle of the cliffs, and soak in the fading ambience a few moments longer. On the other side of the cliffs the sleepy hamlet of Nhon Ly settles down for the evening, house lights come on and temple bells chime out their devotions.

The Phuong Mai Peninsula holds another hidden gem over the spur of cliffs and sand dunes separating the sea from the lagoon, the gorgeous cove of Ky Co. Previously accessible only by boat from Nhon Ly village, a new road cut roughshod into the headland and now snakes its way over, though the locals in the village try their best to keep this from becoming common knowledge. We seek it out the next day (it's so new that its existence has yet to be shown even on Google Maps), climbing its intimidating gradient, stopping to ogle the unbroken views over coves and azure sea stretching to the horizon, little fishing boats bobbing on the tide. The road eventually turns a corner to reveal the picturesque cove splayed out below, and what must be one of the best-kept secrets of this part of the country. No time is wasted changing out into boardies and bikini and charging in. The cove, though not exactly undiscovered, is for the time being still well off the radar for foreign tourism, though given its irresistible beauty, like the haven of a Bond villain, this surely can't remain the case for long.

### Kingdom of Light and Color

Back in Quy Nhon, the boulevard and city square has come to life with children on bicycles, snack sellers and couples strolling the promenade. We join the carnival atmosphere and walk along the cool sand. Out at sea the pinprick lights of a hundred shrimp boats dot the waves like a ghostly mirror city. A gentle sea breeze blows over the town, and some of that Quy Nhon charm makes itself felt.

For me, Quy Nhon, like most southern Vietnamese cities, is at its most affable in the morning hours before the great cooker of the tropic sun reaches maximum burn. These charms are best found and appreciated on a leafy side street eating the local cuisine, *banh xeo Quy Nhon*, *ca phe da* at hand, pearls of condensation running down the side of the glass. The sea breeze only heightens the mood, with the open-ended feeling of a new day of exploring ahead. We pore over maps (or screenshots of maps), and chart out the trajectory of the day to come, a day in search of the last vestiges of the Champa Kingdom of Vijaya, which was once centered not far from the modern city of Quy Nhon, and shared its port.



Vijaya was at one time the heartlands of the Cham people, a collection of Hindu seafaring kingdoms who came from across the seas and established a powerful trading empire here along this rocky coast, from Danang down to Muine, and with outposts reaching as far as the southern highlands (there is even a single lonely temple near Buon Me Thuot). Their spiritual center may have been the sanctuary of My Son, near Hoi An, but at one time their economic heart was the thriving city of Vijaya. Of it now, little remains. Just a temple here and there on a lonely hilltop, statues dug up out of the ground and displayed in museums, and rice farmers farming rice as they have since time immemorial. The most well-known of these temples around Quy Nhon are the Banh It Towers (Thap Banh It), about 12km north of the city just off National Highway A1. But there is another temple site within the city limits itself, the Thap Doi towers, tucked in amongst houses and businesses on a pleasantly maintained grassy plot.

All that remains of that city are a pair of carved elephants standing sentinel at what was once the gates of the royal palace. One of these elephants, as I squat taking its picture, is almost at the front door of a small house. An old man comes out to see what the fuss is all about. He is not used to the spectacle of camera-toting tourists at his door. You could be forgiven for mistaking the elephant as one of his garden ornaments, it is that close to his house. He shakes my hand vigorously upon being informed that I am an English teacher and have called Vietnam my home for some years now, translating through my girlfriend. It turns out he lived in the same part of the city as my girlfriend for a good chunk of his life, until he was able to build his house here in the Quy Nhon countryside, to which he proudly gesticulates to behind him, and the two have a long, amiable discussion. He tells us a great wooden palace once stood here, guarded by these elephants, though no trace of



it now remains. At length he bids us farewell and shakes my hand once again with no less enthusiasm, ambling back to his door, whacking the sweat from the back of his neck with a checked handkerchief as he goes.

So little-known are the majority of these remaining Cham temples, that for the intrepid traveler who is willing to seek them out, you are likely to have them all to yourself. This becomes

startlingly apparent later in the day after tracking down the imposing complex of Duong Long, in an idyll surround of shimmering rice paddies and rural hamlets. The complex is fenced off, with a hand-painted sign affixed to the gate railings, which are padlocked shut. Painted onto the sign is a phone number, that of the watchman, who we unwittingly rouse from sleep. After a short interlude he comes along on his motorbike and gruffly unlocks the gate.

The Duong Long towers are of a magnitude larger than those of the famed My Son Sanctuary, yet almost wholly unheard of outside of their immediate neighbors and the rare instance of budding historical enthusiast such as yours truly. Some real digging took place beforehand in order to track their location down, and a great deal of asking directions from farmers throwing chuff into tractors on the roadside. This is quite an astounding state of affairs, standing beneath in their long shadows, head craned up to the tops, where starlings and bats have now made their home, and not a camera shutter to be heard. Other than that of my own, of course. And they are quite the sight, three mighty redbrick towers, for the most part still intact, constructed entirely from thousands upon thousands of hand-baked bricks, which give them







that distinctive orange hue, the same hue of riverbanks and the mud of the earth which is found up and down the length of the land.

We carry on through a landscape seemingly untouched by time, a landscape of red-tiled houses, old women in their conical hats and dark-hued *ao ba ba* raking out rice to dry on country lanes, buffalos in the fields, schoolchildren passing by in flocks of bicycles who wave as they pass, and the idle flow of turquoise rivers wending their way out to sea, crossing bamboo bridges driven into the alluvial sandbars, a world away from the megacities with their flyovers and incessant cacophony of

engines and horns.

This is a part of the country that reveals its secrets slowly, handing out its rewards in no great hurry, without the tour buses and package groups. It is a place that requires one to become immersed within it on its own terms, to become spellbound, haunted even, in its pastoral beauty and color. For Quy Nhon is a kingdom of light and color, its joys and melancholy wrapped up in its long and at times tumultuous past, the kind of place which invites poetry and introspection, and holds within it the multifaceted spirit which once felt, continues to beguile back to it those placed under its spell. ■





# Notes from **The Ivory Tower**

*A day full of love, beauty and monkey business at the Taj Mahal*

Text by **Susie Gallop**



**THERE'S A RIGHT WAY AND A** wrong way to convince a monkey to give you back your sandal.

I, apparently, have chosen the wrong one.

"If you put your hand out and ask for it, the monkey will simply run away," says my guide Shiraz of the cheeky langur monkey who's just scarpered with one of my Havaianas.

"The trick is to offer him food. Only then will he drop it."

We're at Itimad-ud-Daulah in Agra, otherwise known as India's "Baby Taj."

It might not be on the same scale as its big sister up the road, but rumor has it this Mughal mausoleum, built three years before the Taj Mahal, was the blueprint for the world's most famous building. It's also the final resting place of the grandfather of Mumtaz Mahal, for whom the Taj Mahal was built.

Like many monuments in India, the 400-year-old Baby Taj wears its historical cloak lightly: road workers doze in the shade of the garden's luridly-flowering trees and troops of black-faced monkeys screech and stagger around the walled compound like drunken women on a hen's night.

As custom dictates, we remove our footwear to enter the tomb of Persian nobleman Mirza Ghiyas Beg. Less



than a second later, an alpha male with eyebrows Kim Kardashian could only dream about reaches in and grabs one of my sandals, before scurrying to the other side of the courtyard.

Yelling at the furry offender only encourages him: he holds his prize aloft, as if to say, "come and get it" before casually doing a victory lap of the manicured garden. My anger burns

hotter than the midday sun, particularly as I don't have any food on me. Our driver is eventually dispatched to play chicken with the relentless traffic to buy peanuts from a roadside stall.

"Throwing food at them usually works," says Shiraz. And so it does: the monkey grabs the packet, sniffs it to ensure he's not being conned and then calmly releases his grip on my sandal.





For the remainder of our visit to the first tomb to be built on the banks of the Yamuna River, my footwear remains firmly clasped to my chest. Having your personal effects held hostage by a monkey may be hard to beat but later that evening something comes close—the Taj Mahal.

Sunrise and sunset are the two prime viewing times of the world's most beautiful building: not only is the Taj at its most atmospheric then, you're also less likely to need sharp elbows as the crowds thin out at either end of the day.

We arrive as dusk is drawing a soft, dappled sheet over the sky. Cars aren't allowed within a 500m radius of the marble structure, so the only way to get there is to walk, catch a horse chariot or climb onto the back of a camel. Neither of the options involving animals appeals—they all look pitiful and I feel sorry for them having to drag overweight tourists in the unspeakable heat.

Instead, we make our way on foot through the swirling chaos of touts, multi-colored saris and wandering livestock to reach the building, which looms out of the haze like an Impressionist painting brought to life. My husband worries it will disappoint; like the Mona Lisa, it's too famous, too photographed. As we clear security and



pass through the delicate arched gate, our fears disappear.

It's a cliché but, like most clichés, it's true—no matter how many pictures you've seen, or even if you've visited before, the first sight of the Taj Mahal is breathtaking. Creamy domes and towers appear to float in perfect symmetry, a mirage broken only by the Quranic calligraphy, precious and semi-precious stones and intricate flower designs that represent paradise.

Shiraz, who's been leading tourists around the site for 11 years, must have trotted out its history hundreds of times but he still fizzes with excitement as he relates one of the greatest love stories of all time.

Shah Jahan, the Emperor of Mughal India, was so heartbroken after his wife Mumtaz Mahal died giving birth to their 14th child in 1631 that he commissioned the grand mausoleum for her. It was 23 years in the making and involved around 20,000 workers. According to local legend, some of them may not have fared so well: Jahan was said to have ordered their hands to be chopped off once the building was complete to ensure nothing so beautiful could ever be created again.

No written evidence of this has ever been found, but Shiraz tells it with such gruesome delight, I almost want

to believe it. If it is true then karma certainly caught up with Jahan: not long after the building was complete, he was overthrown by his son and imprisoned at the nearby Agra Fort where, for the rest of his days, he could only gaze at his creation from a window. Following his death in 1666, he was buried at the Taj alongside his wife.

We've already taken more photos than should be allowed by state law, but Shiraz insists we have a picture at the "Diana Bench," the spot where Princess Diana was snapped in 1992. Although it's as cheesy as a fondue, we comply, waiting our turn and crossing our legs at the ankle as the late Princess did.

Thankfully, there's no fear of our footwear being nicked here: once inside, we're given white booties to pull over our shoes to protect the marble floors. We spend the next few hours oohing and aahing at the scale and perfection of the translucent dome, the painstakingly carved filigreed screens and the soaring minarets.

As we leave the world's greatest monument to love and plunge back into the melee, we see a woman chasing a tribe of monkeys who've stolen a shirt from her washing line. I want to tell her how to get her shirt back, but figure she must already know. ■



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# Kids & Education

A high-angle, top-down photograph of four children lying on their backs on a lush green lawn. They are all laughing heartily, with their mouths wide open and eyes squeezed shut. Their hands are raised to their faces, covering their eyes. The child in the center foreground is wearing a blue polo shirt with colorful horizontal stripes. To their left, a child wears a red bandana with a white paisley pattern. Another child to the right is wearing a green shirt. The overall mood is joyful and carefree.

# MIX IT UP

## Factors schools should consider when incorporating mixed reality technology into the classroom

Text by Jonathan Roberts

**ALL THE WAY BACK TO THE 80S**, it's easy to find articles promising that virtual reality (VR) will rapidly change classroom teaching. These discussions range from allowing students to disappear into a virtual world, to developing skills and practicing with digital objects.

But the reality is that for most schools, a technology has to be consumer grade, which means private use of this technology becomes widespread before it is integrated into the classroom. While we often have thoughts about how our classrooms will have specialist technology straight out of the research lab, it's often the case that a technology has to be commercialized before a school can adopt it.

It's only over the last few years that VR technology has truly become available to the average consumer, and also available to our students. On top of this, newer related technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and mixed reality (MR) have also begun to become available, providing different combinations of digital objects and the physical environment that students can interact with. According to US entrepreneur Keith Curtin, mixed reality will be most important technology of 2017.

### What Is Mixed Reality?

Mixed Reality is a broad term first proposed to describe a continuum between the real world on the left hand side (real reality) and the virtual world

on the right (virtual reality). In between these two extremes are two other possibilities—augmented reality, where the real world is augmented with digital objects, and augmented virtuality, where the virtual world is augmented with real world objects (or representations of them).

In this nascent space, it becomes quite difficult to work out which of these technologies are the best fit for the classroom. With a plethora of mixed reality options from the major companies, including Microsoft, Apple, Facebook and others, teachers are often overwhelmed with choice. With some devices costing many thousands of dollars, the choice becomes even harder.

We should strive for technology-enabled pedagogy, not pedagogy-enabled technology. I often represent this with the mantra 'pedagogy before technology,' which reminds teachers that their use of technology should always start with a pedagogical problem to solve. Based on the problem—the right technology can be selected. A strength of AR is that it adds digital objects to the physical world within the context of the environment.

Any pedagogical problem that you are looking to solve should take this into account. Perhaps AR could be used to place digital objects in contextually relevant parts of the school for students to find. For example, this could include a lesson on nature that incorporates objects placed in trees and gardens, as this uses context and also the digital objects.

Conversely, if the AR system you are envisioning does not require context, such as putting dinosaurs on a table in the middle of the classroom, then perhaps VR would be a better solution.

If you start with the problem, then you can choose the technology that suits it best, but if you start with the technology, you'll often find yourself searching for a problem, or even using the technology inappropriately.

### Using The Technology

Once you've determined the pedagogical problem and the right technology, you need to consider what hardware suits your problem best. Having determined what type of technology you wish to use will have narrowed the list, but there will still be several choices in each space.

For instance, in the current VR space, devices such as Oculus Rift from Facebook, HTC Vive from HTC, or headsets from Microsoft are all popular. In the AR space, Meta 2 from Meta, HoloLens from Microsoft and Apple's recent foray into AR via their ARKit toolkit are all possibilities. And for each of these spaces, it's also possible to use a mobile mixed reality solution, where a standard smartphone is put into a plastic



or cardboard headset and used to allow a VR or AR experience.

When making this choice, consideration needs to be given to the features of each device. For instance, in the VR space, HTC Vive provides world-positioning functionality through wall sensors that are not currently provided by the Oculus Rift. Similarly, in the AR space, the Apple solution uses a non-immersive mobile phone view, whereas the Microsoft HoloLens uses an immersive view with holograms projected right in front of your eyes.

Cost is also a factor, with Mobile Mixed Reality solutions being the cheapest, moving through more expensive options in the HTC Vive and Oculus, to the large cost of HoloLens. When considering the need for these devices to be used by an entire class, this means that often the cheaper solutions are the most useful.

The old adage “you get what you pay for” is often the case with MR hardware, and while devices like HoloLens are more expensive, they also provide a complete experience. It is, however, hard to go past

a whole class set of MMR headsets cheaply. This further strengthens the need to balance and also understand your problem before making a decision.

What software is needed to make this all work? At this stage, the software question needs to be addressed after the hardware question, as software is often dependent on a particular hardware, especially given the different characteristics of mixed reality hardware. Within this limitation, many software solutions are available, with the important consideration being that the pedagogy be considered first when selecting software. Sometimes a simple piece of software best suits the pedagogical situation, and it's worth thinking outside of the box when selecting software.

With this in mind, it's also worth noting that, unlike finished software, development environments are much more flexible. In particular, Unity

offers plugins for many mixed reality environments, and allows compilation across many different environments. This provides the opportunity for some more unique user-created content from students.

Rather than finding a pre-built app, students in secondary schools can propose a design to build their own app to solve a pedagogical problem. This also matches well with the Digital Technologies curriculum and the focus on development in later years.

Mixed reality is an emerging and exciting field that is only just starting to break into education. When you consider the variety of hardware and software available, and the ability of students to develop user-generated content, a focus on “pedagogy before technology” becomes important. When applied to the classroom appropriately, mixed reality solutions can make a positive difference to student learning. ■





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# The Next Stage of Learning

Oi speaks to Ian Battersby, Head Teacher at the British International School, about open space learning and their new innovative Early Years and Infant Campus in District 2

Text by **Michael Arnold**  
Images Provided by **BIS HCMC**



**WHEN THE NEW EARLY YEARS** and Infant Campus opens in Thao Dien next year, it will complete the evolution of one of Ho Chi Minh City's oldest and most prestigious international schools. The new **British International School** ([www.bisvietnam.com](http://www.bisvietnam.com)) location will see the closure of its D3 primary facility on Tu Xuong, finally bringing all students enrolled at the school within close proximity of each other in District 2.

The new campus will be headed by Ian Battersby, currently fronting the Tu Xuong campus, who will also inherit the school's Fundinotots program for 0–2-year-olds and eventually oversee learning for all enrolled students through to Year Two, aged 7 years. Personally involved in working with the Early Years campus architects, Battersby and his colleagues have endeavoured to ensure that facilities closely match the school's educational goals for students at the foundation level.

"Our aim in the Early Years and Infant Campus is to develop children's independence, building the foundation for future learning. A part of which is giving students essential language, mathematical and scientific knowledge," says Battersby. "This approach is very much for F1, F2

and F3. They build on this curriculum when they move into Year One, so we need to ensure that the children are prepared for their next stage of learning, where it's a lot more independent. We see that difference in Year Two, where the children have established the groundwork to go forward with maths, English, science and so on."

The design of the new campus is informed by the school's educational philosophy to the extent that the environment itself constitutes part of the children's teaching. Students are not cloistered into tiny classrooms and coerced into their learning, instead large, open spaces facilitate freedom of movement and more opportunities for children to explore activities designed to stimulate their personal, social and physical development. The free-flow concept, which enables the children to self-direct their own education from the age of 2, draws from modern practices in British education that foster individual character building in a social setting.

As the children move on in their schooling, the environment in the new campus adapts to allow them to transition into a more traditional classroom. By the time they're older and are working towards their university entrance qualifications, they'll have acquired all the fundamental skills in self-driven learning, while having developed enough self-discipline to sit down to work.

"Learning spaces are opened up and

shared across the year group with additional outdoor environments designed to extend learning in all the prime areas. Our learning spaces, although principally designed to enhance physical development with features such as a sensory walkway, cycle tracks, and climbing and crawling areas, also provides opportunities to explore their understanding of the world. Mark-making areas surrounded by the natural environment, will provide the stimulus for the children's initial stages of writing. In addition to the learning spaces on the ground floor, we also have a grassed rooftop playground with shelters for making dens, a climbing wall and plenty of natural grass, contributing to the eco-friendly nature of the school."

The school has been working with this open classroom model for five years, having adapted the Tu Xuong campus as much as possible to accommodate year group units rather than separate classrooms. The approach builds on best practices from the UK, and from what advanced educational research has revealed about play-based learning. "We did a lot of work with the architects to ensure that we've got the various spaces that work for what we want to achieve," explains Battersby.

The Early Years & Infant Campus will very much focus on securing the foundations for learning—enquiry, reflection, and perseverance, tempered with integrity, respect and care. ■





# Get With The Program

Social-emotional learning programs have not traditionally targeted students with psychiatric or developmental disabilities. Here's why they should

Text by **Amanda Atwood**

**IT WAS NINE-YEAR-OLD TOBIN'S** first day at a new school, and like most kids he was nervous. He didn't know the other students or his teacher, and he already had quite a history of behavioral problems at other schools. He likely wondered whether this experience would be just another failure for him.

However, on that first day, he took a simple but monumental step: He summoned the courage to ask his teacher to take a walk with him. (Tobin's new classroom was intentionally small and supportive, and at times included extra staffing to accommodate such requests.) I don't know what they talked about, but I do know this: In that small request, Tobin set himself on a new path in school, one pointed toward success.

Getting there required a year and a half of hard work and gradual progress. Eighteen months earlier, Tobin had attended a

private, nonprofit school that serves students with emotional, psychiatric and developmental disabilities who have not been successful in other school settings. He had missed more than 30 days of school in the past year, and when he was in school his behavior was often unpredictable and sometimes explosive. He often struggled to meet academic expectations, and his reading skills lagged significantly behind those of other students his age. When an assignment was difficult for him—or looked like it would be too hard—he was easily overwhelmed, at times erupting with rude remarks or attempts to flee his classroom.

For a student like Tobin (whose name has been changed here to protect his privacy), there are many valid approaches that a typical school might take: extra attention to his reading skills, a course of rewards and consequences for his disruptive behavior, suspensions for particularly

challenging behavior, perhaps a suggestion to seek outside counseling or medication.

But the private, nonprofit school took a different route. While they certainly provided intensive academic supports and efforts to reinforce “good” behavior (and reprimand “bad” behavior) after it occurred, and these strategies did help Tobin, they also focused more proactively on nurturing his social and emotional skills. This included strengthening his abilities to recognize his emotions and thoughts and how they influenced his behavior, cope with stressful feelings or situations, and maintain positive, cooperative relationships with peers and teachers. For example, they helped Tobin realize when he was getting overwhelmed by a difficult-seeming assignment, and ask for help instead of acting out.

Given all of the challenges facing Tobin—and the realities constraining regular schools—it's not hard to imagine a focus on social-emotional skills like these being considered a luxury (if even considered at all). And yet social and emotional learning (SEL) can actually prove essential to helping students meet their goals, even—or perhaps particularly—for children with significant behavioral problems. While these children have not traditionally earned the attention of SEL programs, there is good reason for that to change.

But to help students like Tobin develop their social-emotional skills, teachers and administrators must take two critical steps. First, they must change the way they think about the needs of these students, seeing them as children who need help developing key skills and strengths in order to meet school





expectations rather than assuming they can eliminate their problem behaviors by enforcing consequences or firm limits. Then, educators have to tackle an important question: How can existing research-based SEL strategies and programs be tailored to the needs and strengths of these students?

Despite these trends, there has been little focus on SEL skill development for students with diagnosed psychiatric or developmental disabilities. Very few of the evidence-based programs have been specifically tested with these students in mind, let alone as the primary target. It is not uncommon for SEL programs to require extensive writing assignments or long classroom discussions, tasks that may be impractical for students who have trouble writing or sitting still.

### Going Prosocial

Why focus on SEL development for students like Tobin? There are several good reasons. The first reason is conceptual. Disabilities like AD/HD or anxiety disorders, and the behaviors associated with them, are better thought of as deficits in certain key skills—deficits that may in part be remediated by intensive focus on SEL skill development rather than by trying to stop negative behavior through a regimen of rewards and consequences or even medication. For instance, students struggling in school might particularly benefit from help learning how to inhibit impulses to lash out and to practice calming techniques instead (like mindful breathing), or how to develop a realistic sense of what their strengths are and when they need to ask for help (and from whom).

There is now a wealth of evidence to suggest this approach works. Research led by SEL pioneer Joseph Zins has shown that supporting social-emotional skills like these not only reduces students' distress and

behavior problems but also improves their chances of success in school. Studies of specific SEL programs have shown similar results: The Second Step program has been found to reduce aggressive behavior and promote kind, helpful—or “prosocial”—thinking; the PATHS program has shown similar benefits while also helping to improve students' academic performance. In fact, a meta-analysis of 213 separate studies found that, on average, kids who participate in SEL programs see their academic achievement test scores increase by 11 percentage points.

Finally, although students with significant behavioral problems frequently receive plenty of attention in school, too often this attention comes in the form of frustration, disappointment, and rejection from teachers and peers. Teaching them social and emotional skills—like taking the perspective of others—can help them reach the point where their relationships become sources of support, not of tension or judgment.

Clearly, teaching SEL skills to students with psychiatric or developmental disabilities has great promise. But, as with teaching academics to such students, it also comes with great challenges. How do we approach this? For instance, with a student who has a tendency toward hyperactivity, when presenting a lesson we might take frequent movement breaks, use specialized seat cushions, or allow that student to stand at her desk. Or, for a student struggling with low frustration tolerance, we might provide small chunks of work with the opportunity for a break or other earned incentive.

Along these lines, we also consistently tailor SEL programs to match students' academic abilities, which may include reducing written expectations, repeating key concepts, or providing flow charts, outlines, or other visual/graphic supports.

The second key to using the evidence-based group lessons from SEL programs is to have follow-up by teachers and classroom staff. This may involve using language from the program in more individualized coaching sessions, special reinforcement programs (e.g., “catch ‘em being good” programs targeted at prosocial behaviors such as kindness or persistence), or other efforts to translate group materials into the rest of the week's curriculum.

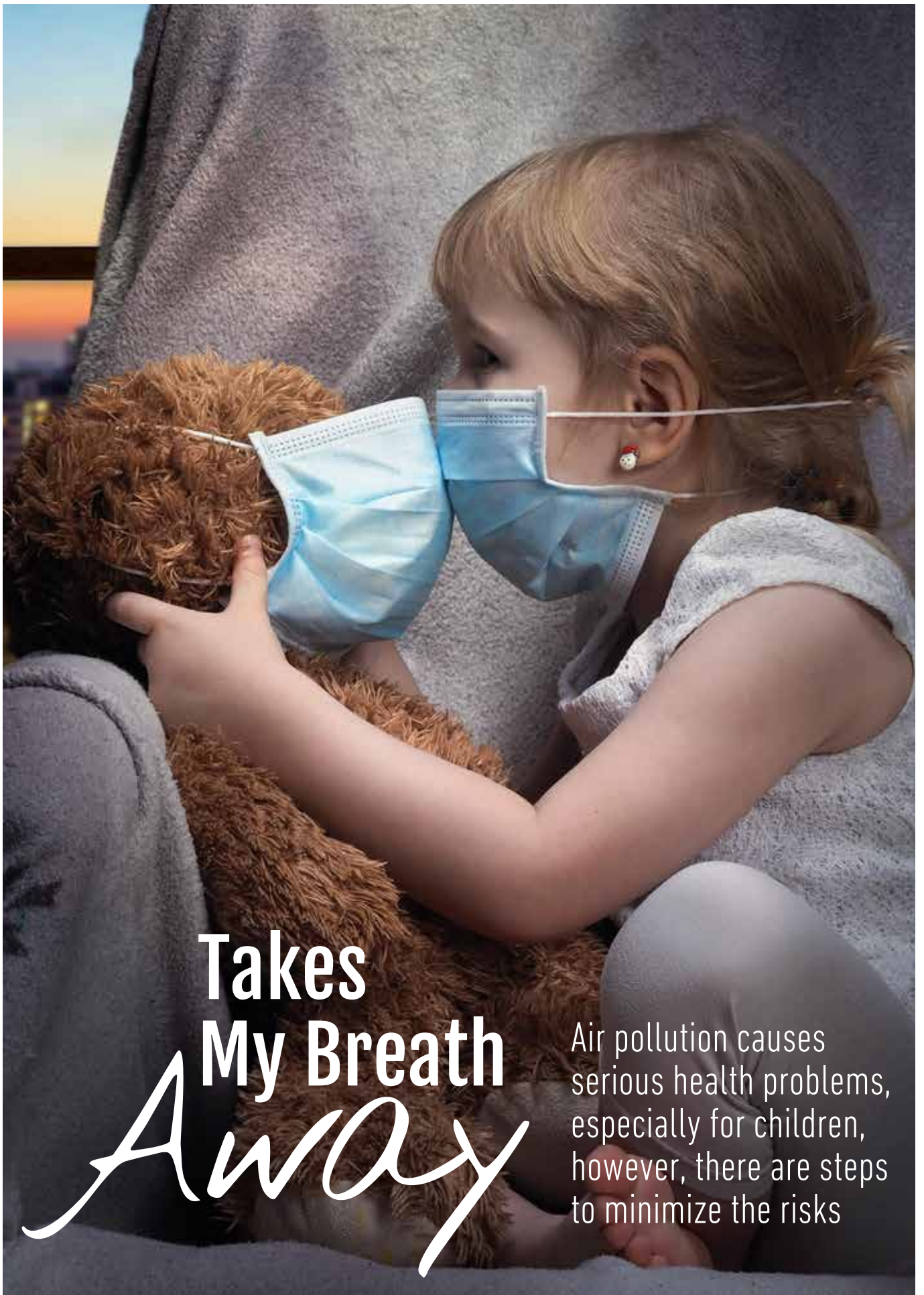
Teaching social and emotional skills to children with significant behavioral problems is not easy. It requires both a good grasp on existing evidence-based strategies and a creative approach to modifying these strategies. It requires a patient teacher who can build strong relationships with students and has an eye for seeing students' challenges as opportunities to teach and coach (not to mention catching a situation before it erupts into a crisis).

For Tobin, this involved taking away his old go-to strategies (like running away from class), despite his initial strong opposition, and helping him see teachers as adults who could also care for him. And it involved teaching him to take a deep breath or ask for help before he got totally overwhelmed by an assignment that looked difficult.

On a practical level, he went on a lot of walks with his teacher (while an aide remained with the class) to take a break from the classroom, discuss what he was worried about, and make a plan to tackle the challenge. Over time, he internalized this set of strategies—enough so that when he finally returned to a public school setting, he was able to ask his teacher for that helpful walk and set out on a new, more constructive path to success. ■











**Dr. Jonathan Halevy** received his degree from the Sackler School of Medicine of Tel Aviv University, and then underwent his residency in the Pediatric Department of the Wolfson Medical Center in Israel, earning his certification as a specialist in pediatrics.

**WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU LIVE** near a construction site? Here is a typical story. I recently saw a three-year-old child who has been suffering from a recurrent runny nose, ongoing cough, sneezing, and sometimes sticky red eyes for the past three months. Previously he was a very healthy kid, but now he has these symptoms almost daily. He was prescribed many different types of medications (cough medications, allergy medications, and antibiotics) which sometimes helped a little—but as soon as he stopped taking them, he would become sick again. His mother was very concerned that his immune system was weakening. Upon questioning the mother, we found out that just before the child became sick, a construction site had been set up not far from their home.

If you have lived in Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City over the past decade, you almost certainly had this problem at some point—a site in your neighborhood where an apartment building, house, road or bridge was demolished, built up or renovated.

How does this affect your health and your children's health? As it turns out, it's much more than just the noise at night that won't let you sleep.

- The heaviest toll on our health of having a construction site near home is the air pollution. This is not just the regular dust that you might find in any home: construction dust contains many different types of chemicals, including cement dust, heavy metals, synthetic fibers, sawdust and even asbestos (a known cause of lung cancer) and silica (a cause of chronic lung disease).

- Fumes from cars, trucks, bulldozers, generators and other fuel-operated machinery in and around the site can significantly contribute to the pollution of the air you breathe.

- Radon is a radioactive gas, which is released from the soil. In construction sites, its levels tend to increase as it is released into the atmosphere. Radon is one of the leading causes of lung cancer (second only to cigarette smoking).

- Aspergillus is a fungus (mold) that is ubiquitous in the soil. During the construction, renovation or demolition of buildings, it spreads easily into the air and may cause significant respiratory problems and chronic allergic symptoms to those people who live nearby.

- Construction sites promote infestations such as rats and cockroaches. These animals can shed their skins into the environment. These are known to be strong triggers of allergies and asthma.

- Chemicals and heavy metals from construction sites can be absorbed into the soil and water in the neighborhood and cause further pollution and health problems.

- Airborne chemicals and dust particles can also cause irritation to your skin and eyes as well as dermatitis (skin inflammation) and eye infections (stye, conjunctivitis).

The construction site doesn't have to be next door. It can even be hundreds of meters away and still have a heavy effect on your children's health. The same goes for construction sites near schools and kindergartens.

I see many children from different areas of the city who suffer from chronic nasal congestion, sinusitis and enlarged adenoids, chronic bronchitis, asthma and eye infections—and it's not because their immune system is weaker, it's because their immune system is desperately trying to fight a losing battle with air pollution.

What can we as parents do? We can't stop the construction obviously, but there are ways to reduce your child's exposure to dust.

- If you live near busy roads or construction sites, you may need to keep your windows closed.

- If you use air conditioners, make sure the filters are cleaned frequently, at least monthly. These filters tend to accumulate dust and mold and spread them into the room.

- Vacuum your home with proper vacuum cleaners (with HEPA filters) daily.

- Remove objects that may accumulate dust from your child's room (carpets, heavy curtains, furry toys, pillows)

- Clean and air bedsheets and mattresses frequently.

- If you live near construction sites, busy roads or in a dusty neighborhood, use a special mask (N95) every time your child leaves home. They may help reduce exposure to large dust particles (unfortunately, most are not useful against tiny particles, chemicals or gases).

Sometimes, taking a holiday on the beach where the air is clean can do wonders for your health. ■

# >>The List 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, 1E Street, KDC Trung Son, Binh Hung, Binh Chanh, HCMC  
**Primary & Secondary Campus:**  
2, 1E Street, KDC Trung Son, Binh Hung, Binh Chanh, HCMC  
84 28 5431 1833/34/35/36  
office@theabcis.com  
www.theabcis.com



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028 6287 0804/ 0904 938 666  
www.etonhouseanphu.com



### International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP)

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**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



### STEPS Special School

STEPS (Support Teach Encourage Person with Special Needs) Special School caters to children with Autism, ADHD/ADD, Speech Delay, Intellectual Disability, Behavior Difficulty and Deaf. Our mission and vision is to nurture all children with Special needs in a safe inclusive and supportive environment through education, therapeutic interventions and community acceptance. We offer full - day, half - day, after school program, and school assistance.



**18A Vo Trung Toan, An Phu Ward, D2, HCMC.**  
(028) 2253-4728  
www.steps.edu.vn  
Steps2017vn@gmail.com



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

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



**16 Vo Trung Toan, D2**  
+84 (28) 3898 9100  
admissions@aaavn.edu.vn  
www.aaavn.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**



### 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 21 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. In 2018, The American School will open its new, sprawling mega-campus in District 2's An Phu Neighborhood. This purpose-built facility will house up to 1200 students from pre-nursery through grade 12. This is an exciting time in the growth of the school!

**177A, 172-180 Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien, D2**  
**028 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**



## 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**



Kaohsiung, Taiwan // [www.art-kaohsiung.com](http://www.art-kaohsiung.com)

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# ISHCMC-AA MUSIC

Khiem, Grade 12 student



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