



VIETNAM

12-2017

THE IRON MAIDEN

Meet Vietnam's Female Bodybuilder
Dinh Kim Loan

PAGE 18

A GESTURE OF GOODWILL

New Restaurant Asks Guests
to order in Sign Language

PAGE 52

GUNSLINGER TEXAS RANGER

Ten-gallon Hats, Guns and
A Lot of Swagger in Dallas

PAGE 76

SEEKING ATTENTION

Strategies for Teaching
ADHD Students at Home

PAGE 92

Holiday Gift Guide



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Contents

WINE & DINE

RESTAURANT REVIEWS

This month's highlights include sun and sumptuous food at Novotel Phu Quoc, dining at the unique new restaurant Blanc, where sign language meets gastronomy, and sexy tapas at the newly-opened Tomatito Saigon



TROPICANA - CREME CARAMEL WITH FRESH FRUIT / IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN

FEATURES

10 DATEBOOK

With these events, you'll never have to be bored again

14 TROI OI

Find out why pigeons, milk and clogs made it into our list

18 THE IRON MAIDEN

Vietnam's female bodybuilder who's smashing stereotypes

22 TAKE ME TO THE RIVER

Explore the beautiful tapestry that makes up the Mekong Delta

24 DETOX FOR TET

Explore Spa by Le Méridien Saigon harnesses the healing powers of the sea

28 STEP BY STEP

Sophie Clarke, winner of the female division in the HCMC SKYRUN, on how she won the race

32 FOR THE LOVE OF PETS

Oi speaks to Thao, the CEO of Pet Lovers Centre Vietnam, to find out why now is the right time to enter the pet industry

COLUMNS

30 TAIL TELL SIGNS

Every so often, you will need to give your dog a bath, but there is a fine line between letting the dirt build up and overwashing

34 LEGAL EASE

Alternative methods in Vietnam for women who can't conceive

35 MONEY TALKS

Everything you wanted to know about Bitcoin but were afraid to ask

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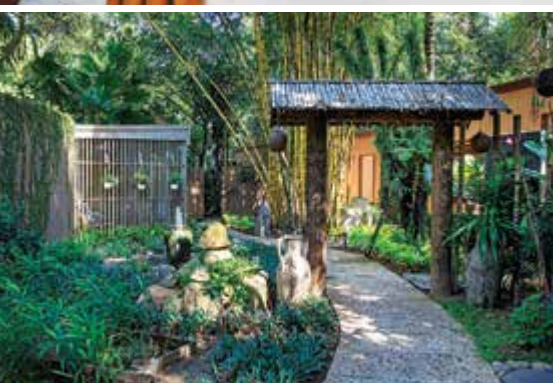
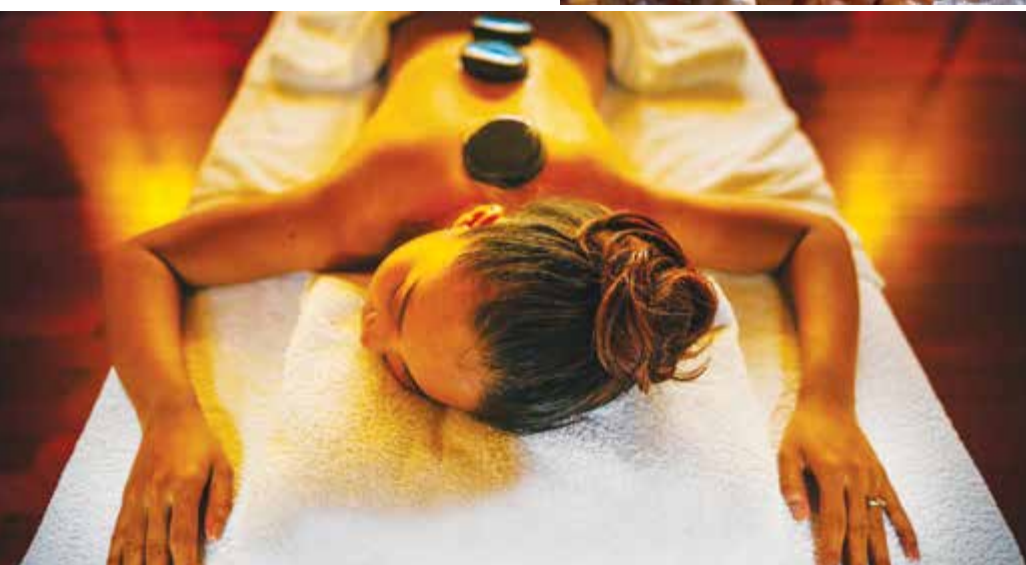
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Contents

COVER STORY

HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

This year we've rounded up the most thoughtful, stylish and fun presents to surprise your friends and family



SAIGON JEWELRY / IMAGE BY NGOC TRAN

FEATURES

36 NATURALLY BEAUTIFUL

Buffalo horn and lacquer accessories that make the perfect accent to any outfit

76 GUNSLINGER TEXAS RANGER

Deep in the heart of North Texas is Dallas, and what's sizable about the "Big D" is its Western boots, ten-gallon hats, guns and swagger

80 ISLAND ENLIGHTENMENTS

Why go to the Greek Islands? The question should really be, "Why not?"

88 CODING MATTERS

Coding allows students to develop an understanding of being able to use, and create with, digital technologies

92 SEEKING ATTENTION

Strategies for teaching ADHD students at home

COLUMNS

62 RECIPE OF THE MONTH

The exciting cousin of plain white rice, sticky rice is versatile and delicious with everything

64 CHEERS!

Should the taste of wine change?

94 THE DOCTOR IS IN

A simple guide to cough medications



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Datebook

What's on this month...

DECEMBER 9

What: Back2Back

Where: The Lighthouse (Floor 6, 104 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D1)

About: Max Cleo is the only female DJ in Vietnam to choose underground dance music as her primary focus. For Max, "underground" means fresh, new and energetic; three words that aptly describe her sound. After years deejaying across Vietnam and more recently in Thailand, Japan and Russia she is working extensively on recording and 2017 looks to be Max's year both domestically in Vietnam and internationally as the appeal for her pure deep sounds broadens.

Contact: Visit heartbeatsaigon.com for more info



DECEMBER 9 & 10

What: Xmas Art Market

Where: inpages (4 Le Van Mien, D2), 2pm-9pm

About: To all the notebook lovers in Saigon, inpages are happy to announce their theme for this year: Make Notebook Great Again! The new area is just for notebook makers to promote the writing culture. The market will also be packed with handmade local products and artwork, present by the artist themselves. Expect Christmas music, cold drinks, workshops and a chance to pick up a Christmas gift or two.

Contact: Visit inpages.org for more info

DECEMBER 15



What: 5 Years Heart Beat Feat. Heiko Laux// Kanzleramt, Ovum

Where: The Jungle, D2 (located near Phu My bridge); 9pm; VND150,000

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About: To celebrate this anniversary Heart Beat, Saigon's premier Techno promoter, a monthly mainstay for underground music lovers, has produced and published a photobook of the underground music scene in Saigon, featuring many of their events, guest DJs, and many of the venues that are no longer open. Last year Heart Beat sprouted HRBR-Harbour, another underground music promoter making the Saigon nightlife more colorful, and managed to release nearly four EP's on its label.

Founded in 1994 by Heiko Laux, Kanzleramt was Germany's premier techno label releasing some of the freshest sounds of that time. 20 years later the label is still continuously testing boundaries in contemporary techno, breaching the gaps between techno, trance and minimal.

Contact: Visit heartbeatsaigon.com for more info

DECEMBER 28-31

What: The 9th Engaging With Vietnam—An Interdisciplinary Dialogue Conference

Where: The University of Social Sciences and Humanities Vietnam National University (10-12 Dinh Tien Hoang, D1)

About: With the theme of exploring "development," "tourism," and

"sustainability" in/of Vietnam from multi-disciplinary and multi-directional perspectives, the 9th EWV conference will introduce various activities, ranging from keynote sessions and academic presentations to exhibitions, idea contests, a policy forum, Q&A sessions, curriculum development, sightseeing, field observations, and music performances that are all integrated to offer participants opportunities to feel, think, engage, try out and live the conference theme.

Contact: Visit engagingwithvietnam.net for more info



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TROI OI!

The country in numbers



10,000

PIGEONS WERE SET FREE AS A TRIBUTE TO victims of traffic accidents. More than 10,000 Buddhist monks, followers and residents from across the country were present at Hoi An Pagoda, in Thu Dau Mot City, to attend the ceremony. Attendees pray for peace and reincarnation of the deceased's souls. The event, jointly organized by the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and the National Committee for Traffic Safety, was to commemorate the victims and share the pain and loss with their family members. It was also part of a series of events following on from World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims, which is held on the third Sunday of November each year.

Traffic accidents claimed more than 6,800 lives and permanently disabled 11,785 people in January-October, according to statistics released by the National Committee for Traffic Safety. The deaths of the traffic victims, many of whom were very young, are a great loss to families as well as to society, while the injured victims are burdens on their families and the whole society.

4.3 MILLION

VIETNAMESE MEN EXPECTED TO be in surplus by the mid-21st century, deputies warned at a National Assembly discussion last month. Deputy Le Thi Yen, representing the northern province of Phu Tho and member of the National Assembly Committee for Social Affairs, reported the outcomes of a program meant to improve gender imbalance during the session. The ratio of male/female newborns in Vietnam is forecast to be 113/100 in 2017, while it was 109/100 in 2006. The shortage of women in society is likely to lead to undesirable impacts including 'purchase' of foreign brides, rape and violence as experienced by such countries as China and India. Yen put the sex discrepancy down to a strong cultural preference for sons rooted in a Confucian-affected male-oriented kinship system in Vietnam. The rate worsened amidst the rising trend of married couples having fewer children and a readily accessible practice of sex selection thanks to medical strides.

THE WHOLE SOCIETY.



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DAMAGES TO A BENTLEY WAS PARDONED BY THE OWNER

of the car. A Hanoi businessman, whose Bentley car was hit by a concrete mixer, has refused to request compensation after learning that the faulted truck driver is under massive financial difficulties. Duong, from the northern province of Hung Yen, was driving the concrete mixer on An Duong Street in Hanoi, when he collided with the Bentley. The truck driver was left devastated after learning of the compensation amount, as he is the family's main bread earner, with both his parents in poor health condition. However, a big surprise came when Duong received a phone call from the Bentley's owner, who said the luxury car had been repaired and he consequently did not have to repay the debt. The businessman wishes that, from this example, Duong will pay it forward by helping others.

~500 STUDENTS OF TWO ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS WERE VICTIMS OF THE POISONING.

A program, sponsored by Nestlé, providing free malted chocolate drinks for elementary students in Hau Giang Province, has been halted following a recent suspected mass food poisoning. Milo is a chocolate and malt powder that is often mixed with hot or cold water or milk to produce a beverage. Initial reports of the Hau Giang department of food safety showed that the Milo chocolate powder was mixed with condensed milk and hot water at the warehouse of M.C Advertising Service Company in Nga Bay Town. Competent agencies have examined the storage of M.C and confiscated 400 packets of Milo and over 1,300 cans of condensed milk, all of which have not reached expiration dates. Officers stated that improper mixing or transportation could have caused the suspected food poisoning, adding that the water could not have been thoroughly boiled.



72-YEAR-OLD

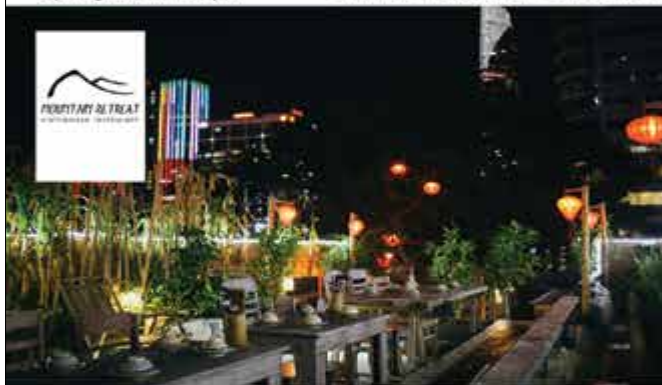
WOMAN PRESERVES CLOG-MAKING CRAFT AT BEN THANH MARKET.

Lien is now the only person selling wooden clogs at the stall she's had for 50 years. There are not enough customers to keep her busy. Lien's shop measures only 1.5 meters square. There used to be several clog shops in the market. Then, they all switched to other business. Her clogs come in many shapes and sizes and boast dozens of decorative patterns. Lien's main concern is whether someone will continue her work when she retires: "It's essential to keep it as a craft and to have clogs displayed and sold at the markets. Otherwise, the clog-making craft will disappear."



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THE BULLETIN

Promotions and news in HCMC and beyond...

Xiaomi Launches Two Smartphones in Vietnam



Xiaomi has rolled into Vietnam with a double product announcement that further cements its commitment to the Vietnam market. The company pulled the wraps off of one of the company's newest flagship phones Mi MIX 2, the gorgeous evolution

of its revolutionary full screen display concept phone Mi MIX launched during Xiaomi's market debut in Vietnam in March 2017. It also simultaneously released Redmi Note 5A Prime for the first time in Vietnam.

Xiaomi officially entered Vietnam in March 2017 in partnership with Digiworld Corporation (DGW), a Market Expansion Service with a two-decade legacy of excellence, with the launch of Mi MIX, Redmi 4A and Redmi Note 4. Since then, Xiaomi has launched a range of its smartphones in the country. The community of Mi Fans in Vietnam has also been growing so fast with frequent online activities and offline gatherings. To date, Mi Community in Vietnam has over 30,000 registered members.



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The Iron Maiden

Vietnam's female bodybuilder
who's smashing stereotypes

Text by **NPD Khanh**

Images by **Ngoc Tran**

"I DIDN'T CHOOSE THIS JOB.

IT CHOSE ME," says Dinh Kim Loan, seven-time Asian gold medalist and twice world champion female bodybuilder for her weight class. Entering into our interview, Loan looks very little like the Asian ideal of feminine beauty. Her waist may be small and her hair may be long, but nothing can hide her sharply defined muscles and impressive Amazon physique. Yet, in other ways, Loan embodies the typical treatment female athletes in Vietnam endure: overlooked despite their accomplishments, and far lesser known than their male counterparts. If she is to be believed, however, Loan doesn't mind any of this unfair treatment.

"This job itself is all the reward I want," she claims. For anyone who knows what she has achieved because of bodybuilding—a job she loves, opportunities for the future, a family who loves and supports her, and the man she loves—it's easy to accept this champion's declaration.

Born in An Giang, a deeply rural province of Vietnam, and starting from an accidental beginning, Loan has had 11 years as a competitive bodybuilding athlete. "I was a member of An Giang's cycling team, professional of course. I also dabbled in other sports, nothing serious, but it added up." In 2006, during the preparation stage for the Vietnam National Sports Festival, an event held every four years and often referred to Vietnam's Olympics, she was discovered by An Giang bodybuilding team's coach, Nguyen Van Hai.

"He approached me, I was an 18-years-old-girl then, and asked if I wanted to compete as a bodybuilder. He said they lacked a female contestant alongside Pham Van Mach, that I was about the same height and weight class as him and that I had a lot of potential." Pham Van Mach, another An Giang native, would go on to become Vietnam's best known bodybuilder on the international stage.

"I didn't even know what bodybuilding was," she laughs fondly at the memory.

Despite Loan's unfamiliarity with bodybuilding, she quickly educated herself on the subject using internet cafés before promptly deciding to accept coach Hai's proposition. "I needed to know only three things," she explains. "One, it's a new sport. Two, it's difficult. And three, few women even wanted to participate due to understandable reasons. What does it mean? It means that there will be more opportunities for me, that there will be less competition, and that if I succeed, I will set the bar as a pioneer of this sport."

She goes further into the reasoning behind her decisive. "I was born into a very poor family in Chau Thanh, the outskirts of An Giang. The first time I went to a city, I was 17 years old. I was shocked. Everything was so big and shiny. There were so many people." The city wasn't Ho Chi Minh City, but Long Xuyen, a tiny provincial city with a population of less than 400,000 people. "So, even at only 18, I already understood many things... such as the fact that it was impossible for me to go to college. My

family was too poor, and I had a younger brother who I wanted to see go to college."

Coach Hai's proposal meant more to Loan than a mere invitation to become a member of An Giang bodybuilding team. It also meant a chance to support her family, go to college eventually on state grants, and to make sure that her brother had his chance at a better education and future. "As a member of the team, I would be paid a monthly salary by An Giang Province (around 70 dollars a month). And if I win any medals, I will get a pay raise. If I win internationally, that means an even bigger pay raise. I wanted to support my family and to not be a burden to them. That was all I could think about," says Loan. And just like that, the 18-year-old teenager officially started her career as a female bodybuilder.

Milk Money

As Loan predicted, she was offered many opportunities, much more than any member of the male team, who faced stiff competition, had any reason to expect. Within just a month and a half of training, she won a gold medal from the National Sports Festival, a lifelong dream for many male counterparts in her bodybuilding team. But that does not mean her chosen path is an easy one or that she was not plagued by doubts along the way.

"The two most difficult things are public perception and finance," says Loan. Rural Vietnam, mired in traditions and stereotypes, has certain expectations for its women and their appearance, few of which any female bodybuilder can meet. "I would sometimes hear whispers

from my neighbors, questioning my femininity or my family's wisdom for allowing their daughter to practice a sport that should only be practiced by men. Sometimes it wouldn't just be whispers," she adds. Fortunately, Loan's family, knowing the reasoning behind her decision, is firmly in support.

"Bodybuilding has very strict nutritional requirements," Loan explains the second challenge to the sport. "I come from a poor family. We couldn't normally afford a budget for the sort of food a bodybuilder needs. And as a newbie bodybuilder, I didn't have much in terms of money." There is a look of combined amusement and nostalgia as she recounts how she met this challenge. "I sat my mom down one day and said, 'Mom, can I borrow your jewelries and pawn them off for money? I need milk, eggs and meat—a lot of them. I swear I will pay you back!'" Her mother agreed with little fuss, and years later she would eventually repay all that she owed her parents and more.

Eleven years after her decision, Dinh Kim Loan is a well-known name among the bodybuilding circle, both locally and internationally, and she has won more medals than is required to prove herself. Using the opportunities afforded to her and through hard work and patience, she has built a house for her parents, bought an apartment for herself, attended college, and even started a restaurant business in Long Xuyen city. Through international competitions, she also met Tom Hammonds, a fellow pro bodybuilder and the man who would become her boyfriend.

"All the things I set out to do, I have done. This job gave me all the things that I want in life," she reaffirms her previous statement. Talking of how female bodybuilding is perceived by the Vietnamese public, Loan says. "I think the public perception has changed a lot in recent years. People used to not know that there was a women's division in bodybuilding and I used to be gawked at with horrified fascination in cities large and small. But nowadays, I would often be approached by teenagers or young women who admired my physique and asked for tips to build their own."

"As for women who are thinking of or hoping to join bodybuilding," she continues. "I just want to say, don't be afraid that you will lose your femininity in the process, or that no man would want you because of your appearance. Femininity is something that comes from the inside. Your ability to be loved and love in return is something that comes from the inside. It has little to do with looks, and far more to do with how much you take care of yourself. Bodybuilding doesn't prevent you from being a woman or enjoying all the things that come with womanhood."

Cheekily, she adds, "In fact, my next goal is to become the most womanly and most fashionable bodybuilder in Vietnam!" ■



Dinh Q. Lê, *Light and Belief*:

Sketches of Life from the Vietnam War, 2012

70 drawings in pencil, watercolor, ink, and oil on paper and single-channel video with sound
Dimensions variable

Video duration: 35 minutes

Courtesy of the artist, Shoshana Wayne Gallery, and 10 Chancery Lane Gallery

Photo by Perry Hu, Courtesy Asia Society Museum

Historical

Awakening

Text by Tressa Berman

An exhibition where art and artists respond to the challenges of their socio-political circumstances

AMERICAN FILM DIRECTORS

Ken Burns and Linda Novick interviewed more than 79 witnesses for their epic 10-part television series *The Vietnam War* (called *The American War in Vietnam*)—now playing to millions of viewers across the US. The documentary film dovetails in time and approach with the current New York exhibition *After Darkness: Southeast Asian Art in the Wake of History*. The artists in the exhibition join first-hand witnessing with historical reckoning, taking from individual accounts of past events to illuminate present-day ripple effects through the lens of contemporary art. I focus here on the works by Vietnamese artists—though the contributions of Indonesian and Myanmar artists create no less powerful dialogue with the exhibition's overarching themes of collective memory, personal story, and how the aftermaths of war and its subsequent national cultural shifts have brought about vibrant and socially engaged contemporary art movements.

Two of the exhibition's elder artists, Dinh Q. Lê and Tan Andrew Nguyen (of the Propeller Group collective) went to the US as young refugees in the 1970s and came back to Vietnam as part of a new wave of returning diaspora, creative artists re-seeding their cultural roots. Dividing his time between Ho Chi Minh City and Los Angeles, Dinh Q. Lê is largely

considered one of the key shapers of HCMC's contemporary art scene, having co-founded San Art in 2007 (see *The Collectibles: Collecting Contemporary Art in Vietnam* in *Oi Vietnam* August 2015 issue) and mentored a new generation of Vietnamese artists, curators and art educators. His installation, *Light and Belief: Sketches of Life from the Vietnam*

War is a haunting depiction of the humanity of war portrayed through more than 70 found drawings of soldiers in their everyday routines juxtaposed alongside video recordings of the artists' remembrances (the artists themselves were soldiers from the North Vietnamese Army).

Social documentary forms (film,

The Propeller Group, The Dream, 2012

Single-channel HD video and motorbike frame with steel pallet

Motorbike: H. 57 x L. 47 1/8 x W. 31 1/2 in. (145 x 120 x 80 cm)

Video duration: 4 minutes, 20 seconds

The Burger Collection

Photo by Perry Hu, Courtesy Asia Society Museum



Nguyen Thi Thanh Mai, Travels, 2014

Bamboo, palm leaves, 12 digital C-prints of digital collages
House: W. 118½ x L. 157½ in. (300 x 400 cm); Each print: H. 9¾ x W. 13¾ in. (25 x 35 cm)
Courtesy of the artist
Photo by Perry Hu, Courtesy Asia Society Museum



Nguyen Thi Thanh Mai, Travels series, 2014

Detail of digital C-print
Bamboo, palm leaves, 12 digital C-prints of digital collages House: W. 118½ x L. 157½ in. (300 x 400 cm); Each print: H. 9¾ x W. 13¾ in. (25 x 35 cm)
Courtesy of the artist
Image courtesy of the artist



photography, archival materials) frame the present-day perspectives of the past that ripple through the art works here, filled with the ironies that such contrasts as past/future, memory/fantasy, trauma and beauty portray. The Propeller Group's *The Dream* is a single-channel time-elapsed video that shows a Honda Dream motorbike being stripped overnight of its parts, leaving only a ravaged skeleton of the bike—installed in the exhibition as a physical artifact of a utopian dream and its dystopian remains. Dreams and fantasies also fuel the documentary work of Nguyen Thi Thanh Mai, the youngest of the artists. Part ethnography, part creative imagining, her installation of a village hut of Vietnamese refugees caught in the borderlands of Cambodia depicts 12 portraits of villagers and families pasted onto the bodies of a glamorous fashion models—imagining, for example, the prosperity of a wedding celebration or simply hope for a better life.

Taken together, the Vietnamese contributions to *After Darkness* illuminate the strongest of human tendencies: resilience, reconciliation, creativity and imagination. That is how the featured artists shed their light.

The exhibition After Darkness: Southeast Asian Art in the Wake of History is on view in New York through January 21, 2018 at the Asia Society Museum. Featured artists: FX Harsono, Htein Lin, Dinh Q. Lê, Nge Lay, Nguyen Thi Thanh Mai, The Propeller Group (Vietnam), Angki Purbandono and Tintin Wulia.

Bio: Tressa Berman, Ph.D. (tressa.berman@gmail.com) is an anthropologist and curator who specializes in art and heritage. Author of two books, her contributions include, for *Art Papers*, *Arte Al Limite*, and *Cultural Weekly Los Angeles*. She is also the founder of the Institute for Inter-Cultural Practice, www.interculturalpractice.com. ■

Dinh Q. Lê (Detail) Scroll #1 and #4 from WTC from Four Perspectives, 2016

C-print scroll H. 164 ft. x W. 50 in. (50 m x 127 cm) Courtesy of the artist and Shoshana Wayne Gallery
Photos by Perry Hu, Courtesy Asia Society Museum



Take Me to the River

Explore the beautiful tapestry that makes up the Mekong Delta

Text by **Aliesha Duffin**
Images Provided by **Les Rives**

ON A FINE SATURDAY MORNING

I was picked up at 8am and taken down to Saigon Pier where at 8:15am I and several other travelers boarded a speedboat that would take us south to explore the Mekong Delta. I started chatting with a fellow companion who informed me that he had been on the Les Rives Cu Chi tunnels tour the previous day and had loved it so much he booked the Mekong Delta one as soon as they got back. We were soon introduced to the Les Rives team, offered a light breakfast of banh mis, croissants and iced coffee. As we jetted away from the city, I sank back into my seat and listened to our guide Hang, tell us more about the life and culture of the locals.

Smoothly cruising along, with just the noise of the wind blowing and endless scenes of wetlands, 45 minutes quickly passed and we alighted at our first stop—a Buddhist pagoda. The pagoda was beautiful and the peaceful surroundings seemed like a luxury compared to the chaos of Saigon. We took photos and enjoyed the tranquility before we headed off to the next destination—something surprisingly unexpected before we even had lunch!

We arrived at Mr. Sau's homestead, where we were guided to a lovely outdoor sitting area nestled in amongst tapioca fields and coconut trees. We settled in as Hang introduced us to a local favorite, rice wine. There are three types of rice wine on offer—mixed with honey, it was smooth and sweet and reminded me of drinking mead. We were also given fresh coconuts to sip on as we relaxed in the shade and chatted with Mr. Sau, whose family has lived in the home for over 50 years. After finishing our strong libations, we continued our journey down the river and were then transferred into traditional Vietnamese fishing boats for a 15-minute ride to visit rice paddies owned by three generations of farmers. They, along with their giant python, lived under one roof. The hospitality at both homes allowed us genuine glimpses into life in the Mekong.



On our way to lunch we walked through a market that only hours earlier must have been bustling, however, most vendors and patrons were now enjoying their lunchtime nap. We stopped to inspect items here and there, and as usual our guide was well informed answered all our questions. Our lunch stop was at a lovely outdoor area, and as we sat a round of cold beers were ordered, which went down nicely in the heat. The steamed shrimp with coconut juice was the winning dish, along with a delicious selection of traditional Vietnamese dishes.

After lunch (and another round of beers) we visited a Cao Dai temple, where we learned more about the world's youngest religion. The temple is beautiful and bright, and is an ideal last spot for the tour. It has been a great day exploring the Mekong Delta and we hadn't seen another tour group all day. During the tour we were provided with fresh tropical fruits, chilled soft drinks and water. I was surprised when we arrived back to the Saigon Pier right on schedule because at no point during our trip did I feel rushed—what a great way to spend a day. ■

Operated by Les Rives Authentic River Experience, discover river markets, lush rice paddies, local dishes and genuine countryside hospitality on a speedboat tour to the Mekong Delta. Booked through lesrivesexperience.com or 0.128.592.0018.





Detox for Tet

Explore Spa by Le Méridien Saigon harnesses the healing powers of the sea

Text by **James Pham**

Images by **Ngoc Tran** and **Le Méridien Saigon**

WHILE SAIGON HAS A MILLION things going for it, including world-class street food, a vibrant nightlife scene and parks and rivers galore, life here can hardly be considered relaxing. With Western New Year and Vietnamese Tet right around the corner, my mind is already on renewal, a cathartic stripping off of the old. With that in mind, I find myself in the **Explore Spa by Le Méridien Saigon** (3C Ton Duc Thang, D1), taking advantage of the “Detox for Tet” package.

Located on the 9th floor of the hotel, the Explore Spa by Le Méridien Saigon feels like walking into an underwater kingdom. Giant wooden slats are artfully suspended from the ceiling, recalling a bed of coral, while smooth white ovals hang overhead like so many graceful jellyfish. Even the walls are curved and decorated with iridescent mosaics, and a walkway

carries guests over a tranquil water feature. I catch myself humming *Under the Sea* from The Little Mermaid as I’m served a cool lemongrass tea with sugarcane and a slice of lime and wipe off the Saigon sweat with a scented chilled towel.

With that, I’m whisked into a treatment room where a foot scrub awaits, the first of many therapies in this three hour-long afternoon of pampering. The therapist scrubs my feet with sea salt and rinses them in a warm bath infused with lemon, lemongrass and rose petals.

Feet squared away, it’s on to a 30-minute body exfoliation. The therapist gently rinses my skin with warm water before using lavender-scented sea salt to remove dead cells. Her circular movements work the fine salt into my skin, a surprisingly pleasant sensation. With each scrub, a part of the old me is literally

fading away, and with it I let go of some of my disquieting thoughts. It’s funny, but in the quiet, dimly lit room, with just the light scratching of the salt against my skin, my mind wanders to thoughts from the past year that I want to slough off like so many dead skin cells. There are unkind words I’ve said and that have been said to me, memories of miserable Saigon downpours and ever-present shark-induced internet issues. Like fine grains of sand, they all disappear into the ether.

After a quick jump under the rainwater shower and my second pair of barely-there spa undergarments, we begin the 60-minute aromatic therapy massage. A sachet of lavender is gently placed over my eyes as my therapist works her magic on each quadrant of my body, discreetly draping and re-draping the towel to expose just the area she’s working on. Long



deep strokes lubricated by sunflower oil banish built-up tensions from my muscles. Even though I've silenced it, my phone angrily buzzes in the cabinet where I've sequestered it. But for once, I don't care. I mentally banish the missed calls and email notifications from my temporary underwater kingdom.

Keeping with the ocean theme, a second therapist brings in a tray of Phytomer products to be used in the 60-minute seawater pearl hydrating facial therapy. Made in France, Phytomer is renowned for incorporating marine biotechnologies into their line of spa products which use active ingredients from the sea. I start by inhaling a relaxing serum which is supposed to 'relax points of tensions, calm and increase synthesis

of β -endorphins'. I don't know what β -endorphins are or whether I need more of them, but it smells heavenly, like a stroll on the beach. With *cucumber slices* over my eyes, I try to keep track of exactly how many different serums, lotions, creams, milks, masks and solutions are applied to my face, but after the fifth application, I begin to lose track. I drift in and out of a delicious sleep, awakening to one machine opening my pores with warm steam and another to suction them out. A final scalp massage is the height of bliss.

As I wash my face, I find myself thinking that even though I've never actually touched a baby's bottom, my face and skin are now so incredibly smooth, they've likely achieved a level of softness typically reserved for very small, very well taken care of infants.

Back in the spacious spa reception area, I sip a cup of warm cinnamon tea before heading to the adjacent bistro overlooking the indoor/outdoor lap pool bordered by a clear balcony to take in expansive views across the Saigon River.

As the final part of the package, I sit down to a bowl of seaweed miso soup and a refreshing wakame salad, made crunchy with sprouts, sea grapes and edamame beans, creamy with avocado, and sweetly tart with orange segments, all tossed with a tasty Asian sesame dressing. I wash it all down with a mango smoothie and a glass of water infused with orange, cucumber and mint for a wonderfully light meal.

I've been pampered to three hours of soul-stripping rejuvenation, a new body and face just in time to face the new year. ■



The Detox for Tet package at Explore Spa by Le Méridien Saigon is available from December 2017 to March 31, 2018 for just VND2,018,000++ per person and includes a 30-minute body exfoliation, 60-minute relaxing aromatic therapy massage, 60-minute seawater pearl hydrating facial therapy and healthy refreshments at Explore Bistro including an organic vegetable salad, seaweed soup and a choice of fresh fruit juice.



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49 FLOORS



VIETNAM
HCMC SKYRUN

29 OCTOBER 2017

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Step by Step

Oi caught up with Sophie Clarke, winner of the female division in the HCMC SKYRUN, to find out how she's doing after climbing 1,002 steps

Images Provided by **Sporting Republic**



Sophie Clarke

HUNDREDS OF ATHLETES

competed in the HCMC SKYRUN at Bitexco Financial Tower on October 30, 2017. Local and international runners alike took to the stairs and conquered the skyscraper by running up 1,002 steps to the finish line at the Saigon Skydeck on the 49th floor. Robert Sesemann of Great Britain won the male division, setting the overall fastest time up the city's tallest building in 6 minutes and 49 seconds. Local hero Minh Tan Nguyen of Vietnam placed second, 3 seconds behind, clocking 6 minutes and 52 seconds. Florian Deichmann from Germany came third. In the female division, Sophie Clarke, also from Great Britain, climbed to victory, finishing in 7 minutes 22 seconds, beating Vietnam's Chi Nguyen by 24 seconds.



You've never done a vertical run before, what made you decide to take on the challenge this year?

Actually, there were a few reasons why I ended up joining the event. I was already aware of it because I'd spoken to David, one of the organizers, about our company, Bikelife, potentially sponsoring the event. While we couldn't this year, it definitely put the event on my radar. However, it wasn't actually until the Tuesday before the event that Marcel, from Run Club VN, asked me if I'd registered yet. I'd just finished a full Ironman in Taiwan in October so I was trying to take it easy (trying and failing, like usual), however, when Marcel said that Maple Healthcare would sponsor mine and my friend Nikkola's bibs I thought, 'Oh, why not.' And I'm so glad I did. Plus the event starts later than most, so it meant that Nik and I could have a lie-in, have a relaxed drive into D1 and grab some breakfast and a coffee before the race.

How did you prepare for the vertical race both mentally and physically?

Well physically, I was supposed to still be recovering from a full Ironman. Me and Nik had climbed the stairs a few times back in September when it was raining so much, so I had a rough idea about what to expect pain-wise (burning, all the burning). Mentally I just went in with an open mind. The events I'm used to usually involve hours of moving, whereas this race is over in under 10 minutes. So, to be honest, I wasn't expecting much. I used it as an opportunity to have a catch up with all of these familiar faces from the running community who I only end up seeing at local events. It was only in the five seconds before my wave started that I put on my game face and thought, 'You've got to smash this.'

Do you believe your career in cycling helped you physically when training for the SkyRun?

Yes. Cycling is 100 percent what

made me a contender in the SkyRun, although I only realized it afterwards. Before the race, I thought, 'Ah this isn't something I'll be good at, I'm too heavy for climbing.' But actually, for starters, regularly cycling can get you super fit, and you're also using a lot of the same muscles groups for stair climbing as you do in cycling. It felt like I was doing a really hard, fast time trial.

At any point going up those stairs did you think you wouldn't make it? What kept you going?

I did start to see stars at one point, but it was around the 35th-40th floor mark, so I just thought, 'Come on Soph, just keep going. You can pass out *after* the finish line.' (Which I almost did.)

In the 7 minutes and 22 seconds it took you to reach the top, what thoughts were going through your head? Were you

counting down the number of steps left?

I can't really remember much other than seeing a sign that said the end was at the 49th floor and thinking: 'What!?' Someone told me it was 48! Liars!' I felt like I'd been duped by the extra floor I had to climb. Other than that I had my usual 'motivational' words going through my head, which sound more inspirational than what they actually are: 'Come on, come on, *come on!*' and 'Just >insert floors/kms here< left'. I think "just" helped me kind of deceive myself into thinking it's not as far as it is. It makes you feel more capable.

What did it feel like inside the stairwell with hundreds of others in front and behind you? Did it feel claustrophobic?

Actually, and this really impressed me about the event organization, there wasn't a point where I thought there were too many people in that stairwell. The organizers set everyone off in waves of 5 people, with 3 minutes between each, so it meant that I didn't really need to overtake many people, just a few stragglers who I panted 'excuse me, excuse me' to as I went past.

At the end, what part of your body hurt the most, I assume your legs? What did you do after your win?

Believe it or not, my legs were absolutely fine. It was my chest and lungs that were in pieces. I think the air in the stairwell was pretty dry, and I was breathing really heavily going up, so by the time I got to the top my chest was completely on fire. I felt like I'd smoked a whole packet of cigarettes or something. I was coughing for the rest of the day. After the awards ceremony I celebrated in style... erm... rushing to work. I was really late! Luckily, they forgave me. ■





Dr. An is one of the veterinarians at Animal Doctor International. He has special interest in veterinary orthopedics and surgery in general following his visits to a specialist hospital in Brisbane, Australia.

TO BATH OR NOT TO BATH

Every so often, you will need to give your dog a bath, but there is a fine line between letting the dirt build up and overwashing

“SHOULD I BATH MY DOG regularly, and how often should I do it?” is one of the most frequently asked questions that we received at the veterinary clinic. This concern is reasonable since we, as human beings, bathed ourselves every day so sometimes we think that we can apply the same routine for our pet.

Looking at the positive sides, bathing and brushing activities actually help us assess our pet hair and skin condition. We can easily miss out on changes in hair texture, alopecia, parasites or skin masses if we do not perform an inspection routine on our pet. But the question is: “How often should it be done?”

The answer will always be: “It depends.” It depends on different factors, including skin condition, breed, coat, activity level, etc. Dogs who spend most of their time running around the yard, rolling themselves in mud and dirt should be bathed more than the one who spent the whole day

on the couch. Use our nose: If your dog comes into the room and you can smell him, then he needs a baths. Also, if your dog is regularly covered in dirt or mud, a thorough brushing and bathing is the best option you might have.

Dogs groom themselves to help facilitate the growth of hair follicles and skin health, however, bathing too often can be detrimental to your pet as well. In fact, pet’s skin can easily be irritated, hair follicle can be damaged, and risk of bacterial and fungal infection can increase.

In contrast, a full-shampoo bath is recommended no more than once a week especially if your pet is under topical treatment like some flea products. Some of these products depend on the oil on the skin to be spread and by bathing regularly with shampoo, these oils will easily be wiped away. Some manufacturers have specific shampoo that are preferred for these types of flea products because they are non-stripping. If you have more questions related to certain shampoos, ask the staff at the veterinary clinic where you purchased your flea products.

In general, most dogs can benefit from a weekly bath. Once a week is a great time for you to have an overall assessment of your dog’s skin condition, and also to clean their ears and eyes and also check their teeth. Any changes in skin,

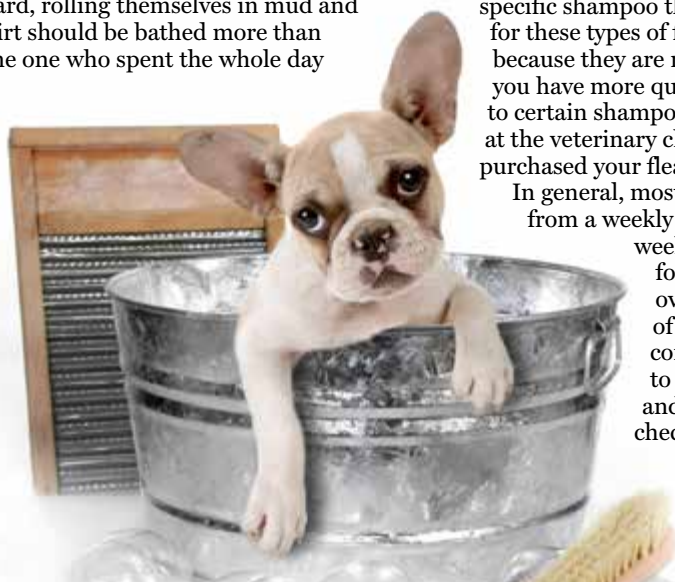
loss of hair, any bumps or lumps should trigger a call to your vet.

The same protocol could apply to cats but needs to be adjusted since cats are different. Although it cannot be denied that bathing your cat does provide several benefits: reduce shedding, shinier and healthier coat, and stops fleas but there is no point to bath your cat too often. In general, an average indoor pet cat can easily handle being bathed one or two times per year. In fact, it’s also not a big sin if you never wash your cat. Many people don’t and cats are fine with it, they don’t need the high level of cleanliness that humans (or dogs) normally do.

Choosing The Appropriate Bathing Products

“Can I bath my dog with my ‘human’ shampoo and conditioner?” is also another concern. Human skin is very acidic with skin pH of under 5 in most cases, while dog skin is much closer to a pH of 7—not strongly acidic or strongly alkaline. Therefore, some shampoo products that are specially designed for human use could become quite irritating for your pet’s skin. Clinical signs that are related to a skin reaction could include red and itchy skin. Accidentally ingestion of any shampoo can also lead to vomiting, drooling and decrease appetite. If these symptoms are noticed, you should re-bathe your pet with warm water and reach out to your veterinarian for follow-up steps.

If you are still unsure about which types of shampoo to buy, contact your veterinarian, who understands your pets and their clinical history to establish the best option. This is especially important if your dog has suffered from several skin diseases in the past. ■





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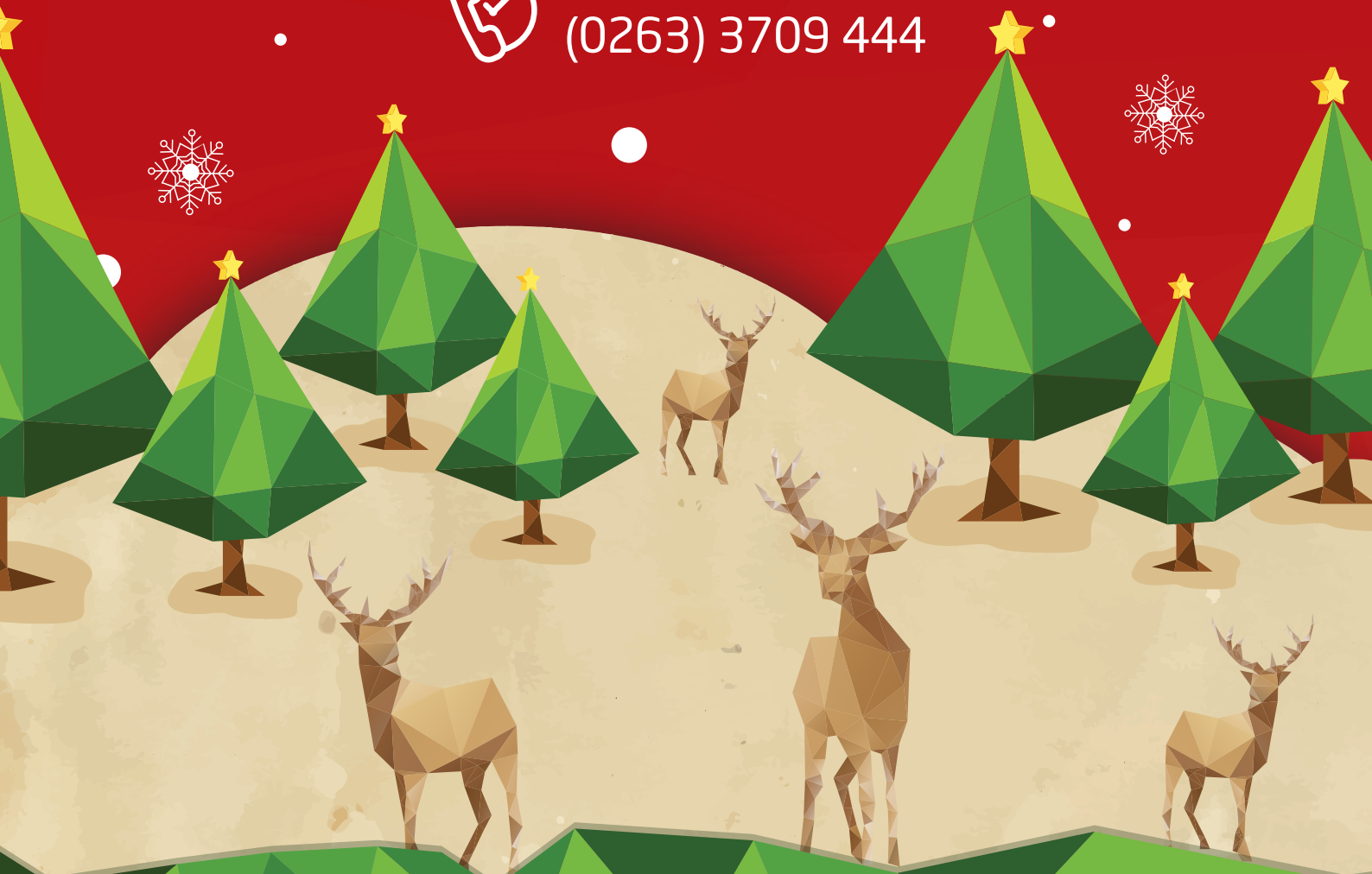
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For the Love of Pets

Images Provided by PLC

Oi speaks to Thao, the CEO of Pet Lovers Centre Vietnam, to find out why now is the right time to enter the pet industry

Do you have any pets?

I have an Alaskan Malamute, a cat and two Vietnamese rabbits. My kids love pets and I am very happy about that.

Pet Lovers Centre (PLC) originated in Singapore and has 85 outlets, including in Malaysia and Thailand, why have you decided to enter the Vietnam market now with this franchise?

Compared to other countries in the

region, Vietnam is a market where awareness and knowledge of people with pets are still developing and traditional in spite of the large number of pet lovers. I have been working with the Singapore company for a few years and feel that this is the right time to bring the brand into Vietnam for the purpose of educating and raising awareness within the pet community on caring for their pets. I can see the difference in the way the younger

generation cares for their pets compared to the older generation, though the love for their pets may be the same.

Why did you choose to open your first stores in District 2 and District 7?

Before deciding on locations to open our stores, we did a lot of research about lifestyle, income, habits, and interests. District 7 and District 2 are the two districts that met the criteria of the brand. District 7 has Phu My Hung area with many green spaces and parks suitable for off-hours sessions and socialization for pets and pet lovers. In addition, the Asian population that lives in Phu My Hung is quite large and most know the Pet Lovers Centre brand from their own country.

Vietnam is slowly embracing pets as members of the family, not just as animals or toys to play with and discard, what are your thoughts on this?

I am very happy that the younger generation's perception of pets are completely different from their parents' generation, and that has affected and gradually changed the way they value and treat pets. So our mission is to continue to work closely with the community to raise awareness about loving and caring for pets.

Tell us about your staff. How are they trained to handle pets while grooming?

The groomers we recruit are those who have degrees in grooming and have at least one year of experience working in the veterinary and grooming field so they understand the personality and behavior of animals. I believe the Pet Lovers Centre Vietnam's groomers have enough experience to handle and take good care of your pets.

You also sell hamsters and rabbits in the store. Are they from reputable breeders?

Currently we are working with some reputable and experienced local partners



for live hamsters and rabbits since we do not focus on importing live animals. We have strict procedures in checking the quality as well as the health of the small animals before selling them in the store.

Pet Lovers Center Vietnam is well stocked with imported, high-quality, international brands. What do you look for and trust in the products you sell?

PLC is a well-known pet shop franchise with a wide range of product categories and we are exclusive distributors for many excellent quality brands for pet. In each market we will consider and select the appropriate products and brands for that market from low to reasonable price to meet all the income levels of pet lovers.

PLC in Singapore has opened a pet safari, "a super-sized PLC theme park," are there any plans to open one in Saigon?

The Pet Safari concept is very successful in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. It is an "all in one" model combined with a thematic design. To do this concept, we have to work closely with strong and reputable partners in the pet field, such as veterinary hospital, pet hotel, grooming academy, etc. We are still looking for and working with local partners and hope to develop the pet safari concept in Vietnam in the near future.

PLC's care for pets extends beyond its stores. Pet Lovers Foundation (PLF) was created by PLC to raise funds for animal welfare organizations, will you also be organizing food drives and fundraising for animal welfare here in Vietnam?

PLC Foundation is a branch of PLC Singapore group. This foundation is very enthusiastic and energetic, which I think is very humane and inspirational towards the community, not just the pet community in Singapore. I hope in the near future, there will be a PLC Vietnam Foundation that will work and inspire the way Singapore has done. ■

Pets Lovers Center Vietnam is located at 189 Ton Dat Tien, Panorama Complex, D7 and Thao Dien Pearl: 12 Quoc Huong, D2.





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.

Assisted Reproduction

Alternative options available in Vietnam for couples who want to be parents

Dear Antoine,

My boyfriend and I are over 30 now, and we think it is time to start a family. Unfortunately, we are not able to have our own babies therefore we're thinking about using assisted reproduction methods here in Vietnam. However, we have tons of questions: What are the processes? Are these methods even allowed here? And what are the requirements to use them? Is marriage one of them?

ASSISTED REPRODUCTION

methods are now common in most countries in the world, however, each country enact less, or more, stringent regulations on them. Vietnam seems to be in the middle. Let's start with some definitions. Vietnamese law allows the following methods of assisted reproduction: artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization (IVF) and surrogacy arrangement. These methods are different and Vietnam has promulgated specific provisions for each of them.

Although many people think artificial insemination and IVF are similar, or IVF is just a type of artificial insemination, these two methods differ in the way they are performed. On one hand, artificial insemination means the deliberate introduction of sperm into the female's uterus or cervix for the purpose of achieving a pregnancy. This method is less "artificial" than IVF and depends on the female's reproductive health. It is often applied for single women or women in relationship with men who suffer from male infertility. On the other hand, IVF refers to the process of fertilization where an egg is combined with sperm outside the body: in vitro or, in another term, in glass. It is said that both methods have an average success rate of 50 percent, according to different hospitals' reports. Some Vietnamese hospitals pride themselves on adopting and practicing international standards of reproduction techniques. Under Vietnamese regulations, the donation

and receipt of sperm or embryos shall be conducted on the principle of anonymity of donors and recipients, while characteristics of donors, particularly their ethnic origin, shall be clearly indicated.

Regarding surrogacy arrangements (as discussed in a previous column), Vietnam has authorized altruistic gestational surrogacy for couples. Under this method, a woman agrees to carry a pregnancy for a couple who will become the newborn child's parents after birth. In Vietnam, like in many other countries, the surrogacy has to be altruistic (which means, not commercial). In addition, Vietnamese law imposes some strict conditions on gestational surrogacy: it is allowed for (married) couples without a child, and when it has been certified that the wife is unable to give birth to a child herself; the surrogate mother must have a family link to the husband or to the wife. Only three medical establishments are allowed to perform it in the country.

A question that is often asked is whether the regulations provide for any marriage requirement, meaning whether assisted reproduction methods are only available for infertile married couples and not to unmarried couples or single person—it being understood that Vietnam does not yet provide for registered partnerships, so that the question whether couples under registered partnership (rather than

traditional marriage) may access assisted reproduction technology is not relevant here. As mentioned above, there is a marriage requirement for altruistic gestational surrogacy. For the two other discussed methods (artificial insemination and IVF), a 2015 decree allows married couple suffering from infertility and single women to have recourse to IVF: this means that this assisted reproduction method is not only allowed for married couples in Vietnam.

Depending on your marital situation and the kind of infertility that you as a couple is facing, you will be able to choose amongst one of the above methods. My first advice is, of course, to have appropriate medical tests to determine which one of the above methods will be the most relevant for you. Surrogacy is a special method, as you understand, and is unfortunately not so easily available in Vietnam except if you meet all specific conditions reminded above.

Based on your details, IVF may be the most appropriate method because it's allowed to single women (which means also to unmarried couples). In addition, the legal rules on IVF are clear and explicit, which is not the case for artificial insemination. I would advise you to contact some of the Vietnamese hospitals offering these services. Having a baby through assisted reproduction techniques is not easy to go through, regardless where you are in the world, but pregnancy is said to be the most beautiful thing on Earth. ■

COINED IT IN

Everything you wanted to know about Bitcoin but were afraid to ask



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Are Bitcoins and cryptocurrencies suitable for my retirement portfolio?

This is quite a loaded question, and the answer could be wildly subjective and would depend largely on how much you know about the asset class and your tolerance for volatility. If you don't know what volatility refers to, then Bitcoin and cryptos definitely aren't for you. Let's begin by answering a few basic questions:

What exactly are Bitcoins and cryptocurrencies, and how do they add value?

Cryptocurrencies are a digital medium of exchange. Each cryptocurrency is essentially a computer network with its own protocols, and each "coin" is a unique string of code representing an owner's store of value. Transactions occur when users use this unique code to exchange for goods, services or to convert back to fiat, or traditional currency, via a blockchain, which is essentially a virtual ledger that instantaneously creates debits, credits, checks and balances over the network.

Basically, blockchains and cryptocurrencies perform the same role that banks do when processing payments; only much faster and with less transaction costs. Also, fraud is basically impossible as each transaction via the blockchain creates a unique piece of code, which cannot be replicated. The technology allows individuals to circumvent banks and traditional financial intermediaries to transact directly with one another.

Is Bitcoin a bubble?

Possibly... Bitcoin's price movement (almost +900%) over the past year is extraordinary. Many are concerned that such a large price movement over a short period of time, for an asset that the majority of people don't understand, is cause for concern. The primary issue is that the majority of individuals participating in the Bitcoin market are average Joes, which is

the entire reason the currency exists. However, many of these Joes are not buying the currency for the purpose of exchanging for goods or services, but are instead using it as a tool to make short-term speculative profits, thereby diminishing the currencies core utility as a medium of exchange. Many market participants may be blinded by high past performance, and irrationally push prices upwards until the movement becomes unsustainable and prices crash. This phenomenon is present throughout history, see: Chinese stock market crash, 2015. Real estate/mortgage crises, 2008. Dot com bubble, 1999-2001, The stock market crash of 1929, all the way back to the first ever asset bubble, "Tulip Mania," in the Netherlands, around 1637. A wise man once said, "if even your taxi driver is asking you for tips on a certain investment, it's time to get out."

Wait... So I shouldn't invest in Bitcoin?

The paradox is just that. You shouldn't be thinking of cryptocurrencies in terms of an investment to make money in the short term, but as a tool that will make day-to-day transactions much easier and cheaper in the future, the way Microsoft changed the office and Amazon changed retail. It's an incredibly important technology that you should pay attention to. However, if you are speculative in nature and have a "fat" trading finger, just remember that it took Microsoft 17 years to recover from its 1999 highs and Amazon 10 years, so waiting for a large downturn in price would be wise, unless you can live with losing 35% of your investment on a Friday afternoon. Buy low, sell high.

Are there alternatives to Bitcoin?

Yes, quite a few. Most cryptocurrencies are in finite supply, hence the incentive to create new networks for the purpose of solving different problems or undertaking different types of transactions. The most mainstream Bitcoin competitor is probably Ethereum, which processes transactions

a lot faster over its network, and is more than just a currency but provides a platform to create and negotiate virtual contracts, among numerous other benefits (this stuff can get quite complex). There is even a project to create a fully digital bank, where crypto loans will be issued and participants will be able to invest in these loans, called "tokens" like one would a bond. You can participate in new cryptocurrency ventures via initial coin offerings (ICOs) similar to how you initially buy shares in a company via an IPO.

How can I buy cryptocurrencies?

You can buy cryptocurrencies via digital exchanges. Also, bitcoin futures will begin trading via CME Group towards the end of the year, which is quite an exciting prospect as it will give investors access to the currency via traditional money management and trading platforms.

What are the biggest dangers/threats to this space?

Since cryptocurrencies are a direct threat to some of the most powerful institutions in the world, i.e. governments, central banks and retail banks, there is always the profound danger that these institutions could push for further regulation of the asset class, shut exchanges down or begin offering their own forms of digital currencies. What the reaction in the short-term will be is unclear, as the total value of cryptocurrencies is minute compared to fiat currencies and other assets. It could be that cryptos end up being a temporary libertarian wet dream and become undone by state authority, or create some sort of happy transactional medium between the state and private citizens, the latter only likely if the state figures out how to use blockchain to collect taxes...

Contact us for our views and research on cryptocurrencies, traditional and other alternative investments. ■



*Naturally
Beautiful*



INSPIRED BY THE beautiful materials and amazing craftsmanship in Vietnam, Aziet Saigon was created in 2015. Aziet Saigon uses mainly the horn in a rough or scratched way, which gives the jewelry a tribal, earthy and organic look. Cultural heritage and local artisans inspires the design of the jewelry.



French entrepreneur Charlotte Minko is also working on new designs and new collections by combining the beauty of the horn's natural colors with lacquer, leather, silver and other materials. Each collection is conceived with a particular philosophy and quality of execution.





For centuries, buffalos have been used for their milk, meat and as beasts of burden on the rice fields. Buffalos are indigenous to Southeast Asia. When slaughtered, their horns and bones are usually discarded so recycling the horns transforms them into beautiful jewelry, creating unique and elegant environmentally friendly-products. ■



Where to Buy:

Aziet Saigon's collection can be ordered online on Facebook: "aziethcmc", among others in the following boutiques in Vietnam:

Ho Chi Minh City

- Kokois Concept Store (24 Thao Dien, D2)
- My Little Show Room (153/5 Nguyen Van Huong, D2;
Facebook: "mylittleshoweroom")
- The Closet (81 Xuan Thuy, D2)

Nha Trang

- Livin Collective (77 Bach Dang, Tan Lap)

Special promotion in December:

Order online via Facebook and get 20% off on all Aziet products by sending the word "Oi" with your order, and at My Little Show Room when mentioning "Oi."



Holiday Gift Guide

Season's greetings, Vietnam! Struggling for Christmas gift inspiration? Relax – we've got this. Our Christmas gift guide is packed with ideas sure to satisfy even the trickiest of friends and family members. Seriously, even the really picky ones. Gifts for dads? Gifts for girlfriends? Totally sorted. And the rest? Whether you're buying for those into fashion or gardening, we've got Christmas gift ideas covered.

Text by **Chris Humphrey, Susan Martin** and **Josh Coey**
Images by **Ngoc Tran** and **Chris Humphrey**



A detailed photograph of a leatherworking workspace. In the center, a white plastic palette holds a finished wallet with a dark blue and light blue geometric pattern and tan leather stitching. Surrounding the palette are various tools: a large pair of metal compasses, a black-handled fork, a wooden-handled mallet, a pair of pliers, and a small box of colorful geometric patterns. A spool of tan thread and a teal container are also visible. The background is a rustic, dark wooden workbench.

Memories of Morocco

“IT’S TIME TO DITCH THE BACKPACK,”

was the last thing Grant Hawkins, the founder and designer behind Marrakesh Handmade Leather (38 Hoa Lan, Phu Nhuan), heard from his boss before heading to the Middle East on vacation in 2014. He’d just taken a new job, and his nylon backpack from university wasn’t going to work anymore. He returned two weeks later with a handmade leather messenger bag from Marrakesh, Morocco. When the shoulder strap broke, he replaced it with his dad’s guitar strap. “That bag came with me everywhere,” says Grant. “On the plane, on my bike, to a meeting—and I got compliments on it every day.” A year later, feeling bored and restless in the US, an old



Marrakesh puts a new twist on the old craft by incorporating the design into their products, like the DODEC wallet, which is hand-painted and available in an array of colors.

The star of the collection, however, is the full-grain, vegetable-tanned leather that Marrakesh uses for all of their products. Like all leather, it’s a waste product of the food industry, but unlike the leather in most consumer products, it doesn’t require the use of Chromium, a dangerously toxic chemical. Veg-tan leather also keeps the natural grain of the cow, so all the textures and small imperfections are preserved and put on display. While the production of veg-tan leather is very small in Vietnam, tanneries in Italy and elsewhere already produce this low-impact material at scale, and high-fashion labels are starting to catch on. “Veg-tan is a bit thicker and stronger and it ages beautifully, so we focus on things you use every day that need to be strong

friend sent him a Facebook message from Ho Chi Minh City, and Grant had an idea. Eager to try something new and inexplicably smitten by the bag, he moved to Vietnam to start Marrakesh.

Today, Marrakesh sells a variety of wallets, bags and accessories. High-quality, low-impact materials are selected from around the world, and craftsmen handmade everything in its Saigon studio. The designs are simple, durable and meant to work in a variety of contexts. Because Grant entered the trade as an outsider, he has a particular focus on functionality and simplicity over tradition. This can be seen in the backpack, which is made from just three pieces of leather and is intended as a purse replacement.

Marrakesh is still inspired by the city for which it was named, nowhere so clearly as the colorful mosaic on the studio wall. “You see these beautiful, ornate tile mosaics all over Morocco, and each one is unique. It’s creativity and dedication on display. I love it,” says Grant.



and should look better with use.”

Marrakesh’s products are all handmade as well, which means each product is dyed, cut, punched, stitched and finished by a human. This means much of the revenue is put back into the local community in the form of low-stress, high-paying, skilled labor that won’t be automated. “For my part, that’s just as important as keeping the water clean,” says Grant.

Marrakesh products are available at Ginkgo Concept Store (92-96 Le Loi, D1), Kokois (24 Thao Dien, D2) and at the Marrakesh Studio (38 Hoa Lan, Phu Nhuan), or online at marrakeshleather.com.





Gifts

That Keep on Giving

CHRISTMAS IS A TIME OF YEAR that can go one of two ways; A Venn diagram would probably consist of two distinct halves - consumerism on one side and meaningful family time on the other. For most of us, the reality probably falls somewhere in the middle. When it comes to buying gifts, it can be difficult to choose something that will please others whilst also being spiritually fulfilling or generally good for the world. One way to avoid this is to buy ethical gifts.

An organization that offers this alternative is Blue Dragon Children's Foundation (www.bluedragon.org) in Hanoi. Their story began in 2002 when Michael Brosowski, a teacher from Sydney, moved to Hanoi to teach English. In his free time he would visit cafes and restaurants around Hoan Kiem Lake and he soon met a group of young children who were shining shoes and living on the street.

In the beginning, all he wanted to do was teach them English in the hope that they could earn more money by shining the shoes of foreign tourists. News spread and more and more kids were soon turning up. It quickly became clear that there was a need to support these kids, and so Michael went on to set up a weekly football game. Michael freely admits that he's terrible at football, but the kids loved it!

When his teaching contract expired, Michael was thinking of leaving Hanoi,



but he didn't want the support for these children to stop. He tried to reach out to other organizations but, at that time, there weren't any organizations that could help. So he thought, "I'm here now, why don't I do something?" Together with Pham Sy Chung, a student of his at the National University, Michael co-founded Blue Dragon Children's Foundation.

Fast-forward 15 years, the organization has grown in stature and has become one of the most respected NGOs in Vietnam, helping over 1,500 children around the country every year. Nowadays, they also help children with disabilities, families living in the poorest areas of Hanoi and victims of human trafficking. They are the only NGO in Vietnam that directly rescues

those who have been trafficked into forced marriage, sexual exploitation or child labor. To date, they have rescued just over 700 people. They reunite these children with their families and provide all the services needed (such as education, counselling, or vocational training) to help the kids they work with recover and grow.

So now you know about Blue Dragon, what about the gifts? They sell all sorts of different things: postcards featuring photos taken by children they support, storybooks and notebooks, t-shirts, jewelry and badges. Some of the most popular items they sell are things like pencil cases, bags and stuffed blue dragon toys. The former two are made by the wife of one of the organization's employees. She buys the material and creates the items specifically for BDCF. The dragons are made by a local supplier in Bac Ninh, which is one of the areas where they have helped children from poorer communities to go to school.

They are beautiful, practical gifts, which also help fund the work carried about by Blue Dragon. So this Christmas, or even this Tet, you could give a gift that's not only meaningful to your loved ones but also helps support kids in crisis in Vietnam. All of these gifts are affordable and can be posted throughout Vietnam.

The products are not yet available on their website so contact info@bdef.org to find out more. ■





Gifts that Grow



SOME GREAT IDEAS HAPPEN while relaxing with a cold beverage in your hand. Sitting at a café in Ho Chi Minh City, Lyriel realized a clever way to put to use that puddle of water that appears under your drink. “Seeing all of this water pool underneath my drink and then get wiped away or tossed out really bothered me. Fresh water is so precious these days, I felt like I needed to solve this problem,” says Lyriel.

Soon after, Lyriel created a simple 3D model and 3D printed a few prototypes. A few tiny succulents were planted and many months of product testing followed. “I was a little nervous that it wasn’t going to work since I usually end up killing all of my house plants. After

six months of testing, I was impressed to see that it worked and the plants flourished.” Now with a proven concept in hand, Lyriel brought together a team of designers and engineers to bring Living Coaster to life.

How Living Coaster works: this unique beverage coaster protects your furniture from watermarks, however, instead of letting that water go to waste, it puts it to good use by growing plants. Condensation from your cold drink drips down into the coaster where it flows into the connected plant pot, watering the plants. By just enjoying a cold beverage a couple of times a week, you can grow a tiny succulent garden with no extra effort. When not in use, you can stack

the coasters together, forming a spiraling tower of tiny plants. Frequent use and a sunny resting place will make your plants happy. It’s perfect on a coffee table or office desk.

“These will probably be your favorite and easiest to care for house plants,” says Lyriel. “There’s no need to remember to water the plants, all you need to do is sit back and enjoy a cold tasty drink. Cheers to your new tiny drinking buddies!”

The coasters are made from recycled plastic and have UV sun protectant to keep it looking nice if left outside. To buy, contact @LivingCoaster on Facebook. Sold as a two-piece gift set without plants (VND300,000) or as a single coaster with a plant (VND150,000). ■



FEW GIFTS ARE MORE

meaningful and generous than original art and here, in Vietnam, the art scene is changing as fast as the cityscape and young artists are finding a new freedom to express their ideas and celebrate their landscapes and culture. Art galleries are now taking Vietnamese paintings and sculpture to international contemporary art exhibitions all over the world. Interest is growing and prices are rising.

Even the most discerning of art buyers has difficulty telling original work from the copies, the deeply philosophical art from the derivative daubs, however, there is a shopping district in Hoi An that is trying to set itself apart and build a reputation for authentic, original work in all fields of visual arts and textiles.

The old French Quarter in Hoi An, which runs along the river near the central markets, offers a quieter, broad avenue shaded by trees and a gathering of some of the best art and art galleries in the old town. Phan Boi Chau Street is at the heart of this area, which is distinctive for its French, military-style buildings.

Amongst them is March Gallery, established earlier this year by English artist Bridget March. Bridget shows a range of her own work and her books but for the Christmas season she has gathered a collection of the finest paintings by Vietnamese artists who are living and working in the town. All works center around landscapes and the people of Vietnam and, displayed together, they make a vibrant display of color.

One of the artists whose work stands out is Do Nhu Tuan. Tuan is a graduate of the Hue School of Art and he works in the Fauvist style that is so popular today. He uses bright, colors to describe his subjects and landscapes. You can feel the love and the tropical heat emanating from his canvasses.

Pictured here is a local landscape describing the rice fields with their backdrop of the Central Highlands. His use of color is always adventurous and uplifting. Other subjects include a neighborhood dog with lopsided ears looking straight into the artist's eyes, and a buffalo mother and son with sun bleached horns and her shy, sideways glance. His works are as collectible as they are delightful, and are reasonably priced.

These paintings, titled Local, form the Late Autumn exhibition at March Gallery and are intentionally priced for Christmas, range from USD300-USD600. For more info, visit www.marchgallery-hoian.com or pop into the gallery at 25 Phan Boi Chau, Hoi An. Paintings can be shipped worldwide. ■



Yellow wall - 60x60cm - Acrylic

The Art of Giving



The Giving Tree

FASHION TRENDS ARE

constantly changing, but the simple meanings behind a lot of pieces, like the mustard seed necklace, the evil eye bracelets and the Tree of Life, remain timeless and relevant. Trang Pham, the Director and Designer behind Saigon Spring Jewelry (9A, Street 43, D2), shares her unique take on the Tree of Life.

What inspired you to create your own Tree of Life designs?

The Tree of Life is a well-known symbol in many cultures, dating back to ancient times. It represents the connections among universe, inspiration, and growth. Its roots dig deeply into the soil while branches and leaves reach for the sky, symbolizing a fresh start on life, positive energy, good health and a bright future.

Its unique and positive representation inspired me to bring the Tree of Life to my jewelry. In fact, wire-wrapped jewelry with the Tree of Life symbol has been quite popular for sometime, especially among Westerners, however, I wanted to bring a different style and craft them on natural stones. The combination of natural stones and the tree symbol is visually stunning.

What are the stones used to make them?

Most of the stones that I use are natural stones, like Labradorite, Amazonite, Aventurine, Jasper, Amethyst and Tiger's Eye. Only some, very bright-colored stones like Agate, are dyed. Each stone represents a different meaning. For example, Labradorite is the stone of protection, while Amazonite is the stone of truth and communication, and Tiger's Eye for positivity. However, I believe that the real power is not in the stone, but is inside each of us to live our lives to the fullest and to make a positive impact on the people and world around us.

Tell us about your new special Christmas designs.

For Christmas, I love to put Christmas colors into my jewelry, so I used lots of red and green stones (Red Jasper and Mint Amazonite). They are very eye-catching when wrapped with copper wires. I am also working on some special Christmas designs with my horn jewelry, although the well-loved natural colors and textures of the horn will still be showcased.

Any plans to expand Tree of Life into rings and bracelets? And can pieces be customized?

Recently I have started using sterling

silver wires so that my customers can have more choices with materials, color combinations and price points. I do have plans to make Tree of Life rings and bracelets next year.

Yes, we absolutely can customize. Depending on the customer's budget and requests, we can work closely with them to create the size, color and material combinations that they are looking for. ■







Terrific Terraria

AIR PLANTS, ALSO KNOWN AS tillandsias, are having their moment. Known for their spiky shape and being extremely low maintenance, they are growing increasingly popular for crafting, design and décor. Because they don't need soil, you can dangle and perch them almost anywhere in your home. Mount them on shells, rocks, slate or driftwood to display in your favorite nook.

"Since the trend, we have seen many freelancers and part-timers jumping in the market. Mostly these guys import supplies from China and assemble more or less run-of-the-mill models. There's little to no designing or creating in the process. We aim to do things a little differently," says Tuan, mini garden designer at 9xGarden (9xgarden.com, prices start at VND500,000). "These terraria are very soothing to have around the house or office. They are like zen gardens. But creating an air plant terrarium is not like crafting a pretty block of wood or stone. It is a process of trial and error, especially when we want to add in unique design components, like certain types of rare woods or stone quarries. People don't realize that we are working with living organisms. Sometimes the plants don't take to the new stone framework, and they die, and we go back to the drawing board."

These air plants bring garden freshness and the outdoors to interior design, and make a luxurious accent in any space. ■



Wine & Dine

TAPAS AT TOMATITO SAIGON







A Gesture of Goodwill

Text by **James Pham**
Images by **Ngoc Tran**

Blanc's hearing impaired staff
combine gestures with gastronomy

I USUALLY BRISTLE WHEN MY requests directed at Vietnamese service staff fall on deaf ears, but for once, I don't mind. I'm at **Blanc**, the five-month old restaurant that features almost all

hearing-impaired waiters. Co-owned by Vu Anh Tu and Germ Doornbos, the proprietors of Noir, Dining in the Dark (the two restaurants share the same entrance at 178 / 180D Hai Ba Trung, D1), Blanc is equal parts food for thought and food for the palate.

Like its sister, Noir, Blanc is housed in a beautifully restored French colonial-era house from the 1930s, all high ceilings, vintage tiles (which you might recognize from the Museum of Fine Arts), and pale grey shutters. The space retains a residential feel in its partitioned rooms



includes simple signs in Vietnamese Sign Language (VSL) to encourage diners to order by signing. Most countries have their own sign language while Vietnam actually has three: Hai Phong; Hanoi which is influenced by French Sign Language; and Saigon which shares similarities with American Sign Language. The three share only 54 percent of signs in common, making them closer to distinct languages rather than variations of the same. Luckily for us, my dining companion and I both know rudimentary American Sign Language (ASL) which gives us a head start. “We want guests to experience something new without creating too much hassle,” says Tu. “In the end, we want people to have a nice night out at a restaurant which just happens to have deaf staff.”

“Some people may think it’s a burden to learn signs,” adds Germ, “but unconsciously, everyone already points at the menu without realizing it. Learning sign language is not too complicated and can be quite fun.” Diners can choose how engaged they want to be with their waiter, from pointing or using pen and paper, to signing menu items and simple phrases from a booklet on the table, to holding actual conversations with the help of a hearing staff member, if needed.



The World of VSL

We peruse the a la carte menu which is thankfully kept quite simple with only a few each of soups, starters, mains, vegetarian dishes and desserts. We settle on a Palm heart soup (VND80,000) and a

and sunken terraces as well as gorgeous collectibles gathered from Germ and Tu’s travels, ranging from thousand-year-old vases to vintage Chinese headboards. Antiques commingle with modern art and transparent Victoria Ghost chairs by Philippe Starck for an eclectic, decidedly un-stuffy Indochine vibe.

Whereas Noir is an immersive experience between the diner and the environment but not so much the staff, Blanc is fittingly its opposite. While there are earplugs available should you want to experience a totally soundless evening, Blanc is really about interacting with the wait staff, some of whom are hard of hearing and some of whom are completely deaf. The menu





Crab salad (VND110,000) for starters. The velvety soup is elegantly poured tableside, keeping the edges of the bowl clean and making it easier to see the slivers of palm heart and prawns tinged with curry. The kimchi makes for an unusual pairing but supplies a vibrant burst of acidity to balance out the creaminess of the soup. The Crab salad is refreshing, with lumps of sweet crab meat mixed with pomelo, cucumber and apple, contrasted by a tamarind dressing.

For mains, we go with the Norwegian Salmon (VND180,000) cooked sous-vide to seal in its moisture and presented on a bed of coconut fennel miso with a potato pave. As with Noir, the kitchen likes to play with textures and flavors and the fresh young coconut cut into tender noodles is almost unrecognizable as a savory side to go with the calamansi beurre blanc, again providing the necessary bit of brightness. The Australian black angus short rib (VND250,000) is art on a plate, the boneless beef slow-cooked for 24 hours and finished with a bacon pistachio crust over an earthy pistachio purée and red wine jus.

Between courses, we chat with Hieu, our waiter, who tells us he's recently finished high school at the age of 26, a laudable achievement here in Vietnam. Statistics vary wildly, but one survey puts the percentage of disabled in Vietnam at 15.3 percent of the population, with the hearing impaired accounting for 13 percent of that number. In general, the attitude towards the disabled skews toward 'care and protection,' where family and society are primarily concerned with providing care, food and shelter while keeping the disabled away from the community at large, believing that they are inherently incapable of any meaningful social or economic participation. Ironically, the one area where the deaf are often mainstreamed is in school, where the lack of specialized deaf schools combined with the desire of parents for their children to be "normal" puts deaf children in an incredibly challenging environment where they're expected to lip read or otherwise keep up with hearing children.

"It's a case of low awareness, high stigma, and very little government support," says Germ. "Those factors are very much connected. Many parents don't want their children to sign as if there's something wrong with it. In a way, people view the deaf from their own perspective. Because the whole world is about sight and sound, they assume the deaf and blind have a hard life. How can you work? How can you use a phone? But really, there's so much they can do. We should be the ones to adjust to them because they will never be able to adjust to us. Their mentality is perfect, but they simply cannot express themselves through words. In the end, we don't want guests to feel pity for our staff. We're not a charity or an NGO. We're simply a good restaurant that happens to have deaf staff."

Germ goes on to explain that most of the wait staff arrive with no work experience, "but what they lack in experience, they more than make up in enthusiasm," he says. "They can still learn; they're not stupid. They just happen to be deaf. That doesn't mean they can't have a job, can't have a life."

The fallacy that the deaf are somehow lesser employees means they are often shunted into low profit margin industries such as handicrafts, massage and sewing. Some families simply prefer to squirrel them away, unwittingly stripping them of opportunities for mental stimulation that we all need and want. Because family members rarely learn sign language at a proficient level, communication in the home is often unsatisfyingly basic, based on a few rudimentary signs invented out of necessity.

While we wait for dessert and coffee, Hieu is our patient guide into the fascinating world of VSL. Comparing the difference in signs in ASL and VSL, we begin to see concepts through Vietnamese eyes. For instance, the sign for coffee in ASL mimes the movement of an old coffee grinder

while in VSL, the left hand is placed on top of the right as you wiggle the fingers of your right hand, mimicking drops of coffee from a filter. Some of the signs Hieu teaches us are self-explanatory (for example, using the right pointer finger to make a pecking motion on the back of the left hand, the sign for "chicken") while others have us perplexed. We sign for "milk" in ASL (the fist repeatedly opening and closing, like squeezing an udder) but Hieu corrects us by cupping his hand with the thumb pointing downwards and moving it in a circular motion. Seeing our confusion, he mimes opening a can of condensed milk and turning it upside down to pour. It's a rare dining experience where your brain gets as much of a workout as your palate and we love every second of it.

The desserts arrive, Carbonara ice cream (VND110,000), a surprisingly delicious salty-sweet concoction of ham, cheese and balsamic along with peanut butter mascarpone cream and a coffee sponge cake, and Black sesame ice cream (VND95,000), an elevated take on the common Vietnamese street food dessert, here beautifully presented with a black sesame sponge (which actually looks like a sea sponge) and pandan flan. We take the opportunity to ask Hieu a final question about what he thinks of working at Blanc. "I like making people happy and seeing them happy when they enjoy their meal," he says. We wait for him to say something about sign language or being grateful for the employment opportunity, but he never does. Thinking he might not have understood our question, we ask one of the hearing staff to interpret. "When the guests are happy, I'm happy," he responds again. Just to be sure, I tap out the question in Vietnamese on my iPad and he says he likes working at Blanc because 'the restaurant is beautiful, the service is good and the food is excellent.'

I finally get it. He doesn't feel as though his deafness is tied into his job. He's deaf, but his deafness does not define him. He simply wants what we all want – to be good at what we do and hopefully brighten someone else's day while doing it. If that's not a gesture of goodwill, I don't know what is. ■





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in this holiday season

My Little Tomato

Tapas take on a sexy new look and flavor with the arrival of Tomatito and its colorful award-winning chef, Willy Trullas Moreno

Text by **Grant Hawkins**

Portrait by **Ngoc Tran**

Food Images Provided by **Tomatito**

THE “SEXY TAPAS BAR” TOMATITO SAIGON (First Floor, 171 Calmette, D1) is about to open in the heart of the new burgeoning bar/restaurant neighborhood south of Ben Thanh Market. As tradesmen hang drywall and run electrical and plumbing, I catch up with Chef Willy Trullas Moreno, the entrepreneur and celebrity chef behind the international Tomatito brand. I’m greeted with a warm smile and a friendly handshake. Today he’s wearing one of his signature embroidered chef’s jackets, this one a crisp white with kittens on the shoulders. On the heels of two successful launches in Shanghai and Manila, Chef Willy is now bringing his sexy tapas to Saigon.

Tomatito, Spanish for “little tomato,” opened in June 2014 in Shanghai. The concept is a contemporary Spanish tapas bar with a sexy twist. Chef Willy created small bites that are “funky, playful, have a sense of humor and a personality,” and an equally-inspired cocktail menu that includes a selection of Spanish wines, signature cocktails and house-made sangrias. “All the sexy Spanish elements,” he says with obvious relish. The food and drinks are complemented by retro-Spanish decor and music from the 1960s and 70s,



courtesy of Willy’s brother, an interior designer working in Barcelona. Add it all together and, in Chef Willy’s animated words, “It’s a great place for groups, friends and business peers. After work you go have

some sangria and some sexy tapas—what a lovely evening!”

Willy is a first-generation professional chef, but he still draws inspiration from the traditional food prepared by his mother



and grandmother. After completing culinary school in Barcelona, he landed in Shanghai and spent a year traveling around China with a wine company and creating dishes to pair with their wines. His talents were quickly recognized, and he was recruited to breathe new life into a struggling restaurant back in Shanghai. A decade later, Willy is the creative force behind three of Shanghai's most acclaimed restaurants—Elefante, El Willy, and El Ocho—and an award-winning chef who's known for his colorful personality and creative spin on traditional Spanish food. But for Tomatito, his latest venture and the first to expand beyond Shanghai, he is focusing on the Spanish favorite, tapas. Although he does see parallels to the family-style dining common in Asian cultures, it's the "creative playground" of contemporary tapas that really makes his

eyes light up.

The essence of tapas is sharing. While tapas are commonly known as a version of appetizers, they have evolved into something new in contemporary Spanish cuisine: a whole new style of dining. Gone are the days of everyone ordering separate entrees, placing your bets and stealing a bite from your neighbor when they're not looking. Instead, you order several small tapas plates for a group and eat a bit of everything while mingling and chatting. This style of dining also opens up a creative playground for chefs, inviting bold and risky new ideas with personality and a sense of humor—what Chef Willy likes to call "sexy tapas."

The first time Willy visited Ho Chi Minh City was six years ago, and at the time he says he couldn't imagine a Spanish restaurant here. With all



the changes brought in recent years, however, he feels like now is the perfect time. While acknowledging "you need that expat population, especially at the beginning, to make the place shake," he says, "it'd be a big dream to introduce Vietnamese people to the Spanish cuisine. I would be super excited." Tomatito Saigon will have the same type of format, but with a menu that's tailor-made to the local market. The chef says it "could lead to dishes with a little Vietnamese touch."

Tomatito Saigon will open during a time of change and revitalization. With new skyscrapers and megamalls being built in anticipation of the metro system, massive developments across the river and new transit-oriented development projects all over the city, Ho Chi Minh City is joining the ranks of Asian cities redefining what it means to be a global cultural hub. Tomatito embodies that creativity and dynamism and is sure to become a mainstay of the happy-hour and late-night set. As our conversation comes to a close, I ask Chef Willy: Isn't Saigon sexy already? He smiles, glances towards the kitchen and says, "It's gonna be sexier." ■



Sunshine and good eats for everyone at
Novotel Phu Quoc Resort

Tropicana RESTAURANT

Text by James Pham
Images by Ngoc Tran

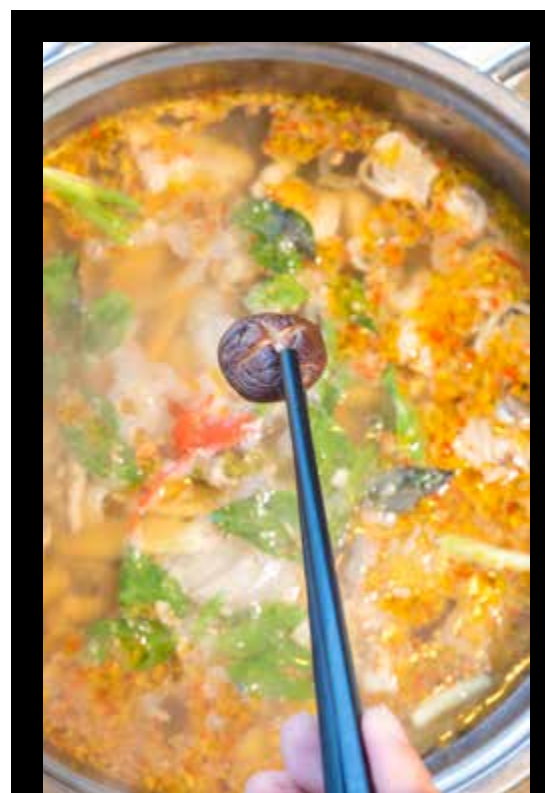
IN 1983, THE SUPERSTAR BRITISH duo Wham! released *Club Tropicana*, a playful ode to the hedonistic island getaway. “Club Tropicana, drinks are free/fun and sunshine, there’s enough for everyone,” they sang against a backdrop of pretty people sipping cocktails around the pool.

While drinks may not be free at Novotel Phu Quoc’s Tropicana Restaurant (signature cocktails with names like Ocean’s Flowers and Green Wave cost VND135,000 and are served at the adjacent Moment Bar), there’s plenty of sun, fun and good eats for everyone. Located across the street from the main Novotel hotel building in the quiet, tree-lined neighborhood of Novotel Villas (open to outside and inside guests, via electric buggy), Tropicana is a spacious, casual-contemporary restaurant with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the sparkling blue freeform pool surrounded by swaying palm trees where alfresco

dining is available under oversized market umbrellas.

The problem with large hotel restaurants is often trying to be all things to all people. So often when traveling, we find ourselves immersed in a gorgeous yet generic experience, practically interchangeable with any number of pretty hotels and perfectly fine restaurants offering “international” cuisine. Novotel Phu Quoc’s Tropicana Restaurant manages to avoid the cliché with its distinctly Vietnamese offerings showcasing Phu Quoc’s cornucopia of fresh ingredients for a memorable dining experience. Its 10-page menu is easily navigable, with roughly a page each devoted to a key ingredient or course: squid, prawn, local fish, mollusks, soups and salads, with a handful of sushi for good measure. A helpful legend informs diners on whether a dish contains shellfish, sesame, nuts, lactose or if a gluten-free option is available.

While many hotel restaurants tend to serve as temporary placeholders until





guests can get out and experience better (read: cheaper) food, Tropicana firmly stands on its own merits, bettering by a long shot Phu Quoc's relocated Night Market in terms of quality and presentation while still offering reasonable prices, all without the hassle of travel.

We sip on a wonderfully refreshing Mango lassi (VND75,000) as we await our starter of Deep-fried crab cakes (VND150,000) made from crab from the nearby fishing village of Ham Ninh, known for its firm, sweet meat. The crab cakes are just lightly breaded with a touch of coconut milk for added richness and Phu Quoc green pepper for heat, accompanied by a homemade cocktail sauce with a splash of cognac. The dish embodies a lazy afternoon in the sun without a care in the world.

For our main, we choose the Chicken hotpot with vegetables and yellow noodle (VND440,000), an earthy, healthy homage to the bounty of the island of Phu Quoc. The hotpot is served with

fresh herbs and vegetables from the island, including squash, two types of mushrooms and fragrant lemon leaves. The spicy, flavorful broth is enhanced by fresh Phu Quoc coconut juice, but the star of the dish is the free-range Phu Quoc chicken, both chewy and lean from running around the island's plantations. The yellow noodles ensure the soup is filling without feeling heavy, making it a delicious yet healthy option.

We finish with the Creme caramel with fresh tropical fruit (VND140,000), firm yet delicate as flan should be. The light dessert comes chilled, the perfect antidote for a sunny Phu Quoc afternoon.

In the words of Wham!, Tropicana is the place to be on your next Phu Quoc trip: "Let me take you to the place / Where membership's a smiling face... /

Where strangers take you by the hand / And welcome you to wonderland." ■

PRO TIP

For those staying at the Novotel Phu Quoc Resort (www.novotelphuquoc.com), Tropicana also serves up a buffet breakfast. While Tropicana is primarily for those staying in the villas, guests can have breakfast at either restaurant. The two restaurants have different chefs and some dishes are different, so it's worth it to cross the street and try breakfast at Tropicana where the setting is slightly more quiet and spread out. Bring your things with you and make a morning of it, lazing by the huge freeform pool right outside.



Xoi

XOI IS A CATEGORY, NOT A single dish. Variants may be sweet or savory, but are traditionally eaten as the main dish at breakfast or wrapped in paper on the go. Street vendors sell it in every town and city, and those in the know have their favorite carts or brazier stands that they visit regularly. The central component of any *xoi* dish is sticky rice. It can be eaten with Chinese sausage, pâté, fried egg or grilled chopped meat, and served with cucumber or pickled mixed vegetables. The savory types may also have chicken (my recipe this month) or vegetables, corn and ground lotus seeds. There's no hard and fast rule for what must go into a *xoi* dish, except the sticky rice. Types are generally dictated by what flavor is culturally favored. It's a food idea more than a single, rigidly defined recipe. ■



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



1 Clean chicken with salt, reserving the fat. Cook the chicken fat until it liquefies.



2 Steam the chicken in a steamer to seal in its juices. Alternatively, boil in a pot. Keep the liquid. Tear the chicken into pieces.



3 Soak the sticky rice and split mung beans for 5h or overnight. Mix the turmeric powder with the sticky rice and steam with chicken stock in a steamer. Also steam the split mung beans with salt and water.



4 When the sticky rice is done, remove to a mixing bowl. Add the chicken fat, mix well.



5 When the split mung beans are done, mash them well, and roll into big balls. Slice them thinly.



6 Stir-fry shallots with the remaining chicken fat until golden brown.



7 In a serving bowl, place the sticky rice, and add the chicken. Top with dried, crispy onions. Serve with soy sauce.



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.

Same Same, But Different

Should the taste of wine change?

IF WE FOLLOW THE MAIN RULE of marketing, we should produce the product that our customers want, rather than sell to them what we have: Simple and straightforward. But what about wine, should it be the same? If so, where does that leave innovation? This is always a difficult question.

I recently attended an event that brought young winemakers from Bordeaux to Vietnam to present their wines. Interestingly, all of them, without exception, were talking about the many generations of the Chateaux making wine... in other words, how, for many years, they have been doing, or trying to do, the same wines as before. In fact, there was almost no outstanding change in the blends they are using, if people like and are buying Bordeaux as it's made now, why change it?

Well, not everyone agrees. For example, winemakers in premium areas of Italy and Spain have been making drastic changes on how they produce their wines and how they taste, but with very different outcomes.

Quite a few winemakers producing Brunello di Montalcino, Amarone and Barolo have started to change how those wines are being traditionally made, so that rather than having to wait a decade or two to be able to enjoy them at their prime, they can be drunk and enjoyed at release date. The idea is that people will drink the wines on release, which can lead to sales significantly increasing.

Some have welcomed the practice,

however most have not, as the wines do not taste the same as before. Although they don't taste bad, not at all, they miss the peculiarities or what you would expect from a good Barolo, Brunello or Amarone—what it is that makes them outstanding. They sold out quickly though, but although prices for the next vintages changed downwards, those wines made through traditional methods saw the opposite effect. Do people like traditional taste then?

Winemakers of premium Rioja wines did not need to do the same as in Italy because good Rioja wines, especially Gran Reserva, due to extended aging and winemaking techniques, are ready to drink on release.

However, the region has been seeing drastic changes on how their wines are made and taste. A good quality Rioja has always been associated with flavors

of vanilla, leather and wood, mostly coming from long aging in American oak barrels. But this taste does not usually suit novice wine lovers who find it too overwhelming.

So, winemakers have started to reduce or even eliminate the American oak, and changed it for French oak, which provides the wines with subtler, less intense flavors and aromas; some have even reduced aging time. The results are more delicate delicious wines, perhaps more feminine, but also lacking the power of traditional Rioja. Unlike the Italian winemakers, these producers are succeeding with the new Rioja wines, which are selling not only very well, but also often at higher prices than the traditional wines.

So, how much innovation, if any, do you want on the taste of your favorite wines? ■



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, DI / 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, DI



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, DI
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, DI
028 6263 6688 - ext.6930
www.lemeridiensaigon.com



BARS & CRAFT BEER BREWERIES



Acoustic Bar

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

E1 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3



Aperitivo

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

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



BiaCraft

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

90 Xuan Thuy, D2

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, Café RuNam is now embarking on the road to becoming a successful franchise. The venue's first floor is particularly enchanting in the late evening.

96 Mac Thi Bui, D1

www.caferrunam.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 cafe 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



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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



Ganesha

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

38 Hai Ba Trung, D1

www.ganeshindianrestaurant.com



Natraj

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

41 Bui Thi Xuan, D1

028 6679 5267 - 028 6686 3168

www.facebook.com/natrajindiancuisine



Saigon Indian

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

1st Floor, 73 Mac Thi Bui, D1



Tandoor [®]

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

39A - 39B Ngo Duc Ke, D1

028 3930 4839 / 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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✉ 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

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>



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



River Restaurant

Tasty Vietnamese food by Saigon River side. The River Restaurant has its' own vegetable garden and a play area for kids. There is a pool table and a futsal table.
199bis Nguyen Van Huong, Thao Dien Ward, D2, HCMC
Tel: 0907 65 66 67



The Hue House

Located on the 10th floor roof of the Master Building, The Hue House opens up to a breezy space with views over the city. The décor is simple yet elegant – bird cages repurposed into lamps, bonsai centerpieces in pretty ceramic bowls and lots of greenery. The menu highlight unique ingredients only found in Hue, like the Va tron fig salad with shrimp and pork, assorted platter of rice cakes meant to be shared, the sate-marinated ribs come with a plate of crunchy greens and mixed rice, originally grown by minority groups in the Central Highlands, and many more.
Rooftop Master Building
41-43 Tran Cao Van, D3
Opening time 10am-10pm.
0909 246 156 / 0906 870 102



Also Try...

3T Quan Nuong

Tasty BBQ venue situated above Temple Bar. The venue has a traditional, rustic theme with old-style furniture and a quaint Vietnamese decor, making this a nicely atmospheric restaurant and a great place to dine with international friends new to the cuisine. The menu features a number of local favorites.
Top Floor, 29 Ton That Hiep, D1
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
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

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
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

R For full review, please visit: 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

For restaurant promotions go to fest.vn or Call 1900636997



Blanc Restaurant

How to listen with your eyes? Blanc Restaurant employs a team of deaf/hearing impaired waiters. Try a new dining experience and order your dishes from the a la carte menu in sign language; communication will take on a new form.

178/180D Hai Ba Trung, Da Kao, DI

02862663535

www.blancrestaurant.vn



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

028 3823 3597

www.forksaigon.com

FORK



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242 Tran Binh Trong St, Dist. 5

028 3839 7777

https://hochiminhcity.equatorial.com/



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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

www.facebook.com/hungrybunnybistro



Noir - Dining in the Dark

Can you differentiate beef from duck? Mystery meals are served in complete darkness by blind/visually impaired waiters. Select from one of the three-course set menus from the East, West or Vegetarian. Mystery wine pairing available too. Discover with taste and smell, embark on a culinary journey of the senses.

178/180D Hai Ba Trung, Da Kao, DI

02862632525

www.noirdininginthedark.com



Poke Saigon

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

Tue-Sun 11am-8pm

2nd Floor, 42 Nguyen Hue, DI

0902474388

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



Tomatito Saigon

This sexy tapas bar is Chef Willy's casual interpretation of the prêt-à-porter concept. Willy has a very personal perception of style, that is reflected in all his creations. His universe is colorful, funky and eclectic.

171 Calmette, Dist 1, Ho Chi Minh City

www.crhcmc.com/tomatito

www.facebook.com/crhcmc

+84 (0) 2862 881717



twenty21one

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

21 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3



Travel & Wellness

SANTORINI - GREEK ISLAND





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Gunslinging Texas Ranger



Deep in the heart of North Texas is Dallas, and what's sizable about the "Big D" is its Western boots, ten-gallon hats, guns and swagger

Text and Images by David Muller

Yeehah! Welcome to Dallas Texas!

Flying in on Richard Branson's airway I avoided the newer and bigger DFW airport, instead landing at the old Love Field airport. Celebrating its 100-year anniversary, the airport staff were busy giving out free bite-sized cupcakes for all passengers. Southern hospitality at its finest.

Everyone is super polite and friendly in Texas, which could have something to do with the fact that everyone is packing heat. So I was on my best behavior and took pains not to let my usual combination of inherited German bluntness and Aussie twang cause offence.

My Uber driver, like so many people I met in America, was an old service veteran who, on hearing I lived and worked in Vietnam, instantly became animated, telling me he had been stationed in Hawaii as an aircraft mechanic during The American War. He related that hundreds of planes landed in Hawaii every day to refuel on their way to Tan Son Nhat and Da Nang airports.

On the 30-minute journey to the hotel we talked a lot about how General G. had helped USS Army Major Allison Thomas create the Allies' OSS Deer force to fight the Japanese, Vietnam's dream for independence, freedom and happiness, and the follies of war. The cabbie, in his Texas drawl and wisdom of age, was simple and matter of fact: "Yeah... we could have handled that situation a whole lot better than we did."

Entering my hotel, I noticed the large sign on the front entrance, which read: *"Pursuant to Section 30.07, Penal Code (Trespass by license holder with an openly carried handgun), a person licensed under Subchapter H, Chapter 411, Government Code (handgun licensing law), may not enter this property with a handgun that is carried openly."*

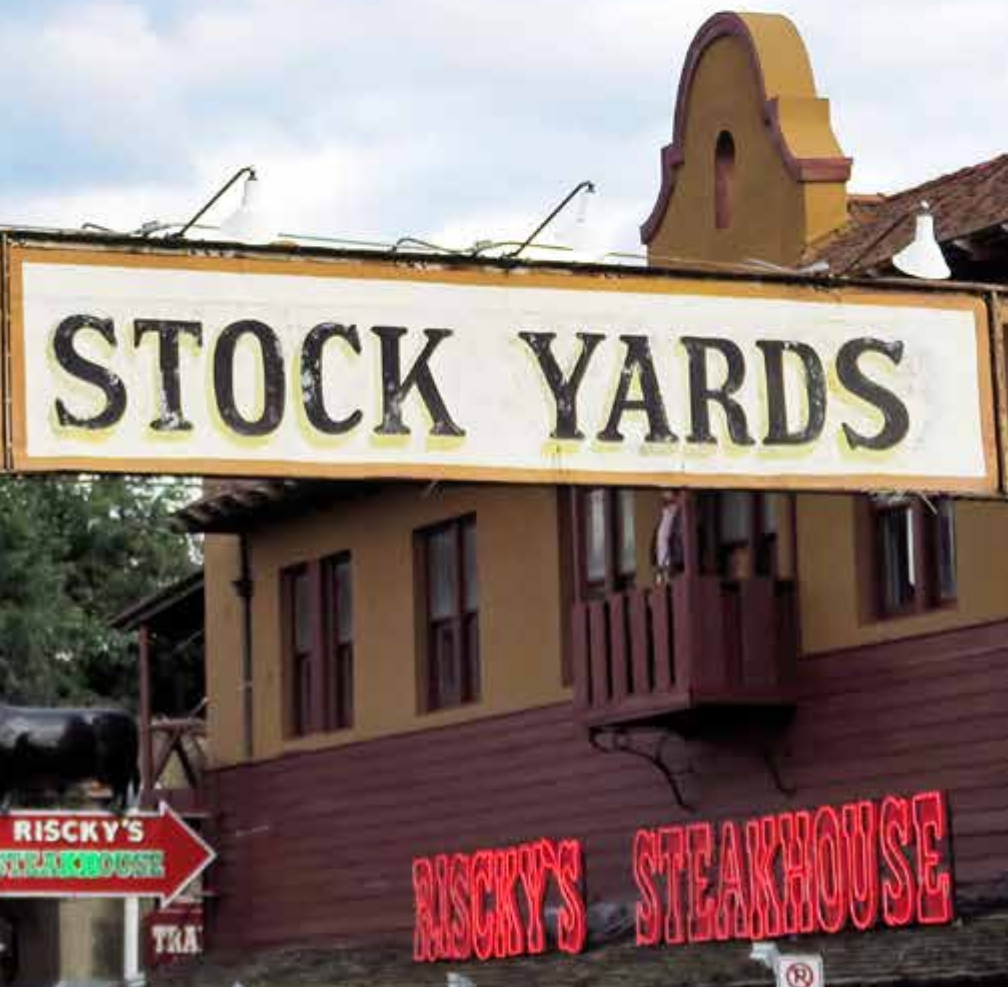
So, you could bring a gun into the hotel, but you just couldn't let anyone see it. Now I knew there were people with guns in my hotel, however, I didn't know who had one and who didn't.

Robert Cray was playing at the beautiful old Majestic theatre built in 1921 on Elm Street in downtown Dallas and my friend had booked us front row seats. The musician's soulful act soothed the crowd and he was in perfect harmony with the band. The metal detectors we had to pass to enter the venue also eased my fears of gun violence in the Majestic, and I was comforted this wasn't going to play out tonight like the second act in the Ford theatre.

Question: You are at Fort Worth Stockyards, Texas. What do you buy to blend in with the locals?

Answer: A Stetson cowboy hat.

The Stetson Company was founded in 1865 by John B. Stetson, who was well known in the Wild West for helping a wayward traveler and making fine quality handmade felt hats. The latter at the store was almost like a reincarnation of





JB himself. As he fitted me up with the perfect hat, he asked if I wanted to mold and shape the hat using the steam machine on his workbench. I thanked him for his attention to detail but said, "It looks just perfect the way the craftsman made it."

As I stepped out of the Stetson shop wearing my new Stetson and an old weather-worn brown leather jacket, my friend quipped that I just needed my stock whip and I'd be Indiana Jones.

It was late in the afternoon and the sun was setting over the stockyards, so we moseyed on down to Billy Bob's for some honky-tonk. Security was tight getting in and even a damsel with a dainty Derringer pistol in her garter belt wasn't getting a gun into this mammoth establishment. Purchasing a derelict 100,000 square foot department store, the owners



had retro-fitted it into a mega bar entertainment complex. It seemed everybody in there was wearing a cowboy hat and the place was so big it even had its own rodeo. I approached the bar and asked, "What do the locals drink in these parts?" She said, "What's your poison?" I answered, "Whiskey!" She said, "Well, how 'bout a Fireball?"



Fireball is cinnamon Whisky (that's without the "e" because, like basketball, it was invented by the Canadians and adopted by the Americans). The Whisky company's slogan is "Tastes like Heaven, Burns like Hell." It certainly warmed my belly while I listened to the live country and western music belted out by a band of brothers in Stetsons.



Leaving the safety of the bar, I asked my friend, “So, if everyone carries a gun in this town and Billy Bob’s doesn’t allow weapons, where do they leave their guns?” “Oh...in their cars,” he said nonchalantly.

Time to Reload

Deciding it was time to see what makes the locals tick, the next day we booked into a gun range. I joined a bunch of international novices and we all stood around in the reception area waiting for the attendants (who were all open carrying) to register our passports. We were ushered into a training room where we were briefed on gun safety for two minutes and then the trainer asked the group if any of us had used a gun before. I raised my hand, having had the experience of a bachelor party in Phuket, where we shot 10 bullets, each for a dollar a bullet, next to a go-cart track. The trainer then ejected me with all the other people who had raised their hands; it seemed I’d passed the test. Time to choose my weapon. There was a bit of a line for the guns so I hovered by the open door of the training room. Seemed they were very thorough explaining the safety and correct usage

of a firearm to the greenhorns, much better than that attendant in Thailand who said, “You point target, pull trigger, bang, bang!”

The attendant, like the hatter, fitted me up with the perfect companion. He asked what I would feel comfortable with and we settled on a Glock 22, 9mm

handgun, a dartboard gun target and 100 bullets (two boxes of 50 rounds). He then handed me safety glasses and earplugs to make sure I didn’t go deaf or blind. As I walked through the soundproof doors with a sign declaring “live firing range,” the sound was intense yet comfortably bearable as my earplugs muffled the muzzle fire. I passed rows of gun enthusiasts firing off round after round, right to rows 21-

24 at the end, where my international friends were already shooting live rounds under the watchful eye of the instructor.

I entered my stall, pinned my target to the board, using the mechanical pulley to winch the target down the lane. The greenhorns had it at 5 feet—almost point blank range—so I pushed mine out to 15 feet, being the seasoned veteran with my 10 bullets in Thailand. Taking out the weapon, magazine and bullets, I suddenly realized I didn’t even know how to load the gun, but in Texas it was self-service! I waved one of the instructors over, who looked like his parents could have been Vietnamese but sounded 100 percent American, and was politely shown how to load the magazine: he did one bullet then I was on my own. The magazine holds 15 rounds but by round 10 I was struggling to get the next bullet in. Stuff it! 10 rounds was easier to calculate anyways and I was keen to get started playing Around the World with my dartboard. I held the gun firmly with two hands, adjusted my stance, aimed between the two pins and the site, took a deep breath and fired on the exhale. The first round was a big jolt but by bullet ten I was getting the hang of it. I slowly reloaded a total of five times, by which time my fingers were sore from reloading. I never did manage to hit the bull’s eye dead center but neither did I miss the target completely. I decided though after one box of 50 bullets I’d had enough. I returned to the front counter and cashed in my remaining box of bullets. The total cost of this cultural experience came to USD46 dollars.

Returning on the flight to Vietnam, I reflected on how far Vietnam had come in these last 40 or so years since the end of The American War. As I am writing this, Vietnam will be hosting the APEC Summit in Da Nang with many of our world leaders in attendance. Perhaps the Americans will change from the MTV channel or put down their guns for just one moment to see their President Trump experiencing the true beauty of Vietnam and how great a country can prosper under peaceful development. ■





Island Enlightenments

Why go to the
Greek Islands?
The question
should really be,
“Why not?”

Text by **Silvia Danaie**

FOR MANY PEOPLE, GREECE IS synonymous with islands. If you need a vacation from your busy mainland Greek vacation, the islands exert an irresistible pull.

Explore a tight, twisty maze of whitewashed cubic houses with vibrant trim. Dig your toes into the hot sand while basking under a beach umbrella. Go for a dip in the crystal-clear, bathwater-warm Aegean. Nurse an iced coffee along a bustling harborfront, watching fishermen clean their catch while cuddly kittens greedily beg below. Indulge in fresh seafood at a rustic seaside taverna, and chat with the big personality whose family has owned the place for generations, all while watching the sun gradually descend into the sea. Putter along remote-feeling roads across the spine of the island on a rented ATV, then drop down on a twisty lane to a desert-isle cove with an inviting beach. The Greek islands really do live up to their worldwide acclaim.

While I appreciate a healthy dose of restorative island time, I prefer to spend the bulk of my Greek vacation visiting

the country's amazing wealth of ancient sights. That's why I've focused my Greece on the bustling capital of Athens and Greece's "heartland," the Peloponnese, where—compared to the islands—prices are much lower, tourism is less suffocating, and travelers have more exciting opportunities to peel back layers of history. Still, a visit to Greece isn't complete without at least one island stay.

Greece's Island Groups

Greece's roughly 3,000 islands and islets (227 of which are inhabited) are scattered far and wide across the eastern Mediterranean. Most are in the Aegean Sea (south and east of mainland Greece), while a few are in the Ionian Sea (west of the mainland). The islands are divided into distinct clusters:

The Ionian Islands, closer to Albania and Italy than to Athens, are Greece's northwest gateway to the Adriatic and the rest of Europe—they've had more foreign invaders and rulers (from Venice, France, Britain, Russia, Austria, and so on) than anywhere else in the country. The main island is Corfu (Kerkyra in



Greek), with a bustling, architecturally eclectic main town and a lush, green island landscape dotted with attractions and beaches.

The Saronic Gulf Islands (Argosaronikos), conveniently wedged between the Peloponnese and Athens, ooze lots of island charm and give you a chance to get away from it all without actually going very far. Hydra, my favorite, is in this group.

The Sporades Islands, due east of Athens, are dominated by the giant Evia island, which is attached to the mainland by a bridge. Thickly forested and less toured by international visitors, the Sporades are a popular and handy weekend getaway for Athenians.

The Cycladic Islands (or simply Cyclades)—a bit farther south, between Athens and Crete—are the prototypical "Greek islands," boasting chalk-white houses with colorful windowsills and doorways; rocky, sun-parched landscapes; delightful beaches; old-fashioned white windmills topped with tufts of grass like unkempt hair; and an almost overwhelming crush of international visitors. Mykonos and Santorini are the two best and most famous of the Cyclades. Near Mykonos is the archaeological site of Delos (one of the most important locales of the ancient world).

The Dodecanese Islands, at the sunny, southeastern end of the Greek lands, are more rustic and less developed than the Cyclades. Their proximity to Turkey and historic ties to Venice give them a hybrid Turkish-Venetian flavor (though the population is mostly ethnic Greek, these islands merged with Greece only after World War II). Rhodes, with an appealing and very real-feeling old



town, is the biggest of these islands.

The North Aegean Islands, relatively untrampled and remote-feeling, lie roughly between Turkey and Thessaloniki (at the northern end of mainland Greece). The southernmost of these, Samos, is a particularly handy

springboard for Turkey, as it's very close to the Turkish port city of Kusadası (near the remarkable ancient site of Ephesus).

Crete is Greece's biggest island and practically a ministate of its own (in fact, from 1897 to 1913 it was an autonomous state within the Ottoman Empire). While

many of Greece's smaller islands merit a day or two of fun in the sun, Crete could occupy even a busy traveler for a week or more. Historically, Crete was home to the Minoans—the earliest advanced European civilization, peaking around 1950 B.C., centuries before "the ancient



Greeks" of Athens. While Crete's modern main city, Iraklio, is drab and uninviting, the rest of the island offers an engaging diversity of attractions: Minoan ruins, scenic mountains, enticing beaches, characteristic rustic villages, and dramatic caves and gorges (including the famous Samaria Gorge).

Choosing an Island

Hydra is my favorite, thanks to its speedy connections to Athens and the Peloponnese, its relaxing car-free ambience, its easily reached beaches, and its charming harbor that invites you to just linger. Two of the most popular Greek islands are Mykonos and Santorini; both are relatively well-connected to Athens. Mykonos is an adorable, windmill-topped fishing village slathered in white and thronged by a hard-partying international crowd, enjoying its many beaches and side-tripping to the ruins on nearby Delos. Santorini is the most geologically interesting of all the Greek islands, and arguably the most picturesque, with idyllic villages perched on the rim of a collapsed and flooded volcano crater.

While each Greek island has its own personality and claims to fame,

most offer the same basic ingredients: a charming fishing village, once humble and poor, now a finely tuned machine for catering to (and collecting money from) a steady stream of tourists; a rugged interior, and rough roads connecting coastal coves; appealing beaches with rentable umbrellas and lounge chairs, presided over by tavernas and hotels; maybe a few dusty museums collecting ancient artifacts or bits and pieces of local folklore; and occasionally a good or even great ancient site to tour.

Many islands have a main town, which is sometimes named for the island itself, or might be called Chora or Hora, which literally means "village." This is generally the hub for transportation, both to other islands (port for passenger ferries and cruise ships) and within the island (bus station and taxi stand). Some islands—such as Rhodes, Corfu, and Crete—have sizeable cities as their capitals.

Getting Around the Greek Islands

Many passenger boats crisscross the Aegean Sea, making it quick and fairly easy to reach your island getaway. Be warned, however, that gathering ferry information takes some work, as routes can be covered by multiple companies

and schedules can change. Prior to your trip, look up schedules online, then confirm the details on arrival in Greece at any travel agency (or two or three, as you may get slightly different information from different agencies). Keep in mind that sailings can be cancelled because of bad weather (more likely in the off-season).

To save time, consider flying. Compared to boats, flights are less likely to get delayed or cancelled, tend to offer more frequent connections, and are much faster — but often more expensive. Two major Greek carriers offer daily flights from Athens to many Greek islands are Olympic Airlines and Aegean Airlines. Also consider Astra Airlines and Sky Express. If you're headed to far-flung islands such as Mykonos or Santorini—which have small airports—check flights on these airlines, which can be surprisingly affordable (and save you the long boat journey). By shopping online at least a few weeks in advance, you may be able to snare a deal.

The Greek islands are made-to-order for cruising and a major destination for cruise ships. If you're coming on a cruise, your challenge is to beat the hordes: You'll arrive in town at precisely the same time as 2,000 other visitors, all hoping to fit the maximum amount of sightseeing, shopping, or beach time in a single day. Get as early a start as possible, and explore the back lanes and beaches when the main drag gets too congested.

If you're not cruising, it's smart to be aware of when ships are scheduled to show up. If you're planning to visit outlying sights or beaches, do it when the ships are in port—by the time you return to town in the afternoon, the cruise-ship passengers will be loading up to leave again.

Island Accommodations

Greek-island accommodations range from rustic dhوماتia to chic designer hotels with spectacular views. Even out-of-the-way islands get heavy tourist traffic in the summer, so options abound. Some travelers just show up on the boat and are greeted at the dock by locals offering cheap beds; this can be a decent way to find accommodations if you're not too picky (be very clear on the location before you agree to take a room).

At the busiest times (July–September, peaking in August), visitors can outnumber beds; to get your choice of accommodations, book ahead. Expect to pay (sometimes wildly) inflated prices in high season—in the most popular destinations, such as Mykonos and Santorini, prices for even budget hotels can more than double. Prices for other services—such as car rentals and restaurant meals—also increase when demand is high. For the best combination of still-good weather, fewer crowds, and more reasonable prices, visit just before or after these busy times.

Whenever you visit, enjoy your time here and simply give yourself over to the Greek islands. ■

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>>The List Travel



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www.chamvillas.com



Cham Garden Restaurant

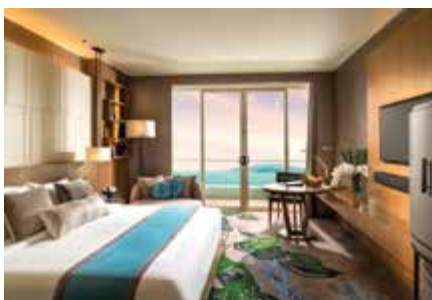
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www.mianhatrang.com

info@mianhatrang.com



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Vo Nguyen Giap, Khue My, Ngu Hanh Son, Danang

0236 395 8888

www.pullman-danang.com



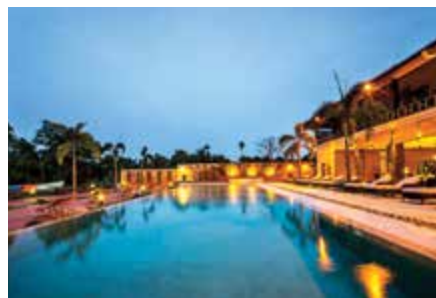
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HEALTH



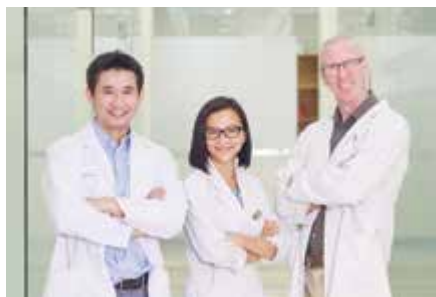
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Kids & Education

A photograph of children playing on a blue and yellow playground structure. In the foreground, a young boy with brown hair, wearing a white t-shirt and a red plaid shirt over his shoulder, is smiling at the camera. Behind him, a girl in a blue and yellow striped shirt is also smiling. To the left, another child in a yellow shirt is visible. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the playground and other children.



Coding Matters

Coding allows students to develop an understanding of being able to use, and create with, digital technologies

Text by **Sophia Chen**

IF YOU HAVE BEEN INVOLVED with the education sector for the last 12 months or more you would have heard the call to have all children learn coding. The publicity has stretched far and wide and coding education has even become a part of the political sphere and things are only just getting started.

Why coding? We know that today's students live in a technology-saturated world. Emerging technologies are changing education and the world as we know it but while many students (and, in fact, adults) often know how to use technology, rarely do they understand how it works. Think for a minute about the things around you, how was it built? How did it transform from an idea to reality? How did it get to you? Somewhere along that chain, computer science was involved. Did you know

that Ikea's "Billy" bookcase does not come into contact with human hands in manufacturing? The entire factory operation runs 24/7 and is facilitated by machines and robots with employees there to simply feed materials into the machine and then take out the packed boxes. With over 25,000 bookcases being built a day, this operation could not happen without coding.

Digital disruption is transforming both the manufacturing and service industries, and in order to future proof our economy and workforce changes need to begin now. The skills students develop when learning to code will enable them to participate in this future workforce, where flexibility, agility and entrepreneurial thinking will be at the forefront of many careers. It is indeed possible that the jobs today's primary school students will have in the future, do not even exist yet.

So What Exactly Is Coding?

Coding, or computer programming, is the way people command and communicate with computers and machines. It can be described as the process that people take to design, write, test and debug computer programs. Coding in education is about understanding the process of how a computer works.

But what about coding and learning? When we discuss the thinking involved in learning to code it is imperative that teachers are familiar with the work of Seymour Papert. Papert was one of the designers and inventors of *Logo*, an educational programming language that was built in the 1960s. *Logo* is based on the work of Piaget (with whom Papert worked) to allow students to think and solve problems in a play-based environment. Papert likened these environments to 'microworlds' describing them as a place where strategic thinking and powerful ideas can be developed.

Papert's work on coding and learning also identifies that while students are developing their programs they are



constructing mental processes and patterns of thought used to make sense of information. This process, Papert coined as Constructionism. Constructionism is similar to what we know as the Constructivist learning theory in that learners construct knowledge and make meaning through experiences, however, in Constructionism the key difference is on knowledge being built by the learner making something tangible and sharable.

When Papert said, "I am convinced that the best learning takes place when the learner takes charge..." it is easy to assume that the logical thinking, problem solving skills and meaning being developed when students are creating through code is a step in the right direction for education and students in today's world.

There is more to learning to code than just recalling a set of symbols and commands. More than 20 years ago, Steve Jobs famously said, "Everyone

should learn how to program a computer, because it teaches you how to think." With that in mind, it is fitting that any new digital technologies curriculum should be designed for students to develop a deep understanding of systems thinking, design thinking and computational thinking. In fact, coding should just be one part of a new curriculum that endeavors to allow students to develop an understanding of being able to use, and create with, digital technologies.

For coding education to be a success it is important that teachers are developed, empowered and trusted to teach it with confidence. Top tips for developing this in staff include:

- Purposeful and specific professional learning;
- Workshops and learning experiences built around play;
- Breaking down and unpacking the language in the new curriculum; and,
- Developing an understanding of Papert and Constructionism.

Teaching our students to code does not mean that we expect all students to become professional computer programmers. We teach students how to write music, but we don't expect all students to become professional composers or recording artists. We teach students physical education and how to play sport, but we don't expect all students to become elite athletes. We teach the basics of science and history, but we don't expect all students to become scientists or historians. What we do expect, however, is that all students, in all schools are given the opportunity to learn about the world they live in, how it works and how they can be successful. In the continuously changing digital landscape we now live, learning about digital systems and being able to create through code should be an essential component of a balanced education for every child. ■





Reinventing the Library

A 21st century education requires
a 21st century school library

IN TIMES GONE BY, AND WHEN

parents of today were in school, a library was a quiet place to read books, research for a project and study for the next exam. **International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP, 92 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh)** is now redefining the possibilities of what a library should look like, feel like and offer in today's educational landscape.

In a process that has taken over 12 months, ISSP is launching their bold new libraries. A year may seem like a long time just to get to this stage, but it was time that has been well used. "Everyone in our community has contributed to these projects," says Lester Stephens, Head of School. "Our parent's voice, our student's voice and our teacher's voice all supported the concepts of the libraries designs. Those voices have inspired the designs."

After consolidating the community's voice, the leadership team at ISSP was tasked to uncover a focal point that was versatile enough to be incorporated into two libraries. "ISSP provides education for children from 18 months to 11 years old in an international context." Stephens continues, "The learning needs for children within this age range are vastly different at various stages throughout their development." ISSP will invest in a Library that meets the needs of its youngest learners in Early Education (children 18 months to 4 years old) and an additional Library for Elementary grade levels (children aged 5 to 11 years old). The challenge to pinpoint an objective that is adaptable enough should not have been underestimated. Yet it is brought back to something more basic and noncomplex. The common theme between both libraries is something that each and every one of us experiences on a daily basis; connectivity.

"Making sure the design and layouts of our new Libraries provide opportunities for making connections was so important and intentional," says Rae Lang, Deputy Head of School, who goes on to say, "Connectivity is something we experience throughout all of our lives whether it be with other people, our environment or within ourselves. The libraries provide different spaces that allow for all types of connectivity to happen."

The Early Education Library encompasses a variety of different learning spaces in an open plan layout. Children can connect with each other through dramatic play, which research tells us develops character and confidence. It is also a fun way for children to express themselves in a safe setting, as ISSP champions each child as an individual. The garden-like décor allows for connection to the environment and the immediate surroundings. This is supported by an extensive panoramic window with a honeycomb effect seating area that children can climb through as withdrawal spaces. By providing children opportunities to look out to the wider environment, it makes learning visible and learning real. Most importantly, as a library should, it promotes books and for children to connect with them.

The Elementary Library builds upon these opportunities further, as you would expect when a child grows and develops. A combination of flexible seating options allow children to decide where, how and with who they would like to collaborate. Collaboration provides a forum for essential life-long skills to develop: language, communication and interpersonal to name just a few. Connecting to literacy, not only through reading but writing and technology,

ensures children are well equipped for secondary school. In a first for international education in Vietnam, ISSP will offer children the opportunity to connect with nature set within a purpose built conservatory that joins the Elementary Library. This promotes a seamless flow of learning between areas stimulating all the sensory senses.

Incorporating the purposes of a conventional library with features for modern teaching approaches had an overwhelming influence during the development of each of the libraries. Hollie Slater, Literacy Lead and Grade 1 teacher explains, "A library must still be a place of learning. That is what we always came back to when researching the pedagogy for the new designs. Every space, element and piece of furniture has been specifically chosen with teaching and learning in mind." ISSP recognizes the need for children to have a strong skills base that will allow them to access their learning.

The Early Education Library will open in January 2018, along with the Conservatory. "There are lots more plans in the pipeline to develop our campus further. These libraries are an ambitious start to what is an exciting time for ISSP with the support and investment from the Cognita Schools Group. One thing that we will continue to do as a school is to use our community's voice as inspiration, together with reputable research and strong pedagogical practice to provide the best educational experience for our students." Stephens concludes. ■

To learn more about ISSP's new libraries and vision, you can book a personal tour with their multilingual team by e-mailing info@issp.edu.vn or phoning (028) 2222 7788.



Amy Melton is a Grade 1 teacher with a Bachelor and Master's in both Elementary Education at the International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP).

Mind Your Languages

WHY SHOULD ANYONE LEARN a foreign language? While living abroad, I can say that one thing I regret is not learning a second language. There are so many benefits to learning a second language. Such as connecting with people from different cultures, traveling, building multitasking skills, and increasing brainpower. According to *The Telegraph* on *Benefits to Bilingualism*, physiological studies show that speaking two or more languages is an excellent asset to a person's cognitive process.

When I grew up in the US, I often wondered why should I even bother learning a second, or even a third, language because everyone around me spoke English. This excuse stopped me from learning a second language. As I got older, I came to realize how important it was to speak more than one language and how I was at a disadvantage compared to those who were multilingual. Being multilingual would help me connect with people in different parts of the world.

Ethnologue, a linguistic website, states that currently there are roughly 6,909 languages spoken across the globe. I can only speak one. The majority of people that I have encountered through my experiences overseas can speak up to two or more languages. Since teaching in Asia, I have discovered that the majority of my students speak more than one language, especially within their homes. Regardless if a child is able to speak more than one language, I believe that it is very important for the child to have a strong understanding of their native tongue, before learning a new language.

I am a huge advocate in encouraging my students to speak in their native language (or "mother tongue") at home. "Mother tongue" means the language that the child first learns at home. Children growing up in a bilingual home may speak two mother tongues. Once the student's mother tongue is strong in reading and writing, he or she would be able to pick up another language and make better connections. It is easier to teach them multiple languages simultaneously at a young age. The child's first language is critical to that child's identity and culture, which makes them who they are as human beings. For instance, if we look at the perspective of home building, we can ascertain that the foundation is the most important part of the home. The same applies to language learning. Indeed, a child's first language is the foundation of the house. Before he or she wants to learn a new language, the foundation needs to be built first.

When students attend school where English is the language of instruction, their minds often switch from their native tongue to English and vice versa. Through observation, I have seen many of my students switching from their mother tongue to English all the time. As a teacher, I encourage my students to exchange conversations with peers in their native language during break times at school. I support this because it may relax their brains from the amount of new information in English that they are learning in school.

Learning a new language is indeed a challenge and quite time-consuming, but very rewarding. As someone who grew up speaking only English in my

household, learning a second language was extremely difficult. Now that I have been learning French for almost a year, I can see the difficulty of switching back and forth from my native language to French. I am not quite fluent in French yet, but I look forward to the moment when I finally am. It is also a good way to exercise my brain and improve my memory. There are similarities between the French and English languages, such as the grammatical structure, the alphabet, and the commonality of words; this helps me grasp the language a little bit easier.

Naturally, by teaching in an international school, there are learners where English is an Additional Language (EAL). I have gained more of an understanding of how my students feel learning a second language. Having that same familiarity of learning a new language, I feel that I have been more understanding with where my students are coming from when they come to my classroom to learn. In return, I try to learn some of the students' native vocabulary and then we try to make those connections together.

Therefore, I encourage anyone who speaks one language, to try to learn a second. I encourage my students to keep speaking in their native tongues as they are learning new languages at the same time. I often tell my students how being multilingual can be a huge advantage in their lives. Language development is a process of both maturation and experience. It may take a couple of years to become fluent in a new language, but it's never too late to start learning. ■

Seeking Attention

Strategies for teaching ADHD students
at home

Text by **Linda Harris**



ACCORDING TO THE LEARNING

Disabilities Association of America, Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is not considered a learning disability. But the reality is that many students who have ADD/ADHD have other associated issues, which do hinder their ability to learn according to the traditional education plan that exists in most schools. Even without additional learning disabilities, students with ADD/ADHD and their teachers often need adaptive strategies to make learning less difficult.

Three of the issues that teachers, and this includes homeschooling parents/teachers, have to deal with in students with ADD/ADHD are:

Distractibility.

Students with ADHD find it difficult to concentrate on any one subject for extended periods of time. One way parents/teachers can deal with this is to keep lessons short. Help the student to break down larger tasks into a series of smaller tasks. Math is one of those large tasks that lends itself to being divided into more manageable pieces. Instead of instructing the student to “do their math” it would benefit both the teacher and the student to have a short-term goal of completing the instructional portion of the math assignment then taking a break. After a short break allow the student to refocus and complete a small number of math problems.

In a homeschooling environment it

is possible to control the environment for the student. There are not 30 other students who contribute to the distraction. Noise can be controlled in the home. Additionally, homeschooling is very flexible and this helps homeschooled ADHD students spend more time, or less, on a subject depending on their needs.

Hyperactivity.

ADHD students sometimes seem like they are “driven” to be in constant motion. This can be difficult to deal with in a traditional classroom setting. For the home educator it is easier because the student’s motion does not disturb anyone else. If the student needs to hop around the room on one foot while reciting the multiplication tables then allow it. Sometimes the act of moving and learning at the same time can be a very useful tool because it allows the student to both burn off excess energy and commit things to memory.

There are several techniques that can be used to help your ADHD student drain off excess energy. One family allowed their student to use an exercise ball as a seat instead of a chair. The student was allowed to gently bounce on the ball, or rock back and forth on it. Even when sitting relatively still the student still needed to make minor balance adjustments and that allowed him to use some of the excess energy.

Another thing to do is to keep the student’s hands busy. Conventional wisdom says that the student is not paying attention if she is doodling or using modeling clay but the reality is that ADHD students seem to be able to do more than one thing at a time, and even benefit from being allowed to do more than one thing at a time.

Easily Frustrated.

ADHD students seem to become easily frustrated. They often do not like repetitive lessons, reading lessons, or lessons that require a lot of writing. Remember that ADHD is not considered a specific learning disability. However, ADHD students do tend to learn differently. Their brains tend to process things very quickly and so repetitive lessons seem like a waste of time.

Reading requires doing only one thing at a time (reading) and comprehension tends to be reduced if the student is distracted. As for the ADHD student disliking writing, many ADHD students have poor handwriting and are frustrated by the speed at which ideas in their heads can be translated to paper.

Part of the way to get around this frustration is to allow the student to use adaptive technologies, and these can be easily accommodated in a homeschool environment. Instead of having the student actually read a book allow her to listen to an audio book. This allows the student to focus on the story with their ears while doing something else with their hands, or jumping up and down. Teach keyboarding skills early because it is easier for a student to get the ideas out of their heads and onto paper if they can process that information at the speed of typing as opposed to writing.

As for repetitive lessons such as spelling, instead of having the student practice spelling words all week and take a test at the end of the week, why not let the student take the test first? Then have the student work only on the words that he was unable to spell. It makes for less repetition, and allows the student to process the lessons in shorter bursts.

Finally, allow students to work at a pace that is adapted for their learning abilities rather than trying to make the student adapt to traditional lesson plans. Use technology where possible. Online curricula allow the student to have some control over the rate at which information is presented. Homeschooling ADHD students works well because it allows for learning to occur on their terms instead of trying to make the ADHD student adapt to an education model that is a poor fit for them. ■

Linda is a writer and homeschooling parent of one ADHD child. She uses an online core curriculum, Time4Learning, listen to a lot of audio books, and use educational games at Learning Games for Kids to improve keyboarding skills.

That Naggging Cough

A simple guide to cough medications



WHEN YOU WALK INTO A pharmacy, you'll notice that the majority of medications on the shelves are for cough. There are so many different types of cough medications that it can be quite confusing to choose the "right one" for you. As my mentor used to say: when you have so many medications to treat one symptom, it usually means that none of them really works.

Cough medications are a four-billion-dollar-a-year industry in the US alone, so the urge to sell them is very high. But the simple truth that many doctors and pharmacists won't tell you—and this may come as a surprise—is that most cough medications are completely ineffective.

As a pediatrician, when I prescribe medication to my little patients, I must always consider the benefits of the medication versus the possible side effects. If the potential harm is greater than the benefit, then this medication should not be given.

Cough can be a symptom of many different conditions and disorders. The most common of these is viral respiratory tract infection, causing cold or flu symptoms. Unfortunately, many children will be prescribed antibiotics for this condition, even though they have no effect on viruses.

"Post viral cough" is another common cause. Sometimes, a cough may last for several weeks after a viral infection. The cause is not clear, and usually the cough gradually improves with time.

Air pollution is one of the most common causes of chronic respiratory problems. Sadly, Saigon is one of the most polluted cities in the world—if you live in Saigon and you *don't* cough, something is wrong with your lungs! In a similar vein, children of smoking parents

suffer much more from respiratory problems, infections and asthma than others. If you or your spouse smoke, you are going to be seeing your pediatrician quite frequently.

Asthma is another common cause of chronic cough—more than 10 percent of children suffer from it, and it remains one of the most misdiagnosed conditions around, often mistaken for bronchitis, bronchiolitis or pneumonia. Many parents (and doctors) believe that asthma always comes with wheezing or breathing difficulties—actually, the most common symptom is just a cough that goes on and on, and when you listen to the child's lungs they may be clear. Asthma does not respond to regular cough or allergy medications, and some may even worsen asthma (e.g. cough suppressants).

Cough Medications

Cough medications presumably work in different ways:

Expectorants: These are medications that increase the volume of water in the mucus (phlegm) and thus loosen it so it's easier to cough out. The most common expectorant is guaifenesin. Unfortunately, studies have not proven that guaifenesin has any effect at all, while potential side effects of guaifenesin are urinary retention (difficulty to pee) and kidney stones.

Oral Decongestants: These are medications that constrict blood vessels in the nasal membranes and reduce the production of mucus. They include pseudoephedrine, which was commonly used in cough medications combinations and was very effective—however, since it is very easy to turn this chemical into the narcotic methamphetamine, it has

been removed from the market in most countries.

Phenylephrine has replaced pseudoephedrine as a systemic decongestant. It has been used for years as a medication to raise blood pressure, administered by infusion into the vein. However, many studies have demonstrated no effect when taking this medication orally, since most of it breaks down in the stomach when swallowed. It also has the potential for serious side effects, including high blood pressure, low heart rate, loss of appetite, restlessness and difficulty falling asleep.

Nasal Decongestants: These include steroid sprays, which are very effective in reducing nasal congestion and relatively safe to use even for several weeks. The effect is built up over several days, so it takes time to achieve the maximum effect. It is usually given for 7–10 days. Nasonex spray is somewhat better, since it can be used once a day and there is no absorption into the blood.

These sprays are the first line in treating allergic rhinitis (hay fever), and are helpful in treating colds.

Oxymetazoline (Otrivin and similar) is a very effective spray decongestant, and it works fast. However, if used for more than 3–4 days, it can worsen congestion. Use of this spray must be stopped after four days, and not be used more than once a month.

Antihistamines: There are two types of antihistamine medication.

The "old" generation antihistamines have many side effects, including drying up the nose and mouth; causing drowsiness, sleepiness or irritability; behavioral problems; and increased heart rate. An overdose on these



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.

medications can cause a baby to suffer seizures, become comatose, reduce blood pressure, stop breathing, or even die. Babies below two years old are at higher risk, and these medications are not approved for them. They are used as cough medications, not because of their anti-allergic effect, but actually because of their side effects in reducing mucus and drying the membranes, as well as causing drowsiness and suppressing the cough reflex. Studies have not shown significant effects in improving “cold” symptoms in babies and little children; moreover, suppressing the cough and causing the mucus to become thicker can worsen asthma and should be avoided in asthmatic children.

The “new” generation antihistamines don’t have the side effects common to the old generation varieties. Therefore, they are only useful in coughs caused by allergic rhinitis. They don’t have any effect on coughs caused by colds, viral or bacterial infections, or asthma.

Mucolytics: These are medications that break down chemical connections between proteins within the mucus, making it thinner, less sticky, and easier to expel. The most commonly used are Bisolvon (bromhexine); Mucomyst and Azimuc (acetylcysteine) and Halixol (ambroxol). Mucolytics have been shown to have some benefit in treating the common cold and bronchitis, and they are relatively safe. Acetylcysteine may cause spasms of the airways, so if a child has wheezing or asthma, it’s better to avoid this medication.

Ambroxol: This is an exceptional medication: besides its mucolytic action, a few studies have shown that it also has an antiviral effect, reducing the ability of certain viruses to multiply; an anaesthetic effect, giving relief from sore throat; and an antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effect, reducing tissue damage. It has even been shown to reduce injury to the lungs after heart surgery. It is the only cough medication that has been safely studied in little babies, and it has even been shown to be effective in reducing chronic lung disease in preterm babies. Recent studies suggest that Ambroxol may have a protective effect on brain cells, and this year a large study in the US is being conducted to see if ambroxol can improve brain function in Parkinson’s disease. Ambroxol is my personal choice of medication to treat cold and flu, and as a secondary treatment in pneumonia, sinusitis and asthma.

Herbal Medications: Among the many “herbal cough medications” you may find in local pharmacies (some are real and some are fake), only “Prospan” (ivy leaf extract) has been studied and shown to have some benefits in treating cough.

What to Avoid

There are some simple precautions that you should follow when taking cough medications or administering it to your children:

1. Avoid any cough medication that has more than one ingredient (for example, Ameflu, Toplexil, Theralene, and so on).
2. Antihistamines (Aerius, Zyrtec Loratadine, Benadryl, Phenergan etc) are only effective against an allergy-induced cough. They are useless in respiratory

infections or asthma.

3. Cough suppressants should be avoided in children (medications to “stop” the cough).

4. Salbutamol (Ventolin) is a specific medication for asthma. It has no effect in respiratory infections. If your child has asthma, he or she should receive this medication only by inhalation, not as a syrup! Oral treatment is not effective and may cause significant side effects such as tremors, fast heart rhythm, loss of appetite and more.

5. Singulair is another specific medication to treat asthma only. It has no effect on respiratory infections. It is only given to children with chronic asthma (not for an acute attack).

What's Safe

The following medicines may be used without a doctor’s prescription:

1. Ambroxol (Halixol) is an excellent medication for productive cough of different causes. It has been proven to be effective and safe in many studies. It also has antiviral and anti-inflammatory effects.

2. Prospan (ivy leaf extract) is the only tested herbal medication for cough that has been shown to have benefits and is safe to use. It can be used for dry cough or in combination with Ambroxol.

3. Nasal washing (Sterimar, Physiomer, Xixat, Saline) is an efficient way to clean your baby’s nose and give relief. Proper nasal washing has been shown to improve infections and reduce the risk of developing sinusitis. (There is no need to use suction on your baby’s nose after proper washing).

For any other medication, you should consult with your pediatrician first! ■

>>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



At EtonHouse International Pre-School Franchise - An Phu, children aged 18 months to 6 years experience

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Level 2, Somerset Vista, 628C Hanoi Highway, D.2, HCMC
028 6287 0804/ 0904 938 666
www.etonhouseanphu.com



International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP)

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



92 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh
+84 (28) 2222 7788/99
admissions@issp.edu.vn
www.issp.edu.vn



Kinder Academy

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

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

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

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



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





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