



VIETNAM

09-2018

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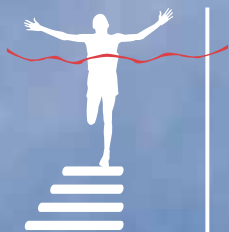
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Datebook

What's on this month...

SEPTEMBER 6 & 8

What: *Plastic Paradise* Documentary

Where: The Hive (94 Xuan Thuy, Thao Dien, D2); free

About: Thousands of miles away from civilization, Midway Atoll is in one of the most remote places on earth. And yet it's become ground zero for The Great Pacific Garbage Patch, syphoning plastics from three distant continents. In this independent documentary film *Plastic Paradise*, journalist/filmmaker Angela Sun travels on a personal journey of discovery to uncover this mysterious phenomenon. Along the way she meets scientists, researchers, influencers and volunteers who shed light on the effects of our rabid plastic consumption and learns the problem is more insidious than we could have ever imagined. If you want to hear about solutions, not only problems, join this screening. We are all aware of the impact plastic has on our environment, but are you aware that plastic also affects your health? This documentary will expose what the oil and gas industry spent years and millions of dollars hiding from us. Then, we will bring forward some of the solutions that are available here in Vietnam in order for us to consume wisely and reduce our plastic consumption. Join one



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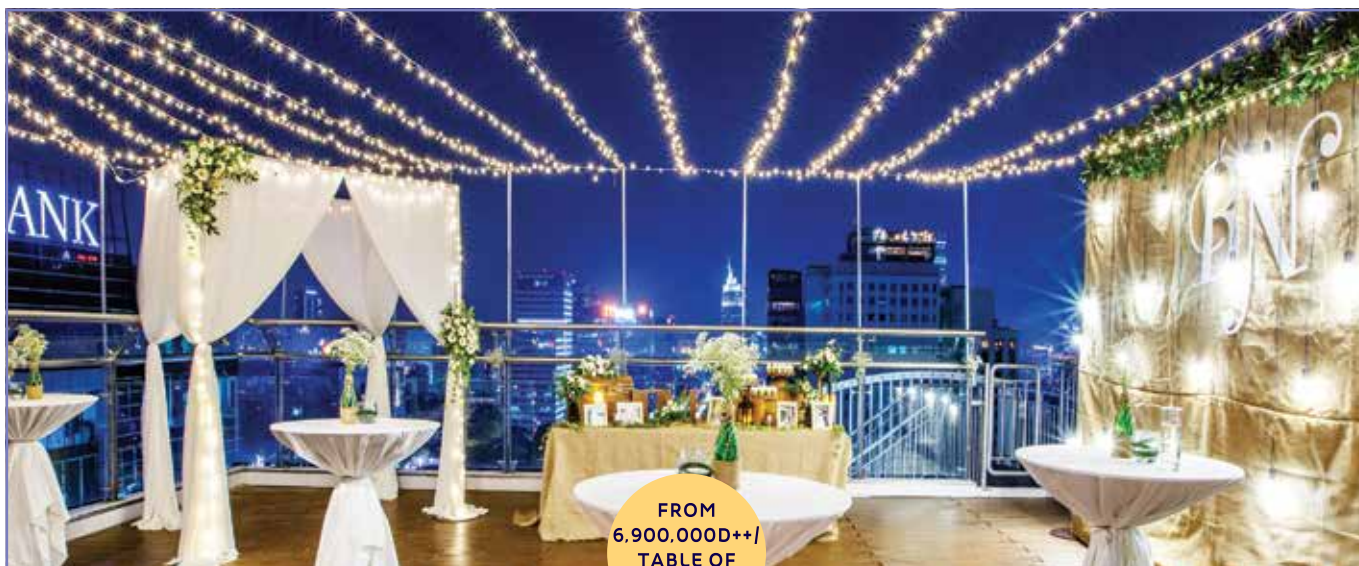
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Datebook

What's on this month...

SEPTEMBER 14

What: Sunil Sharpe

Where: 6FL Lighthouse (104/ Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D1); After 10pm VND100,000; After midnight VND150,000

About: When Sunil Sharpe starts talking, it's hard to get him to stop. From the ideal design for a DJ booth to techno's resurgence, the Dublin DJ and producer has much to say on many subjects. Right now, plenty of people want to know more about Sharpe. Long a fixture at techno haunts here, his diary now features regular dates at clubs such as Berghain in Berlin and Fabric in London. The DJing is just one aspect of Sharpe's working week. There are also releases for his label Earwiggle and the Tinfoil project with Matt "Defekt" Flanagan, as well as the course on DJ techniques and music production he has been teaching at the Bray Institute of Further Education for the past 10 years.

Contact: Visit www.facebook.com/HeartBeatSaigon for more info

SEPTEMBER 15

What: Living Room Series Ho Chi Minh City

Where: Modern Hustle (12 Ton Dan, D4); 7:30pm

About: The Living Room Series is inspired by 18th century French salons where a cross-section of society would gather to

discuss ideas and share their passion for music and the arts. Through these events, they aim to gather people with different lives, backgrounds and stories to expand everyone's perspective and build a community through music and words. In the advent of the digital age, it is easy to get caught up in the latest celebrity gossip, political scandal or what someone said on Twitter. Let's bring back the days where substantive ideas are discussed in person and where music and art are expressed in its purest form without the cacophony of background noise. The theme for this upcoming Living Room Series is Rejection. Donations will be collected at the event.

Contact: Visit livingroomseries.me for more info

SEPTEMBER 15, 16, 22 & 23

What: *Mr. Stink*, A Family-Friendly Theatre Event

Where: The Dance School Theatre (155 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia, D3); 2pm and 6pm; VND400,000

About: Dragonfly Theatre Company are proud to present the funny, touching story of *Mr. Stink*, written by Dragonfly and based on the book by British author David Walliams. *Mr. Stink* tells the story of a girl called Chloe who makes friends with *Mr. Stink*, the local tramp. Dragonfly are excited about their first collaboration with the talented John Andrew Cunningham, who will be directing the show with the experienced Dragonfly actor, David Patrick Delves. Both John and David have trained with the highly-acclaimed London Drama School East 15, and have worked with well-known theatre companies such as Frantic Assembly and Nomad Theatre. The production of *Mr. Stink* stars Leon Bown, who has extensive experience in the UK that includes performing with The Everyman Theatre in Liverpool. Bown is a staple of Dragonfly productions, having starred in *Waiting for Godot*, *Chalky White Substance* and *Lovesong* as well as directing *Lawrence and Holloman*. New talent Mimi Tran Lam will play the role of Chloe. Mimi has starred in several productions for her school, her latest role being in the drama *A View from the Bridge*.

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Contact: Tickets available at ticketbox.vn/event/mr-stink-72729/49429. Email dragonflyvietnam@gmail.com for more info

SEPTEMBER 19

What: Pharmed & Healthcare Vietnam 2018

Where: SECC (799 Nguyen Van Linh, D7)

About: Pharmed & Healthcare Vietnam 2018 is annually organized by ADPEXJSC and hosted by the Ministry of Health of Vietnam. The exhibition will bring together the latest products and technologies of modern medicines from many participating countries around the world. Pharmed Vietnam gives the opportunity to exchange expertise and experiences, provide business co-operation for domestic and international enterprises and expand pharmaceutical manufacturing and medical equipment in Vietnam along with the development of Vietnam health to serve community health.

Contact: Visit adpex.vn for more info

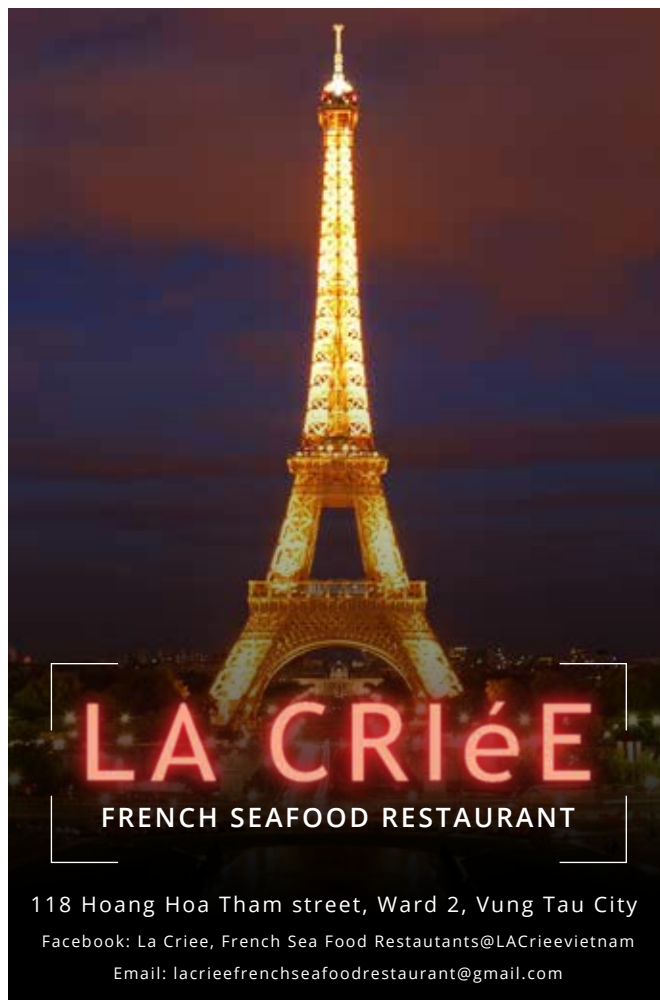
SEPTEMBER 28-OCTOBER 1

What: Saigon Latin Fiesta

Where: Royal Hotel Saigon (133 Nguyen Hue, D1)

About: Saigon International Latin Dance Festival, formerly known as Vietnam International Latin Fiesta (VILF), is back. The event is to connect people through dance, bringing you not only international artists but also talented dancers worldwide for a social dance experience. And last, but not least, to encourage and help develop the local dance scene by giving opportunities to local dancers to learn, experience and, through that, grow in their own dance path. This year's top artists: Fuquan Ferrel & Candace Joyner (US, directors of Fuego y Hielo Dance Company), Mari Yogo (Japan), Franklin Liranzo (US), iMambo (South Korea) and more.

Contact: Email ladanza.info@gmail.com for more info



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The country in numbers



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AIRCRAFTS REGISTERED TO VIETNAM AS OF THE END OF July 2018, up 14 compared with the figure of the same period last year, according to the Civil Aviation Administration of Vietnam (CAAV).

The largest fleet belongs to Vietnam Airlines with 91 planes, including 11 Boeing 787-9; 12 Airbus A350; five A330 and 57 A321 aircraft. It is followed by Vietjet Air with 54 planes, including 31 A321 and 23 A320 aircrafts. Jetstar Pacific ranks third with 17 A320 aircrafts. Other airline firms such as the Vietnam Air Services Company (Vasco), Vietstar Airlines Multirole Corporation, among others, also have Vietnamese registered-planes. CAAV said, as of the end of July 2018, there were 28 helicopters registered, unchanged compared to the same period last year. Under the Decree, to be eligible for the registration of Vietnamese nationality, the aircraft must not bear the nationality of any other country or have had the nationality of a foreign country deregistered. It must also have all the valid paperwork to prove aircraft ownership or the right to possession of the aircraft under lease or lease-purchase terms.

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IN TAX ARREARS AND FINES HAS BEEN

collected from a local man that earned VND41 billion from Facebook and Google ads. The man is a programmer whose game has been viewed and downloaded on Facebook, Google and YouTube. He earned over VND41bn (USD1.6m) from ads in 2016 and 2017 but didn't make any declarations or pay taxes. The tax arrears were detected when the Department of Taxation ordered banks to check on incomes from Google, Facebook and YouTube that haven't deducted taxes. The authorities will zero in on Facebook accounts that are the most active and have large incomes. Those who earn less than VND100 million a year online must pay a business license tax. Those with over VND100 million of annual income must pay additional VAT and personal income tax. According to the Department of Taxation, Facebook, Google and YouTube incomes at four banks are in the range of VND500 billion. Last year, the Taxation Department collected VND9.1billion in tax arrears from a Facebook account that sells cosmetics online.



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was poured into the southern economic hub in the first seven months of 2018, a year-on-year rise of 70.5 percent. According to the municipal Department of Planning and Investment, the city granted new investment licenses to 553 projects worth USD508.25 million in the period under review. It also allowed 148 existing projects to increase capital by USD453.38 million, a respective year-on-year increase of 27.6 percent and 13.3 percent.

Local authorities also approved 1,628 foreign investors to carry out procedures to contribute capital, purchase shares, and buy back capital of USD3.73 billion contributed by domestic enterprises.

The Republic of Korea made up the lion's share of foreign investment in HCMC with 30 percent, followed by Singapore (22 percent), Norway (13.8 percent), and Japan (10.4 percent). Investment was mainly poured into real estate (47.6 percent), science and technology (19.5 percent), wholesale and retail and repair of automobiles, motorcycles and other vehicles (8.1 percent), processing and manufacturing industry (7.7 percent), accommodation and catering services (4.2 percent).

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Text and Images Provided by Emeraldalda Ninh Binh

THE MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL IS

just a month away; where families come together to celebrate the full moon and the period of the wet rice cultivation. During this time, families gather around the table to enjoy mooncakes and oolong tea under the sparkle of the lunar full moon. However, unfortunately, it is getting harder to witness the full moon's beauty in busy city because of the huge amount of skyscrapers today.

Emeraldalda Resort Ninh Binh, nestled on the edge of the Van Long Nature Reserve—a tranquil reserve comprises of wetlands that is popular with bird-watchers in Ninh Binh province—can be reached approximately a 90-minute drive from Hanoi, and is an ideal destination to admire the full moon with your whole family during this mid-autumn festival.

Located amongst limestones mountain in ancient the Hoa Lu capital, Emeraldalda Resort Ninh Binh brings back traditional Vietnamese architecture and elements to meet the demand of those looking for a sense of nostalgia with its clusters of houses, anciently designed with brick roofs, wood ceilings and pottery floors. The Tonkin style houses in the resort will bring back fond memories of bygone years and a great way to celebrate the full moon.

In the cool weather of the Northern Autumn, take a bike tour around the resort or the Van Long Nature Reserve. Children can play at the Kids Club or go swimming in both the outdoor and indoor pools with their grandparents. And then finish the evening with a Vietnamese dining experience at Organic, Sen Restaurant for dinner.

The Vietnamese have a saying, “Money can always returns, but time will not,” so create a happy memory with

your family while enjoying tea and telling stories under the light of the full moon.

During this full-moon festival, Emeraldalda Resort Ninh Binh welcomes families with the Dream Family relaxing package from VND3,500,000/one night stay in a Superior room for 2 adults and 2 kids under 12 years old, including 1 set menu dinner and biking trip. Surcharge during peak seasons. Valid until December 31st, 2018. ■

Emeraldalda Resort Ninh Binh:

- *Van Long Reserve, Gia Van Commune, Gia Vien District, Ninh Binh, Vietnam.*
- *Tel: +84 303 658 333.*
- *Email: info@emeraldaldaresort.com*
- *Website: www.emeraldaldaresort.com*





Fred's World

From cockroaches to a spiritually-powered Vietnamese heroine, peer into the eclectic world of animator Fred Serra

Text by **Paul Y. Kim**
Portrait by **Vy Lam**
Illustrations by **Fred Serra**

Nu Anh Hung



ANIMATION ARTIST FRED

Serra's apartment and studio space is currently going through a very last minute and unannounced renovation by the landlord, so our scheduled interview moved locations to his bar—now design studio space—Ruby Soho. As I was walking towards the Ruby Soho bar in an ethnic Korean enclave known as Phu Mu Hung located in District 7, one couldn't but hear the echoes of the 90s punk rock band Rancid's song of the same name bellowing in the ears. The raspy guttural croons about love lost and then the chorus line crescendoing with the lines, "*Destination Unknown! Ruby Ruby Ruby Ruby Soho!*" It paints a presumption in one's mind about why Fred Serra might be and why a French cartoon illustrator works, resides, and operates a business establishment in Saigon.

Ruby Soho is located on a small thoroughfare in District 7, a part of a nondescript stripmall similar to the ones you would find ubiquitous in the suburbs of the States. You would think it would be easy to spot, but the exterior is surprisingly low key that you might walk right past it. The door is open but with a chair strategically placed in the entrance to serve as notice that the place isn't open for business yet. As you walk in you are immediately immersed in Fred Serra's world. The stark red painted walls are adorned with iconic images from music, cinema and comic books. You will find photos or illustrations of Kurt Cobain; alongside his idols, The Ramones,

Michael Caine from *The Ipcress File*, O-Ren Ishii from *Kill Bill Vol. 1*, and Tarantino's Japanese cinematic source of inspiration for the O-Ren character, Lady Snowblood—among countless other images. It goes even further with a projection screen showing movies ranging from Sergio Leone's *A Fistful of Dollars* to the cult car classic, *Vanishing Point*.

You soon realize that it's not just a bar or lounge but a gallery space—a purveyor of cool. It's hipster without the condescending sense of irony. Esoteric, but with a fair amount of mainstream references to be approachable. It does however feel that it can easily spiral into Brooklyn hipsterdom by one self-loathing mustached imbibor ordering a Lone Star Beer but the mere fact that it isn't in Bushwick or Austin, TX but in a family residential area of Saigon saves it from a plight of being tragically hip. Soon any of those thoughts in the back of one's mind fades as one meets Fred.

Best known as an animation illustrator, but he studied architecture in school. With that education he began illustrating backgrounds for cartoons, which led him towards the path that he's been enjoying for over 25 years. He offers a drink. It's high noon and hot, so an ice cold Tiger beer was in order. The typical questions that every expat asks and is asked are dealt with

quickly: "Where are you from? When did you arrive? What brought you here?"

Fred moved to Vietnam 15 years ago. He was sent here by the production company he was working for to oversee the production of *Oggy and the Cockroaches*, a popular French cartoon series from the turn of the century, of which he was the head illustrator. He states he is from Marseilles with a tinge of reluctance. After I replied that I spent some time in the quaint artist village of Aix-en-Provence, which is 30 kms north of Marseilles, his demeanor changed, and with a bit of exuberance admitted that he's actually from Aix and *not* Marseilles, explaining that the amount of times and effort giving French geography lessons in Saigon has long passed its expiration date.

So this segued to the question, how is the experience for an expat artist living in Ho Chi Minh City compare to a place like Aix-en-Provence, the birthplace of Paul Cézanne and the final home for American songstress Nina Simone. "Ho Chi Minh City is a huge city but at the same time the art community is like a village. If you stay here for a long time you meet most of the art community," he replies. "Vietnamese art community is really dynamic, friendly, and really open. It's part of the big change in Vietnam in recent years. I remember when I first arrived in Vietnam, the art community was really small."

Fred goes on to explain, "When I worked at my company's production studio 15 years ago, it was located in the

National Art University of Vietnam, and so I could see the work from the students, and it was really 'classical'—which is, of course,

important—but now there's new modern work being produced. If I want to characterize the art from then I would say that majority of the time they would just draw portraits of Ho Chi Minh, but now you can see some very good dynamic artists. One local artist I really appreciate is Phong Ronin. He's a comic artist based in Hanoi... really interesting stories."

Protector of the Nation

When asked about how Asia and Vietnam has affected his work, one doesn't have to look any further than to his logo that he uses for his personal social media channels. It's a red sun like that on the Japanese flag with three Asian looking characters. The top one is wearing a Vietnamese conical hat, the middle and bottom ones looking like two different versions of ninjas.

"[My] Personal logo is very Asian. I've lived in Asia for a long time. I



Bowman

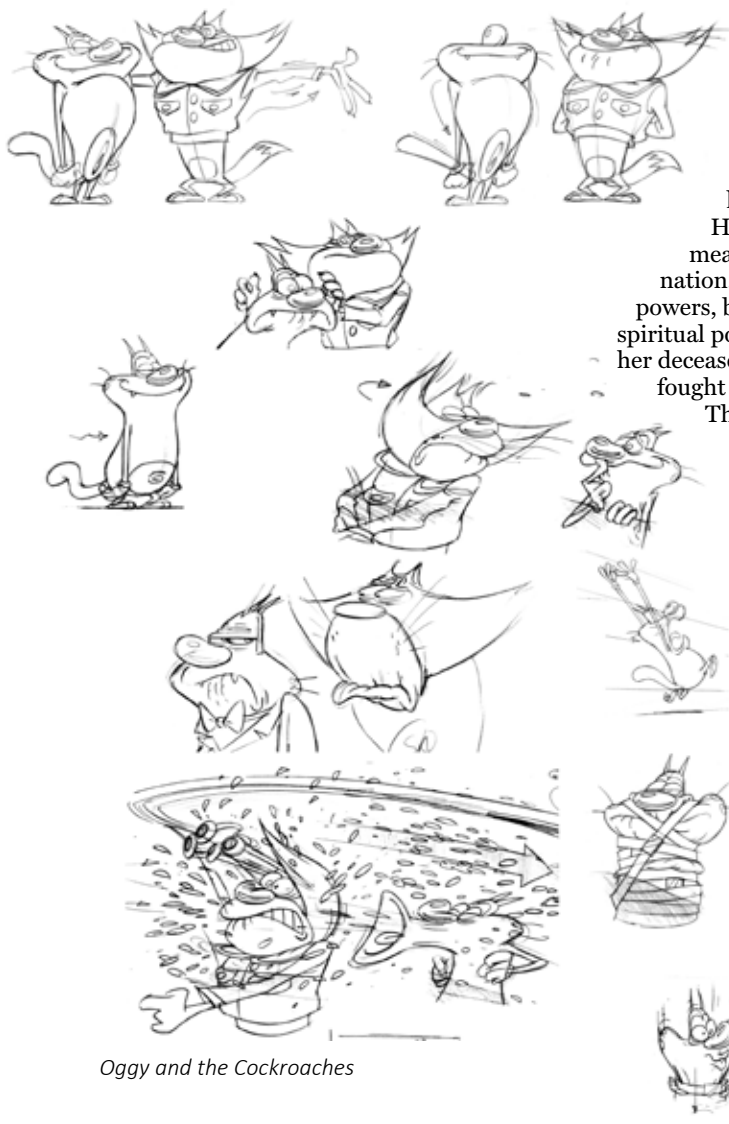


Fred's personal logo

don't consider Vietnam *my* country because it's not mine, but I love this country and I love Asian culture and Asian people—from China, from Korea, from Vietnam,"

says Fred. "The logo is a caricature but it's far from traditional (Asian). It's in reference to the Three Wise Monkeys (see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil). I don't think it's satirical and I don't think it's offensive. I did it because I love Asia. I didn't want to make a French logo. I wanted to make an Asian logo."

This brought him to talk about his personal side project that he just begun and is extremely proud of. He has created a modern Vietnamese heroine named Nu Anh Hung, which loosely means "protector of the nation." She won't have super powers, but instead will have spiritual powers—speaking with her deceased grandmother who fought in the American War. The grandmother will be her spiritual protector, giving her guidance and a heightened sense of awareness.



Oggy and the Cockroaches

"I need to always have a personal project. I need to create something all the time. I see this as a natural representation of strong women in Vietnam and will be a good role model for my daughter (who's happens to be half Vietnamese)," says Fred. "You can say that Wonder Woman is an inspiration, but it's something completely different, since she will not have any superpowers and not have nationalistic themes."

Professionally, he is currently working on illustrating the main characters of a large budget feature length 3D animation film based on a cult classic Sci-Fi horror film franchise, which he is not at liberty to disclose since it is still in pre-production. He was able to share the final sketches off the record. He is contemplating exploring animation for the gaming industry as well because there are a fair amount of gaming studios based in Vietnam.

It's a far departure from the work he became famous for, *Oggy and the Cockroaches*. When asked about this departure he explains that animators have to be diverse in their style. The newer work draws inspiration from some of the illustrators he admires: Jim Lee, Korean American comic book artist, and the legendary Japanese artist Katsuhiro Otomo, creator of *Akira*.

This brought the topic back to Fred's creations and what inspires it. "Everything can be an influence for me. I use Ruby Soho as a place where I play. I change the images all the time. It's a mix of classical things and artists and underground work. I like to surprise people sometimes. It's not to show people who I am, but more for myself and what I like. I consider this place like my bedroom growing up as a teenager."

One starts to experience the work and not simply view it or consume it. The lines are blurred or vanish between different cultures—what is Asian or what is Western, what is considered commercial art and what is considered fine art, what is considered original or drawn from influences—and when drawn from influences can become something completely different. As The Ramones begot Kurt Cobain, *Lady Snowblood* begot O-Ren, The Specials begot Rancid—this is how Fred Serra came to be an artist—a Vietnamese artist from France (Aix-en-Provence to be exact). ■



Uncommon Scents

It's all about finding your nose and creating a fragrance unique to you

Text by **Daniel Spero**
Images by **Vy Lam**

IN A SMALL, FRAGRANT ROOM ON the second floor of the Craft House, there is a perfume workshop held on weekends. Up a steep wooden staircase you enter a well-lit room, cooled with air-con, with two large wooden tables to sit around and more seating around the edge.

On the tables are essential oil bottles of various scents, beakers, test tubes, paper strips, syringes, droppers, empty lip balm tins, as well as jars of oil and cocoa butter flakes. As time for the workshop to begin approaches, the room fills with mostly 20-something Vietnamese women, but there are a few men, typically accompanying their companions.

The workshop begins with an introduction by Rei Nguyen, a vibrant young Vietnamese woman, affable and approachable, with excellent language

skills in Vietnamese, English and Japanese. She explains her history with aromatherapy, describing the process of learning about it from her mentor in Japan, and how important fragrance is in Japanese culture. In a fascinating opening monologue, Rei goes on to explain the holistic approach to scent that she studies, considering herself, and others like her in the fragrance genre, as artists, creating smells the same way a musician creates a sound or a painter creates art. She wants her customers to “discover the fragrance artist in you.”

After this engaging primer, Rei passes around test strips papers with scents applied and asks the group: What they smell? What color does it make you see? What about the texture? The shape? She encourages participants to think about



the scent with all of their senses and, remarkably, people's interpretations are quite similar. She does this with more test strips, again and again. After each round, she explains the significance of the smell, that the first one has notes of citrus, the second flower, the third wood and the fourth, oriental. Rei explains the uses of each of these notes to combine to create the best fragrance, like how flower scents are considered the heart of perfume, but that wood, specifically sandalwood, is the key ingredient in most men's cologne, and how all of these groups can be combined to generate various attars; it just depends on the amounts and the combination.

Once the participants have a foundation of understanding, they are given a paper with instructions for how to create what they refer to as a solid perfume, which is a natural scented balm or salve. The benefit of this over a liquid perfume is that liquid perfume has alcohol and other chemicals, whereas the salve is natural, using beeswax, coconut oil and essential oils, making this option better for the skin, more subtle and more unisex.

First, the participants smell the various essential oils and decide

which scents they enjoy the most, typically choosing from just a couple to more than a half a dozen, being cognizant of how the combinations interact, or which scents overpower others. So, for example, if you use something like canela (cinnamon) with a flower scent like rose or lavender, then you'll need more drops of the flower or it will be subdued by the stronger canela, like 3 or 4 drops of the flower scent to every one of canela. Once the participants decide on the essential oils they like and what ratios work best, which comes with a bit of trial and error, they count out the drops that get placed in a test tube until they have 2 milliliters, or approximately 76 drops.

After that, the attendees pour ten milliliters of oil, either jojoba, coconut, kernel, or sweet almond oil, depending on their preference, into a beaker. They then weigh out 1.5 grams of beeswax pellets and one gram of shea butter on a small digital scale and add it to the oil in the beaker. Next, the mixture is heated and stirred until it is properly blended. It then needs to cool slightly before the essential oil mixture is added and is continually stirred and blended. Finally, before the mixture cools to the point of solidification, it is poured into one of the empty tins. And voila, you have your own personalized scent.

Those in attendance seemed to really enjoy the experience and were more than satisfied leaving with their own unique fragrance. Furthermore, it cannot be understated how engaging and articulate Rei is with assisting the patrons as they work through the process. It's a delightful and constructive way to spend two hours, and a great weekend activity for couples, singles or families alike.

Rei's Amai Aroma organization holds a number of workshops in both Vietnam and Japan, covering a wide range of topics relating to fragrance, including workshops on solid perfumes, spray perfumes, perfumed candles, massage oils, reed diffusers, as well as DIY workshops for natural cosmetics and skin care products such as lip balms, bath salts and soaps. For more info, visit the Amai Aroma Facebook page at www.facebook.com/Aamai.ya/.

The Bartist

When he's not crafting beautiful cocktails, Richie Fawcett is making art about his Saigon neighborhood

Text by **Jesus Lopez-Gomez**
Images by **Vy Lam**

SAIGON IS CHANGING AND WILL almost certainly be different next year. Hell, the city might change next week. Like a living organism, it is constantly destroying and regenerating itself. Habits don't do well in the city that can barely sit still. Yet, somehow Richie Fawcett can.

For years Fawcett has been a regular fixture around his part of District 1, observing and documenting the city in pen sketches. His Saigon drawings—too serious to be called cartooney, but too loose to be mistaken as a piece of realism—have immediately recognizable landmarks that place them somewhere definite within the city, maybe somewhere you have been before but didn't stop to look at for long and maybe couldn't have captured like this.

Fawcett's drawings are like a meditation on the effortlessness of the city's beauty, how the city's actors—the food seller, the crossing pedestrian, the motorbike—are blocked like characters in a performance amidst a most storied set. They perform unconsciously, carelessly for usually for no one unless Fawcett is minding movements by which to match his pen strokes.

Like Saigon has many identities, many acts it can perform, the native Englishman wears a few hats. His *plein air* drawings visible both in his personal studio or at Shri, the upscale, rooftop restaurant he manages. A lifelong fixture at bars and restaurants ever starting



when he attended university in London an archaeology student, which required a visit for a nearly 3,000-year-old sunken wreck off the coast of Cyprus. Shri is his magnum opus as a service manager and drink principal. The son of a chef, it's a trade he's been around since he was young.

But Fawcett is also a lifelong creative, having been taken with drawing ever since he was young. The craft is also a family heirloom; one piece in Fawcett's personal art collection is a drawing by his grandfather. "I believe my artistic ability is a powerful combination from both my father's technical ability and my grandfather's classically trained artistry



and draftsmanship. I never went to art school," Fawcett wrote in an email. Like treasure, he keeps it behind a heavy vault door Fawcett perhaps borrowed from a bank to put in to his personal exhibition space The Studio Sai Gon.

You'd have trouble locating said door within his studio without help. On an ordinary Saturday afternoon, Fawcett guided a visitor through his private studio. The small room is mostly monochrome black and white like Fawcett's drawings. It's decorated wall to wall in the artwork he's become famous for: from streetscapes that are sometimes intimate like the *nuoc sam* seller depicted in one of his drawings to the colossal bird's eye drawing that takes up an entire wall of the gallery.

Fawcett sometimes will use red to accent parts of his drawings, but the print embedded in the wall has an unusual accent: actual light. He gestured to a compound on his drawing. "When you see the lights on in this building, which is the French Consulate, it means the bar's open," he said opening what turned out to be a false wall. When he does that, you realize print hides a false wall, a safe door to what might be described as the city's coolest living room: a cozy space lined on one sight with seating face a sort of reverse bar that opens to the seated clientele rather than hiding the machinery of mixing.

The studio is a bar as the artist is a bartender. Fawcett frustrates categories. Like a newly discovered species, a new term must be made up for his previously unknown kind of creature. Fawcett offers a possible title, "bartist," in one of his latest drawings: a surreal picture that imagines his wrist open like the hood of a car. Inside are cogs and bars rather than flesh.

Bartending and hospitality are flagship skills you'd see on Fawcett's LinkedIn page. His first forays into mixing drinks were as a student in college where "obviously, I got a job at a bar," Fawcett said matter of factly. Whereas most people might have at one point in their life bartended to do something else, Fawcett bartended to bartend and grew to have a storied career as a publican, which included serving for



former James Bond actor Roger Moore.

He made drinks for Moore—who reportedly prefers a weakened bloody mary—his family and their coterie of film luminaries for six years in the mid-aughts before moving on to a series of restaurant gigs around Europe and Asia before landing in Vietnam in 2011. A couple of years after he arrived in Vietnam, the restaurant project he was called in to work dismissed Fawcett believing they could run the show without him (they closed shortly after).

Fawcett said he started going on walks just to clear his mind just as he was drawing just to pass the time, a thing to do while you do something else. Fawcett said he started becoming very aware of his surroundings in a new way.

“I walk around the streets now, the guy on the corner, I know him very well. He fixes the motorbikes. The guy at the door, in his 60s but he’s been watching the door for years,” Fawcett said recalling the regular characters on Ly Tu Truong street.

“They’re all out there working hard

jobs for not a lot of money,” Fawcett added.

Even today, Fawcett prefers to walk anywhere he needs to go, and that may be why everyone seems to know him in the area. They will see him walking or seated for hours on end adding line after line until he’s captured his subject to his liking in drawing.

Fawcett will sit still for a city that won’t.

The Saigon of last year is already a dated image. Who remembers what the park in front of Ben Thanh Market



restaurant scene, architecture ... it shocks people when they come," he said. "It's an electric city. It's evolving so fast. As it grows, 'It's going to lose a little of its personality.'"

Through the years, Fawcett amassed enough drawings and knowledge about Vietnam and Saigon to publish *Cocktail Art of Saigon*, a collection of historical anecdotes matched with drink recipes the artist's visual representation of certain Saigon touchstones like Ben Thanh Market and Dinh Doc Lap. For the downtown market, Fawcett offers a drink of lychee and ginger; for the presidential quarters, a drink of almond and cherry.

It's a book that would require a team composed of a trained artist, mixologist and historian to produce. Or just one Richie Fawcett. "For me, I'm a trained archeologist. My passion ... is to understand a foreign culture."

One of Fawcett's most important accreditations is an official commendation from the Vietnamese

government's Culture Department. Known officially as a Certificate of Authenticity, it is both a recognition of the value of the work Fawcett has done documenting Saigon in "Cocktail Art of Saigon" as well as a license to use the country's important pronouns, its names, traditions and images. The 2016 book will soon get a follow up volume, which Fawcett expects to publish before Christmas this year. Fawcett's work looks outward, but for him the work is deeply personal and a critical part of how he's developed an understanding of himself. "In terms of what fires me up is to learn something new where you also learn something new about yourself. 'We're just learning about ourselves all the time.'"

It's scholarship as self exploration, and Fawcett is cool with that. "I've probably learned more about myself here than I have at any point in my life," he said. "If you have an open enough mind and an open enough heart, you're going to learn about yourself." ■



used to look like before it was walled off for construction? Fawcett does. It's captured in a drawing owned by one of Fawcett's buyers. Among the group of patrons that Fawcett has sold his work to is Ho Chi Minh City businessman Dave Gorman. "... he's capturing the city in a very detailed way. He will capture the personality of the city in a way that other people don't," Gorman said. "He's not just drawing buildings."

In the 14 years Gorman has lived in Vietnam, he's watched the city change and then change again. Gorman met Fawcett at a restaurant he was managing and grew fascinated with the artist's talent serious contemporary anthropological study of the city, capturing the now. "You can look at his stuff and go, 'I've seen that place, I remember where that was,'" Gorman said.

For Gorman, the city's culture expresses itself as a one loving diversity and entrepreneurship. "The street life,



Nuts Nuts

About

Text by **Jesus Lopez-Gomez**
Images by **Vy Lam**



An all-natural peanut butter that goes directly from farm to sliced bread

IT'S POSSIBLE TO EAT DAT BUTTER peanut butter and know nothing about how it's made, how a team of a just a handful of men are making small batches of the stuff in 100-jar-per-day batches (about 90 million jars are sold annually in the US alone, according the federal agriculture statistics) selecting for just Vietnam's natural peanuts. It's possible to enjoy it and not know the social mission Dat Butter is embarking upon to improve the livelihoods of Vietnam's farmers.

What's different about Dat Butter then? Let me first ask you if you've ever really stopped to appreciate the taste of a peanut. Somewhere in the process of scaling up peanut butter production to serve the estimated 700 pounds

consumed annually in the US, we seem to have lost the taste of peanut butter. Conventional peanut butter is a little bit like listening to music played on a cellphone: okay, acceptable, and we know generally how we're supposed to feel.

Dat Butter is like going over to your friend's house who spends too much money on surround sound and listening to music there. Just as you'd hear the warmth and new depth of music with better speakers, Dat Butter's minimalist recipe—peanuts, and sometimes salt—puts the peanuts at front and center of the palette, giving them a wine-level amount of flavor expressiveness. Who knew peanuts could be both bright and woody, while also being weirdly and





Dat Butter co-founder Luan Jenkins wants to double peanut farmers' earnings. A US-raised Vietnamese man, Jenkins reconnected with his biological family when he returned to Vietnam. They were farmers and, "I just started realizing farmers here have it hard," he said.

Jenkins—a trained marketer—connected with Dat Tran, a food production expert who'd worked in industrial production of such edible goods as Chupa Chups. The third piece of what would become Dat Butter's core team was Long Bui. His work with community benefit projects, like educating rural poor students, lent the talent necessary to build what they hope will become a social enterprise, a company that exists as a partner with Vietnamese farmers. Under the arrangement Luan described, farmers would get regular peanut orders from Dat Butter. As the company grows—which its expected to once it clears the production threshold for international export—the farmers' business will grow.

The team hopes to grow the company and earn Fair Trade certification for their product, making them bonafides as a seller of natural food. The peanuts they are seeking right now are a rare commodity. Farmers who produce peanuts to the company's standards net about VND60,000 per kilogram.

Dat Butter is sold in 55 stores across the country, including Big C. But for now the company remains a modest operation doing things jar by jar in their 2,000-square-meter farm in Cu Chi where they're vetting peanut crops to determine the best strain for the operation. The smallness is intentional, Jenkins said. With a small model farm like theirs, they can show others how to grow peanuts with limited land resources. "We want it to be small, so we can show people how it is easy to replicate," Jenkins said.

Even with as small as an operation as they've had, the peanut butter maker has been able to make limited quantities of a product never before sold: cashew butter made exclusively from Vietnamese nuts. The cashew butter, like the peanut butter, is made entirely of Vietnamese products. ■



subtly sweet? Why have we not been using these full bodied, rich nuts that are nothing like the deadened, almost calcified bar nuts that are served with beer and must be generously enhanced with sugar and oil to make the typical jar of peanut butter?

For one, the types of peanuts Dat Butter is working with are a little hard to find. The Cu Chi peanut butter maker has been sourcing their peanuts from a small network of farmers who've committed to making GMO-, pesticide- and fertilizer-free crops.

Peanuts in general are hard to find within Vietnam. While farmers do supply a share of the peanuts processed within the country, Vietnam does import a fair share of peanuts from China and the US to meet its processing needs. The demand is high, but the earnings are modest for peanut farmers. Conventionally produced peanuts net about VND30,000 per kilogram.





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.

Housebroken

Breaking a lease is breaking the law, know your rights as a lessee

We signed a contract with an owner to move on August 1st, and the deposit was paid the day before. At 3pm, he told our real estate agent that he will return the deposit and the first month rent because he felt that he did not receive the money early enough (the contract did not stipulate when it should be paid as long as it is before the moving date, which we did). We are now looking for a new place and had to pay the moving company a fee for last minute cancellation. We believe that the owner broke the contract and owe us two months rent as per the contract. Are you able to help on this matter?

IT SEEMS THAT YOUR SITUATION is not uncommon in Vietnam as many lessees, especially foreigners but not limited to, don't often get along with their lessors. Fortunately, the law allows these types of problem to be solved, particularly the Law on Housing 65/2014/QH13 dated on November 25, 2014.

Article 121 of this law states that all the requirements of a housing contract must be respected in order to be legally effective. This contract needs to be mutually agreed upon between the contracting parties, which is quite common for a contract. In addition, the parties to such housing contract must conclude it by writing, which means that you need to have signed a proper contract: Whether paper version with ink signature or electronic version with proper electronic signature.

More accurately, clauses 4 and 5 of Article 121 of the Law on Housing stipulate that the housing contract must comprise the deadlines and methods of payment regarding transactions in lease and lease term. It means that any specific requirement in terms of deadlines associated with payment under the housing contract must be clearly provided in the housing contract. If your owner had wished to receive the rent six months in advance, for example, this needed to be clearly stated in the housing contract.

Regarding your specific question, I understand that your housing contract did not specifically mention that the

deposit must be paid within a certain period prior to the first day of housing lease, i.e. August 1st. As the law does not contain any mandatory provisions with respect to such delay, you had no obligation to pay the deposit as early as the lessor wished.

In addition, I understand from your situation that the lessor's decision that you cannot move in was taken by the lessor and communicated to you on August 1st, which means on the first day of your lease term. The issue (for the lessor, not for you), if that the law, though not providing specific provisions with respect to deadlines for payment of deposits, do provide specific provisions with respect to time limitations for termination of a housing contract.

The law outlines the differences between two situations: First, where the parties to the housing contract have provided for a specific lease term (for example, rent of the house for one year, two years, etc.). Second, where the parties to the housing contract have not provided any term: jurists say that the contract has been concluded for an unlimited term.

In the first case, the law provides that no party may decide to end the housing contract, except in exceptional cases. For example, if the lessor wishes to end the housing contract, they must be able to prove that the lessee has failed to pay the rent as agreed, for three or more months, without a legitimate reason, or has sub-lease the house

to someone else without the lessor's consent. And even in such specific cases, the lessor must send to the lessee a 30-day notice before being able to actually end the housing contract.

For the second situation (contract with an unlimited term), the law simply states that the lessor may end the contract but must send to the lessee a 90-day notice. And, as a general rule, if a party does not comply with its obligations in terms of advance notice, it must pay compensation for prejudice caused by it.

To come back to your specific situation, I understand from your relation of facts that the lessor agreed to sign a housing contract with you and on the first day of the lease term required you to move out and returned the deposit and first month rent. Based on the legal provisions described above, it seems that this would not be in compliance with the law.

You would say that I am biased in giving this advice, but I strongly believe that people in general should more often seek legal advice from lawyers, even for cases that may appear too small at first. This is a good habit because everyone should be aware of their rights. So, my final advice would be to gather all the relevant documents (your housing contract, email exchanges, bank statements for the payment of the deposit and the rent, etc.) and meet a lawyer to confirm your exact rights and seek fair compensation if appropriate! ■

Common Pet Emergencies, Part One

If your furry friend shows any of these signs, don't ask Facebook members for a diagnosis, go to the vet stat

IT CAN BE QUITE FRIGHTENING to see your pet suffering, especially if you are unsure whether the situation should be considered an emergency or not. When in doubt, always contact your veterinarian or the nearest animal hospital. However, to hopefully better prepare you, here are six of the most common pet emergencies found in emergency veterinary hospitals around the country.

Seizures

Seizures are episodes of abnormal electrical activity within the brain. They can be triggered by intra-cranial problems (such as epilepsy, brain tumors or brain swelling) or extra-cranial problems (such as low blood sugar, electrolyte disturbances, etc.). Any seizure can be life threatening. Seizures can occur singly or in clusters, and can occur at any time and in any frequency.

Pain

Pain can occur in pets for many reasons and can be displayed in a variety of ways. Pacing, agitation, restlessness, panting, vocalization, rapid heart rate, or even aggression, are all symptoms of possible pain. Spinal pain can oftentimes be misinterpreted as abdominal pain. If your pet is acting strangely and you suspect pain, contact a veterinarian immediately.

Difficulty Breathing

Increased respiratory effort typically occurs when the lungs or airway is compromised. This can occur due to trauma, allergic reactions, heart failure, toxins, infectious agents, cancer, or leakage of air. Any difficulty breathing should be considered a serious problem, requiring immediate evaluation by a veterinarian. Often radiographs are necessary to evaluate the lungs and airways.

Coughing and Choking

Choking can be a serious problem, even if the symptoms resolve within seconds. Lack of proper oxygenation or the build-up of fluid within the lungs can be dangerous consequence of choking. Coughing is a vague symptom of several possibilities, including viruses, bacteria, fungal pneumonia, allergic bronchitis, or even heart failure. Any compromises in your pet's respiratory ability should be evaluated by your vet.

Vomiting and Diarrhea

Vomiting and/or diarrhea are some of the most common emergencies pets can have. These nonspecific gastrointestinal signs could be caused by a primary gastrointestinal problem (such as getting into the garbage or having an obstruction) or by a secondary cause (such as metabolic disease, cancer, etc.). Dehydration can occur quickly, and depending on the underlying cause, symptoms can drastically worsen in a matter of hours.

Difficulty Urinating

Struggling to urinate is a symptom of more than just a urinary tract infection. Many pets will strain to urinate if they have crystals or stones in their bladder.

Inflammation, blood clots, cancer or even stress alone can all cause difficulty urinating. If a pet is straining and is unable to pass any urine, it is a life-threatening emergency that needs to be addressed by a veterinarian ASAP. ■



Nevena Stefanovic studied at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in Belgrade, Serbia and Wroclaw, Poland. Her primary interest are companion animals internal medicine and surgery. Nevena is now working as a veterinary surgeon at Animal Doctors International Clinic, HCMC.





Workforce Wanderlust

Digital nomads are bringing their e-work to places where others go on vacation. For these young people, Saigon is one of the top destinations

Text by **Grace Homer**

AS TECHNOLOGY BECOMES AN essential part of our lives and the business world changes accordingly, fewer people are required to be in a fixed location to earn a living. Sure, it's the dream for many, but very few people actually take the plunge. Of those that do, it seems a fair portion base themselves here in Saigon.

Recently, Vietnam's southern capital has lit up on the nomad radar as a low-cost solution in a continent of rising prices. According to Nomad List, a crowdsourced database of cities for digital nomads, Saigon is number six on the list of top cities to live in. The same database also reports that the average cost of living in Saigon is USD724 per month. Combine these low living costs with Saigon's café culture and you have one of the best locations for those seeking a remote working lifestyle.

Oi managed to catch up with two people from different backgrounds living the location-independent lifestyle here in the city to understand what it's really like

to be a digital nomad in the southern hub of Vietnam.

For Justine Lopez, a freelance writer and editor from California, the digital nomad life came about almost by accident when she was looking for jobs in Jakarta, Indonesia, in 2014. "I had recently graduated with a Masters in Communications and Journalism and had been working as a magazine editor in California. Despite being qualified, I didn't realize that it would actually be possible to work in my field in Asia." A few applications here and there led to a freelance contributor position for the Jakarta Post. Fast-forward four years of Justine building her skills and client base and she has since lived in Phnom Penh, Beijing and now Saigon, while taking the opportunity to travel parts of Southeast Asia whenever she chooses.

Saigon's growing popularity among location-independent workers drew Devin Gray, a web developer from South Africa, to Vietnam. He describes the life of a digital nomad as "[living]



Devin

outside of the borders, away from the average." Devin has been working as a coder remotely for the past three years, covering destinations such as Bali, Germany, Switzerland and currently, Saigon. His approach to beginning a location-independent working life was fuelled by a desire to travel to places where people usually go on holiday, "I just wanted to travel, and one thing lead to another... There were no actual steps taken, I just did what I enjoyed and it all happened."



Justine Lopez

In recent years, Vietnam has been recognized for its growing tech culture and has seen a number of large companies investing in the start-up community here. For Devin, basing himself in Saigon has only enhanced his entrepreneurial lifestyle, “Living here gives me so many opportunities to meet other developers and nomads from all walks of life. I love the culture around tech.” With plans to set up his own open-source start-up company this coming year, Devin revels in the buzz surrounding Saigon’s technology market.

Grievances

While digital nomads like Justine and Devin get to enjoy the freedom of choosing where they work, where they live and when they travel, they do recognize that there are drawbacks to living this kind of lifestyle. Devin finds it hard to regularly save money: “When moving around and making use of multiple payment methods, it’s difficult to keep track of where the money comes from and plan for the future.”

Justine adds that being a digital nomad takes a lot of effort. “Between freelancing, finding new clients and expanding [your] skill-set, there is always work to be done.” Being a digital nomad and having freedom doesn’t mean it doesn’t require hard work; Justine often finds herself working over 40 hours a week in order to maintain her lifestyle.

Loneliness is also one of the most common grievances for digital nomads like Justine. “Instead of socializing with co-workers day in and day out, I have to make a very concerted effort to meet and socialize with people,” she says. Luckily, groups like Saigon Digital Nomads, Female Digital Nomads, and Vietnam Creative Circle on Facebook and similar platforms provide some much-needed comradery for those working remotely in Saigon. Justine, who also has a travel blog called *Travel Lush*, finds that the connections she makes through social media provide great support and enable her to ‘virtually’ meet like-minded people.

While speaking to Justine and Devin, it becomes apparent that it takes a lot more than just desire to live the nomad life. Justine believes that it takes motivation, determination and discipline that not everybody has. “So many people I know need the structure of being in an office, having a specific routine and having a boss who enforces deadlines in person. I’ve always been the type who works well independently, and I am super reliable when it comes to getting the job done well and on time.” She also acknowledges how important it is to be both persistent and resilient when looking for freelancing work and following up on quotes.

“The main thing is the want to be different. When you really want something, you will make a plan otherwise, you’ll find reasons why it isn’t possible,” she adds. Devin’s approach is particularly poignant

those who want to take the leap but don’t know how. He doesn’t believe it takes certain personality traits, just a pure desire for that lifestyle and, of course, focusing on what you do best in order to make a living out of it. Both acknowledge the importance of switching up your work environment when working remotely. Whether it be poolside or from a shared office for Devin, or taking advantage of Saigon’s many cafés for Justine, they both stress the importance of keeping your work environment fresh.

If you seek a little more regular structure in the way of an office-like environment, Saigon is teaming with co-working spaces, all offering unique benefits for their members. Citihub (93 Nguyen Van Thu, D1) is an intimate, open-plan working environment that hosts a number of local start-ups, freelancers and entrepreneurs. A VND150,000 day pass includes a drink, Wi-Fi access, a quiet working environment and a motivating atmosphere. For others looking to meet a few more expats, The Hive (94 Xuan Thuy, D2) is a friendly hub, beautifully designed to accommodate anyone from hot-desking freelancers at VND1.2 million per month to small businesses in need of an office for VND5 million per month. Not all digital nomads are fans of these kinds of working environments, as Devin says, “Co-working spaces tend to have a lot of noise and high coffee prices.” This certainly isn’t the case for the majority of co-working spaces and, with over 20 to choose from in Saigon’s city center, there will be one to suit every type of remote worker.

Saigon offers a good quality of life and a simple set-up process, so it’s no wonder why more and more entrepreneurs and freelancers are gravitating here. Devin, who’s achieved this lifestyle at the tender age of 25, has some words of advice: “Focus on what you do best, make that worthy of investment and then sell your time as if it were the only thing of value... minutes of your life are the product.” ■





Passionate About Pets

When man's best friend gets sick, veterinarians like Dr. Note are the ones who are there to get them back on their paws again

Interview by Christine Van
Image by Vy Lam

Tell us about yourself.

I'm Dr. Surasit Detchom, but you can call me "Dr. Note." I graduated with a Bachelors Degree in Faculty of Veterinary Science from Chulalongkorn University in Thailand in 2004. In 2008 I received my Certificate for Post Graduate Foundation In Veterinary Science, Cardiorespiratory at Sydney

University in Australia. Now I work as an animal companion business consultant at White Ocean Vet Clinic in District 7.

What was your motivation for wanting to be a vet? Have you always had a love for animals?

When I was young my dog got into an accident and I brought him to a pet clinic

but it was closed. I called and hit the door a hundred times but he finally died in my arms. It was a terrible time for me and I was lost in life's bad moments for almost a year. One day my parents said I should remember the good times and use them as an inspiration to reach my dream and dedicate myself to the things I loved, that's why I decided to be a vet.

Why did you decide to practice here in Vietnam instead of your native Thailand?

I'm always open to learning new things and challenges along with sharing my experiences with others. I had been told that a veterinarian career is not well regarded as compared to human medical doctors, therefore I would like to use my 15 years of experiences in Thailand to apply and encourage Vietnamese veterinarians to hone their skills and to also increase the quality of pet care to an international standard here.

How do you stay up-to-date in the field of veterinary medicine?

I frequently attend seminars in Thailand (every 2-3 months) and also read the veterinary scientific papers that are published weekly and monthly. These help keep me up to date and aware of the latest international standard knowledge in the veterinary field.

What is the most challenging part of being a vet in Vietnam?

Most pet owners are still not knowledgeable in the proper ways of owning and caring for pets. They are not concerned with diseases and zoonosis. Vets have to work hard in their job in terms of both curing the pet and giving advice to owners. Irresponsible pet-owners are also another challenge because there are no regulations for owning a pet and preventing their pets from diseases.

What is the best part of your job?

First of all, I would like to tell you that I'm proud to be a vet and so proud to answer when asked what's my job? Honestly, it's quite emotional when I see owners' expression of worry about their pets' health and the clinic happy because their pet is better—that's the best part of my job.

How are the pet industry and culture in Thailand different from Vietnam?

In Thailand, dogs are the most popular pets, followed by cats and smaller pets, such as hamsters, rabbits, fish and reptiles are also common. The Thai pet-product industry, which has a value of 2 billion baht, has the potential to grow by up to 10 percent while the overall economy looks to be slowing down. With rapid urbanization, the growth of e-commerce, increase in awareness of animal welfare, increase in pet-product information availability, the pet industry itself continue to grow as the younger generation continues to be pet owners who take care of their pets, whether that is purchasing food, sanitation, health and well-being, doctor visits, vaccinations, grooming, exercising, socializing; spending approximately 10 percent of their income on their animals.. These are supported by factors like 24-hour emergency veterinary clinic/hospital, easy availability of pet food, toys, grooming items and clothing for pets. Thailand's pet segment occupies

a remarkable position in the Asian Pet industry.

Recently, the Thai pet welfare societies, such as the A CALL for Animal Rights Thailand, The Voice Foundation, Soi Dog Foundation, Lanta Animal Welfare, have been spreading awareness by posting videos and images of stray cats and dogs through the social media, encouraging pet adoption.

We cannot ignore that dog meat is a status symbol in Vietnam and still remain on menus throughout the country, especially in the Northern area. However, things have changed since the arrival of foreign investment, so too has foreign culture come together as well. There are various groups that have been established to help rescue abandoned cats and dogs. One of the most well-known, Animal Rescue and Care (ARC), has earned tens of thousands of likes on social media and has rescued hundreds to thousands of animals.

Hopefully, with the use of social media to spread awareness throughout Vietnam, these terrible images of the dog meat trade will garner more disapproval and pet ownership will continue to rise, and dogs and their feline friends will be treated better and more humanely.

Some believe annual vaccinations are too often and some are anti-vaxxers. What side do you fall on this topic?

Regarding the issue of annual vaccinations as too often, according to the US and Europe protocol, it's standard and recommended to vaccinate every three years. However, in Asian countries, we are still in an endemic area with many diseases so I strongly recommend annual vaccinations until there is scientific research that supports a change from annual vaccinations to every 3 years. I fully disagree that vaccinations are completely unnecessary because vaccination is definitely better than non-vaccination. For example, rabies is one type of the core vaccine that must be immunized against, otherwise, if your pet gets infected with rabies that means they usually must be euthanized and there is no treatment or cure for rabies once symptoms appear.

Diet is another highly debated topic: raw, vegan, kibbles, mixed, etc. What's your recommendation, and does it depend on the breed?

It's quite a controversy, and in my opinion, there's little scientific evidence for a raw diet or a vegan diet, and there are two majors problems with them: Food contamination from salmonella and campylobacter (a strain of bacteria),

and nutritional imbalance. As a vet, I recommend diets that are scientifically proven.

What are some of the unusual animals you've treated?

Hedgehog, bearded dragon, guinea pig and a hawk.

What is the most common problem you've treated?

It's skin problems in dogs, often caused by ticks and fleas. It's quite a major problem for dog-owners here. I recommend owners to use ticks and fleas prevention products. As well as treating your dog, it is important to also treat the surrounding environment because 90 percent of the tick and flea population live off your dog, treating the areas where your dog spends most of its time is important, for example, their bedding, vacuuming the house if the dog is allowed indoors.

What would you do if there were obvious signs that an animal you are treating has been abused?

If the pet came with signs of abuse, I would treat the pet according to the symptoms as usual and I will try hard to communicate with the owner of their wrong actions towards their pets and I will closely follow up with these cases to see if the owner improves their behavior towards their pets. There was a case where I had seen an improvement from the owner and I gave them a membership discount as a good gesture. I did not support the owner's mistreatment of the dog but wanted to encourage them to be a better owner by rewarding them.

Do you have any pets?

Yes! I have two male, white Pomeranians.

What are some of the differences in how Vietnamese and foreigners care for their pets?

Of course, there are both similarities and differences. Currently, many Vietnamese pet-owners are taking care of their pets in the same way and standard as foreign pet-owners in terms of diet and health concerns. However, in rural areas, dog-owners still view them as security animals, with no regards to their well-being—unbalanced diet, no vaccinations and no disease prevention concerns.

Another obvious difference between the two cultures when it comes to pet ownership is that expat owners are highly aware of population control and have their pets neutered, which both promote good health to the pet and also reduces the dog and cat overpopulation problem that leads to abandonment and an increase of strays on streets. For some Vietnamese people, they still believe that neutering their pet is considered animal abuse and sinful. ■



Côí-Origins







Heat wave... the sand is lightly smoldering under our steps. Heavy palms are quivering and gently rustling in a breeze. The sun is at its highest and the carved dark wooden doors have been shut. Naptime. It is summer in Hoi An. On the wood table, a bowl of fresh fruit from the morning market. Books, note pads, empty glasses, plates ... all attest to a brief visit. In the garden pond, carps are lapping amongst water lilies. The red hibiscus flowers have closed up and the flame tree stands in full majesty at the heart of the garden. Its branches weave delicate lace patterns under the light. In the background, the gentle sound of the rolling waves reminds us that the sea is just a stone's throw away. We settle down. We take the time to savor the simplicity of the moment. Time stretches, bodies and minds unwind.

With Metiseko's (metiseko.com) new organic cotton collection, the brand is returning to its roots in Hoi An, where everything began 8 years ago. We wanted to create a heart-felt and warm collection, inspired by the tropical summer, traditional life and beautiful nature around Hoi An, reflecting the simplicity and friendliness of our home.

Our Cội-Origins Collection is using organic cotton and is locally produced under fair conditions by our own tailors in Hoi An. The collection offers women's as well as men's clothing. The organic cotton is produced and dyed in the Region of Tamil Nadu, India, then printed in Vietnam.

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Beach Bound

SORA & UMI AT INTERCONTINENTAL PHU QUOC LONG BEACH RESORT



A Tropical Dose of Vitamins

“Be” and “Sea”

Perfection at InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort

Images by James Pham and Mott Visuals



Magical sunset at Sea Shack

IT'S A MONTH INTO THE SCHOOL year when suddenly a new kid shows up in class, a pretty boy with effortlessly cool hair and stylish but not too flashy digs. Pretty soon, he's everyone's best friend, including yours, equally loved by the preps, the jocks, and the nerds.

With a soft opening in late June, the InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort is one of the newest kids on the Phu Quoc block. Fanning out from a central Sky Tower like the arms of a starfish, IHG's landmark 1,000th InterContinental, in the Europe, Middle East, Asia and Africa region, has 459 rooms, neatly creating three distinct spaces: one for families with a Planet Trekkers Children's Club for kids up to 12, including Splash! family pool, cooking school and games room; one for Club InterContinental guests featuring private

spaces, exclusive benefits and premium amenities; and one for discerning travelers looking for a touch of understated luxury with their beach vacation.

While the resort has all the accoutrements expected from an international 5-star chain, from a contemporary-chic lobby bursting with tropical fresh flowers and a jaw-dropping 130-seat theater screening family-friendly movies to motion sensor lights in the dressing area and electric louvered blinds showcasing sweeping beach views from the soaking tub, the InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach is more about quiet elegance. In a “less is more” approach, the beauty of the resort is found equally in the myriad of tiny touches that may go unnoticed until you suddenly do – a choice of still or sparkling water in the airport

shuttle, the fresh take on ao dai-inspired uniforms for the staff as they serve up welcome drinks of jasmine, lemongrass and fresh lychee, and the guest-friendly layout of the resort built around a central courtyard with a distinctly Hawaiian vibe. It's the type of place where you can just “be”, without needing to plaster every moment on social media.

Located on the tail end of Long Beach, InterContinental Phu Quoc also serves up a healthy dose of Vitamin “Sea”. Guests are spoiled for choice when it comes to enjoying the outdoors, whether in an oversized cabana by the two infinity pools, lazing by the wide, sandy beach, or taking in a Phu Quoc sunset brilliantly reflected in the lagoon by HARNN Heritage Spa.

Even the resort's restaurants take inspiration from the tropical surrounds. Meaning “Sky and Sea”, Sora & Umi, the



resort's all-day dining venue features gorgeous blue-on-blue views through double-height, floor-to-ceiling windows. We savored blissfully prolonged breakfasts in this large contemporary space, noshing on flaky croissants slathered with homemade apple compote and wandering around the five open-kitchen stations serving up delectable selections.

The restaurant also serves a la carte and set meals, focusing on delicate Japanese and fresh Vietnamese flavors starring Phu Quoc's famed seafood as well as its excellent free-range chicken and beef, as in the succulent Grilled Chicken served with sticky bamboo rice and a lovely Pomelo Salad with beef jerky and a tropical dash of fresh shredded coconut.

Lazy afternoons were spent by the freeform Oasis pool, dipping into the climate-controlled water and hanging by Ombra, the Italian-inspired pool bar. True to its name, a gorgeous bamboo canopy with seriously sexy curves shaded us overhead while we feasted on upscale Italian comfort food, including a succulent Lobster Linguini with a rustic, earthy Arrabiata sauce, and Sea Urchin Tonnarelli, hand-made pasta simply tossed with olive oil and garlic, and



Ombra



Resort Classic Ocean View



Seafood Pizza

generously topped with golden nuggets of Japanese uni. The Phu Quoc Seafood Pizza was some of the best we've had anywhere in Vietnam, loaded with meaty chunks of crab, shrimp, and calamari atop a thin, Neapolitan-style pizza crust baked in a wood oven right on site. Surrounded by nautical blue tones and the salty sea air, it didn't take much to transport us somewhere on the Med.

Our favorite venue, however, was the Sea Shack with its distressed wood floor and gorgeous single-plank wood tables. Encased in glass to better show off panoramic beach views, the restaurant serves up some beautifully presented beach favorites. We enjoyed dinner on the outdoor terrace, sand between our toes and hands grimy in the best way possible from picking apart the luscious Grilled Seafood Platter with oysters, lobster, baby octopus and more, accompanied by a heavenly coconut-curry dipping sauce that enhanced the natural sweetness of the seafood, a wonderful way to get our daily dose of Vitamins "Be" and "Sea". ■

Enjoy the Opening Special Offer at the InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort at just VND5,400,000++ per room per night, including daily breakfast for 2 at Sora & Umi, VND2,500,000 per stay to spend in the resort's spa and restaurants, return airport transfer and an additional 2,000 IHG® Rewards Club Points. A minimum 2-night stay is required and rates are subject to 5% service charge and 10% VAT. For more information and reservations, contact the Reservations Team by phone +84 283 978 8888 or by email: reservations.icpq@ihg.com



Lobster Linguini



North by North Shore

Idyllic adventures of a castaway on Phu Quoc's north shore

Text and Images by James Pham

I AM WHAT IS KNOWN AS A LATE adopter. (Fine. It's not strictly one of the technology cycles but much preferable to being called a "laggard.")

I didn't climb aboard the iPhone bandwagon as much as I was chloroformed-into-a-moving-van onto it by a friend who had an after-contract 3GS ripe for the taking. By the time it got to me, no one was even selling cases for that model anymore. (The upside was I finally found one in a dusty discount bin somewhere for 99 cents. Score!) I've upgraded once in the past three years, again, thanks to being a sad, sad technology-have-not charity case. I don't mind that I'm perpetually two generations behind everyone else or that local Vietnamese are more than happy to part with a month's salary to obtain the latest offering, casting pitying glances at my iPhone4, the kind usually reserved for homeless people, an uncomfortable mix of pursed lips, sad eyes and a subtle, slow shake of the head.

My utter innovation adoption failure extends to other things, though, not just technology. I saw the Chatroulette version of *Wrecking Ball* before I had actually heard the song. (And I may or may not have had to Google what Chatroulette was...)

Recently, I pretended to laugh along when a lawyer colleague made a joke with the punchline, "Better call Saul!" Alas, television's highest rated show of all time had ended, me blissfully unaware. (Although this oversight was rectified with some serious binge-watching.)

So when my blogging nemeses, the awesome Steph and Tony of 20 Years Hence, suggested that I join Instagram, I balked. "It'll be fun," they said. "You'll like it more than any other form of social media," they said. "All you have to do is press "like" on the pretty pictures," they said. This coming from bloggers equally disdainful of social media as I was. I'm already on Facebook. I barely understand Twitter. Do I really need another avenue to express myself?

The Lure of Instagram

So, armed with my new Instagram account, I promptly took a trip to the Vietnamese island of Phu Quoc, posting photos willy nilly. Just miles off of Cambodia's coast, most of Phu Quoc's hotels are centered around the town of Duong Dong, towards the middle of the 31 x 16 mile island, with the pearl farms and fish sauce factories to the south, and the national forest and sleepy fishing villages to the north.

After visiting gorgeous Bai Sao (Star Beach) and doing a tour around the island's south side, I headed up to the north shore for a few days. There are three roads to get to Ganh Dau, the northwesternmost point of the island, and also point closest to the Cambodian mainland just 8 miles away. One dirt road hugs the coast, just meters from the beach. A two-lane cement road paralleling the coastline was finished, cutting the travel time practically in half, to about 30 minutes. Very strangely, it's not well marked as you make the turnoff



from town and bizarrely starts with a runway from Phu Quoc's old airport.

Alas, bad directions from the receptionist at the resort (last resort?) where my friends were staying led me to take the road that cuts up the middle of the island, through Phu Quoc's national forest. Dusty but scenic, with no road signs to speak of, I'm glad I got a chance to see the island's interior, but thankful that it was during daylight hours as pot holes and sand traps needed dodging.

About 400 meters up the road, there's a sad Vietnamese-run place called Gio Bien. I checked out the bungalows and while they weren't terrible, they weren't particularly inviting. This is a popular lunch spot who want to visit the north coast without committing to staying so far away from the action.

Along the walk over, there are a few ramshackle homes housing fishermen and their families. Looking out over the water, past the netted enclosures where locals raise sea mollusks, you can see the nearby Cambodian islands, but really, the reason to come all the way out to this part of the island is to get away from it all.

I took a drive through the sleepy fishing village of Ganh Dau, where an ominous-looking waterspout was the most excitement the town had seen in a while. Not to worry. I took shelter in a photogenic pagoda and waited for blue skies to return. The weather soon cleared and I made my way past the picturesque fishing village. I found little cottage industries centered around the products of the sea, tiny fish drying in the sun. The little home factory processes 2-3 tons of fish daily that when dried are ready to be used as soup stock or fried up as a tasty snack.

Every now and then, some small cuttlefish are found amongst the fish, which the owner steamed up and offered me to snack on while I was exploring his little home factory. His daughter seemed to like them, too.

Further down the road, I came across a dried shrimp factory where shrimp are boiled with a bit of salt and coloring, then laid out to dry. Afterwards, they go through a drying machine. And finally, neighborhood women are used to pick out shells and bits before the shrimp are packaged and sold all over Vietnam.

Most of the coastline is rugged and



undeveloped. About 10 minutes away, where the new paved road starts, lies Sunset Beach and a lovely restaurant by the sea serving up two of my all-time favorites, plucked live from tanks: tamarind crab and sweet and sour soup with shrimp.

The northern part of the island also has a few dog training and breeding facilities. The Phu Quoc Ridgeback, characterized by a telltale ridge of hair that runs in the opposite direction along its spine, is just one of three ridgeback species (the other two are from South Africa and Thailand), and are found everywhere on the island.

I took a quick tour around one of the family-run places that breed and train these friendly, teachable dogs. When I asked the locals about these places, they all gushed about how the dogs can climb fences "like people." Seeing it in person, I couldn't decide whether it was fascinating or terrifying. I played out a scene in my mind where I was being chased by vicious dogs, managed to haul my hefty, nonathletic body over a fence and collapse in a heap of sweaty relief, only to watch in horror as they started scaling said fence Commando-style. Yes, my mind is a very dark place. Fun. But dark.

In addition to fish sauce, the island is also known for its pepper. Plantations line the roads, and people were very friendly when I asked to stop and just wander around. There's just one harvest per year, with each bush yielding 3-4 kgs of pepper in a bumper season.

The island also produces small quantities of sim wine, a very sweet dessert wine made from the pretty Rose Myrtle. While I didn't care for the wine, we did buy



a bottle of sim concentrate (which tastes somewhere between grape and mulberry) to throw in with rum and seltzer.

Just south of Ganh Dau, there's a long stretch of beach that's now home to a massive VinPearl Complex. I remember going there in 2008, when there were no restaurants, no canteens, no nothing. Just a wild, deserted place to throw down your towel in the sand and go for a swim.

So, if you're fortunate enough to be in this part of the world, make time for Phu Quoc. Make time for its quiet, sandy beaches. Make time for its glorious sunrises and sunsets. Make time while there's still time. ■

Alice's Adventures in Phu Quoc

Seaside Wonderland at JW Marriott Phu Quoc Emerald Bay

Text by **James Pham**
Images Provided by **JW Marriott Phu Quoc
Emerald Bay**

EAGER FOR HER NEXT

adventure, Alice found herself on her way to the creamy white sands of Bai Khem (Ice Cream) Beach on the emerald island of Phu Quoc. What Alice would find, however, was a resort beyond her wildest imagination, a dreamy Wonderland of design and style inspired by her very first adventures all those years ago.

Entering the JW Marriott Phu Quoc Emerald Bay, Alice immediately noticed its graceful archways and towering ceilings. While she found the vintage suitcases, antique bookcases and artfully clustered sofas pleasantly familiar, the

lush greenery surrounding gurgling fountains was something entirely new.

Scampering through the hallways past old leather gymnastics equipment and regal trophy cases, Alice recognized signs of a mythical academy. She walked past each hotel block cleverly named after various fields of study to the Shell & Botany Building. Graceful seashell mosaics and groupings of colorful scientific drawings led the way to the most beautiful room she had ever seen. Eyes as wide as saucers, she took in the black and white deco bathroom with shutters opening to her spacious



Sun Pool



Reception Area

floating down the rabbit hole without a single care in the world.

In the evening, Alice made her way to the 2-storey mansion called The Pink Pearl and feasted on foie gras terrine soaked in red wine (which she was told took three days to prepare) accompanied by fresh cherries. All throughout dinner, Alice couldn't decide whether to look around the restaurant with its salmon-colored walls and whimsical furnishings which included a peacock, a penguin and an owl or to look at her food which was just as beautiful: a plate of earthy beetroot served with slices of summer truffle and strawberries, and a wonderfully moist snakefish, cooked sous vide, with a lovely tart black currant sauce. There was even a piano player and a songstress who charmed the room with lilting melodies in French, reminding Alice very much of a summer spent in Paris.

Much too soon, Alice's time in Phu Quoc came to an end, leaving her with beautiful memories of happy summer days spent in a very real, very magical place. ■

For more, visit www.jwmarriottphuquoc.com

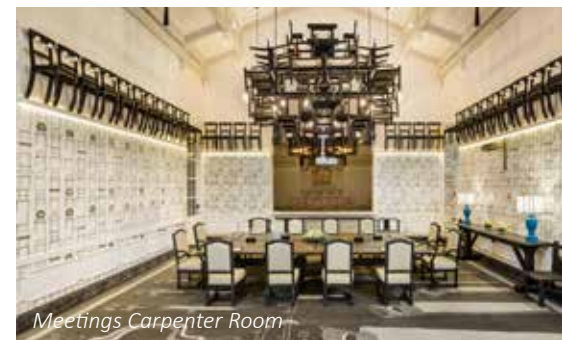


Department of Chemistry Bar

making Hoi An lanterns, playing table tennis or doing her calisthenics in the modern gymnasium. When she tired, she ducked into the French & Co. Deli for a pastry hot out of the oven and scrumptious chocolate drinks.

After lunch, Alice put on her swimming costume and swam in the glittering pool shaped like a seashell. She also took long walks on the beach and found hammocks strung up amongst the tall palms, the perfect spot for a quiet afternoon nap. One day, she peeked inside the Kids Club. Although she was too big to join in, she saw a whole building just for children 12 and under with reading nooks, art stations and all sorts of fun activities.

One afternoon, Alice found herself at the Chanterelle Spa. The hand-painted walls and mushroom-shaped furnishings made her so very happy, as did her blissfully relaxing massage where her therapist used thumbs, forearms and elbows to soothe her tired muscles, making her feel as if she were again



Meetings Carpenter Room



Chanterelle - Spa

Emerald Bay View Room bathed in shades of seafoam green. She threw open the balcony doors and plopped down on the plush lounge, looking out over a perfect crescent beach lined with swaying palm trees and the clear, turquoise waters beyond.

Alice's days started with leisurely breakfasts at Tempus Fugit. As she wandered around the large restaurant nibbling on freshly baked breads and sipping tropical fruit juices, she noticed design accents inspired by the Department of Architecture—ornate wooden models and oversized rulers used as door handles. After breakfast, Alice spent hours popping in and out of the shops on the Rue de Lamarck,



Emerald Bay View Room



Pool

Island Gem

From prison island to paradise island, Con Dao's unspoiled terrain makes it one of the world's top destinations

Text and Images by **James Pham**



"CON DAO IS AN ISLAND OF

heroes, a great historical monument... It will be the property of the people and an invaluable asset for many generations," declared General Secretary Le Duan on visiting the island in 1976. It was the year after the island's infamous 113-year history as a penal colony came to an end, first under French and then South Vietnamese rule.

An archipelago of 16 islands approximately 230 kilometers south of Ho Chi Minh City, Con Dao today refers both to the group of islands as well as its largest and only permanently inhabited island of Con Son. Although there is archaeological evidence of the islands being inhabited as far back as 3,000 years ago and subsequently occupied by seafaring Portuguese, British and French in the 16th to 18th centuries, it's mainly known to the Vietnamese as an island housing a lone line of national heroes, starting with Lady Phi Yen. Embroiled in a civil war in the late 18th century, her husband, Nguyen Emperor Gia Long sought French support to bolster his cause. Lady Phi Yen objected, hoping to settle the matter without foreign intervention. For her supposed crime of treason, she was banished to Con Dao.

Con Dao's isolation and harsh but livable conditions made it an ideal place to house prisoners. A century after Phi Yen, the islands became home to the largest prison complex in all of Indochina, beginning with 2,000 mainly political prisoners in 1862. Over the next 113 years, it's estimated that more than 20,000 lost their lives here out of the many tens of thousands who suffered unspeakable atrocities behind its thick walls, with crystalline blue waters and dense green forests acting as natural jailers. The islanders often say that for every inhabitant, there are three ghosts roaming the hills and beaches of the islands previously known as "hell on earth."

Forty years on, and Con Dao is looks more like heaven than hell. Turtles, dugongs and dolphins swim its warm waters. Approximately 80 percent of the island is national forest, with just one road winding its way down the coast from the airport in the north, past the ultra-lux Six Senses Con Dao, through the center of town, and down to the port where fishing vessels refuel and shelter. The island is shaped like a bear, with its back to the mainland, and the town at its belly. Everything seems to come in two's here: two banks, two stoplights, two mini-marts on an island that leans more towards catatonic than sleepy.

On a hazy morning, I make the drive back out towards the airport, headed for Dam Trau, one of the island's prettiest beaches. With only 7,000 residents, half of whom are military personnel, long stretches of road go by before I see another person. Just before the airport, I turn off the road, past the memorial to Prince Cai, Lady Phi Yen's son, tossed into the sea by his father for making too

much noise on the journey. The tar gives way to sand as my motorbike fishtails the rest of the way, finally stopping in front of a beautiful stretch of golden sand beach, anchored by a mass of boulders on one end and thick jungle on the other. Like everywhere else on Con Dao, the beach is blissfully free from mass tourism, with only a few simple huts of bamboo and hastily poured concrete serving up snacks and drinks. Nylon beach chairs and hammocks sway in the breeze and a smattering of tourists down beers and seafood on the otherwise secluded beach. It's this sense of wild rusticity that beckons people to the island.

"I came here ten years ago with my husband," says Lua, originally from Bac Lieu in Vietnam's south. "I heard there was a good opportunity to make a living and that life was better here." She's sitting in front of her small house in Zone 1 (out of 10 residential zones on the island), her hands sorting through a pile of squash and cucumbers she's plucked from her garden. "We were farmers back in Bac Lieu, too, but here we can fetch five times the price. The islanders have a saying: 'If you're poor, you eat fish. If you're rich, you eat vegetables.'"

It wasn't only economic promise that brought Lua to Con Dao where she's expecting her first child this

month. "It's quiet here, even compared to country life in Bac Lieu. There's very little crime. There was news about some guy who snatched a gold necklace at the market, but he wasn't from around here. He doesn't know how the island works. With only one main road, where are you going to go? When a crime happens, all they have to do is block the road at both ends, where the planes leave and where the ships leave."

She's referring to Ben Dam, the recently built port 10 km south of town, where sailors can hole up for months at a time to wait out bad weather. I make my way along the beautifully rugged coast, sheer cliffs to my right, waves pounding the shore to my left, passing picturesque Bai Nhat (Shy Beach), that only appears during low tide. Almost where the road runs out, I find myself amidst a nondescript grouping of beer joints, karaoke parlors and girlie bars. "Most of the crimes that happen on the island, they happen at the port," says Phong who works for the island's one television channel. "It's sailors getting drunk with nothing to do and getting into fights. Otherwise, the island is practically crime-free." Con Dao is the kind of place where there are no paid parking lots because you can simply leave your bike on the side of the road, more often than not, with your keys in the ignition.



Everywhere you look on Con Dao, the legacy of the past remains. High up in the mountains stands a watchtower that looks out over the town and the islands in the distance. The place is known as So Ray, a hard labor plantation where prisoners were sent to grow crops in the dense jungle. It's hard enough scampering up a steep incline over twisted roots and sharp rocks to the top, almost unimaginable for someone malnourished and without shoes. Then there's the 914 Pier right on the town beach, a testament to the number of lives lost in its construction. Most visible of all are the prison complexes to the north of town, their tiger cages and bleak interiors a sobering reminder of the evils man can inflict on each other. When the island was liberated in 1975, there were 7,448 prisoners freed, with 157 choosing to stay behind to rebuild the island. They were joined by waves of settlers from the mainland, some doing their patriotic duty, others in search of a new life.

Among them were Doan Huu Hoai Minh and his wife Nguyen thi Anh Thu, two artists from Can Tho who arrived in 1984. "I remember the whole island coming down to the pier to meet the ships. We cried like the rain," remembers Anh Thu, "even if we didn't know anyone coming off the ships. But because none of us were from the island, every new person felt like family, even if it wasn't our family."

"For sure, there were hardships," says Minh. "We had to ration our rice, but we were never hungry. After work, we'd just walk down to the beach with a lamp and a trident and hunt for crab and fish in the shallow waters. I think that's how people still view Con Dao, though, as a deserted, forgotten place—like that cartoon with two prisoners in striped uniforms sitting on an island with only a coconut tree between them," he laughs.

"Our son went to university on the mainland and when his first girlfriend's parents found out that he was from Con Dao, his mother cried," Anh Thu remembers with a cackle. "The parents of his second girlfriend threatened to commit suicide if they got married. The thought of their daughter going to live on Con Dao, with nothing to do other than sit and eat turtle soup was worse than death". Her husband adds: "I remember the tourists in the 80s bringing huge barrels with them. We thought it was wine, but fell down laughing when we discovered they were bringing fresh water because they didn't think the island had any!"

Even now, 30 plus years on, Con Dao is still regarded by many as a backwards blip on the map. "When I told people that I was moving to Con Dao, they kept asking me if I was running away from a broken heart," says Thao, a bubbly 20-something from Saigon. "Either that, or they asked if I was coming here to play with the monkeys. But life here





is truly peaceful. There's no traffic, no struggle to compete. In Saigon, people look at what you're wearing from your shoes all the way up. Here, no one cares."

Now, slowly though, word is starting to get out about the pristine beauty of the Con Dao Islands, a throwback to what Phu Quoc must have been like 20 years ago. The government has issued long-term plans to develop the island, building up its infrastructure in preparation for mass tourism. Some, like Lua, aren't particularly worried. "I live in Zone 1, the closest to the airport, closest to the best beach on the island and even though there have been rumors for years about development, I haven't seen anything yet. I think more tourists would be a good thing because that would mean more people would know about our island."

Not everyone is so optimistic, though. "I'm both optimistic and pessimistic. I'm happy because that will mean more investment and better lives for people on the island. But I'm worried because if the changes come too quickly, it will destroy what makes the island special. Now, the flights are expensive and limited, and that forms an economic gateway to regulating the number of tourists. If the numbers increase dramatically, that will surely change the community spirit and friendliness of the island," says a general manager of one the resorts in Con Dao of plans for development.

The studio of husband and wife artists Minh and Anh Thu is filled with paintings of quiet, shady streets and long stretches of deserted beaches. "That's one of the reasons why we paint," says Anh Thu, "to document the way life is now because we know it's going to change. Sure, we'll see improvements like better roads, schools and hospitals. But we're afraid of losing the appeal of the island. Con Dao is the pride of the whole nation, not just of the people on this island."

The sun sets over the town promenade, where soldiers and teens sit on the stone embankment and look out to the sea beyond. A smattering of vendors sell snacks to the small crowd that's gathered to watch a pick-up game of beach football. Among them is Phuc, 21, who came here for a visit three years ago and never left. "People are different here. They weren't raised around competition like on the mainland and it shows in their nature. I don't even miss the big supermarkets or the cinemas. In Saigon, you come home and close the door. You're making your own prison. Here, it's a better way of life." I ask him if he believes that the island is protected by the ghosts of comrades past. He nods. "I pray to them. I pray for peace. For my family and for myself." Catching his gaze over the spirited game happening below, and out to the glassy sea beyond, I ask him if he's found it. "Yes, I guess I have." ■

Constant State of Bliss

Finding paradise at the adults-only An Lam Retreats Ninh Van Bay

Text by James Pham
Images Provided by An Lam

IN HOMER'S ODYSSEY,

the Greek hero Odysseus stumbles across the land of the Lotus Eaters, a people so completely at bliss that everyone who sets foot there never wants to leave. For centuries, people have tried to find this mythical island without success. Perhaps until now.

Two months after An Lam Retreats Ninh Van Bay's grand opening at the end of June, we set out to see if this land of legend really exists. Our own odyssey begins with a seamless airport pick-up, driving along Nha Trang's beautiful coastline 15km north of town to An Lam's private jetty. A completely enclosed tender boat takes us on a smooth 15-minute ride over glassy seas, a flock of swifts flitting in the spray of our wake, towards the peninsula on stunning Ninh Van Bay. As we draw closer, the only sign of the 34-villa *adults-only*

retreat is a giant wooden sphere, a modern interpretation of a lotus flower, a sign that we've arrived to the modern Land of the Lotus Eaters.

Staff are lined up at the jetty to welcome us to paradise, a place so idyllic, it makes every slick marketing slogan ever written sound insincere. I've often wondered how Adam and Eve might have lived in the Garden of Eden, another earthly paradise. Might they have lived in a tree house, Tarzan and Jane-style? Or simply slept under the stars, cuddled by Mother Nature on a dense carpet of grass? Walking along the woody path up to our Treetop Pool Villa, past brightly colored lizards and butterflies, I think I have the answer to my question.

Set 12m above the ground, up three flights of stairs, our 75sqm tree house is jaw-droppingly stunning, as if Adam had

a degree in Environmental Architecture and Eve majored in Interior Design. The largest of five villa types, the Treetop Pool Villa features two outdoor seating areas, a spacious bedroom with incredible, sweeping views over the bay, and an equally large bathroom with wooden bathtub, his-and-her sinks and a glazed turquoise-tiled rain shower with a sliding door opening directly onto a private plunge pool, all accented with New Zealand pine, appropriately distressed for a beach chic vibe. Natural materials give the villas an aura of lightness and brightness with stone and wood floors, polished bamboo accessories and gauzy curtains naturally dyed and hand-woven in northern Vietnam.

While the uber luxurious nature of the villas themselves would fit right in to the pages of Architectural Digest, it's the designing hand of Mother Nature

that sets An Lam Retreats apart from all pretenders. Instead of seeking to tame nature, the retreat embraces its wild beauty. Built to merge seamlessly into the landscape, practically hidden amongst towering trees and giant boulders, each villa features ingenious sliding panels and windows which can be thrown open to allow the sea breezes in. The playlist to life in paradise is supplied by bird chirps, the hum of cicadas and the sound of water lapping against the crescent beach. The air is heavy with Mother Nature's perfume, an intoxicatingly woody scent with sweet notes provided by jasmine flowers and cashew fruits bursting with their sugary, tart juice, just some of the many fruit trees on the property.

The retreat is blessed with a natural mountain spring with its head some 10km up the mountain and double filtered for guest and resort use. One morning, we take a guided walk following the stream partway up the mountain, past the Jungle Gym, literally a state-of-the-art gym in the jungle, and the two private treatment salas of the Jungle Spa, recalling our earlier Swedish massage that took us further away from reality with every firm, tension-releasing stroke. We stroll along wooden walkways and scamper up large, smooth boulders into the jungle. Accessible only by boat, the peninsula is densely forested and largely uninhabited save for troops of langurs and other wildlife. We cool off in a swimming hole fed by the cool, clear stream, as panoramic views of the pristine bay unfold below us with Thi Island and its abandoned pagoda to the right, and Monkey Island closer to the mainland.

The retreat is similarly tranquil, with most of the other guests blissfully holed up in their villas, no doubt cooling off in the plunge pool, lounging on plush sofas or Instagramming with a #liveyourbestlife hashtag. Life at An Lam Retreats is all about privacy, and the staff, including dedicated butlers for each villa, know to be discreet, ringing a bell before delivering daily afternoon snacks and refreshments like passion fruit iced tea with a selection of petit fours to stave off the 4 o'clock nibbles. In fact, the rare times we see other guests are usually at the infinity pool, on the postcard-perfect beach fronting glassy, sea foam green water or at Sen Restaurant.

Built over water, the spectacular open-air restaurant features plush, overstuffed sofas on the outdoor deck and tables inside with a show grill in the center, surrounded by massive timber pillars. The restaurant showcases classic Vietnamese cuisine with a handful of Western favorites, immaculately presented. One lunch, we have the Australian Tenderloin, beautifully seared with an earthy mushroom sauce and served over a bed of mashed potatoes and steamed vegetables with a smear of sweet berry reduction balanced by the tartness of balsamic caramelized onions. However, it's in the treatment of fresh seafood where the restaurant truly





shines. Thanks to carefully cultivated relationships with some of the nearby floating fish and lobster farms, the seafood on offer is second-to-none and guests are even invited to visit the floating farms via 5-minute boat ride to select their own seafood.

One evening, after sundowners at the rooftop bar with 360-degree views of the bay and the hazy blue mountains beyond, we order the Nha Trang Seafood Platter with grilled sea bass, tiger prawns and squid served with a small heap of herbs and veggies from the retreat's own organic garden and a flavorsome green chili dipping sauce. It's followed by Lobster with Garlic Butter, grilled to perfection, and a whole grilled pomfret, its firm meat ideal for rolling in rice paper with fresh veggies, all dipped in a thick, Vietnamese dipping sauce. With the lights of the mainland glittering like a string of Christmas lights in the distance and the gentle sound of waves lapping the shore, there's no place else we'd rather be.

It's appropriate that in this halcyon Land of the Lotus Eaters, An Lam Retreat's logo is a lotus flower in full bloom. It's subtly incorporated into the design of the resort—in drawer pulls and tabletops and in the contemporary shape of Sen Restaurant. Iconic of Vietnam, An Lam's lotus proudly represents a homegrown Vietnamese brand achieving a level of luxury previously seen only at international-level properties, but here wholly Vietnamese owned, designed and operated.

As with Odysseus' men on the mythical island of the Lotus Eaters, we can barely tear ourselves away from An Lam when the time comes. Even as the boat idles on the jetty, we sip the last drop of our frothy Vietnamese iced coffee and freshly baked breads, a last nibble of the intoxicating lotus in this very real version of earthly paradise.

An Lam Retreats Ninh Van Bay is an adults-only resort. For more, visit www.anlam.com.



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The Cape Escape

Beyond the oil rigs and tourist trips, there's another side of Vung Tau worth exploring

Text by **Tayne Ephraim**
Images by **Ngoc Tran**

VUNG TAU IS A PLACE I'D brushed over in the past and mentally scratched off the list. So when asked to return and give it another try, mid monsoon, I take it as a chance to dig a little deeper and see what the city has to offer beyond a long strip of beach and a giant hollow Jesus. And as it turns out: quite the bag of little delights, for those willing to go the extra mile.

For the unfamiliar, Vung Tau, somewhat like Italy (albeit on a much smaller scale) juts out into the ocean like a strangely shaped boot. At the foot of this boot lie two mountains, Little Mountain (at the heel), and Big Mountain (at the toes). It's a two-hour or so drive from downtown Saigon, with the newly built Long Thanh expressway slicing a good hour off the old time.

I pack my camera and some books into my trusty satchel and head out of the big smoke (Saigon) to the beach. The

minivan drops us off on the main beach strip and we waste no time in acquiring some wheels, renting a scooter from a hotel in town and zipping out to explore the peninsula's lesser-known sights.

Beyond the hotel-lined beachfront and seaside restaurant strips the forested hills of Vung Tau are honeycombed with gorgeous little roads that snake their way across the promontory hills, leading to old fortifications, shrines, grottos, and a lighthouse. The French put a battery atop each of Vung Tau's mountains, and the cannons are still there today, pointed out to sea. Some of these roads, however, are military, as we unwittingly discover, following one into the back door of a small military base with squat French-built bunkers cut into the face of the face. Only as I'm about to dismount for a photo opportunity do I realize my error, quickly backing out and away before alerting any personnel to our unwanted presence.

Getting our bearings back, we head out for the lighthouse on Little Mountain for some winning views over sea and city. While nothing remarkable, it's a curious edifice, a stubby cylinder on the mountain top with the odd spectacle of birdsong recordings playing out of loudspeakers at an amplified volume in the effort to attract the real thing. Go figure. The views afforded from this vantage point over the long finger of coastline and brightly-colored houses of the town nestled below make it well worth the effort. Also of note are the old French fortifications and an overgrown bunker, just down a set of steps from the lighthouse and its viewing platform. The hilly topography at the tip of Vung Tau's peninsula is teeming with such relics and they make for an intriguing addition to the city's attractions.

Years back I'd road tripped out to Vung Tau with some friends. We'd found



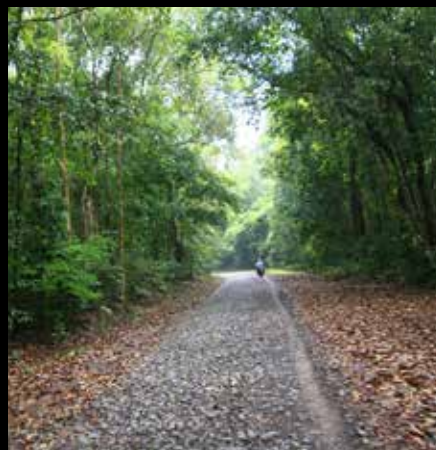
We reach it by small lane, which winds its way up, passing by clucking chooks and curious children with monk-styled hairdos. Perched right above the city, the hill's barren rockiness makes it feel like a world away from the bustle below, and an ideal camping spot for the more adventurous.

Hon Ba Island is perhaps the most curious sight in Vung Tau. This mysterious little outcrop of land (technically an islet) is linked by a natural land bridge to the coast, accessible only when the tide is low enough to reveal it, which is about once a month. The temple crowning the islet's tip was built back in the 18th century to appease the goddess of the sea and bring good fortune to the fishermen. It was also a French fort for some time, the remnants of which can still be seen. When the tide goes out long lines of pilgrims clamber their way over the sharp rocks and oysters to pay their respects.

Other than being a weekend playground and easy-to-reach beach getaway from the big smoke, Vung Tau has much to offer the budding foodie also. Our appetites kick in and we go in search of the local specialty, *banh*

khot, a grilled rice pancake topped with shrimp, squid and chopped scallions. We find ourselves on Hoang Hoa Tham Street, somewhat of a central hotspot for the dish with no shortage of offerings to choose from, just as another squall moves in over the city.

We venture on to the very tip of the peninsula, Mui Nghinh Phong, Cape of the Greeting Wind, and wander up to the top of its little hill. Looking back, a small cove is revealed, tucked away in the fold of the cape; a hidden beach, devoid of the tourist traffic, and a pleasant surprise. A little stairway leads down to the beach. An abandoned restaurant hangs above and adds an eerie, forgotten atmosphere to the place. There is a small yellow shrine to the ocean nestled in amongst the rocks. I watch its keeper lighting sticks of incense before stripping down to his jocks and wading into the surf for his afternoon swim. A local woman collects limpets and oysters with her pants rolled up to her knees. A swimming monk and a smiling lady move about the rocks—these are timeless images. It's a magical little spot, with the sun getting low on the horizon, and one that I hope remains that way, a sanctuary from the feverish rate of development. ■




the trail that winds its way across the top of Big Mountain and followed it to a bombed out radar installation, a relic from the war. But where once stood only weeds and twisted steel, a kitsch waterpark has sprung up. Mo May, or Sky Park, which also includes on its premises a zoo, a zip line and a rollercoaster, comes complete with its own cable car to ferry up holidaymakers from Tran Phu Street below. Needless to say, things change fast, awfully fast, in Vietnam. Even in little Vung Tau.

Sea Food

Another neglected gem offering scenic views is Doi Con Heo, or Pig Hill. Located on a rocky outcrop above the shell of an abandoned hotel project, this secluded little spot overlooks Hon Ba Island and offers beautiful photo opportunities.





Latin Flair

"Ever since I was a young girl, I dreamt of becoming a designer and to be able to live from my passion," says fashion designer and image consultant Lily Rivero of her eponymous one-of-a-kind, bespoke brand. Born and raised in Uruguay, Lily studied art and clothing production in her native country, with an additional two years in fashion styling in Mexico, before making the move to Vietnam with her husband in 2014.

"My brand highlights the beauty of women, stylizing the female figure and tailored to every woman every day," adds Lily. "I am eager to show you my designs—all created from my ideas, visions, strength and experiences in Saigon, where my dream of becoming a fashion designer came true."







Clothing & Stylist: **Lily Rivero** (40, Duong So 41, Thao Dien, D2); Instagram: LilyRivero.designer

Models: **Yulia Yukhimchuk, Yulya Red'kina, Nguyen Ngoc Trinh, Lily Rivero**

Photographer: **Tuan Le** (tuanlestudio.com)

Makeup: **Cumba Balde & Janne Oligario**

Location: **District Federal Restaurant** (84 Xuan Thuy, Thao Dien, D2)



Wine & Dine

IMAGE PROVIDED BY JARDIN DES SENS







Middle Eastern Medleys

Discovering the exotic flavours of the Fertile Crescent

Text by Paul Y. Kim
Images by Vy Lam

Dip platter

AMUN GARDEN RESTAURANT & LOUNGE (23A Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3) is located on the Ngo Thoi Nhiem strip of District 3, where the hip locals and the better-informed foreigners dine and spend their lazier low key nights. Amun Garden is inspired by the cultures and cuisine from Morocco and North Africa. The airy interior and colorway is designed to mimic the famed Majorelle Garden located in Marrakech. To say it's inspired or mimics is to use the terms loosely. It's more of a dance, toeing the mark around the illusive label of authenticity.

We walk in for lunch during a slow Saturday afternoon. The outdoor area is bright and inviting. There are low cushioned sofas surrounding knee high tables. Two fountains in the North African Mediterranean style are along the wall. The indoor area is dark and more intimate, made to escape the punishing Saigon heat and humidity.

During that day the heat wasn't as brutal and the outdoor mister gave a subtle cooling affect, making for a very comfortable dining experience al fresco. We begin with an order of two of their signature cocktails, the *Spicy Mojito* and the *Arab Kiss* (VND135,000 each). The *Spicy Mojito* is like that of a Cuban Mojito, but I was expecting distinct Moorish flavor notes. I was surprised

to find that the lingering spice flavor is undeniably Southeast Asian. The owner Anh Nguyen explains that its homemade chili syrup comes from Da Lat chili, a less bitter and less spicier pepper compared to the ever present Bird's Eye peppers in Vietnam. It, nonetheless, gives a sharp kick to the drink that is more known to be sugary sweet. The *Arab Kiss* is made up of more familiar cocktail ingredients of vodka, cointreau, lemon and watermelon juice; making

it a perfect companion to have on any summer evening.

The menu has a majority of North African and Middle Eastern dishes, but also a smattering of Western dishes to appease the non-"adventurous" diner who comes to this destination more for the smoking of hookah and the ambiance.

The service, however, was unmistakably Saigonese—the pace of the service was languid and seemed unrehearsed by daily repetition, nor





Grill platter



Arab Kiss cocktail

showed signs of previous protocol. It added to the overall sleepy vibe, tempting us to recline and bask in the Saturday breeze as if we were waiting for a harem of belly dancers to come and entertain the guests. (We were told that belly dancers indeed performed the evening before on Friday. Just our luck!) With this malasse overtaking us (or the two cocktails I drank) we give in to the temptation of a hookah. It comes in what appears to be a makeshift watermelon and pineapple casing. The mu'assel flavor is Forest Perfume and smells and tastes exactly as the name describes.

We ordered the dip platter (VND410,000), which consisted of five spreads: hummus, garlic hummus, spicy ganoush, muhammara, and cacik. For the main course we asked for the grilled meat platter (VND495,000) and the chicken tagine (VND140,000). The portion sizes for the dip platter and grill meat were enormous and could have easily been considered "party sizes." The chicken tagine came presented in the traditional tagine pottery, cooked slow

and purposefully.

The pita bread to accompany the meal is made with Vietnamese flour. I'm unsure of the properties of Vietnamese flour compared to that used in traditional pita bread, but the ones produced from Amun Garden are fluffy pillowy discs with a considerably more noticeable yeast quality to the inner dough. The flavor is slightly sweeter and less sour compared to a traditional pita bread as well. Similar to the way the Vietnamese baguette has unique qualities that the French baguette do not possess, the same can be said with the pita bread here.



Amun garden and lounge - shisha



Orange desert

The dessert dishes arrive no less than five minutes after our mains—much to my delight! The Moroccan Orange Dessert (VND75,000) is perfect in its simplicity—peeled orange slices with caramelized sugar and sprinkled with cinnamon. The second dessert of grilled rock melons with coconut ice cream (VND115,000) once again delighted with its lack of regard to being tied to a regional theme.

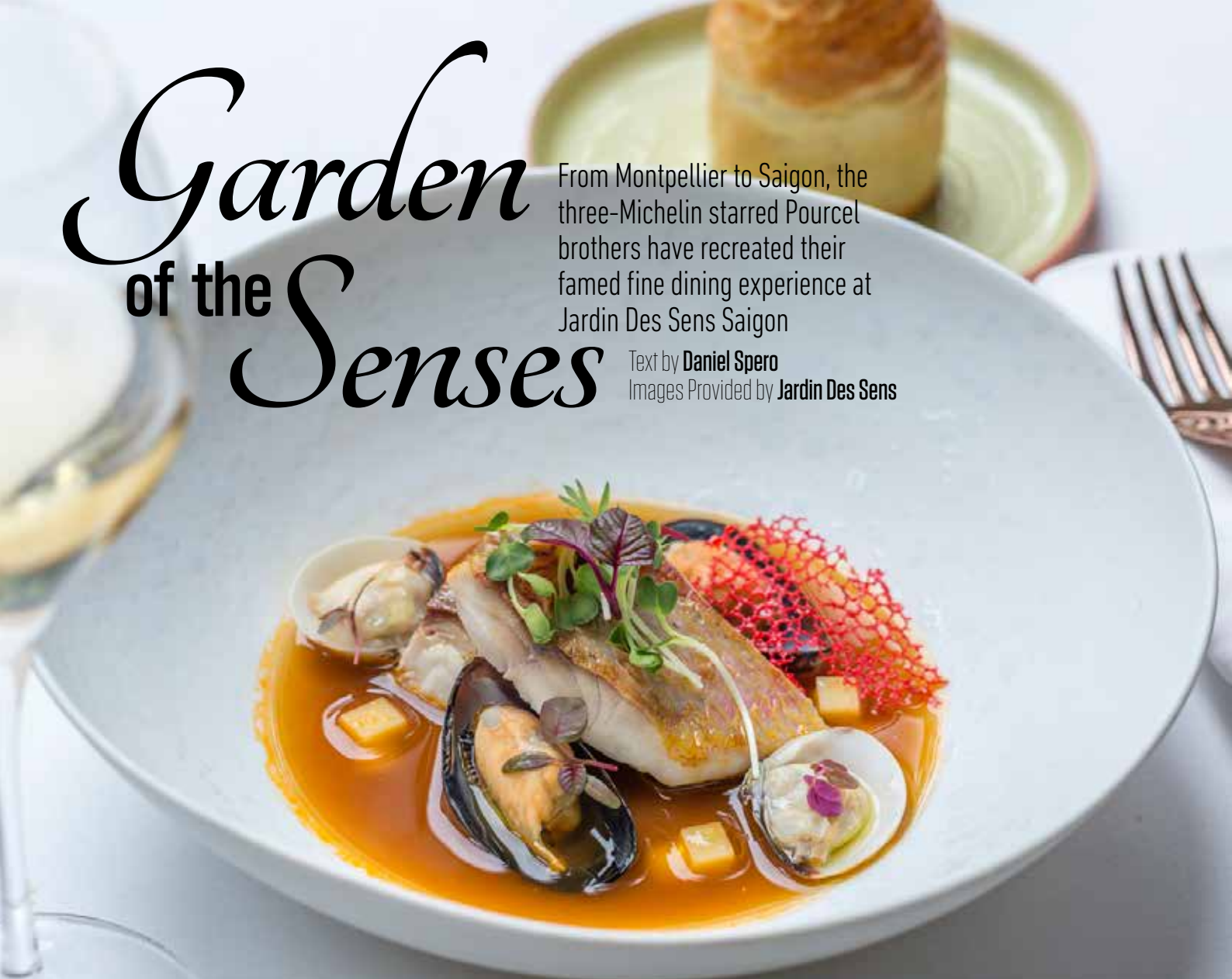
Like a dance, it's about bringing your own sense of style and drawing from different inspirations. Amun Garden shows that there's more than one way to interpret a belly dance. Just make sure you arrive on the right night, so that you don't miss the performance. ■

Garden of the Senses

From Montpellier to Saigon, the three-Michelin starred Pourcel brothers have recreated their famed fine dining experience at Jardin Des Sens Saigon

Text by **Daniel Spero**

Images Provided by **Jardin Des Sens**





WITHIN A 100-YEAR-OLD

French colonial villa, on the corner of Dien Bien Phu and Le Quy Don, is the latest gastronomic venture of twin brothers Jacques and Laurent Pourcel, bringing Vietnam its first fine dining experience by 3-star Michelin chefs. Having already established themselves in Asia with restaurants in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore and Tokyo, the Pourcel brothers have come full circle by bringing their flagship restaurant to Ho Chi Minh City.

Opened in January, walking into **Jardin Des Sens** (251 Dien Bien Phu, D3) you enter the lounge, with large windows and modern chandeliers around comfortable soft seating. There's a bar near the door and next to a double staircase, which leads to the dining room, is a newly built wine cellar in glass panes containing 100 different kinds of excellent French wine. The Pourcel brothers, sons of a winemaker, are renowned for pairing wines with the dishes they prepare for guests, so there's no need to bring in a sommelier. The Sales and Marketing Manager, Constantin Huby, showed us their highest priced bottle, a rare vintage Richebourg Annee 2009, which if you'd like to uncork will set you back VND140 million. Not to worry though, they do have a range of more reasonably priced



bottles—all imported from France.

The dining area upstairs is a large open space with seating for 38 patrons, including a private dining area with seating for 12. Even the crockery is unique, having been handcrafted by an artisan in Monte Carlo. We were at Jardin Des Sens for lunch, which offers a set menu for VND630,000 that includes an appetizer, main, dessert, wine and coffee. There are two choices for each course to choose from and the lunch menu changes weekly.

Once we were seated, the waiter brought over a selection of house-made breads, a mixture of sweet and savory, which were served with house-made butter. For the best, softest baguette in Saigon, look no further. The first appetizer that came was confit duck foie gras with smoked cobia fish, caramelized onions and a dollop of house-made jam. The flavors of the dish were complex, with the richness of the foie gras shining through. The second appetizer was a chickpea salad with confit salmon and smoked cobia fish. The fish was subtle and drizzled with a distinctive, tangy sauce.

Next came the main courses. First was roasted chicken from Bresse with potato confit and green lentils. The chicken was moist and soft, perfectly prepared, with the essence of this dish understated, yet balanced. The second was a traditional bouillabaisse, a fish stew originating from Marseille. This

had a base with hints of garlic, onion, fennel, saffron, thyme and bay leaf, with chunks of mild fish and fresh clams stewed in it—this is not to be missed.

After a few minutes to digest and enjoy our wine, the desserts arrived. The lemon tart, with a sweet sauce drizzle, a dollop of lime sorbet and house-made cream, was heavenly, while the sharpness of the sorbet was an astounding partner. This was followed by a honey panna cotta with pistachio and apricot that was exquisite.

If you have the luxury of a two-hour lunch (12pm-2pm), this is a wonderful culinary journey. And dinner is even more exquisite with an expanded menu, with dishes such as pan seared scallops with caviar and potato mousseline in a creamy broth, or the Ninh Thuan's farm slow-cooked young goat with homemade gnocchi, Kalamata olives and green curry. Through the Pourcel brothers, Saigon's fine dining scene has garnered star power. ■



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.

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BIG CHANGES

Our partners; each giving a % of profits to Small Change



American BBQ in the centre of the city. Meat smokers out front fill the place with juicy aromas and serve up delicious 'fall-off-the-bone-goodness' in hearty American portions. Homemade sauces and Grandma Lois's Potato Salad all help to keep this place busy.

50 Pasteur Street, D1, HCMC
+84 93 883 50 77
www.jakesamericanbbq.com



The sister restaurant for Skewers by Tristan Ngo, Elbow Room is an American-style bistro offering a welcoming selection of appetisers, soups, salads, sandwiches, mains and desserts, plus an extensive wine menu. Cosy and intimate, this restaurant is one of the city's mainstays.

52 Pasteur, D1, HCMC
Tel: 3821 4327



Serving up authentic, simple & honest American diner cuisine in a family friendly environment, Eddie's is a neighbourhood joint where everyone is made to feel welcome. Sit at the counter or grab one of the booths, Eddie's has one of the biggest and best milkshakes in town.

71 Thao Dien, D2, HCMC.
Hours 11:30 AM - 8:30 PM

A restaurant with a deserved reputation, and an old favourite among the city's long-term expat residents. Skewers serves up simple yet delicious Mediterranean cuisine in a convenient downtown location and at prices that can't be argued with.

9A Thai Van Lung, D1, HCMC
Tel: 3822 4798

www.skewers-restaurant.com



A popular expats bar in Thao Dien, Buddha Bar has been an institution for many years. Serving up tasty meals and reasonably priced drinks in a relaxed, chilled environment. The large venue has two pool tables and TV screens for sport and stays open late.

07 Thao Dien, An Phu, D2, HCMC
Tel: +84 837442080C



Newly revamped and boasting an extensive menu for carnivores and vegetarians alike, The Boathouse sits on the river in a private Thao Dien compound making it the perfect place for drinks and a peaceful meal with friends and family.

Boat House - No. 40 Lily Road
APSC, 36 Thao Dien, D.2, HCMC
Booking: +84-8-3744-6790



Located in the heart of Danang next to the Grand Mercure Hotel, Nom Bistro serves some of the finest traditional cuisine from the north and south of Vietnam, including locally caught fish and freshly sourced salads. Great cocktails and a great atmosphere.

Lo 01-A4, Khu biet thu Dao Xanh, Hoa Cuong BacQ. Hai Chau, Danang
(next to Grand Mercure Hotel)
Telephone: 0236.379.99.44
nombistro.com



Located at the far end of the Bui Vien strip, this small craft beer bar with a popular outside terrace has built itself a well-deserved reputation for serving up the best Mexi-Cali food in all of Saigon, with legit margaritas and a cast of Phat Rooster beers to help wash it all down.

207 Bui Vien, D1, HCMC
Tel: +84 90 126 82 26
www.sanchocantina.com



A taste of home for the city's British contingent, Union Jack's Fish & Chips serves up crispy battered delights with all the extras you'd expect from a traditional British chippy. Owned and managed by an English man, expect warm, welcoming hospitality with your food.

Upper Deck, 130 Ton That Dam, D1, HCMC
Tel: +84 162 691 1720



Tucked down a small hem in District 1, Organik House is one of the city's premier vegetarian and vegan restaurant with a daily menu made from locally sourced, fresh, wholesome and seasonal produce. Italian chef and owner, Alessio Sortino, takes inspiration from Mediterranean, North African and Lebanese cuisine.

7F Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, Ben Nghe Ward, D1, HCMC



Hosted by a veteran of the local restaurant scene, La Fiesta has a solid fan base of regular customers who come for the fresh, homemade food and welcoming hospitality. Serving up authentic Tex-Mex grub with chef Scott Marquis's own creative twists.

33 Dang Thi Nhu, Nguyen Thai Binh, D1, HCMC
Tel: +84 94 429 16 97



A welcome alternative the mass produced lagers and wacky flavoured craft beer, Rooster consistently deliver a range of classic everyday go to beer for everyone to enjoy.

Their tap rooms, Han House & Chicken Coop are in the Pham Ngu Lau area.

AsiaLIFE
www.asialifemagazine.com

Small Change operates as a revenue generating social enterprise believing that the more money it makes the greater the social impact it can have. Small Change's first initiative is with Streets International, a U.S. 501, non-profit corporation, founded to provide scholarships for their culinary and hospitality training programme for disadvantaged youth in Vietnam.



www.smallchangevietnam.com

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



Italian Trattoria Oggi

Italian Trattoria Oggi is a perfect place for either a dinner, night out or special party in the breathtaking resort setting and distinctive interior, where you can enjoy the best that American and Australian beef has to offer together with premium wines.

2A-4A Ton Duc Thang Street District 1
(0)28 3823 3333
www.lottehotel.com/saigon

Italian Trattoria
Oggi



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



Chaya Restaurant

Chaya, a new small Japanese Cafe is coming to town. We are here to bring the best Japanese atmosphere to Saigon customer. At Chaya, customer can relax on the Tatami, taste some delicious Sushi Roll, Japanese sweets or local cuisine while enjoying Japan historically decorated space. Most of our ingredients are imported directly from Japan, especially Kyoto Matcha. Welcome!

35 Ngo Quang Huy Street, Thao Dien, District 2
0938 996 408 (Vietnamese)
0939 877 403 (Japanese)
chayavietnam.com
Facebook: chayavietnam



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



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



VIETNAMESE



Five Oysters

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



SaiGon Grill

Located on the rooftop of Saigon Royal Building, Saigon Grill has an absolutely fantastic view over the city. Classical BBQ with beef, pork and seafood by a small charcoal grill at the table and friendly staff. Enjoy our great BBQ with a glass of wine.
Rooftop 7th floor, Saigon Royal Building
91 Pasteur, Ben Nghe Ward, D1
Opening time: 4pm-11pm
0916622662
www.saigon grill.vn



Red Door

Red Door offers traditional Vietnamese food with a contemporary twist. The restaurant is also a platform for art talk, science talk, and social talk; where ideas and passions are shared.
400/8 Le Van Sy, D3
012 0880 5905
Facebook: Reddoorrestaurant



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



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

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

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

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

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

INTERNATIONAL



Butcher MANZO & Craft Beer Bar

Butcher MANZO & Craft Beer Bar

Manzo means "Beef" in Italian and as the name implies, it's a "Meat Bar". Manzo also offers several different dishes matched with local craft beer and selected wines, set in a classic European bar atmosphere. Butcher MANZO & Craft Beer Bar was established in the heart of HCMC on Le Thanh Ton Street in District 1.

17/13 and 17/14 Le Thanh Ton street, District 1, HCMC

028-2253-8825

www.butcher-manzo.com



Madcow Wine & Grill

Mad Cow combines the feel of an edgy grill with the casual tone of an urban wine bar to create a stylish, laid-back atmosphere. Guests can enjoy a delicious meal on the 30th floor of the award winning 5 star Hotel, Pullman Saigon Centre, and look out over vibrant Ho Chi Minh City. Mad Cow's expert culinary team brings each cut of meat to flavorful perfection on handmade charcoal grill. Aside from grilled delights, delicious tapas are on offer – sourced locally and created fresh every day.

30th Floor, Pullman Saigon Centre

(0)28 3838 8686



twenty21one

A new casual dining venue with an innovative tapas menu divided into two categories: Looking East, and Looking West, with dishes such as

Crispy shredded duck spring rolls and Bacon-wrapped dates stuffed with Roquefort blue cheese. There are two

dining levels: an upstairs mezzanine and downstairs are tables with both private and exposed positioning (open-air streetside; and a terrace by the pool out back).

21 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3

TWENTY21ONE



Saffron

The first thing that will strike you when you enter Saffron is the terracotta pots mounted on the ceiling. Located on Dong Du, this restaurant offers Mediterranean food, some with a distinct Asian influence added for further uniqueness. Prepare to order plates to share and don't miss the signature Cheese Saganaki! Guests are welcomed with complimentary Prosecco, fresh baked bread served with garlic, olive tapenade and hummus.

51 Hai Ba Trung, D1
(0)28 3824 8858

Also Try...

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, D1

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 extensive 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, D1

028 3823 3597

info@forksaigon.com

www.forksaigon.com

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, D1

02862632525

www.noirdininginthedark.com

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.chcmc.com/tomatito

www.facebook.com/chcmc

+84 (0) 2862 881717



Travel & Wellness

BARCELONA, PARK GUELL







More Than A City

Stylish design, eye-popping architecture, a Mediterranean climate, and one of the most dynamic culinary scenes in the world are just a few of the many reasons to visit Barcelona

Text and images by David Muller

MANY ARTISTIC GENIUSES, such as painter Pablo Picasso and architect Antoni Gaudí, have drawn their inspiration and creativity from the pastel hues that radiate from the warm Mediterranean atmosphere that envelops the city of Barcelona.

The city has a population of 1.6 million, with the surrounding Barcelona province having a combined number of 4.7 million inhabitants. The two official languages in the city are Spanish and Catalan, the local language of the region. Spanish can easily be used around the city but Spanish dialects, words and phrases, like English, vary widely in different regions around the world. A Californian friend tells the joke of his two-week university study tour to Barcelona: Walking into a store on the first day brimming with confidence from his years of Spanish speaking in California and neighboring Mexico he asks for three items in a stationary store. The middle-aged cashier turns to him with a big smile and says, "Okay Mr. Mexico, here in Barcelona

we call the soft drink this, the eraser this and only my grandfather calls the pen a 'feather.'"

The local people in Barcelona are proud, proud of their Catalan heritage and even more so of their local football team, F.C. Barcelona. Number 10, Lionel Messi, is currently their most famous superstar player. If you Google "Barcelona," the first page search results are all for the football team, while the second page is where the listings for the city starts. The third most valuable sports team in the world, owned and operated by the supporters; the club's motto is "*Més que un club*" ("More than a club"). The club's fan base worldwide is truly staggering and even the F.C. Barcelona Vietnam Facebook page has over 270,000 likes. Their biggest rival club is Real Madrid and matches between these two teams are referred to as "El Clasico," with fans baying for blood in the modern stadium as if the game was to the death in a Roman Coliseum.

Barcelona's history can be traced





back to its founding as a Roman city in 15 B.C., with legend even claiming Hercules responsible for the city's original founding. In the old gothic quarter, remaining parts of old Roman walls have been incorporated into some of the buildings, such as the Cathedral Basilica La Seu. This area is a joy to walk through with signature restaurants, artisan shops and gothic limestone architecture. It is host to many museums, including the Picasso Museum. Pablo Picasso was famous for wearing his navy blue and white striped shirt, which signified victory, a garment he acquired from his time living in the working class areas of southern France. A prolific painter, Picasso studied art in Barcelona and spent much of his life, the early and later years, here. The museum houses 4,251 works from the artist, a large amount from his early blue period. Many of these sketches and paintings of the female form are very provocative and risqué. I've never seen so many portraits of oysters in the wild and they certainly cause a few blushes on some museum patrons.



Olympic Flame

Antoni Gaudí influenced architecture and design in the same way Picasso did with his art. Geometrical forms within nature heavily influence Gaudi's designs, where animals and trees are used to create wondrous structures that follow mathematically perfect growing patterns in their natural lives. Gaudi mimicked these patterns and shapes and made revolutionary building designs. Many of these can be discovered dotted around the city, such as Casa Vicens, La Pedrera, Parc Güell and Casa Batlló. His most famous building, La Sagrada Família, has been under construction for over a hundred years. It is a mammoth project with a planned 18 spires and intricate facades and interiors. The project relies solely on donations and ticket admission sales to fund the construction. The completion date is slated for 2026 A.D.—the centenary anniversary of Gaudi's death.

Spanish poet Federico Garcia Lorca has romanticized La Rambla walking street as "the only street in the world which I wish would never end." Unfortunately, however, the street has developed a reputation for pickpockets, so be caution with your wallet and valuables. The public market of La Boqueria can be accessed from the famous walking street of La Rambla. In the large market, an assortment of foods, fruits, meats and spices can be found. The name "La Boqueria" is derived from Catalan and means "place where goat meat is sold." Taking back a goat leg to have in your *lau de back* in Vietnam might be the perfect gift for the Vietnamese in-laws.

Spanish custom suits night owls like myself, who like to stay up late and start the morning slowly. There is a spectacular sunset view of Placa



d'Espanya and the Venetian towers from Arenas de Barcelona. Previously a bullfighting ring, the arena has been converted into a commercial shopping and entertainment complex. After sunset, catch a performance of flamenco dancing at Las Arenas. The sultry movement of the performers is hypnotic and mesmerizing. The dance has even been recognized by UNESCO as a masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity. After the performance, dine late into the evening at one of the rooftop restaurants above. Tapas is a Spanish favorite, small bite-sized dishes like *Chipirones*, deep fried tiny squid, and *Croquetas*, ham or chicken breaded and fried all go well with a Catalan wine from one of the nine wine growing regions nearby. At midnight, head down to the swanky Barcelona W Hotel, the building looks like an open sail in the wind. The W Hotel- Eclipse nightclub is at the penthouse, where both the crowds and the cocktails are sophisticated and trendy.

After a late Saturday night, wake up late and walk down to the Puerto de Barcelona and take a catamaran yacht. Sail out on a sunny Sunday afternoon into the harbor, drink cheap Sangrias and listen to the sultry sounds of a skilled saxophone musician.

Barcelona didn't really have a beach until the Barcelona Olympics of 1992. That was the famous opening ceremony where Paralympian Archer Antonio Rebollo shot an arrow to ignite the Olympic flame. As part of the revamp of the city for the games, 4.2km of beach, with sand imported from Egypt, was constructed northwards starting from Barceloneta beach.

Barcelona has a cool vibe that brings tourists back and makes them want to stay. On the coast of the Mediterranean, the city has thrived and has been home to many creative individuals who have helped give the city even more character and zest. The city can also be your starting point to venture inland to explore the smaller towns and villages of Spain. Whether it's your first or your 10th time, the city has so much to offer visitors and residents. Experience Catalan culture at its finest in Barcelona. ■



A woman with dark hair is seen from the side, pouring water from a dark, round bowl into a large wooden bathtub. The scene is set in a room with warm, orange-toned wooden walls. The lighting is soft and intimate, highlighting the textures of the wood and the woman's skin.

Pampering With Purpose

Work out those stress kinks with a traditional Red Dao herbal bath all the while supporting a good cause

Text by **Rebecca Jones**
Images Provided by **Dao's Care**

THERE ARE FEW OCCASIONS IN life when we can treat ourselves to an hour of pure pampering while feeling we are also doing something good and worthwhile for humanity. However, Dao's Care, a wellness centre with an inspiring social mission based in Ba Dinh, Hanoi, provides such an opportunity.

Established in 2016, Dao's Care has brought one of the secrets of the northern Red Dao people to Vietnam's capital: their herbal baths. Commonly used among the Sapa-based minority, herbal baths are taken to relieve muscle and joint pain, as well as to promote healing after pregnancy. The closely guarded recipe contains over 20 different

herbs, many of which are unique to Sapa.

Co-founder Trang explains: "Recipes for the herbal baths often differ between families, and are passed down through the Red Dao women, who know the herbs by sight. We work with a small co-operative in Sapa called Sapanapro to bring one of those recipes here. Before, there were many places in Hanoi offering Dao herbal baths, but they were not the real thing."

Trang discovered this in 2014 when she visited Sapa and experienced a real Red Dao herbal bath for herself, which she describes as "powerful." Indeed, during my visit I was warned not to spend more than 15 to 20 minutes in the bath, as those not used to its effects can

feel disoriented, or even "a little drunk" afterwards.

Heeding this warning, I kept a firm eye on the clock as I slipped into the dark purple waters of my bath, contained inside a traditional round, wooden tub. The fragrance of the herbs mixed with the aroma of the Pomu wood—chosen for its natural essential oils—was certainly intoxicating, however I am pleased to report that I emerged only blissfully relaxed.

Red Dao herbal baths are only a small part of what is offered at Dao's Care, however. During her fateful visit to Sapa in 2014, Trang also met people from the visually impaired community, many of whom were disenfranchised and



living in poverty due to their inability to work in the fields. What she saw, though, was that many of these people were “good with their hands in other ways, especially massage.”

And so Trang sprung upon her idea for Dao's Care, which would include traditional massages given by visually impaired women from the Red Dao community. Today, the centre employs five therapists from the Dao and other ethnic minority groups, all of whom have faced challenges due to their impaired vision, but have found a new life and purpose as massage therapists.

“Dao's Care isn't just a business. We want to help the Red Dao people establish a sustainable income that keeps their traditions alive, which we do through our partnership with Sapanapro. However, we also want to provide a new way of living for visually impaired people in the community by training them to be masseuse's and supporting them to live in the city,” she explains.

These therapists include Xiem, a 40-year-old Red Dao woman born blind, orphaned at three months and left homeless by the age of 16 after the death of her grandmother. The first therapist to be trained at Dao's Care, Xiem is now the center's most highly sought after masseuse and, Trang says, their “most beloved” employee.

“We were a little nervous when we took Xiem on—we didn't know if she would be able to adapt to life in Hanoi. She didn't speak the language and we didn't know if she would be able to learn massage. She was a slow learner, but actually that meant she learnt things much better. Now she is our best,” says Mai, one of the center's employees.

This I discovered during my traditional Dao massage with Xiem, which I was quietly led to from my bath following a refreshing cup of herbal tea. With a warm, shy smile Xiem ushered me onto the immaculate massage table, where I opted for “stronger pressure.” I soon found that Xiem's mild manner belies a truly firm hand and keenly felt her banish the stubborn knots from my shoulders.

Xiem and her colleagues, Trang insists, have been vital to the success



of Dao's Care. From around 30 customers per month in 2016, the centre now services more than 400, and demand is growing. As such they will shortly be moving to new premises nearby where they will expand to 13 beds—up from the current six, with eight baths. This will also enable Trang to employ and train more women from ethnic minorities, a prospect she relishes.

“We will be able to employ up to 15 therapists in our new centre, all of whom will have a visual or other physical impairment that has held them back in their communities. This is very important to us: often we see therapists move on very quickly from the centre to even better employment, and that makes us very happy. The more women we can empower at Dao's Care, the better,” Trang says. ■

A Red Dao herbal bath at Dao's Care costs VND120,000, with a 75-minute traditional Dao massage priced at VND320,000. Find out more at www.daoscare.com. Dao's Care will be moving to 351 Hoang Hoa Tham, Ba Dinh, Hanoi, with a grand opening planned for 1 November 2018.





Pain Management

When acute or chronic pain drags you down, you're desperate for relief. Here are a few ways to put out the fire

BACK, SHOULDER AND NECK pains are one of the most common types of pain resulting from repetitive use, poor posture and injuries. Anyone who has had acute or chronic pain understands how debilitating it can be. In this article, I will be sharing my journey in seeking treatment for my acute shoulder pain.

My search for treatment began when I had an injury near my rotator cuff, and I couldn't lift my arm. The pain was unbearable, and I felt handicapped by not being able to have full use of my left arm. I knew I had to treat the injury immediately to avoid the pain spreading to other parts of my body. I began searching online, and the closest

result I found was the FV Hospital Pain Centre, which primarily offered surgery and steroid treatments for serious complications. This was a non-option for me since I prefer a non-invasive and drug-free approach. Though for serious cases, surgery and medication may be the appropriate treatment. So beyond hospital care and medication, where does one go to treat musculoskeletal types of pain?

Chiropractic Treatment With Physical Therapy

I visited the American Chiropractic Clinic (ACC) in Ho Chi Minh City for my first treatment. According to ACC's website, they defined chiropractic care

as treating "neuromusculoskeletal complaints, including but not limited to back pain, neck pain, pain in the joints of the arms or legs, and headaches" through hands-on spinal manipulation. I was treated by the founder of ACC, Dr. Wade Brackenbury, an American chiropractor who opened the first international chiropractic clinic in Vietnam in 2006. Before the actual treatment, there is normally a diagnostic process which includes taking x-rays (or bringing your own), and an evaluation of your posture and physical movement. For my injury, Dr. Wade concluded that I had an inflammation in my bicep tendon though the pain felt like it could have been a tear. He proceeded to recommend



Thuy M. Do is founder of Wellness Vietnam (www.wellnessvietnam.com), an online resource for wellness products, services and travel.

treatments that were appropriate for my condition. First, he conducted a spinal and neck adjustment which is meant to restore mobility to the joints and to help increase blood circulation to the nerves and tissues. I'm not a big fan of adjustments, but it actually felt pretty good afterward and felt like there was a release of tension in my spine and muscle tissues.

I was very impressed by the holistic approach of the chiropractic care at ACC which went beyond spinal adjustments. The clinic is equipped with state-of-the-art physical therapy equipment to aid in the healing process. After I had my spinal and neck adjustment, shockwave and laser therapies were prescribed for me which are designed to reduce inflammation through heat therapy, in addition to acupuncture for pain-relief. After about an hour at the clinic, I left feeling revitalized, and my pain reduced significantly, though my mobility was still limited. As I was eager to regain my mobility and be pain-free, I was recommended to come for an additional two days of consecutive therapies for the best results. Miraculously, after three consecutive sessions, I achieved my quest to have full mobility and be pain-free. I think a major part of the success is due to the treatment of my injury in the early stages before it became a chronic condition.

However, after four months, the shoulder pain reoccurred in the same location probably because of not continuing with physical therapy. It started as discomfort and within a month escalated to sharp pain that extended to my neck and down my arm. Though I still had my mobility, I couldn't sleep because of the increased pain when I lie down. The previous chiropractic care helped with treating my injury but I felt this time, I needed therapy that was more along the line of rehabilitation for sustainability and prevention of future pain. Fortunately, there are more options and availability of complementary therapies today and I was able to find a bodywork therapist at Mandala Wellness.

Deep Tissue Work And Body Alignment

The purpose of bodywork therapy is to correct physical problems relating to posture, connective tissue, and/or musculature to bring about greater ease of movement, less discomfort, and a higher level of energy in daily activity. My first bodywork therapy experience was with Shaun Alexander, a licensed massage therapist, who combines various modalities in his session, which includes myofascial release, deep tissue, trigger point therapy, cranial sacral, guided breathing and sports massage. According to Shaun, one of the biggest and most common source of shoulder pain, particularly those who work on a computer all day, is the tightness of the pectoral and rotator cuff muscles which causes the shoulder joint to pull forward and the muscles in the back to overstretch. His approach to relieving this type of pain is to break apart any restricted fascia inhibiting range of motion, loosen the muscles in the front, get rid of any knots in the back, and start to strengthen and train the weaker muscles to do their share of the work in supporting the body. Though this is his general approach, Shaun says that "every client receives treatment that is specific to their needs and I use the methods most suitable for the situation. Over the years, I've found my greatest tool to be my intuition and focus. I'm constantly 'listening' and conversing with the body and tissue."

First, let me be clear that this is not the same as massage. It certainly isn't relaxing since certain modalities, such as trigger point therapy, can be painful and uncomfortable. Shaun also applied cupping on my shoulder area which helped to loosen the tissues for him to access the source of the pain. I appreciated the fact that Shaun took the time to educate me on what was going on with my body and was in awe of discovering the interconnectedness of the body's neuro, muscular, and skeletal systems. In one session, he focused on aligning and loosening my hip and at one point pressed on an area near my hip,

and I felt a sharp pain on the opposite side of my shoulder. Though this was new information to me, Shaun says that hip imbalance is a common source of shoulder pain.

In the end, I had a total of three sessions with Shaun, each was different, depending on his evaluation of the state of my body on that day. He couldn't guarantee how many sessions it would take to be pain-free since every individual responds differently to the therapies but I noticed that after each session, the pain was incrementally reduced. Surprisingly after three sessions, my shoulder pain was gone! Though the bodywork therapy treated my pain, I have chosen to continue this therapy for maintenance and prevention of future pain.

Other Consideration

Another form of therapy to consider is Osteopathy which has a similar approach to bodywork therapy and focuses on stretching, gentle pressure, and resistance techniques. I went for one session which is not sufficient to conclude the effectiveness of osteopathy, but it is good to know there are additional choices in seeking pain remedy. Personally, I was looking for a more aggressive approach to treating my shoulder pain, and I felt that osteopathy might be more effective for maintaining body alignment.

I know how challenging it can be to find the right treatment, especially in Vietnam. And when you're in pain, you're desperate to try anything to find relief. Though I found treatments that worked for me, this is not an endorsement of the therapies or to suggest that these may work for others since each person's condition and the response is unique to their own. Through this process of treating my pain, I have gained a better understanding of my body and learned simple tips such as regular stretch, exercise, and correct posture, can help significantly in preventing future injuries and pain. ■

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Kids & Education





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Zombie Minds

Can you be a prophet in your own hometown - where is your Rick Grimes?

Text by **Brandon Tillman**

MANY TEACHERS WOULD BE

aware of Sir Ken Robinson's discussions about various educational paradigms. Most would be familiar with Sir Ken talking of education systems as a 19th century invention that was created out of the need to look after the children of the Industrial Revolution. He is also well-known for his work on creativity and the establishment of a 21st century education system. A new paradigm if you would! Sir Ken has an answer to what the new paradigm should be. He says, "The answer is not to standardize education but to personalize and customize it to the needs of each child and community. There is no alternative!"

The trouble is, we do not live or work in a new paradigm (yet). We live in a time of transition. We are between paradigms. Yes, we have witnessed amazing innovations within our sector, but we have not brought along all of the parties involved in the understanding of what a new paradigm would look like. In Australia, there has not been a clear, open debate about what a new education paradigm should be. This is an issue that education systems globally have grappled with and has caused a lack of a shared vision. With no joint vision, people have felt disengaged with various movements and initiatives. This disengagement between the different parties, be they teachers, policy makers, university professors, parents or even the students themselves, has caused a strange symptom that could be likened to *The Walking Dead* Educators.

The *Walking Dead* Educators are people who have switched off from the concept of 21st century pedagogical practice. They do not prescribe to the concept of personalized learning, collaboration across student groups or even country boundaries. Their zombie-like minds think thoughts only of *back to the basics, I have always done it this way, or it did not do me any harm!* Their goal is to have their students score elevated scores in the high-stakes standardized tests that many governments have imposed on schools. In my own

hometown of Sydney, Australia, a principal showed signs of this thinking in his actions to ban laptops in his school for fear of distraction. His rationale was honorable (although his actions were highly questionable); he wanted to improve the test results of his students. The question is, is our entire education system worth more than merely scoring high on your finishing exams? Surely as a society we want more from 13 years of education! What we need is to produce students who have the problem-solving capabilities and the collaborative skills that will best suit our society's needs in our current and future economies.

Where Is Our Rick Grimes? Who Can Fight The Walking Dead?

We are blessed with a plethora of innovative educators who are able to add transition contemporary paradigm. Dr. Allan Carrington from Adelaide fights the good fight. His Pedagogy Wheel highlights the need to put pedagogy before technology. He interweaves the SAMR model with Bloom's taxonomy to create a usable tool where teachers can embed good practice into their lessons through the use of an appropriate technological aid. At the center of the wheel are graduate capabilities that using the tool will help to develop. These capabilities include having passion and enthusiasm for one's work. Students also develop the ability to learn from their errors, be collaborative and to think strategically. These are the desirable corporate skill sets that we need to develop to make our students more effective and productive members of society when they transition into adulthood.

Dr. Alan Finkel, the Chief Scientist, recently released a report compiled by Professor Chubb into the future of a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) workforce in Australia. He highlighted the need for technological literacy has begun to blur between STEM and non-STEM areas. That said, the report also found that STEM-related jobs are growing in

Australia at a rate of 1.5 times the speed of non-STEM employment. However, our current graduate population consists of only 15 percent of graduates qualified in STEM, while 26 percent of the population is qualified in non-STEM areas. The report raises the question, is this an appropriate balance to move towards for any nation wanting a successful future in a STEM-centric economy as we re-shape our global economy?

It Is Hard To Be A Prophet In Your Own Hometown

Proactive teachers do not want to sit waiting for a Rick Grimes style hero to come and give them a gift-wrapped cure to solve all their zombie apocalypse style issues. They want to solve their own problems and share their knowledge, cures and practices with others. Often though, they hit a brick wall. It is all too common for great teachers to go unlistened to while schools and systems seek advice from further afield.

Why is it that leadership within schools and education systems demand expert advice from other states and countries? Have The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) results from The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) got us mesmerized with what is occurring in Finland and Singapore or is it something more subtle that prevents us from tapping into the local knowledge as often as we should?

It can be hard to be a prophet in your hometown because your local audience remembers you when you were developing your ideas and skill set. They knew you when you were learning and still cutting teeth. They remember you before you got to a level of proficiency that others would consider expert status.

Familiarity creates fondness, but it can also breed contempt. People are less likely to get excited about something that they are already familiar with. This is true in business, relationships and education.

There is a need for principals and system leaders to be more open to using the talent of those in their own backyard, but at the same time if you are sick of waiting for a knight in shining armor to save you and your students and you are ready to be your own Rick Grimes, reach out beyond your immediate surrounds. Look for ways to find connections. What you will find from city to city, state to state and even country to country is that we are all fighting the same fight. All teachers are looking for ways to better engage with their students and help them achieve stronger results. We all want to strengthen our bonds with parents as we not only navigate political interference but work to build better schools. If you have answers to these issues, then you will have an audience eager to listen. You just need to find a way for your voice to be heard! ■

Smartphone Dilemma

Coping with and, sometimes, without our phones for a balanced life



THIS MORNING THE ALARM clock on my phone woke me up and, as it does every day, a gentle melody tune eased me up from my pillows. I checked my messages, scrolled the news, and cleared my notifications while I had my coffee. I laughed at the messages my family sent several hours before, strapped on my headphones to listen to my favorite Spotify playlist and stepped out the door.

When I arrive in my classroom each day, I turn on my PC, open up my laptop, check my email, grade my students' assignments and scroll the headlines all before the bell rings. I'll view my phone

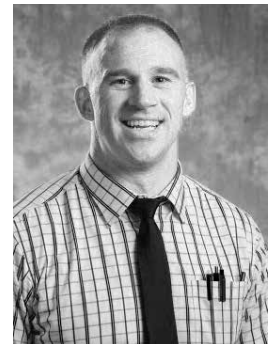
again during lunch to message family, browse Booking.com and use Google Keep to record my ideas. I'll receive another 15-30 emails throughout the day and another 10 after 4pm. I also get countless messages from groups of friends on Whatsapp and Facebook Messenger. I try to refrain from checking my Facebook or Instagram until the day is done and I can decompress. The phone checking will continue after work while I watch TV, exercise and even when I eat.

Does This Sound Familiar?

Like most of you, I can't live without my phone. We need our phones to be

more efficient and "smarter," but does it actually help us? Every day starts and ends in a similar manner. Strapping my eyes to my cell phone wastes precious time I could use for sleeping, reading or talking to loved ones. I was never one to play games on my phone, I'd rather read from my Kindle, but that's just one more reason to increase my screen time. Our phones have become a way of life.

We are inundated with notifications that zap away our attention. I may intend to use my phone for one thing, but popular app interfaces have made it so easy to scroll through a bottomless pit of headlines in a 24-hour news cycle. Additionally,



Bill Hanrahan is a Technology Education Coach & Social Studies Teacher at ISHCMC-American Academy. He is a Syracuse University adjunct instructor for psychology and entrepreneurship and is convinced *Seinfeld* is the best show there ever was or will be.

Instagram, my favorite social media platform, provides a thoughtless braindead form of entertainment. Time literally escapes me as I scroll through funny videos from Barstool sports, puppies and 90's classic wrestling matches.

This isn't news. It's been happening for a while. It's only recently started to be seen as something that is harmful to us. In a June 2018 CNN interview titled *Apple's Screen Time feature proves you're addicted to your iPhone*, Apple CEO, Tim Cook, stated he uses his phone too much and announced a screen time app to help others use their phone less. Well, thanks Tim, this is all your fault! Supposedly, Steve Jobs didn't even let his kids use the iPad when it first debuted. He's not the only thought leader or celebrity to warn against cell phone usage or even give it up. Ask Denzel Washington. He challenges you to turn off your phone for a week. Can you do it? Because access to social media and cell phones go hand-in-hand these days, it is truly harder than we think.

Technology in the classroom is sometimes seen as the future of learning. Being a technology education coach and social studies teacher I get to see the grass on both sides of the fence. I can assure you my beliefs are to use technology to improve traditional learning, not replace it. One problem that came across my desk regarded which app to use to get kids to record their homework. Different teachers have different techniques. Our Virtual Learning Environment also had its own method. Sometimes big problems require simple solutions. The best and easiest way for children to write down their homework is to write down their homework. Writing is still a skill we need to utilize. When batteries die, connections don't work, computers fail or data runs out, a simple pen and paper gets the job done. Additionally, a piece of paper or a journal won't vibrate to let you know someone liked your photo. Each time our children check a message on their phone a little bit of dopamine is released into

their brains. As a result, we are constantly checking to get that feeling.

Zero Interruptions

Some of you may not have as tech-filled days as I do, but no doubt your job requires email. Email serves great purposes to businesses and worker efficiency, but how much is too much? We need to distinguish when it's appropriate to write an email, or simply walk to that person and convey your message face-to-face. Even making a call to that person can save you time and energy. Think about how much time you spend crafting an email to ensure you don't come off the wrong way. What could you have done in that 20 minutes? And how often do you open your inbox to write one email, but ended writing a dozen? There is something genuine about face-to-face interaction. According to Adam Adler, who authored the book *Irresistible: The Rise Of Addiction Technology*, we develop our emotions based on how others react to us. We learn to portray and interpret other people's feelings based on face-to-face conversations—emojis aren't going to cut it in the workplace.

We need to find a better way to use our time. Technology is designed to make our lives easier and better, but it has highly addictive qualities. According to Time Well Spent (*Humanetech.com*) movement founder and former Google designer, Tristan Harris, those notifications and little blue lights are engineered to keep you tethered to your phone. Even he isn't immune from the chimes, buzzes and vibrates of the phone. The companies that made the apps intended to keep you on them as long as possible. As a result, it has monetized your time.

How can we as teachers and parents tell our children to get off their phone or laptops when we can't do it ourselves?

I can't tell you how to live with zero interruptions from your phone. I'm still figuring it out myself. I admire those

few remaining souls that never bought a smartphone, but we can take steps to change our cell phone behavior—if we want to. More importantly, we should be taking steps to prevent our students and children from using them too much. The first step is to model behavior. It's easier said than done, but don't eat at the dinner table with your phone out while instructing your child not to. The further away from the phone, the less anxiety one will experience. A study done by McCombs School of Business discovered that if your smartphone is within reach, your cognitive ability decreases.

It's ironic that our phone does have apps that can help you better use your time. A simple search of the following items in the App Store or Play Store can help:

Demetricator: Eliminates the numbers you see for facebook notifications. Good for your browser.

Moment or Quality time: Tells you how long you spend on your phone and for what purpose.

Deluminate: A background dimmer lowers the colors your screen emits so it's easier to go to sleep. This one is for Chrome, but this feature is also built into some of our phones (grayscale).

Here are several non-tech ideas you and your child can do together:

- **Clear and block** all notifications.
- **Turn off emails** after work in your app settings, or take work email off your phone altogether.
- **One-hour challenge:** Don't look at your phone for one hour before bed or one hour after waking.
- **Remove phones** from the dinner table.

Some of you may already have great techniques to limit cellphone use, others may be a "master of your domain," or "queen of the castle." Imagine if popular sitcoms reflected what life is actually like these days. Watching Jerry, George, Elaine and Kramer text each other just wouldn't be the same. Please share your ideas to my email (before 4pm) and keep reading. ■



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IN A PROCESS THAT HAS TAKEN

18 months, this is a moment to celebrate a significant milestone in ISSP's story of being Vietnam's leading international school for Elementary and Early Years.

Ray Davis, Director of School Support & Evaluation from CIS commented in the awarding report "[ISSP provides] a positive school climate with high quality relationships and genuine interest in the view of all stake holders."

ISSP has infused its programs and offerings with international and intercultural perspective so students can move forward with the attitudes and understanding that will provide them with a solid base wherever their studies or work may take them in their futures. ISSP commits to undertaking an ongoing external quality assurance processes to enhance student learning. Being accredited by CIS means that ISSP is comparable with many international schools that are accredited throughout the world.

Why Become Accredited?

For three years prior to commencing the self-study accreditation process, ISSP was a member of both CIS and NEASC. The Leadership team at ISSP believed as the school grew; it was the natural progression in establishing itself as a key contributor amongst much larger and established international schools in the city. "It's a demonstration of our commitment to all areas of school life in delivering a high quality international education," explains Mr. Lester Stephens, Head of School at ISSP. "It is not our ambition to be the biggest international school in terms of student numbers. We embrace our neighborhood-feel, purpose-built campus and respect its capacity. We do, however, want to provide the best international education that is available in HCMC."

The accreditation process works in cycles of five years. It is a model of continuous improvement and development so that schools remain honest to their objectives and stakeholders.

Dr. Alegria Lores, Visiting Co-Chair of NEASC commended ISSP for "... making significant improvements in the organizational structure, the building infrastructure, and the academic programs of the school..."

This is in part credit to ISSP's extensive campus renovation plans over the next few years of its learning spaces. The catalyst of which was to provide suitable environments that support the continued investment in modern approaches to teaching and learning.

What is the difference between Member and Accredited status?

A school must obtain Member status prior to applying for Accreditation. There are several services that members are permitted to access such as Career

and Recruitment resources, a profile on the agency Membership Directory and access to the membership network. "In addition to becoming a Member, the accreditation process is voluntary. We made the conscious decision to open our doors to CIS and NEASC to evaluate all aspects of the school," states Mrs. Rae Lang, Deputy Head of School and appointed Accreditation Chair for ISSP. Accreditation not only focusses on the curriculum and the teaching, but also on the way the school is organized. The process is thorough and accreditation status is awarded to schools that meet international standards in key areas such as Curriculum, Governance and Management, Student Support Services and more. Dr. Patricia Mertin, Visiting Chair of the CIS team commented "[ISSP is] ensuring high-quality resources and facilities are provided at all levels of the school to enable student learning in a modern and student-friendly environment".

To conclude the process, CIS and NEASC arrange a visiting team consisting of educational professionals to evaluate the candidate school's self-study report. CIS considers the peer evaluation model "a hallmark" of the accreditation philosophy and "a diverse [visiting] team enriches the accreditation process through the sharing of knowledge and effective practices..."

Why CIS and NEASC?

Both organizations are independent nonprofit agencies that are well respected throughout the global education community. There are over 500 schools worldwide that are awarded accreditation by CIS. Whilst NEASC is a globally recognized standard of excellence from North America with accredited schools in over 65 countries. NEASC Accreditation attests to a school's high quality and integrity.

The two agencies complement each other and are renowned for rigorous evaluation against internationally agreed standards through a blend of support and challenge focused on a school's development. Using a peer-based model that brings together international educators from across the world of CIS-accredited schools.

There was also a strategic reason CIS and NEASC were chosen for families that attend ISSP. For parents this accreditation is a major advantage since it will enable students to move from one international school to another should they relocate to another country or their home nation as accreditation is an assurance a certain standard that is upheld. ■

To learn more about ISSP's accreditation, speak to one of their friendly multi-lingual team by e-mailing info@issp.edu.vn or phoning 028 2222 7788. You can search for ISSP's accreditation status via www.cois.org and www.neasc.org.



Sun, Skin, Scar



Dr. Ruben Martinez-Castejon studied dermatology at Cardiff University in the U.K. and serves as an internal medicine specialist and dermatology consultant at Family Medical Practice.

Love to bathe in the sun? Then it's time to check your face, lips, ears, back of your hands, forearms, scalp and neck for these signs

ACTINIC KERATOSIS IS A precancerous lesion that can develop into a carcinoma. It normally appears in sun-exposed areas—as opposed to melanomas, which can appear anywhere on the skin.

It's typically a patch of raw skin that looks a little like eczema, but instead of appearing in areas of flexure (such as behind the knees or elbows) it appears on the “roof” of the body; the ears, nose, scalp (especially in people with fair skin and not much hair), the back of the arms, the back of the hands. Sometimes it's not so visible—it might look normal, but feel somehow wrong—or it could be raised, scaly, non-healing, sometimes itchy or burning. When we see a skin lesion with these features, diagnosis can be relatively straightforward.

They're very common in people who are frequently exposed to the sun—sailors, surfers, beach-lovers, pool-lovers. It's typical in older men, but can occur early depending on the type of skin; especially with people who have many freckles or who were sunburned when they were a young child when the skin is comparatively weak. They don't occur as broad rashes, but more like mushrooms—you might have two or three, four maximum, not very close together. On the scalp, however, there can be many. The interesting thing is that they can be mostly invisible, so the skin changes happen much earlier than when the effects can be seen visually.

It's very important to treat this condition, as the mutations in the cells can lead to the development of squamous cell carcinomas and cancer. The fact is that actinic keratosis has a 10–30 percent chance of becoming, over a period of around ten years, a squamous cell carcinoma. So if we find it, we don't give it a chance.

There are different strategies of treatment. One of the strategies is “kill on the spot.” You see the lesion and you freeze it or treat it with something that is destructive. Normally on this kind of lesion, it's not necessary to do a biopsy, you don't need to make a cut. But most skin clinics choose “destroy on sight.” It's done repeatedly—once you have some, you have to go back after a few months to check for more.

There are also certain “field treatment” strategies using an immune stimulator called imiquimod. An alternative product is ingenol mebutate, which is derived from the plant *Euphorbia peplus*. These medicines burn the cancer cells via a direct chemical reaction. Imiquimod increases the skin's immune awareness toward anything that is strange (and especially viral), which is why we use it to treat warts and cancer. When you put imiquimod on your body, if you have a healthy immune system, it triggers a very strong inflammatory reaction—not only in the lesions that you are treating, but also in the neighboring skin. The visual effect is very ugly, but it disappears after about a week or two and takes with it the existing lesions and any potential ones that are developing unseen. Finally, the skin is rejuvenated, and usually looks fresher and healthier than it did before, free of spots.

It's good to examine your skin for anything that doesn't heal, is pinky, scaly or scar-like. Actinic keratosis typically has volume or an atrophy; they can get discolored or have a whitish, spidery aspect. Any lesions like this that are raw and don't heal should warrant a dermatological check-up. At the clinic, we can examine the skin and do a dermoscopic check to see if treatment is necessary. ■

>> 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.

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Primary Campus:

69, #3 St., KDC Trung Son, Binh Hung, Binh Chanh, HCMC

Secondary Campus:

Duong noi bo so 1, KDC Tan An Huy, Duong Nguyen

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Kinder Academy
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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.

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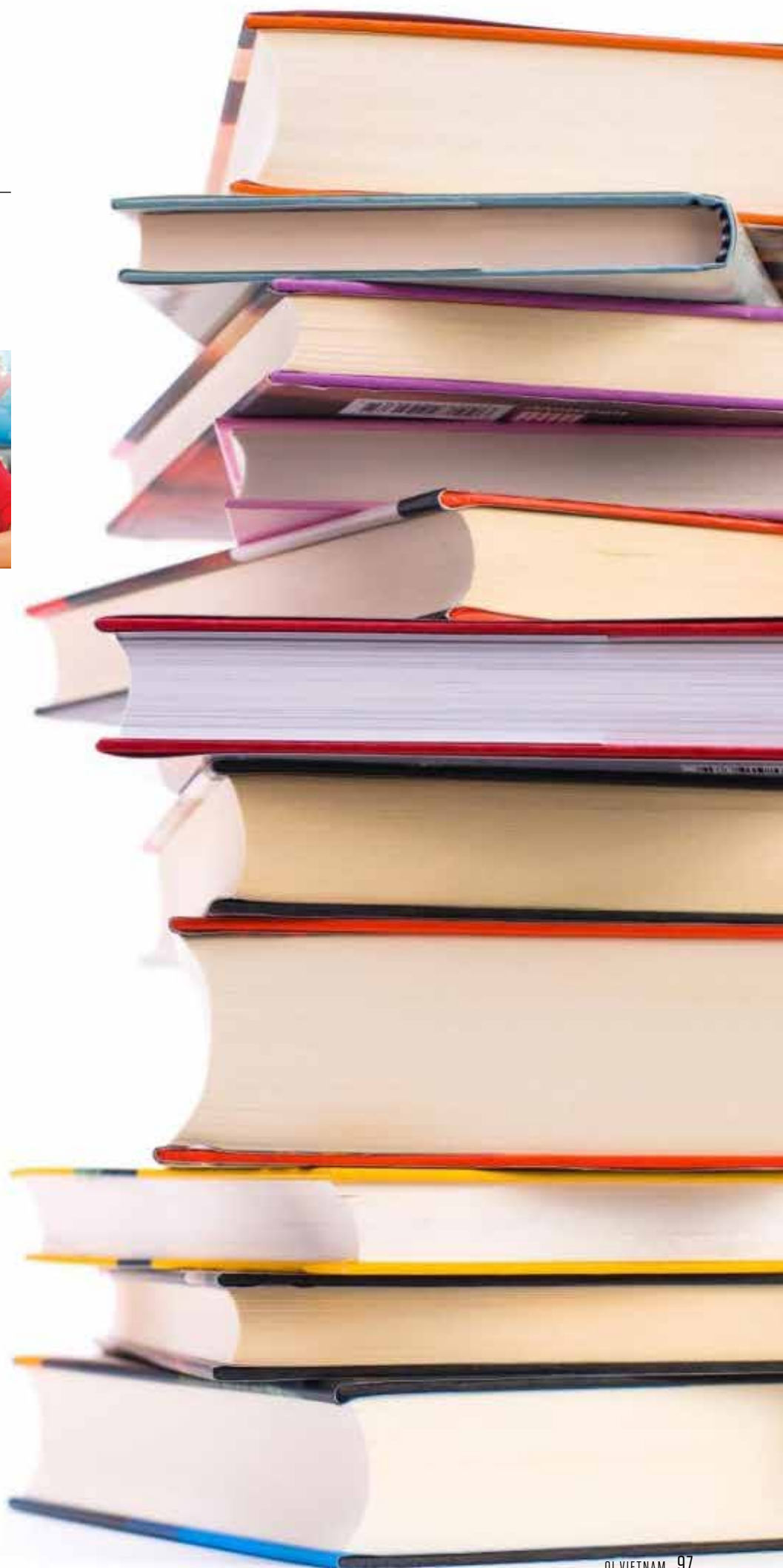




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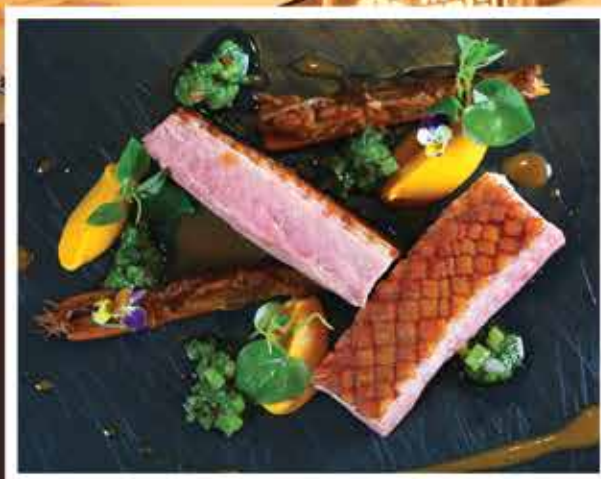
COGNITA



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For bookings, please call 0906 900 523 or email: culinary@caravellehotel.com

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