



VIETNAM

10-2018

The Good Life

Hot Rods

The Go-To Guy For
Custom Cars And Restoration

PAGE 18

A Method to the Madness

Raising Mental Health Awareness
Through The Arts

PAGE 22

Juicy Grilled Glory

Don't Miss The Beer And Barbecue
At The Rooftop BBQ

PAGE 56

Woof Rider

Take Your Dog On Your
Motorbike Trip Exploring Vietnam

PAGE 88



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Contents

COVER STORY

THE GOOD LIFE



THE MYST DONG KHOI / IMAGE PROVIDED BY THE MYST

34

FEATURES

14 TROI OI

Find out why health insurance, pine trees and weddings made it into this month's list

16 GOING THROUGH SPACES

with a necessary dose of surrealism to go through the spaces between men - an exhibition of new work by Hoang Duong Cam

18 HOT RODS

The go-to guy for custom cars and motorsports racing

22 A METHOD TO THE MADNESS

Raising mental health awareness in Vietnam through the universal language of art

24 RETAIL THERAPY

Done with Saigon's behemoth shopping spots? We unearth a few malls away from the mainstream

COLUMNS

28 TELL TAILS SIGNS

Common pet emergencies, part two

64 CHEERS!

Spain is doubtless a red-wine country, but don't dismiss the country's other white wines

94 THE DOCTOR IS IN

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Contents

WINE & DINE

RESTAURANT REVIEWS

This month we focused on downtown Saigon by revisiting Xu, a veritable institution of nouvelle Vietnamese cuisine, and The Rooftop BBQ, a new restaurant bringing popular Japanese-style barbecuing to hungry diners



54

XU RESTAURANT LOUNGE / IMAGE BY VY LAM AND XU

FEATURES

60 LET THEM EAT CAKE

Combine your love of Japanese food and cooking in one place

74 NEAR THE HEAVENS

Come for the magical mountainside Bana Hills, stay at exquisit Mercure Danang French Village Bana Hills

76 FAMILY BEACH LIFE

Connecting family with sun, fun and relaxation in the heart of Danang's My An Beach

80 WOOF RIDER

Take your dog on your next motorbike trip exploring Vietnam

82 HULLELUJAN

Exploring Old Hull, the oldest part of the city of Gatineau, Quebec, Canada

88 PERSON-FIRST LANGUAGE

Focusing on who students are as individuals—instead of on learning differences or other descriptors—starts with empathy



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Datebook

What's on this month...

OCTOBER 19

What: Rimsky – Korsakov's Sheherazade

Where: Saigon Opera House

About: Pianist Nguyen Bich Tra will perform George Gershwin's Piano Concerto in F major, a liberal, high-faluting work with a creative jazz blend. The show will feature the famous Sheherazade by Rimsky Korsakov, a mysterious, Oriental-inspired piece inspired by the story of *One Thousand and One Nights*. Different color paintings will appear on continuation. The works will feature the participation of outstanding violinist Vu Viet Chuong, concertmaster of the San Angelo Orchestra of the United States. The first part of the night is the Introduction and Allegro from the string of British composer Edward Elgar with the participation of leading artists such as Mer.A Nguyen Tan Anh (cello), Pham Vu Thien Bao (viola), Tang Thanh



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Nam (violin), and Le Minh Hien (violin). The program's lead is special guest conductor Christopher Zimmerman, who owns the prestigious American Conducting Prize in 2011.

Contact: Visit www.hbso.org.vn for more info



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Datebook

What's on this month...

OCTOBER 26

What: MMA Forum Vietnam 2018: Mobile, The Marketing Imperative

Where: Ho Chi Minh City

About: Personal and tactile, at once mass-targeted and intimate, mobile is revolutionizing business and marketing, creating new industries and developing unprecedented brand engagement and loyalty. Inextricably woven into the buying journey and consumer lifecycle, mobile creates the most direct and closest connection brands can have with their customers. It's a marketing imperative, and The Mobile Imperative. But, including mobile as core to your strategy is only a first step. To stay ahead of the competition, brands need to understand how to optimize mobile not only within the marketing mix, but within the mobile mix itself. MMA Forum is developed by marketers for marketers and explores the most critical mobile topics in-depth. It's an event dedicated to building capabilities for brands by delivering tangible strategies that leverage mobile as imperative to meeting marketing objectives.

Contact: Visit www.mmaglobal.com/vietnam for more info



OCTOBER 28

What: Operetta Die Fledermaus

Where: Saigon Opera House

About: The Operetta *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss II, which is dubbed *The Waltz King*, is a humorous and fun play on the clichés in the life of the aristocracy. Fraud in family, friends and society has created a surprisingly exciting drama.

With great music, the operetta is much more entertaining than the historical musical or philosophical, deep religious. At the hands of director David Hermann, the *Die Fledermaus* has a lively Vietnamese version with the HBSO, a dance and the special performance that resonates instantly after the first performance in 2017. The program's conductor is the talented conductor Tran Nhat Minh.

Contact: Visit www.hbso.org.vn for more info



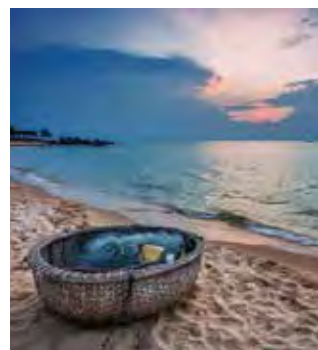
NOVEMBER 16-18

What: Coracle Music Festival

Where: Bien ho- Ho Tram Camping; Bia-Ria, Vung Tau

About: Coracle is a two-night music festival, located at the remote and tropical oasis of Ho Tram Campgrounds. Featuring over 30 live performances with international bands, local bands and DJs playing all day and night. Workshops, activities and on-site camping right on an idyllic beach, Coracle Festival promises to bring a "true festival experience." Tickets are between VND1.2 million-VND2 million.

Contact: For more info and to buy tickets, visit events.pouchnation.com/event/coracle2018



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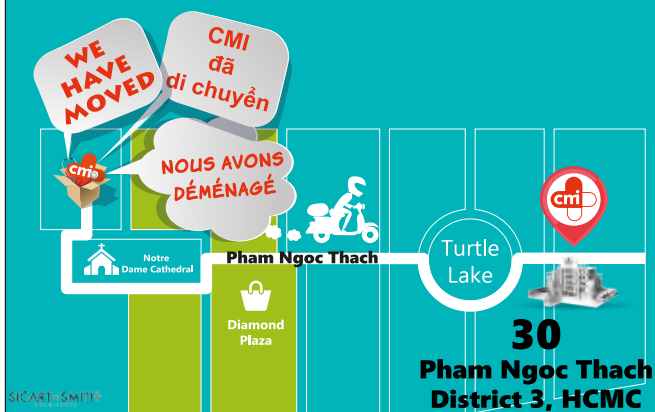
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of Viet Nam. The fines were handed out to overloaded vehicles, which were inspected from July 21 to August 20 this year. At vehicle weighting stations on highways, the inspectors discovered nearly 1,700 overloaded trucks, leading to the revocation of 556 driving licenses and fines. However, there are still too many overloaded trucks traveling on national highways because there are not enough inspectors, said the directorate director Nguyen Van Huyen. "Overloaded vehicles travelling on national highways and around sea and river ports continues to be a problem," he said. Overloaded vehicles cause damage to road surfaces, are unsafe in traffic and worsen environmental pollution. Most of the trucks were reported as carrying construction materials, soil, rocks or cement. To cope with the problem, the National Traffic Safety Committee has asked local governments to further reinforce inspection work at weighting stations along national highways, especially in areas near industrial zones, quarries, ports and construction material production plants, so as to stop overloaded vehicles operating without permits.

~81.76 MILLION

PEOPLE HAVE

joined health insurance as of the end of August, or 87.25 percent of the

population, according to the Vietnam Social Security (VSS). The national insurance agency also reported that an estimated 13.97 million people have participated in compulsory social insurance, while 241,000 participated in voluntary social insurance. In the first eight months of the year, the insurance sector has paid out sick and maternity benefits for more than 6.36 million people, and lump-sum social insurance payment to over 539,500 people. A total of 116 million patients received health checks and medical treatment paid for by health insurance in the review period, while over 487,300 received unemployment benefits including expense for vocational training. The VSS said it would continue to expand voluntary social insurance coverage and improve control of health insurance payment through applying electronic review of health care activities covered by insurance at all medical establishments.



100

COUPLES, WHO ARE DISADVANTAGED WORKERS,

join collective wedding in HCM City last month. The wedding is an annual activity on National Day (September 2). It is a solution to care for the life of the young workers, especially those living in difficulties.

After 11 years, 822 couples have been wed. On the day, the couples, in traditional wedding costumes, participated in a parade along major streets of the city and a ceremony to pay tribute to President Ho Chi Minh. They also took part in a training course on home management skills and joined a honeymoon trip to the country's tourism destinations. In addition, the organizers presented electric bicycles, each worth VND9.7 million, and happy rooms, worth VND20 million each, to 11 couples.



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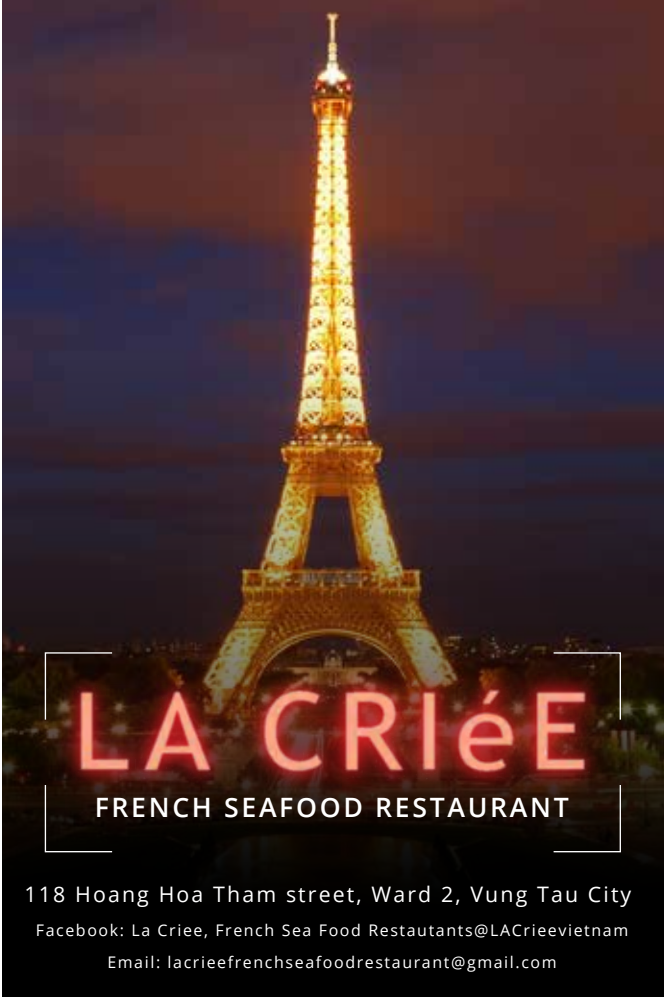



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100s OF 20-50-YEAR-OLD PINE TREES have been illegally cut down or poisoned with chemicals in the Central Highland province of Lam Dong. Some 460 three-leaf pine trees were cut down and 556 others carved and injected with pesticides so that they would gradually die in Subdivision 216 of the Phi Lieng protection forest, *Tien Phong (Vanguard)* newspaper reported. The bark of several trees was peeled off so as to cut off nutrient supply. Many roots, with diameters measuring 20-60cm, were also burnt as if to erase evidences of the crime, according to Le Van Tan, head of the Phi Lieng forest management board. The total damaged area is 40sq.m, including sections that were grown in 1997. Hundreds of other pine trees were subject to the same treatment in Subdivision 215, including those more than 50 years old. The case is under investigation.



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Going Through Spaces

with a necessary dose of surrealism to go through the spaces between men - an exhibition of new work by Hoang Duong Cam

Text and Images Provided by **Galerie Quynh**

FOR HOANG DUONG CAM

the task of the artist is akin to an acrobatic feat of tightrope walking between contradictions. Formal and conceptual opposites recur in this new body of works, straddling jutting and flat surfaces, melancholic and vivid palettes, grand and minor narratives, external and internal worlds. The series of paintings and sculptures



words and reasoning, expressible only through means of fleeting emotions, as well as a sense of lingering curiosity and confusion. Hoang links these liminal experiences to the Zen concept of *công án* (*koan/gong'an*), a meditative exercise of diverting one's perspective from rationality to search for awareness of the true nature of matters. In his own *công án*, Hoang turns away from linear, clear-cut narratives to search for insight and honesty through abstract, innate contemplations. Recognizable images from historic photos are replaced by vibrant silhouettes of the negative space between their borders, cut out and re-arranged, flipped and layered.

A fixation on often irreconcilable distance winds through the series, whether it's the gap between ambition and resignation, between the heroic and the condemned in a nation's history, or between calculated composition and inexplicable effect. Diving into intermediate spaces as an adroit painter and thinker endowed with endless meditations and digressions, Hoang disturbs these normative borders of past-present, north-south, east-west, craftsmanship-conceptuality. With a painting referencing Duchamp's mystical last work, *Étant donnés*, an ever bizarre and erotic landscape that could only be seen through two peep-holes on an old wooden door, Hoang obliquely invites viewers to embrace his work, and the world, with a private, and necessarily imaginative, exercise in looking. To see past, or around, the man-made borders that separate and compartmentalize time, territory and men is perhaps the reward of the work on the part of the viewer. The sensual and indecipherable figures floating across the visceral canvas are forever on the verge of bleeding into something else, an endlessly protean journey, patiently open to polyphonic readings. ■

with a necessary dose of surrealism to go through the spaces between men
exhibition will be on show until October 13 at Galerie Quynh (118 Nguyen Van Thu, D1)

deftly traverses these opposing realms and manifests the artist's eclectic interest in, and critical distance from, a vast range of visual, historical and sonic materials, from ancient folklore to modern war conspiracies, from Edoperiod paintings to European Surrealism, from Chopin's polonaises to Vietnamese bolero. Influenced by the nonsensical logic and play of Dada, Hoang welcomes accidental and fragmented narratives to leave traces on his compositions. Gesturing at multiple significations instead of grasping at a singular meaning, each work sustains a psychological balance among the chaotic forces of histories that fuel his vital mind.

Hoang continues his practice of weaving personal history and larger historical narratives but delves into the multi-faceted, ever-shifting and ever-colliding nature of borderlines—moving between those pertaining to history, geography, and those dividing rationality from the subconscious. Exploring the diverse interactions between these borders, Hoang focuses on the surreal

spaces between them, and the act of “going through” such spaces. Defined by liminality and the baffling unease that stems from it, the in-between space gives rise to substantial experiences indescribable by the rationality of



A custom hot rod car, possibly a Ford Mustang, is shown in a workshop. The car is white with a black roof and a black rear window. It has a custom body kit and a large, black, multi-spoke wheel. The car is parked on a concrete floor. In the background, there are wooden windows and a red fire extinguisher.

HOT RODS

The go-to guy for custom cars and motorsports racing

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



IN THE OUTSKIRTS OF SAIGON, down Nguyen Xien in District 9, a stone's throw from the province of Dong Nai, is a large nondescript building that contains SVK Customs operated by Kristian Somogyi. Kristian began his career as an aerospace engineer working on fighter jets in Sweden, but he always loved motorsports and eventually gravitated toward pursuing a career involving cars over planes. That passion

for cars, specifically in motorsports, led him to settle here in Vietnam. As Kristian explains, "Basically, I want to develop motorsports here, that's my final goal, so everything I do up to that is to get me to my goal."

When asked what type of motorsports specifically, Kristian mentioned track and circuit racing, as currently there are no motorsports in Vietnam. So then, why choose Vietnam? "Because my childhood friend was born here. Growing up in Sweden, I grew up neighbors with a Chinese-Vietnamese family and they inspired me to come

here," he says.

Although there are no official races in Vietnam, there are three racetracks. "Two are really small and one is suitable to go with cars on because it's wide enough, the other two are used for bikes, small bikes," Kristian clarifies. When asked if he had raced there he continues, "I've done track days, but there's no racing as of yet. Subaru hired me to do a safety-driving event with their customers and the press on one of the smaller tracks, which was quite good. I probably did 300 laps that day just taking everyone around, doing things like obstacle avoidance maneuvers and stuff like that."

What about the Vietnamese public in general? If there aren't races here, will they be receptive to it? Kristian thinks so. "Sure. The car culture is growing here. As the middle class gets richer they're



they're starting to look to upgrade their vehicles, so I think in a couple of years they'll be ready for a racing series. It's really just starting to emerge."

But what type of racing does he envision being done here? Would it be like the Formula 1 racing that is popular in Europe, or more like the NASCAR racing that is known in the US? The answer is neither, at least not yet. To start a racing scene in Vietnam the option will need to be much more cost efficient than those types of cars for an initial investment, and Kristian has a plan for that as well. "What I want to do here for a racing series is to make a cheap hybrid car; something that looks really nice, but uses a small motorcycle engine and a couple of electric motors. We will build it here to establish it for a racing series. It will be low cost."

Drive Safely

Until he is able to establish motorsports in Vietnam, Kristian is content rebuilding and customizing cars from his shop in District 9. How did he wind up at this location? Kristian expounded on how this happened, saying, "I met the guy who owns the factory next door and this building and we started talking. Then we came up with the idea that we were going to build the hybrid car for racing and he gave me this space to have my workshop here. I used to live in Danang before, for three or four years, then I decided to move down here because the car culture is

growing a lot more here in Saigon, and to startup with racing, here is a lot more feasible.”

He works alongside one of his close friends and a Vietnamese trainee as they remodel and customize cars, often older, classic models. However, there aren't many classic cars on the roads, so where do they come from? Turns out, they have been here for quite some time. “With old cars, like the 1972 Ford Mustang I have here in the shop, it's been here since the war. The Americans brought it and then they left it. There are also many old French cars from the colonial days. So, if the cars are from the 1950s, they're French. If they're from the 1960s or 1970s, they're American, from the war. And then a lot of Japanese cars came in after the war as well,” says Kristian.

The 1972 Ford Mustang that he mentioned, which is stripped down to the frame and suspended in the air on a car lift, serves as an example of how one of these classic cars that have been in the country for decades winds up in his shop. Kristian explains: “The owner of this car is a Singaporean guy who's had it for 25 years. When he bought it he fixed it up, but the way the Vietnamese fix things, they just kind of cover it over so it looks nice, but they use really soft sheet metal that you can bend in your hands, so actually it's a death trap. It's really dangerous because the welds are really bad and some parts aren't even welded together so, for example, the whole floor wasn't welded to the frame and this is a unibody car so the floor connects to the front and rear sub-frames, so when we lifted the car the car bent like three centimeters. Had they



apart. All of the body repairs here, none of it goes up to the proper manufacturer's standards. All of the modern cars are repaired in the same way.”

It's scary to think that these piecemeal repairs could lead to tragic results in the event of an accident, and this is a key component of what sets SVK Customs apart. They don't just make the cars look nice; they make sure the cars are safe. “Here at SVK, we use stronger sheet metal and tig weld everything so it will be better welded than from the factory. I don't let anything out of my shop unless I feel it's better than it was from the factory,” he adds.

Sometimes finding comforts from back home isn't easy in Vietnam, so is it the same for automotive parts, especially for rebuilding or customizing vintage cars? “It's a lot of work, but we strip the cars down to the base layer of metal to be sure there is no rust and then we build it up from there. With the parts we're going to keep we treat them with phosphoric acid to remove rust and corrosives. Some parts I may have to have imported, but most I make next door at the factory, where we have twenty CNC machines (computer numerical control machines used in fabrication). We manufacture any parts we can't buy or can make ourselves.”

Kristian does not disclose the price of restoring or customizing a car because every car is different. In fact, he can't even give a time estimate for how long it takes on average, because there isn't one. It all depends on the make and model, and how much work it needs to be restored. However, he admits, it's not cheap and it's not quick, but the work he does is top quality, higher than the manufacturer's standards, making sure the cars are as safe as possible. And for people with the time and money to invest in this, that seems to be just fine. ■

For those interested in racing, you can connect with Kristian at www.facebook.com/MotorsportVn, for custom cars or car restoration, visit www.svkcustoms.com.





A Method to the Madness

Raising mental health awareness in Vietnam through the universal language of art

Text by **Grace Homer**
Images by **Long Nguyen**





OPEN A VIETNAMESE DICTIONARY

and it becomes clear why “mental health” is generally misunderstood and misdiagnosed in Vietnam. The definition of “mental health illness” in Vietnamese is “*benh tam than*,” which translates to “someone with a severe psychiatric disorder that is close to madness.” The definition for a “psychiatrist” similarly translates as “doctors who treat madness.” With these terms being used regularly as the only options in the Vietnamese language, fighting the stigma around mental illness is a long process.

Appearances are very important in Vietnam. The good of the family is often held of higher importance than an individual’s welfare; someone with a mental disorder would look bad on the family as a whole, so would usually be kept away instead of being treated. The hierarchical system in Vietnamese families also makes it difficult for the younger generation to talk to the older generation about these topics as peers.

However, many organizations are now recognizing that young people need more support when it comes to understanding and treating mental health in Vietnam. One project making waves in this topic is the Wintercearig Project founded by Tricia Nguyen, an art house manager and ballet dancer living in Ho Chi Minh City. Tricia’s experiences over the last decade have led to this project, which returns for its second installation in Ho Chi Minh City this October following last year’s success.

Having spent a large part of her childhood studying in England, Tricia moved back to Vietnam in 2010 at the age of 19, but, sadly, a year later Tricia lost her

mother to cancer. In the years following, Tricia faced a barrage of pressures and trauma, which led to her being diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression. “As I tried to seek help from within the people I trust, I found out that there aren’t many people that are willing to listen, understand and support me,” she says.

Tricia struggled immensely and found that counselling and prescribed medicines did not help; the only thing that did help her express her feelings and anguish was dancing. “It freed me from being scared and angry at myself for letting it affect me the way it does. The idea that art can free your mind became clearer and clearer over time. I wanted to help those who are in the same position as me, or even in a much more difficult situation than me,” she adds.

From this realization, Tricia was inspired to create the Wintercearig Project—a collaboration between science and the arts to educate, inform and guide people through issues surrounding mental health. “It’s a series of artistic creations to help raise awareness for mental health in Vietnam through contemporary art as well as informing and supporting the community with workshops and talks,” she explains.

Taking place in Ho Chi Minh City’s Fine Arts Museum, the Wintercearig Project aims to provide important support and guidance through a series of art installations and workshops. The Wintercearig Project has also teamed up with Ethos Asia, who specialize in supporting child development and assessing behaviors related to mental health. Ethos Asia will be helping to create a safe and supportive environment

during the workshops and group talk therapy sessions throughout the project.

While the exhibition and workshops will be delivered in both Vietnamese and English, the universal language of the project will be art. The project hopes to enable visitors to express themselves through a series of visualizations, movements and workshops. People from all walks-of-life are welcome to either come alone or to bring friends, family and colleagues. Tricia hopes that the Wintercearig Project will help the community to understand that mental health support and education is needed in Vietnam as well as helping those going through a tough time to open up and express their feelings. “I want to create a space where they, themselves, feel safe enough to come and share and express their feelings and not feel like they have to,” says Tricia.

The overall aim of the project is to reduce the stigma around mental health and to educate the community on what can be done to support, to understand and to help those experiencing difficult times. Tricia particularly stresses the importance of making sure everyone knows they are welcome: “Spread the word so that together we can improve the current situation of mental health here in Vietnam.” ■

The Wintercearig Project takes place between October 5-12 at the Ho Chi Minh City’s Fine Arts Museum. The exhibition will run throughout the week, the workshops, including creative writing, art therapy and talking therapy, will only be held on October 6 and 7. Visit www.facebook.com/wpprojectvietnam for more info.



Retail Therapy

Done with Saigon's behemoth shopping spots? We unearth a few malls away from the mainstream |

Text by **Grace Homer**
Images by **Vy Lam**

ONCE UNKNOWN TO FOREIGN VISITORS, SAIGON'S alternative shopping malls are fast becoming tourist attractions in the city. Most of the fame is because of the highly 'instagrammable' café-apartment mall on Nguyen Hue Walking Street, whose appearances on social media in recent years led to the building becoming one of Saigon's recognizable icon. But, while a lot of the focus remains on 42 Nguyen Hue, Saigon is actually home to several alternative shopping experiences, from underground malls to apartments malls.

The New Playground (26 Ly Tu Trong, D1), Saigon's first underground mall, came onto the scene in the early part of 2017, launched by a group of young Vietnamese creatives. This underground shopping mall is a converted underground motorbike parking lot that sits opposite the traditional shopping mall Vincom Center. The New Playground gets many visitors, both local and foreign.

Saigon Swagger, a hipster Vietnamese bags and accessories brand, is one of the 40 local brands that occupy



The New Playground



a store in The New Playground. "The people that come here are looking for cool fashion so the whole place has more of a trendy feel than big malls like Vincom," says shop assistant Van Anh Nguyen. Many of the small local brands in the building are focused around fast fashion, selling the latest trends at low prices. Son Lee, a shop assistant in Kantan, a men's clothing store, highlights that while The New Playground brings a lot of young people in and creates a great shopping vibe, being underground does have its disadvantages. "We have problems with WiFi signal and electricity. Parking is also difficult."

The New Playground has a mall directly next door, however, few would explore further than the art gallery at its entrance to discover what this mall has to offer. Those that do are greeted by a beautiful, yet aging, building with a vintage elevator at its heart. Spread over three floors, the '**Cong Caphe apartment-mall**' (26 Ly Tu Truong, D1) as some refer to it is home to boutique Vietnamese brands mainly selling



42 Tôn Thất Thiệp



26 Lý Tu Trong



26 Lý Tu Trong

women's clothing and accessories. This apartment-mall is also home to popular cafés such as The Loft and Cong Caphe, a popular café filled with rustic, military chic decor that has taken Vietnam by storm after launching in Hanoi.

Eugene Clothing is one of the many air-conditioned boutiques that fill the hidden mall. Linh, the shop assistant, says that this shopping space creates more of a community than the big brands, high priced malls. Eugene Clothing's prime position next door to the famous Cong Caphe means they get a lot of foreign visitors. "Japanese, Western, Korean, Indian, we get so many different visitors," says Linh. "We do a lot of advertising on Facebook so that customers can come and find us." While shops like Eugene Clothing may not be discovered regularly as street-level shops, their customers tend to be repeat ones once they've stumbled across the shop.

Also on the first floor of the Cong



26 Ly Tu Trong



42 Ton That Thiep



The New Playground

Caphe apartment-mall is Annie Store, a trendy boutique shop specializing in denim trends and individual pieces for women. Anh Thu, who works in the store, says the love for the community within these alternative malls becomes clear. She adds that while it might be nice to get more foreign visitors, the fact that most of their visitors are young Vietnamese is good for them and their business. "Being in here is better than being on the street because we avoid the noise," says Anh Thu, as soft music plays throughout the store and the sound of the roaring traffic is a distant memory.

The fun doesn't stop with these two, Saigon is full of these alternative malls, which are usually stumbled upon by accident or sought out by avid followers of the brands. Try the yet-to-be-named converted apartment building at **42 Bis Ly Tu Trong** in District 1, where you'll find many young, hipster fashion labels selling stylish yet affordable clothing. Highlights of this mall include the beautiful stationary shop, SoNice, where you can find notepads, canvas prints, gifts and leather accessories.

Another mall in an aging apartment building proving that it is far from old and boring can be found at **42 Ton That Thiep, D1**. Similar to the others, this apartment-mall is full of young Vietnamese enjoying a coffee and a browse through these communities of boutiques. If minimalist or grunge-style stores are up your street, then you'll want to make your way to this mall.

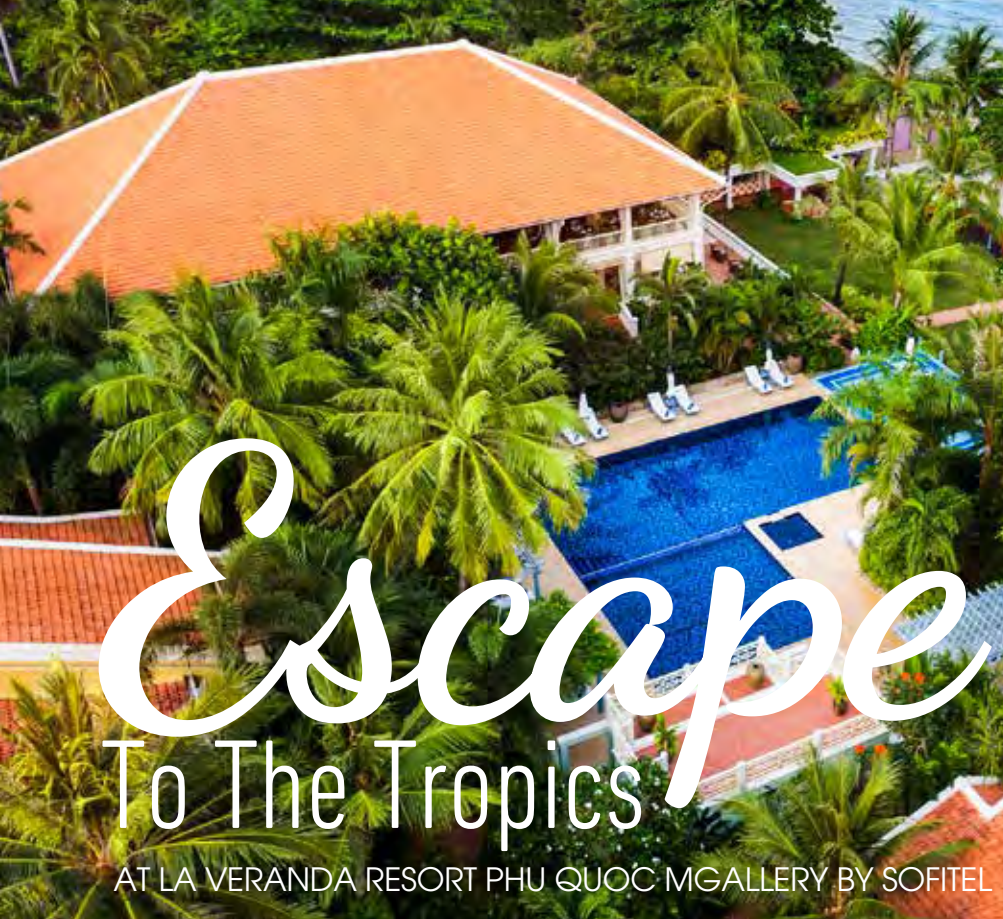
Just when you think you've seen a lot of what Saigon has to offer, these hidden retail spaces present a whole array of shopping and socializing opportunities. The biggest draw to them is the focus on local labels. Combine that with the sanctuary of air-conditioned stores hidden away from the hordes of tourists and loud traffic, and you have yourself shopping havens. ■



42 Ton That Thiep



The New Playground



Escape To The Tropics

AT LA VERANDA RESORT PHU QUOC MALLERY BY SOFITEL



Located on Phu Quoc Island, Vietnam, La Veranda Resort Phu Quoc MGallery by Sofitel offers the perfect quiet escape for travelers seeking warmer weather this winter season. With an easy 50 minute flight from Ho Chi Minh City, La Veranda is the ideal luxurious winter destination for those looking for a serene getaway, or planning honeymoons, spa vacations or family holidays.

An Island Sanctuary

Fringed by white sand beaches and enveloped by the azure shallows of the Gulf of Thailand, Phu Quoc is Vietnam's largest and most serene island. Isolated from outside influence for much of its modern history, its untouched coastline can now be easily accessed via flights from Ho Chi Minh City, Ha Noi and Can Tho international airports.

More than half of the island's 528sqm interior is blanketed in dense national park; its remainder is dotted with verdant pepper fields and fragrant fish sauce factories; with vibrant villages and bustling fishing ports. With delightful new discoveries.

A Mansion by the Sea

Positioned on the picturesque sands of Phu Quoc Island in Vietnam's idyllic southwest, every detail at La Veranda has been inspired by the grandeur of a French colonial mansion. Cocooned by lush tropical gardens, the deep private balconies, high ceilings and unique period collectibles furnishing all 70 spacious rooms transport you to a bygone era when life was slower, simpler. More refined.

Inspired by history, La Veranda's enticing blend of classical signatures

and stylish Vietnamese themes pays tribute to founder Madame Catherine's storied family connection to Phu Quoc and colonial Indochine. Raised in Phnom Penh and on the picturesque waterways surrounding Tonlé Sap Lake, Madame Catherine's childhood during the height of French rule inspired her designs for an authentic 1920s French colonial-style mansion – La Veranda's charming main house.

Refined Rooms

Its 70 rooms and villas exude an interplay of classic colonial signatures juxtaposed against elegant Vietnamese themes. With eight room categories, the tasteful accommodations feature dark wood, mosaic tiles, exposed feature brickwork, unhurried ceiling fans, and double doors with high ceilings creating a distinctive style with comfort and indulgence.

From Gourmet Delights To Unforgettable Indulgences

Amidst the lush tropical gardens of La Veranda awaits myriad decadent experiences from gourmet to sensorial delights. Indulge the senses with Le Spa's expert therapists offering organic therapies or have a taste of tradition

with its 2 fine restaurants. Daily gourmet experiences also await from private romantic dinners, to beachside buffets and cooking courses.

During the festive season, La Veranda offers memorable Christmas and New Year countdown activities with buffet celebrations, cultural dance performances and musical treats. Come pamper yourself this winter at La Veranda; a luxurious getaway that will surely leave you relaxed and rejuvenated. And don't forget to make your reservations early for the peak Christmas and New Year period to enjoy La Veranda's yuletide bash in the tropics. ■

Visit www.laverandaresorts.com. For booking or more information, contact La Veranda Resort at +84 (0)297 3982 988 or email contact@laverandaresorts.com

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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.

Common Pet Emergencies, Part Two

IT CAN BE QUITE FRIGHTENING to see your pet suffering, especially if you are unsure if the situation should be considered an emergency. When in doubt, always contact your veterinarian or the nearest animal hospital. But to hopefully better prepare you, here are 6 of the most common pet emergencies found in emergency veterinary hospitals around the country.

Poisoning

Certain foods and substances are poisonous to dogs and cats, including chocolate; grapes/raisins; human medications; rat and slug poisons. Many plants are also toxic to dogs and cats. With immediate treatment, recovery is possible. However, once the poison is digested and absorbed, the situation becomes a life-threatening pet emergency.

Trauma

Bites, falls, gunshot wounds and road traffic accidents. Your pet could have internal damage, even if he seems ok. Signs of a ruptured lung or internal bleeding can be slow to surface. A wound can be deeper than it appears and an infection can develop.

Gastric Dilatation-Volvulus (GDV)

GDV (a dog's stomach becomes twisted) commonly affects large dog breeds. Early indication: a restless dog trying to vomit after a large meal. As GDV progresses, the abdomen bloats. The dog continues trying to vomit, but usually only brings up a white froth. Odds of recovery decrease the longer treatment is delayed. This is one of the most urgent conditions in small animal practices.

Neurological Problems and Collapse

A neurological pet emergency can manifest itself in various ways: coma, disorientation, incoordination, severe lethargy, unresponsiveness, walking in circles. If your pet suddenly collapses and is unable to rise, possible causes

include: anemia, hemorrhage, heart disease, vascular disease, musculoskeletal problems, neurological disease, respiratory disease, toxicity, adverse drug reaction. Many of these are life-threatening.

Stings/Bites/Allergic Reactions

Signs: face swelling and hives (look at the belly). Severe allergic reactions lead to breathing difficulty (swelling of the airway), extensive bodily swelling, diarrhea and shock.

Eye Problems

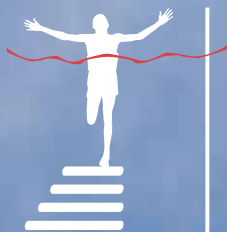
Eye problems can deteriorate quickly and result in blindness or loss of the eye. Signs: discharge, excessive tearing, redness, squinting/closed eye, swelling, constant pawing at the eye. If your pet have any of listed symptoms than veterinary examination is highly recommended.

Prevent What You Can - and Be Prepared for the Worst

While I love to see pets and their owners, I'd rather see them in wellness exams. Some disasters we cannot prevented, but at least some can be avoided or risk of happening can be minimized. (Like poisoning, overheating, car accidents, fights...)

The final part of prevention is being prepared. That means making your pet part of your family's disaster plans, and it means knowing what to do if you're looking at a veterinary emergency. ■





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The HOA BATIK collection symbolizes friendship, hope, peace and love to celebrate the 45th Anniversary of Diplomatic Ties between Vietnam and Malaysia. "Hoa" means flower in Vietnamese whereas batik is a traditional Malaysian fabric printing technique. The fabrics are luxury handprinted silk and adorned with crystals from Malaysia. The designs capture the essence of both countries from an art and fashion perspective. From the ao dai to the baju kurung, it takes you from daytime to evening with great ease, glamour and style.

Clothing: Umbrella by **Doan Quynh Nhi**
(www.umbrella-fashion.com)

Photographer: **Kenji**
Model: **Jade Nguyen**
Make-up: **Trang Bun**
Stylist: **Huyen Coco**











The Soda

AN LAM RETREATS SAIGON RIVER / IMAGE BY JAMES PHAM

Life





Crazy Rich Vinas



An Lam Retreats Saigon River



Dominique Saint Paul



Whisky Room at Shri

Get a taste of the high life seen in the *Crazy Rich Asians* movie right here in Saigon

Text and Images by James Pham

CRAZY RICH ASIANS OPENED

to rave reviews, telling a universally-familiar story of family expectations, backstabbing intrigue, and against-all-odds love set amongst a rarefied and glamorous world of extreme, head-spinning wealth. For many in the West, the first studio movie in 25 years to feature an all-Asian cast revealed a largely unseen side of Asia, now home to more billionaires than North America.

The rom com (and best-selling novel) follows Rachel Chu, a Chinese-American economics professor at NYU, and her boyfriend Nick Young, also a down-to-earth academic. The two head back to Nick's home in Singapore to attend a wedding and for Rachel to meet Nick's family. What she doesn't know is that Nick's entire family is not just rich, but *crazy rich*. What ensues is a hilarious, Cinderella-like, fish-out-of-water tale set against a backdrop of the uber-elite.

While it's fun to see how the 1% live, it's even better to taste the good life for yourself, preferably without the exorbitant price tag. Here are some of our recommendations for living the *Crazy Rich Asian* lifestyle right here in Saigon without breaking the bank. Warning: Spoilers ahead!

Gossip Central

All the dragon mothers regularly gather for Bible study in a lovely home surrounded by priceless treasures. More often than not, though, "Jesus time" ends up being a huge gossip sesh where the ladies dish on everyone and everything in between cups of tea and organizing Tahitian pearls by color grade. Hidden up a creaky set of stairs just a stone's

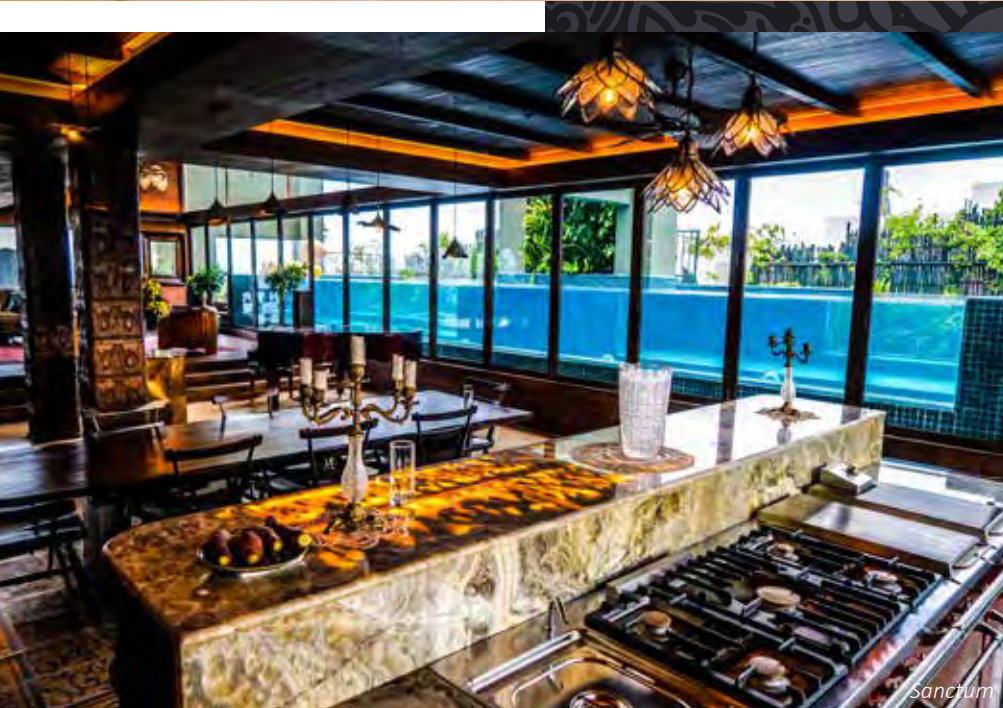
throw from Bitexco, Villa Royale Downtown Antiques & Tea Room (25 Ho Tung Mau, D1) is a great place to sit and gab amongst an eclectic collection of treasures from around the world including vintage kimonos, Buddhist monk scrolls from Laos and traditional tattoo needles from Myanmar. Choose from more than 40 varieties of teas (including the "Dragon Warrior," a black and blue tea with floral aromas) served in gorgeously patterned cups to go along with the delicious homemade pastries.

Street Food with a Twist

One of Rachel's first experiences in Singapore is gorging on street food at a hawker center where second- and third-generation cooks have spent a lifetime perfecting a single dish. Set right in the middle of the Cho Cu wet market, Anan (89 Ton That Dam, D1) celebrates Vietnamese street food with a modern twist. Founded by award-winning chef Peter Cuong Franklin, the compact eatery has received well-earned buzz for reinterpreting Vietnamese flavors with the help of premium ingredients and French culinary techniques, as in the Banh Cam, a fried rice ball filled with rich Marou chocolate instead of traditional mung beans. The Lemongrass Pork Chop is equally amazing, slow-cooked sous vide for 6 hours before being brushed with a caramelized fish sauce glaze and finished on the grill. The result is a spectacular marriage of *com tam* meets North Carolina barbecue. We'll let you discover the mind-blowing Escargot Dalat Pizza and the Banh Xeo Tacos for yourself, but needless to say, with just a few cozy tables, this place is always packed, so reserve early.



An Lam Retreats Saigon River



Sanctum

Members Only

Anyone who's anyone in Singapore high society belongs to an ultra-exclusive club (or two) where restrictive memberships are open only to the most established families and even then, usually come with a multi-year waiting list. Hidden behind a genuine sliding bookcase at Shri Restaurant & Lounge (23rd floor, Centec Tower, 72 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D3) is a secret Whiskey Bar known mainly through word-of-mouth. Evoking the ambiance of a gentlemen's club, the space is all about tufted leather seats, a mounted water buffalo head and one of Saigon's finest whiskey selections. While a bottle of Macallan Reflexion will set you back VND46 million and some change, try a smoked cocktail instead where you can watch as the bartender infuses genuine Scottish peat (or cloves, cinnamon, applewood or a myriad of other aromas) into your drink using equipment worthy of a science lab.

By Design

The ultra-rich fashionista doesn't even talk about last season's looks. Even designer couture fresh off the runway doesn't cut it. Why be caught in something that someone else might have when you can go straight to the source and have something designed just for you? For the best pair of shoes you'll ever own, head to Dominique Saint Paul (29 Dong Du, D1). Walk through the ready-to-wear collection featuring 36 styles for men and women including Oxfords, derbies, loafers and slip-ons, and straight into the back room where 260 fitting pairs await. Once you've determined your perfect fit and style, the fun part begins by selecting your very own signature color from more than 1,000 possible shades to be hand painted onto premium crust leather. Polka dots and ombre are wildly in at the moment. Further accentuate your look with meaningful details like pearl tassels inspired by Hoi



Anan Restaurant

Penthouse Views

Nick's mother, Eleanor, is all about social positioning. In the atrium-like living room of her penthouse apartment with expansive views over the Singapore River, she ponders how Rachel will fit in to her elaborately constructed social universe based on relatives, net worth, and what family scandals might have occurred within the past fifty years. Comprised of two penthouse apartments occupying the entire 27th floor of a District 2 building, Sanctum is one of Saigon's most unique residences with a gorgeous elevated living room, a screening room, and a music and dance studio to go along with three spacious bedrooms and a stunning see-through rooftop swimming pool. It even has its own website (www.sanctum.vn) although the owners are quietly enigmatic on whether it's for sale, rent, both or neither.

An lanterns, a distinctive brogue or a Vietnam star inlaid with mother of pearl. You're an original. Why shouldn't your shoes be?

Tea Time

Once a British Crown colony, Singapore has proudly retained elements of its colonial heritage, from its legal system to the language to beautiful heritage buildings, and of course, a tradition of high tea. One of the most civilized high teas in Saigon can be found at the Park Hyatt (2 Cong Truong Lam Son, D1) where leisurely afternoons can be spent nibbling on delicate sweets, freshly baked scones with jam and clotted cream, and petit bite-sized savory items served in gorgeous Hanoi lacquerware. Pinky up or pinky down, sip on a cup of Dammann Frères fine French tea as afternoon sunlight filters through two-story high plantation shutters with light piano music tinkling in the background.

Gorgeous Getaways

As Rachel and Nick are in Singapore for a wedding, they attend a pair of bachelor and bachelorette parties. Rachel jets off with the girls to a luxury island retreat complete with wooden bungalows by the sea while Nick finds himself on a megayacht with the boys. Once the party starts getting out of hand, though, Nick and his friends retreat to the sumptuous library for some quiet time away from the chaos.

Just 20 minutes from downtown Saigon by speedboat, An Lam Retreats Saigon River (www.anlam.com) is truly a world away. With just 19 suites and villas, many with their own plunge pool set amidst lush gardens, an idyllic escape is never far away. We could happily spend days here getting pampered at the spa, lazing around the pool or just watching the boats go by. The dedicated butler service is simply a bonus.

For a quiet meal in a classy setting, head down to Metropolitan Grill and Lounge (129A/1 Nguyen Hue, D1), tucked down a non-descript alley right off of busy Nguyen Hue. The classic American steakhouse serves up beautifully presented meals starring USDA prime beef alongside ingredients sourced from its very own farm. Oenophiles will enjoy the incredible 600-strong selection of wines, making the restaurant Ho Chi Minh City's first and only recipient of the Wine Spectator Award of Excellence. For additional privacy, head to the cigar and whiskey room towards the back where private tasting menus for 20 of your closest friends can be arranged.

Old School

Nick's mother, Eleanor, rejects Rachel as too common, saying she'd "never be enough" for her son. Hurt but determined, Rachel decides to face off with Eleanor by inviting her to an old school mahjong parlor where she shows what she's made of. Sitting in Zuzu Concept Store (48A Tran Ngoc

Dien, D2), we can practically hear the clacking of the mahjong tiles in this authentic wooden house painstakingly reassembled from a traditional home in Hue. Set down a hidden alley, the café cum retail shop features ornately carved wood walls and a pleasant vintage vibe. Come for a pot of organic tea from Dalat or a cup of Dak Lak coffee accompanied by delectable homemade French pastries while browsing the shop's carefully curated selection of jewelry, home décor and food items. The 1960's ceramics are an exceptional find as is the minimalistic furniture designed by one of the owners.

Sky High

In the movie's final scene, Nick and Rachel celebrate their engagement high

above Singapore's glittering skyline. True love conquers all as Nick risks his family and inheritance to propose to Rachel, while a silent nod between Rachel and Eleanor seems to signal a truce between the two, delivering a feel-good ending to this heartwarming story. While Saigon's skyline might not yet be quite as impressive, one of our favorite places to enjoy nighttime views is the Social Club at the Hotel des Arts (76 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D3). Set 24 stories above the city, Social Club has a good mix of well-heeled local and international patrons eager to dance the night away to live DJ music. Look for innovative cocktails and some fancy bar bites like french fries with truffle dip and Yellow fin tuna tartare. ■



Whisky Room at Shri



Dominique Saint Paul



Social Club at Hotel des Arts



Metropolitan Grill & Lounge



Sanctum



Villa Royale Downtown



Zuzu Concept Store



Anan Restaurant



The Distinguished Gentleman

Get a made-to-measure suit that'll make you stand taller, look slimmer and bring serious style to the boardroom

Text by **Paul Y Kim**
Images by **Vy Lam**





THERE ARE LITTLE TO NO reasons *not* to have a bespoke suit in Vietnam. The cost and availability of top quality fabrics and patterns makes the process virtually frictionless. The craftsmanship is comparable to anyone's you will find in Italy or Hong Kong. The only reason I can see for one living in Vietnam or staying for extended period of time *not* to get a bespoke suit is that one just can't decide what he wants from the myriad of variations.

Let this article be just one example of the possibilities for a beautiful well fitting suit.

I chose Gia Minh Tailor (31- D5 Biet Thu Saigon Pearl, 92 Nguyen Huu

Canh, Binh Thanh; www.facebook.com/GiaMinhTailor), a local establishment not affiliated with any international hotel or located in a tourist area. It's nestled in the Saigon Pearl luxury complex, a part of the townhomes adjacent to the high rises. They've only been at that location for the past three years, but bring over three generations of family experience. The original location being in Hanoi, Tuan Ly, up to his grandfather have been outfitting local celebrities, politicians and international dignitaries since 1948. Mr. Ly and his uncle operate this location.

The first step, of course, is to get measured. This is the best moment you can tell Mr. Ly of any customizing beyond your personal measurements (ie. having a sleeve shorter for your wristwatch) rather than waiting for the suit or shirts to be made.

After the measurements are recorded you choose from the more than 1,000 choices of fabric and colors. If it seems overwhelming, stick to the basics (navy, gray, charcoal, black). I know at times one is tempted to be a little more ostentatious with their bespoke suit—everything from a particularly flashy lining to extra short jacket length. All I have to say to that is to be careful not to come off as if you're trying too hard. And a bespoke suit should be in your rotation for a lifetime. Wait to go bold by your third or fourth bespoke suit. I chose a classic solid lighter navy blue.

Then the real fun part (at least for me) begins—the design. Mr. Ly will go through each design option, showing you sample pants and blazers to make the selection easy and with no confusion. I wanted the suit narrow and slightly slimmer, but not too tight. Too tight and you risk mimicking Mick Jagger and unless you're a Brit pop star from the 60s, I would stay clear from it. Too wide and you might look like an extra from *The Sopranos*. Middle of the road—well, then you'll look middle of the road. Of course each body type requires different cuts, hence bespoke always trumps buying off-the-rack.

Mr. Ly is also very helpful in his recommendations and very astute to current fashionable trends for the younger generation.

Always go with flat front pants. Side pockets on the trousers, I leave to your discretion: vertical slit or slanted pockets. I personally chose the slanted pockets as I found it to lay a bit flatter on my body. I have seen some go as bold as having horizontal pockets, but I found that to look a bit too casual. I requested a single back pocket just for giggles since I do not intend on carrying anything in my pants as not to disrupt the lines.

To cuff or not to cuff? Keeping with the minimal look I went without cuffs and with just a wink of a break in the leg, letting the bottom of the pant legs kiss the top of the shoes. Note: always bring your own shoes to a fitting.

I asked for a single breasted Saville Row cut or a British cut. You can, however, choose a mix of type of lapels, shoulder padding, to pocket flaps. I asked for personal embellishments of a ticket pocket that rests higher on the right hand side and for red stitching on the lapel buttonhole. The ticket pocket for a little “old-school” touch and the red stitching for a little detailed flair.

Depending on the availability of the fabric, most suits are completed within three to five days since everything is done on premises. You can even have it rushed for an extra charge if your time in Saigon is limited. You'll come in for the final fitting and any alterations will be made.

For just a little bit of time and effort, you'll walk out feeling like a style icon. ■

Suits start at VND3.8 million and increases dependent on choice of fabric; shirts start at VND500,000 and increases dependent on choice of fabric; and tuxedos start at VND4 million.

Saigon's Super Bowl

The C-note *pho* hits all the right notes

Text by James Pham
Images by Vy Pham

IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE A DISH more humble than *pho*—a peasant soup of stewed bones à la the French *pot-au-feu* combined with Chinese-style *fan* noodles and topped with fresh herbs. You can still find the rare bowl for less than USD1, but only at a mom-and-pop cart tucked way down a local alleyway somewhere. Even abroad, Vietnam's most famous export is seen as cheap, fast food when someone wants to go “ethnic.”

Peter Cuong Nguyen, chef-owner of Anan Restaurant (89 Ton That Dam, D1), is looking to change that long-standing perception with his USD100 *pho*. “If French or Japanese cuisine can be labelled ‘fine dining’, why can’t Vietnamese? I can make a bowl of *pho* for USD2 but I can also make it for USD100 to give people who’ve eaten *pho* a million times elsewhere a completely new experience,” he says in his restaurant tucked inside a wet market just steps from Bitexco Tower. “After all, what is the worth of a dish? It’s all variable, like the worth of a person. What we’re doing here is giving people something beyond what they know. We’re using luxurious ingredients like Wagyu and black truffle, but beyond that, we’re creating an experience. How many times have you spent USD100 on a meal and not remembered it at all? I guarantee you’ll



Beef Marrow



USD100 Pho

remember this *pho*.”

Like the rest of Anan’s menu, which cleverly takes Vietnamese street food favorites apart only to re-tool them using French cooking techniques and premium ingredients, Chef Peter’s USD100 *pho* pays homage to one of Vietnam’s original fusion dishes, with the French contributing the beef broth, the Chinese adding handmade noodles, and the Vietnamese topping it all off with fresh herbs. Chef Peter’s *pho* starts off with an incredibly clear broth, akin to a French consommé, achieved by a rigorous treatment of the beef bones, soaking, blanching, washing and cooking them for 12 hours. On the second day, seven types of beef are individually prepared including beef ribs cooked sous-vide and Australian Wagyu cooked medium-rare so as not to muddy the broth with its juices. The clarity of the broth can be deceptive, however. Thanks to long cooking times and a secret combination of ingredients (which over a glass of wine, Chef Peter lets slip is actually a combination of chicken, pork and beef bones), the broth packs incredible punch. “You can’t see density in liquid, but when you eat it, you can feel it,” explains Chef Peter. “What gives density to this *pho* is the beef marrow and all the connective tissue. High density means high flavor.”

Famed 18th century French epicure Jean Anthelme Brillat Savarin defined the concept of “gastronomy” as “the knowledge and understanding of all that relates to man as he eats. Its purpose is to ensure the conservation of men, using the best food possible.” Long the exclusive domain of French cuisine, Chef Peter sets out to elevate *pho* to the level of gastronomy by tapping in to the physiology of taste.

We’re in NHAUNHAU, a brand new space two floors above Anan. Swathed in custom-designed, deep emerald ceramic tiles, the lounge is all about seriously sexy curves—the wavy walls, the rounded



Lemongrass Pork Chop



Interior

edges of the tables and gorgeous blond wood bar, the honeycomb-tiled floor, even down to the circular mother-of-pearl accents on the chopsticks. Nostalgic music from the Saigon of the 60s and 70s plays off a vintage turntable producing crystal-clear sound. Everything about the space is designed to be a highly curated experience for the senses. There are only chopsticks on the tables, a deliberate effort to force diners to slow down and savor their food (although cutlery is available on request). Dishes are meant to be shared family-style, where diners can pick and choose what they like from each dish and are encouraged to socialize to find out what the other is tasting.

The *pho* set comes out and there's a precise order in which everything should be eaten. First is a small bowl of *pho* broth with a poached egg, a slice of melt-in-your-mouth Australian Wagyu and a wonderfully earthy, intense punch of black truffle to encapsulate the entire *pho* experience writ small, leaving you wanting more, much more. Next, comes a hunk of Australian beef bone, cooked in the broth and then browned on a grill and sliced in half to reveal the exquisite marrow inside. Fat-be-damned, the luscious "beef butter" pairs brilliantly with crispy sesame crackers.

Next, it's time to dig into the main *pho* course, a big stone bowl of steaming broth with six types of beef. A side dish contains slices of Australian Wagyu, to be dipped in the broth and then into a paste of Italian black truffle and truffle oil. With so many distinctly-flavored components, each bite is different. Each bite is divine.

Laudably, Chef Peter showers the same love and attention to the rest of his menu. You don't have to be a millionaire (even in dong) to savor his whimsical yet sophisticated takes on humble street food dishes. Grilled rice paper typical of Dalat gets a makeover, topped with smoky cheese and delightfully chewy



Chocolate Egg



Escargot Dalat Pizza



Banh Xeo Tacos



Cocktail Phojito

snails. *Banh xeo* (sizzling crepe) batter finds new life as crispy taco shells, filled with shrimp in a spicy mayo and peanut sauce as well as tasty *bo kho* beef stew, all to be washed down with a phojito, a refreshingly innovative cocktail inspired by the flavors of *pho*, complete with a charred stick of cinnamon, or a *tra da*, a take on the ubiquitous iced tea, here with Dalat black tea and honey with a kick of gin and lime soda.

Anan and its newest addition of NHAUNHAU plays with contrasts, mixing the modern with the traditional. Whether it's a Dalat pizza for a little over USD5 or a bowl of *pho* you'll remember for the rest of your life at USD100, Chef Peter wants to elevate eating into a genuine experience for everyone. "When you're a crazy rich Asian, you can get away with wearing whatever you want. Food is moving in that direction, too, being relaxed and casual," he says. "It can be really good food without being formal and fussy. It's the new type of luxury." ■



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Ah, to run away from the hustle and
bustle, even for just a night

Text by **Paul Y Kim**
Images Provided by **The Myst**

The Royal **Treatment**

OPENED LESS THAN A YEAR

and a half ago, The Myst Dong Khoi (6-8 Ho Huan Nghiep, D1) has made a name for itself as a design-minded boutique hotel. There is no shortage of luxury hotels in District 1, but none fuse old colonial charm, Saigon's ipseity and modern luxuries the way The Myst does. People choose the place they stay during travel based on neighborhood/ location, local experience, or just the view and amenities. It is safe to say that The Myst offers it all.

The exterior façade makes it one of the most distinct buildings, with its geometric shapes for windows and balconies, bursting with tropical greenery. From just looking at the building you feel like it could easily be a surrealist museum space. As you enter the lobby you are greeted by what appears to be an entire team of people buzzing around you. You almost feel embarrassed with the amount of attention you garner before you even check-in.

The lobby is designed using a mix of reclaimed materials from the old Ba Son Shipyard, Asian antiquities, and modern paintings from the investor's own personal collection. It does in fact feel like a gallery or museum like the exterior suggests. The Ba Son Shipyard was once a symbol of industrialization during the time of the 1800s and a reflection of the Saigon working class spirit. That symbolism is cognizant at the hotel, not just by reclamation but keeping with a maritime theme wherever they deem appropriate.

Each floor is made to resemble the city's residential alleyways— and the rooms, the homes in the alleyway. No two rooms are exactly the same—stroking the curiosity, like that of a nosey neighbor to peek inside each space as housekeeping turns them for the next guest.

The room I stayed in felt like a guest room of a colonial villa. It came with a king sized bed and wooden furniture. A personal handwritten note from the general manager greeted me with a platter of Vietnamese pastries and bowl of indigenous fruit. The mini-fridge also came stocked with Vietnamese beverages. The outside balcony comes with a jacuzzi with a view of the river. (More about the view later.)

The rooftop pool and bar is where you will want to spend the majority of your time. It feels more like a social club than a hotel pool or discotech like other modern hotels in the area. Here you can find a clear view of the Saigon River.

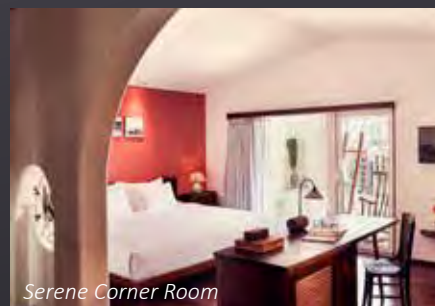
The aptly named The Nest Restaurant on the 12th floor is located two floors below the rooftop. The windows and steel ornate framing with lush plants that encases most of the building gives you a sense of being like a bird overlooking the surroundings



Lobby

perched in the restaurant allowing you once again to enjoy the view. They provide a "tea time" with hors d'oeuvres starting at 2:30 every afternoon. The food is a nice little treat and break from sunning by the pool. The hamburger is decadent, topped with gooey cheese, fatty bacon, and a perfectly sunny-side up fried egg. You'll be ready for another nap by the non-chemical pool afterwards.

The service is atypical compared to the usual languid and casual attention



Serene Corner Room



Bar Bleu



The Nest Restaurant



Bason Cafe

given to most patrons around the city. There was a sense of hyper vigilance almost to the point of resembling butterflies fluttering around Snow White when she prances through the woods and fields. Maybe I failed to tell them that I was not royalty.

The city of Saigon is ephemeral. Every metropolis claims to be, but in Saigon it is as if you are watching a hyper time lapse video. The streets, the buildings, the skyline—all are changing. This is perfectly evident at The Myst Dong Khoi with reminders throughout the hotel giving you pangs of nostalgia even if you have no real point of reference to what Old Saigon was like. The lurking monstrous construction of the Hilton nearby inching ever higher by the day could not be more literal of a manifestation of how the moment is fleeting. This impermanence makes your time in Saigon even more indelible, so enjoy it and before they find out that you're not royalty. ■



The Myst Suite



Big Love

The woman behind Vietnam's extravagant, over-the-top weddings

Text by **NPD Khanh**
Images by **Ngoc Tran and Misa Vu**



Misa

LAM TRAN AND HIEN VO TIED

the knot on December 19, 2014. The theme of their wedding was called "Love in the Air" because the couple loves to travel. It was an extravagant affair nine months in the making that consisted of an executive producer, 20 artists, craftsmen, and designers, and dozens more handymen and carpenters. Custom created and beautifully produced air balloons hung from the ceiling. The aisle was lined with rows of candles, yards of silk, strings of pearls and a veritable sea of hand-sewn roses in powder white, purple and pink. The walkway was paved with digital screens that mimic the appearance of cumulus clouds and the air in the ballroom was perfumed. A team of specialists supervised the lighting and music throughout the night. Halfway through the event aerial silk dancers from the Academy of Performance Arts entertained guests as they hung from the ceiling. A week before the wedding took place at the InterContinental Asiana Saigon, the couple released a cinematic film showing the pair strolling through flower fields in Moc Chau before finding each other by a real air balloon rented and brought over from Thailand. The final bill for "Love in the Air" was over USD50,000.

The grand architect of the lavish wedding was Misa Vu (www.facebook.com/MisaVuLuxuryEvents), known in Vietnam as the "Queen of Luxury Events." Though Misa Vu's eponymous company has only been active for several years they have already designed and created 20 weddings and events, each just as grand and as costly (some more) as "Love is in the Air." There is a saying in the industry: There is Misa Vu and then there's everything else down below.

"It started with a wedding card in 2008," shares Misa. Before the glitter and glamor she worked as a crystal painter and glass artist, but unsatisfied with using only one medium she started dabbling with making paper cards. "An acquaintance of mine asked me to make the cards for her wedding. I sketched out what I had in mind for her. A card of soft powder pink wrapped in delicate lace and gilded with mother of pearls, and a rose to keep it close. Four hundred cards with everything made by hand. She was so taken with my vision and enthusiasm that she let me decorate her wedding too."

Evidently, Misa did a good job because a couple of months later another friend called to ask Misa to plan her wedding. The wedding was called "Alice in Wonderland" and she was paid VND400 hundred million and, although it barely covered her expenses, it did help launched her career. By Misa's third event, a wedding inspired by Marguerite Duras' classic book *The Lover*, her luxury event planning company was officially opened in 2010 with her work and life partner.

Labor of Love

Misa says that three factors constitute a truly luxurious event. The first one is the client's expression. "A Misa Vu wedding cannot be a typical wedding. It cannot fit any preconceived mold. It is the expression of my client's personalities, of their stories. It is their identity. It says what they want to say and shows what they want to show. Everything is tailored to the client's preferences."

The second is uniqueness. Not one Misa Vu wedding is the same. This is a promise the company makes to every one of their clients and has never failed to uphold it. The third is quality, a feature far more difficult to explain. "I never want to plan a typical Vietnamese wedding where people attend out of politeness, eat some subpar wedding food, listen to cheesy wedding music and awkward speeches made by anxious parents, check the time and then discreetly excuse themselves as they sneak out the door. A wedding is once in a lifetime. It should be a joyous occasion! So I want to create not just a party but an unforgettable moment, a never before experience. I want to compose a moment everyone in the wedding party shares, where they simply forget the time and just enjoy the night together. Everything I do, everything I plan—the decor, the flowers, the music, the perfume, the lighting, the dance and

entertainment—everything must work together to orchestrate that one magical moment."

These days, a one-day event, regardless of the size and number of attendees, starts at six figures in dollars. "I do not equate luxury with over-the-top expensive. Luxury is excellence and excellence requires the right funding," she says. "When I started out, people had no concept of a wedding planner. My clients didn't even know what a wedding planner did exactly so I had to work my hardest to show them my vision and convince them to go with it. I budgeted carefully, wasting not a single dollar to make sure I could squeeze in as much of my vision as I could. Still I had to leave out so many things simply because there was no money for it."

She adds: "People think that we are raking in the cash but that's not true because what we charge goes to pay for the materials, for the designers, artists and performers. What we do is less a business and more a labor of love."

With time, Misa hopes to break the Vietnamese preconceived notions on weddings, the planning that goes into making them, and how much they should cost. "I want to do more events, better events, and bigger events. There are so many things I haven't tried, so many things I haven't done. My vision of the dream wedding is still not complete." ■



Falling into Fashion



Models: Katerina Lamteva, Yen Tran, Elvira Utyagulova
Photographer: Diego Chula

FOUNDED BY THE SPANISH

husband and wife team of Diego Cortizas and Laura Fontan, Chula Fashion embodies everything the couple loves about the people, food, art and culture of their home base of Hanoi where they've lived since 2004. "Chula is our life. It's not just about fashion," says Diego. "Fashion is just an excuse to learn more about the country you're in, your environment, and to get to know more about yourself."

Chula Fashion has also enabled the couple to work with a number of people with disabilities, all starting with a serendipitous meeting with a deaf woman. "When you start to work with someone with a disability, you start to realize that everybody has some kind of disability," says Diego. For them, it was not being able to speak Vietnamese. "So for us to learn sign language was natural."

Diego borrows from his background in architecture to design bold prints and patterns based on geometrics as well as more traditional Vietnam-inspired motifs, using sumptuous silks, linens and wool to create dresses, jackets, shirts, and other garments for men and women.



The Chula look is all about mixing the modern with the traditional, while staying true to its distinctly Vietnamese roots. Diego also likens the ethereal nature of fashion to the mapping out of clouds, a continual process of trying to define and reinvent beauty.

As part of the Fall/Winter 2018 collection, Chula has unveiled a series of gorgeous wool jackets and coats, injecting some much-needed color to the grey skies over Hanoi. Even darker backgrounds receive pops of color through geometric patchwork or intricate embroidery.

A signature of Chula collections are elements of whimsy, drawing inspiration from everything ranging from David Bowie to food menus to Vietnamese symbols. However, the luxe handmade garments with a European flair are hip enough to blend in anywhere in the world while still subtly showcasing endearing elements of Vietnam.

In addition to Spain and Thailand, four Chula stores can be found in Vietnam – in Hanoi, Hoi An and Ho Chi Minh City (at 32 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2). The Chula Fall/Winter Collection is available in Vietnam at their Hanoi shops (27 Nha Chung and 43 Nhat Chieu) as well as online at www.chulafashion.com ■






Wine & Dine

THE ROOFTOP BBQ / IMAGE BY VY LAM







OPENED IN JUNE, WHAT SETS
The Rooftop BBQ (2nd floor of M Plaza at 39 Le Duan, D1; www.facebook.com/therooftopbbq or therooftopbbq.com) apart, an open-air restaurant, are a few distinct features. First, unlike other BBQ places where you cook your own food and end up smelling like you worked an 8-hour shift on the grill, here they prepare the food for you with a special type of grill called Fuego. Fuego, the Spanish word for fire, is a unique propane grill designed by Robert Brunner, the former chief of design at Apple and the designer of Beats By Dre headphones, which has superior features for even heat distribution. With the lid on the staff, you can cook food next to your table without patrons leaving feeling like they've been fumigated. Another wonderful feature of The Rooftop BBQ is the beer. Barbecue and a good beer go hand-in-hand, so being able to order from a selection of the best craft beers available in Vietnam is another bonus.

With Head Chef Daisaku Takenaka manning the kitchen and run by Ryo Takigawa, the restaurant

Juicy Grilled Glory

Meat-lovers will not want to miss the beer and barbecue at The Rooftop BBQ in District 1

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

BBQ Platter

is a Japanese BBQ experience, the type that have become quite popular in Tokyo. Influenced by Korean barbecue, yakiniku is relatively new to Japan. It started around 70 years ago with the arrival of Korean immigrants, and there are now over 21,000 yakiniku restaurants on the island nation. Various cuts can be used for yakiniku, like the ever-popular beef tongue, chucks and ribs. In addition to meat, all kinds of vegetables, such as onion, green peppers, cabbage, and eggplant are grilled and served with the yakiniku.

To begin I ordered a craft beer, a Kurtz Insane IPA from Heart of Darkness, as the staff brought over a tray of raw foods to be grilled: bacon, marinated chicken breasts, Australian beef steak, skewered prawns and more, with cross sections of corn on the cob, okra and other veggies to go with the meats. Everything looked clean and fresh, and once I gave the staff an approving nod they took the tray over



Beer Can Chicken

of crunchy onions dipped in Japanese teriyaki sauce were delectable as well.

While we were already stuffed, we couldn't decline The Rooftop BBQ's signature dish, a beer can chicken, where a partially filled can of beer is inserted into the cavity of a chicken before it's cooked, adding moisture to the meat as the chicken is steamed over the beer. The staff brought this to our table where we were able to watch them take out the beer can and carve up the chicken. The chicken pieces were so tender and juicy that we gnawed on the bones getting the last morsels of meat clinging to them.

After our dinner we lingered over our craft beers as we looked down from the restaurant to the street scene of Hai Ba Trung below, as well as Book Street, which is opposite M Plaza. The Rooftop BBQ has a great atmosphere for relaxing and enjoying the surroundings once finished, and that we did. ■



Smoked Salmon Salad



Acqua Pazza

to the Fuego grill and commenced grilling as more food arrived. This time it was a Caesar salad with the lettuce stacked up to make it resemble a hamburger. Meanwhile they brought a charcuterie plate with cured meats, cheese and olives—the highlight of the plate were the boiled quail eggs stewed in a soy marinade.

Next came ratatouille with succulent zucchini, green squash and eggplant. While wonderful, it was too quickly abandoned as a tub of what they call Happy Fries arrived, which are french fries covered with bacon, cheese and chives. Shortly after this, the staff returned from the grill with our meat and seafood. The prawns were large and tender, perfectly accented by the traditional mix of salt and pepper in lime juice to dip them into. We enjoyed the smoky, thick bacon and the grill marked corn. The grilled sections



Charcuterie Plate



BBQ Platter



Octopus Ajillo



Rediscover A Classic



A long-time favorite, Xu is still going strong with its ambitious, mostly assured nouvelle Vietnamese cooking

Text by **Paul Y Kim**
Images by **Vy Lam and Xu**

XU RESTAURANT LOUNGE

(71-75 Hai Ba Trung, D1) is in the heart of the upscale area of District 1. Xu is trendy and a place filled to the brim with the hopes that something story-worthy will happen that night—similar to how one might have expectations when visiting Las Vegas—and Xu definitely has that “anything might happen” vibe. A distinct change of pace to a more exciting fine dining experience in Saigon, where the more orthodox French dining influence takes up a fair share of real estate in the cityscape.

The 2010 Restaurateur of the Year and Regional Chef of the Year, Bien Nguyen, cut his teeth working at restaurants in Australia at the tender age of 15. He arrived in Saigon in 2004 with the intention of bringing a modern flair to Vietnamese cuisine, shortly opening Xu in 2005. It quickly became one of the must-go, must-dress-up, must-be-seen hot spots for the freshly minted locals and

the out-of-towners who came to mix a little entertainment with business with the aforementioned.

You are first welcomed at the door by a statuesque female hostess and find the ground floor lounge. It is a beautiful long sleek space. The upstairs is the dining area and is similar in look and feel, but much more intimate even though it is more spacious. The immense floor gives each table a sense of privacy as if the entire restaurant is only for them—perfect for a date night or a power dinner meeting or just enjoying with your close confidants.

But did we mention that you also get to enjoy Vietnamese cuisine?

We were served the Discovery four-course (VND900,000 food only, VND1.7 million with matching wine) and the five-course (VND1 million food only, VND1.9 million with matching wine) tasting menu. The food here is traditional Vietnamese food with a few tricks up Bien’s sleeves. The

beautiful plating and the presentation looks minimalist at first glance, but you have to look a little deeper to see how it is similar to a sculptor’s work, with the ingredients acting like layers of color and texture. Everything from the banh khot to the prawns lettuce wrap remains true to the regions of Vietnam that the dish is suppose to represent.

The smoked bacon wrapped sea bass is flakey and buttery, while the smoked bacon doesn’t overwhelm the flavors and adds the right amount of saltiness to the fish. The Saigon stewed beef is a sentimental comforting feeling of home and mother’s cooking, which always remains universal. You will find hints of variants to tradition just to keep your taste buds on your toes and guessing. The coconut braised pork belly is a perfect example, as it melts in your mouth if you allow it to linger on your tongue.

The restaurant also has an extensive diverse wine list from France, Australia,



Coconut Braised Pork Belly



Chili Prawn



Cold Pot



Chocolate Kumquat Truffle



Che Troi Nuoc



Tentucky Kumquat



US and South America to cater to all your wine preferences. You can choose to have a wine pairing with the course menu, but we decided to go instead with choosing our own cocktails. The mixologists formulated a unique list of cocktails specific to Xu, modifications of known classics from around the world. For example, the capiruvá is a cheeky Vietnamese version to its Brazilian cousin, the caipirinha—adding muddled grapes to the muddled lime and replacing crushed granular sugar with sugarcane juice instead. The mixologist can also make bespoke beverages depending on your preferences. After a few carefully selected

set of questions by our server, he offered to make me an off-menu item he calls the Asian Lava—made with Hendrick's Gin, Thomas Henry Tonic imported from the UK, hibiscus jam, rosemary, lime juice and a garnish of rosebud. It was so good that I wanted to take credit for the creation of the cocktail. (I learned that that's how bespoke mixology is supposed to work.)

Desserts are literally served bite sized so you can indulge in the different delicacies as you wish or so to be shared with your party. They are served in duck soup spoons to give that extra playful moment to bring the night at the restaurant to an end. The sticky rice

mochi in coconut milk with finely cubed mangoes served in a shot glass and the matcha pudding certainly stands out.

The tasting course dinner may have ended, but it definitely does not mean the story has. As we are walking down the stairs and reenter the bar lounge on the ground floor, I suddenly realize how perfectly fitting the design layout is. I initially thought the lounge was the beginning of the night followed by dinner upstairs, but how could I have been so wrong. It felt as if Bien gave a proverbial wink and smile towards our direction as we ordered another cocktail at the bar. Cheers to continuing the story. ■



Let Them *Eat* Cake

Combine your love of
Japanese food and
cooking in one place

Text by **Carly Naaktgeboren**
Images by **Vy Lam**

AS STUDENTS LINED THEIR CAKE pans and became familiar with ingredients neatly arranged in the middle of the large island-style table, the coziness of Star Kitchen (www.facebook.com/starkitchenvietnam) was evident. Warm lighting, crisp white walls, state-of-the-art ovens, and modern clear chairs fill the petite space situated above the bustling Pizza 4P's Le Thanh Ton.

Six students, including one attending to bake a cake for her son's birthday, were there to learn how to make a sakura shortcake. A delectable baked treat with layers of white wine, raspberry and blackcurrant mousse, interspersed with pink sponge cake and decorated with whipped topping, each layer requires various steps and precise measurements.

The class is taught in Vietnamese

by the main chef, Minatha, who has been working at Star Kitchen for five years. She studied cooking at university and began baking because she prefers cooking without meat. Classes can also be taught in Japanese and English and most of the dishes are a combination of both Japanese and Western flavors because the CEO is Japanese.

The ingredients listed are almond flour, powdered sugar, regular sugar, butter, egg, gelatin and sakura leaves. First, we begin with the sponge cake. We sift flour into a bowl and mix in melted butter. Minatha teaches us how to divide egg yolks from egg whites by pouring eggs half-shell to half-shell until the whites are separated. We then use the egg whites to create a foam, pouring sugar slowly to change the foam to



something resembling whipped cream. Once everything is combined, we each place our light pink batter in our own individual ovens for 12 to 15 minutes.

As the cake is baking, we begin work on the white wine mousse. Minatha shows us how to soak the sheets of gelatin in cold water in order to help it dissolve easily. Next, we whisk egg yolk and sugar with the gelatin until it is all melted together. After adding whipping cream and sugar, we add wine and chopped sakura leaves, giving the mousse its titular flavor. The mousse is placed in the refrigerator to cool.

The cakes come out of the oven, fluffy, pink and smelling like warm sugar. We then use rulers to cut the cake into specific measurements for our final product, sampling the cut pieces as we



go along. We need three sheets of the sponge cake for layers. Once the mousse has cooled, we carefully lay down the first piece of sponge cake in a deep, square pan. We then measure and cut the mousse, placing it ever gently on top of the cake. We place another layer of cake on top of the mousse and it is all set aside.

Now it's time to make the raspberry and blackcurrant mousse. Using a purée, we again melt gelatin and sugar together. This is set aside to cool as we prepare to add yet another layer. Once cooled, we pound on the mousse, creating an echo of clanging tools and laughter in the small space. We cautiously measure, cut and layer again, then place the third and final sheet of cake on top.

Finally, we make a whipping cream to be the topping, layering it on last. Minatha brings out a torch and heats the sides of the pans to ease the cake's hold, then she removes the bottom and ever-so-slowly lifts the sides of the pans up to reveal six layers: pink to green to pink to purple to pink to white. All varying textures. We decorate the tops of the cakes with delicate flowers. Once this is completed, we box up our cakes and dive into Minatha's sample cake and warm tea. The cake tastes both tangy and sweet, each layer landing uniquely on the tongue. The sponge texture is offset by the coolness of the mousse, creating a distinct and delicious flavor.

Not only does Star Kitchen teach various styles of baking, but they teach traditional cooking classes twice a month that focus on sushi, pizza, udon and curry. Baking classes take place twice daily during the regular season and are often in the afternoon, evening, and weekends. Subjects include cheesecakes, crepes, tiramisu and even mochi. During the summer months, their class load is much heavier and includes classes specifically for children three times a day. ■





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

New Wave Whites

Spain is doubtless a red-wine country, but don't dismiss the country's other white wines

IF YOU'VE EVER HAD

Spanish white wines, it's likely that they were made from one of the three better-known Spanish grapes. If you had a white Rioja, one of the most internationally popular Spanish white wines, you were enjoying the juice from Viura (also known as Macabeo) grapes.

You may have been fascinated by the Rias Baixas wines, made from Albarino grapes (probably the most expensive and delicate Spanish white wines), also known as the Spanish Chablis.

Or perhaps you have come across one of the most widely enjoyed Spanish white wine, the Verdejo. A beautiful floral wine, with lots of tropical nuances, very similar to a good Sauvignon Blanc, but with reduced acidity.

However, Spain has many, some yet to be discovered internationally, amazing white grapes that are used to produce unique delicious wines.

My favorite, perhaps, is Txakoli. Made in some regions of the Basque Country in Northern Spain, from an almost forgotten grape, Hondarrabi Zuri, that delivers crisp, highly mineral wines, and not easy to find outside its local region.

Further to the South of Rias

Baixas, you can find the Bierzo region, which has become famous because of its amazing mineral red wines. Not many people know that the region also produces three fantastic white grapes: Godello, Dona Blanca and Palomino (the grape used for Sherry), delivering some very interesting white wines.

Without leaving the area, but closer to Rias Baixas, we find the unknown Ribeiro, whose crisp wines are mostly produced from Treixadura (and sometimes Loureiro, Alballo, and other local grapes) grapes. They are nice and fresh, but almost impossible to find outside the area. These are young wines, made and sold locally during the year of production.

One of my recent discoveries is the Tempranillo, but the white one. Yes, there is a white Tempranillo, a result of natural mutation of red Tempranillo grapes and Viura, which over the centuries has appeared mostly in Rioja. I have not tried many wines produced from White Tempranillo grapes because there are only a handful of wineries producing it, and in limited quantities, but those that I tried I loved.

Another white grape that is making its debut internationally is Alballo. Mostly grown in the center of the country, it is sometimes added to Ribera del Duero wines because it is highly aromatic.

Finally, the widespread Airen grapes, which are mostly harvested for making brandy, but some wineries are making rather nice, inexpensive wines with them. ■



La Vie En Rose – The Chanson D'amour That Will Never Fade By Time

*“Give your heart and soul to me
And the life will always be la vie en rose...”*

Not only having the opportunity to admire the unique moments of sunset from the height above 200m, you will be immersed in the melodious love. Enjoying good wine, beautiful scenery and fine music will make you suddenly realize how much you love that life. In the time frame from 5 pm to 10 pm, EON Heli Bar wants to deliver to our precious guests live music performance with different styles of music, from jazz to the immortal love songs.



Have You Ever Been Watching The Sun Sinking Down The Ocean Of Clouds Like A God?

You will admire the unique moment in one of the highest bars in Saigon. Standing on a height of over 200 meters, you will sightsee the sun as a fireball cooling down slowly sinking into the ocean of clouds. Make sure that you have time going up level 52 of Bitexco Financial Tower to enjoy those beautiful moments.

Or watching the performances of mixologists are enough to create memorable moments on your journey to the skyline.



Wine & Dine

ROOFTOP BARS



Liquid Sky Bar

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

21F - Renaissance Riverside Hotel Saigon
8-15 Ton Duc Thang, DI / 028 3822 0033



Rex Hotel Rooftop Bar

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

141 Nguyen Hue, DI



Social Club Rooftop Bar

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

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

SUNDAY BRUNCHES



Indulgent Sundays @ Nineteen

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

19-23 Lam Son Square, DI
hotel@caravellehotel.com / 028 3823 4999



Le Meridien

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

3C Ton Duc Thang, DI
028 6263 6688 - ext.6930
www.lemeridiensaiagon.com



MICROBREWERIES & CRAFT BEER BARS



BiaCraft

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

90 Xuan Thuy, D2



East West Brewery

Saigon's Local microbrewery located in the heart of District 1, HCMC. Offering a taproom, restaurant, and rooftop beer garden where customers can enjoy local brews and food crafted with ingredients from the East to the West.

181-185 Ly Tu Trong St. District 1, HCMC 091 306 07 28
booking@eastwestbrewing.vn www.eastwestbrewing.vn
facebook.com/eastwestbrewery



Rehab Station

Gastropub in a lovely quiet alley, serves Asian fusion food, 15 kind of different craft beer from most of the popular breweries in Vietnam, along with 60+ imported bottle beers, mostly from Belgium.

02839118229 hello@rehabstation.com.vn
facebook.com/rehabstationsg/



Fresh Authentic Colombian Food



Empanadas, Tamales, Pollo a la Cazadora, Bandeja Paisa, Arroz con Pollo, Sancocho, Ajiaco, Arepas, and more!



ADDRESS:

33/29 Quoc Huong,
Thao Dien, Dist. 2

Tuesday to Sunday:
11am-3pm, 5pm-11pm

Tel: **0126 465 0676**

www.facebook.com/donpataconsaigon/
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CAFÉS



Bach Dang

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

26-28 Le Loi, D1



Café RuNam

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

96 Mac Thi Buoi, D1

www.caferunam.com



Chat

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

85 Nguyen Truong To, D4



K.Coffee

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

Opening time: 7AM- 10PM (Sunday closed)
86 Hoang Dieu, D.4 - 38253316/090 142 3103



La Rotonde Saigon

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

77B Ham Nghi, 1st Floor, D1



The Workshop

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

27 Ngo Duc Ke, D1



Le Bacoulos is a French brasserie located in the heart of Thao Dien. Following the brasserie tradition, Bacoulos serves typical French food at affordable prices.



French Restaurant

Daily Set Lunch
at **VND180.000**

2 courses + 1 soft drink
Le Bacoulos french bistro,
13 Tong Huu Dinh
Thao Dien. Q2. HCMC

02835194058



The open-air premises include a bar and terrace and there is an air-conditioned dining room.

FRENCH



Le Bacoulos

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

13 Tong Huu Dinh, D2
028 3519 4058
www.bacoulos.com



L'Escale by Thierry Drapeau

Chef Thierry Drapeau a 2 star Michelin chef in France takes his inspiration from the surrounding countryside and its top-quality ingredients, then adding an artistic flourish to his fine regional cuisine.

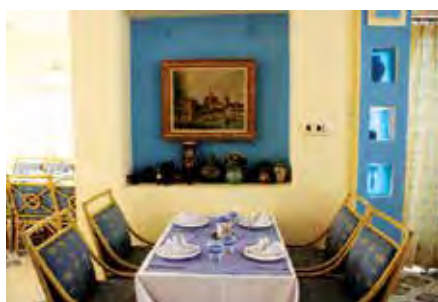
90 Quoc Huong, Thao Dien, D.2
028 3636 0160
manager@restaurant-thierrydrapeau.asia
www.restaurant-thierrydrapeau.asia



Le Jardin

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

31 Thai Van Lung, D1



Ty Coz

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

178/4 Pasteur, D1
www.tycozsaigon.com



Also Try...

La Cuisine

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

48 Le Thanh Ton
028 2229 8882

Trois Gourmands

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

39 Tran Ngoc Dien, D2
028 3744 4585

La Villa

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

14 Ngo Quang Huy, D2
028 3898 2082
www.lavilla-restaurant.com.vn



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

 For full review, please visit: www.oivietnam.com

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 8358

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

IMAGE PROVIDED BY MERCURE DANANG FRENCH VILLAGE BANA HILLS







Near *the Heavens*

Come for the magical mountainside Bana Hills, stay at the exquisite Mercure Danang French Village Bana Hills

Text by **Jesus Lopez-Gomez**

Images Provided by **Mercure Danang French Village Bana Hills**

THERE ARE AN ENDLESS NUMBER of places to stay in Danang, and you need no help from us finding them. “A place to stay in Danang” is one Google search away. But, what if you wanted a special experience? What if you wanted to escape to a private beachfront laid before a charming network of villas? Or disappear into a misty evening inside of Bana Hills with someone special? The mountaintop castle Mercure Danang French Village Bana Hills (An Son Hamlet, Hoa Ninh Commune, Hoa Vang, Danang), offers just that. They aren’t just places to stay while you’re visiting the place; both offer more than enough to *be* the place.

Bana Hills: the modern antiquity parked at the mountainside overlooking Danang. The spectacular views regularly draw massive crowds that ascend the forested hillside and scale the nearly 15,000-meter tall mountain to roam through the recreated medieval village. Everywhere, Bana Hills staff are wearing period attire complementing the charming castles that make up the grounds.

Nested within the European architecture is the Mercure Danang French Village Bana Hills resort. This is a 470-room premium hotel lovingly made with designs that extend the outside French village’s old world charm in an aristocratic abode. Darkened wood and stone amid the golden glows



of interior lights. The sense of being in another time pervades the entire facilities, from the hearth in the lobby to the suit of armor keeping guard that greets guests in the hallways on the way to their room. Inside, each of the rooms are dressed in wine colors: a purple chaise lounge in each room, cranberry red pillows are perched on a white duvet on the bed. Darkened wood beams span the length of the room’s high ceilings.

The crown jewel of the Bana Hills

resorts are the 35 VIP rooms. In addition to bearing the name of notable French figures—one is named after *Les Misérables* author Victor Hugo and another to Gustave Eiffel, whose eponymously named tower is today world famous—boast the most space of the resort’s room selection and a private balcony that overlooks the hustle and bustle of the world down below.

Staying at the mountaintop village and saving the commuting time necessary



of the nearly-winter nights, something you might miss if you've spent too much time in Danang or Saigon but will immediately recognize if your home country has a winter with quiet nights.

You might have forgotten the feel of a crisp breath of winter air, the pleasant chill of winter weather on the cheeks. Bana Hills at night is where you reconnect with the intimacy of going on a nice evening stroll. The only cars are the ones for decoration filled with flowers around the French villa's central square standing silent like guards around the public spaces.

It's the height, it's the rare moment of silence and darkness that defines the area. If you live in one of Vietnam's big cities, it has probably been a long time since you experience the silence and dark of night. The orange glow of security lights are absent from the nightscape in the Bana Hills mountains as are the honks, the calls and the

at night walk under the company of a canopy of stars seemingly made brighter by Bana Hills' nearness to the heavens and the sounds birds not yet known calling for one another through the darkness.

Under the cover of darkness, sneak in to the resort's pub La Taverne for a nightcap. Choose from one of the pub's selection of European beers and imbibe under dimmed lights that make mock oil lamps casting a warm amber glow under the low vaulted ceilings of the pub's vaulted arches. The low clearance gives is the effect of a European pub. The only giveaway that you're in Vietnam is the nightly karaoke held inside the bar.

The intimacy of chilly nights and the romance of a getaway—that's the type of stuff made for the very intimate, those with a world made up of just each other. ■

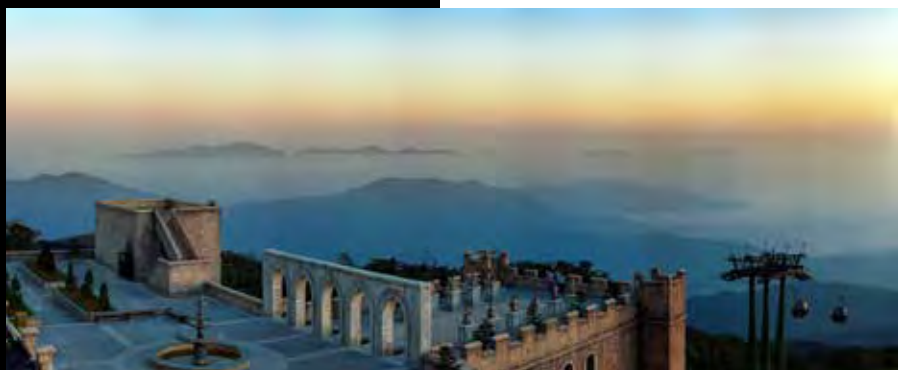
For more info and reservations, visit www.mercure-danang-banahills-french-village.com, email h8488-re@accor.com or call +84 2363 799 888.



to drive to the resort from Danang—at least an hour one way—means you can take Bana Hills in a more relaxed way and, say, have a relaxing massage at Mercure Danang French Village Bana Hills' spa. Bana Hills is not big but the only way to get around is by foot. Your feet will thank you when soaked in the spa's lemongrass and lemon bath.

If there's no rush, then you might even have time for a nice, leisurely paced meal at L'Etable, a horse stable-themed restaurant connected to the resort that serves a menu of Vietnamese cuisine alongside including a generous, tender leg of lamb in a red wine sauce, which is served with zucchini tomato and carrots. The meal is hearty with delicate flavors that would characterize a French dish.

If there's no need to rush around Bana Hills, you can spend some of the time relaxing and waiting for the sun to go down. As the tourists retreat to their hotels back on firm ground, Bana Hills' takes on a quiet, novel majesty like a theme park after closing. Bana Hills by night is special for many reasons, not the least of which is that during the evening with fewer people there. You can really take in the depth of involvement that the site's builder's invested in to the place. The place at night has a distinctly quaint feel. It's not just the temperature, which at night may dip below 20 degrees celsius. It's also the hushed, precious feel



Family Beach Life

Connecting family with sun, fun and relaxation in the heart of Danang's My An Beach

Text by **Jesus Lopez-Gomez**

Images Provided by **Premier Village Danang Resort**



IF YOUR WORLD IS A LITTLE BIGGER and is made up of more than just two, if it includes little ones, **Premier Village Danang Resort Managed by AccorHotels** (99 Vo Nguyen Giap Street, My An Ward, Ngu Hanh Son District-055000-Danang) is perfect for you. The paradisiacal village was made with families at the core of its identity, which mirrors Asian cultural values.

Traveling families are accommodated with private dwellings, which are complete with modern, furnished kitchens and a dining area that can either host sit-down meals or just be home base for snacks taken between dips inside the private swimming pool. Dining in is nice, but Premier Village Danang Resort's guests would be remiss to abstain from the daily breakfast spread inside the Lemongrass Restaurant, a potpourri of fresh grains and fruits complemented by juice and a fresh made espresso, or the seafood buffet at the Ca Chuon Co Seafood Restaurant. Guests can make a meal from the plethora of entrees ready for dining, or they can draw from the restaurant's selection of fresh seafood and have it cooked to order immediately within the restaurant.



The beachside resort is composed of villas built with modern designs favoring lines and broad planes of whites. Abounding everywhere are a cornucopia of attractive plants and flowers lining neatly laid out streets closed to all but the hotel shuttles and bicycles rented by guests.

There is a feeling of difference one may feel when looking over the spa's menu of treatment options, which feature hours-long sessions. In another world, our world, a place where our time is precious and scarce and must be protected from all unnecessary commitments like self care, this would be unthinkable. Here, however, the investment in oneself is not only permitted but encouraged.

That sense of a new world is conveyed through and sensed as a very literal part of the resort experience. Soundproofing protects the resort from the noise of the world, the pristine beaches are perfect for picture or for longboarding through the hotel offers.

It may be when your family is enjoy

Both the Lemongrass Restaurant and the Ca Chuon Co Seafood Restaurant as well as the resort's third dining location, the Nautica Beach Club, share the resort's deep interest in making space for families from the ample number of seating options for groups of five to 10 to the nice-to-not-uptight nature of the dining resorts. It's not uncommon to see children playing hide and seek around the dining room in the the seafood restaurant.

They are busy, but not bustling in the way that the typical good restaurant is. Similarly, the resort is nice without being ostentatious, handsome like a well-dressed guest for dinner. It looks like nothing else within Vietnam, and those inside of it could credibly believe they've gone elsewhere. This is perhaps AccorHotels greatest strength, the feeling of being somewhere else of their accommodations.



a private in-villa barbecue or when you've earned a couple of minutes to yourself having left the children with the resort's childcare facility. If you're ever at the resort within sight of the sea, the eyes tend to go to the blue horizon; more than likely, this is one of the few things you've looked at for the simple pleasure of seeing it in a long time. The pleasure of the sight is doubled by the paradisiacal accommodations. Like meditation, there is something special in becoming aware of your own ensuing pleasure.

It seems a curious irony that the end result of all the nice things around Premier Village Danang Resort—the purpose of the well-planned, flowered grounds; the animating principle behind the pristine, quiet beach—is to bring you to yourself and those closest to you. ■

For more info or to book, visit premier-village-danang.com, email H9530@accor.com or call +84 (0) 2363 919 999



Poulo Condor Boutique Resort & Spa

Where time stands still...

Text and Images Provided by Poulo Condor Boutique Resort & Spa

WHILE SEARCHING FOR A QUIET place for a weekend escape, the name Poulo Condor Boutique Resort & Spa will appear on many popular Facebook travel bloggers' page, which will make you fall in love at the first glance with the charm of the Indochine architecture and amazing surrounding landscape of the resort.

Poulo Condor was known as the name of Con Dao in the 18th century. After a 45-minute flight from the bustling streets of Ho Chi Minh City, you will land at the local Co Ong airport, which can impress any travelers by its surprisingly stunning view over the turquoise ocean. Con Dao, which has been protected for decades as a National Park, is a paradise off the beaten track and is recognized by the

immense natural beauty of the forested hills, untouched beaches and extensive coral reefs.

Only a 5-minute transfer by resort shuttle bus, you will reach a charming boutique resort, which is ideally located on the silver sandy beach of Bai Vong and right at the foot of Chua Mountain. It might not be wrong to say that this is the perfect place for those looking for tranquility and serenity within a beach nature setting.

Inspired by a harmonious blend of Vietnamese traditional design and French colonial heritage dating from the early days of the 20th century, the resort embodies the richness of Vietnamese culture with the vibrancy of the contemporary. All of the 36 magnificent suites and private pool villas

offer you the amazing garden or Mountain View and excellent valuable comfort with a large bathroom, double vanity basin and outdoor rain shower. La Falaise pool bar with a breathtaking panoramic mountain view is definitely a perfect place for you and partners to enjoy refreshing drinks or light food.

Dining options vary from the menus to the venues. Bistro Des Iles, the resort's main restaurant boasts a colonial ambiance and proposes the diversified cuisine from Vietnamese to Western or fusion with all flexible dining styles. La Falaise pool bar is definitely a perfect place for you and partners to enjoy refreshing drinks or light food overlooking a breathtaking panoramic mountain-view. We can create to suit any



customized special requirement for event & dinner.

For relaxation, you should not miss the Yen Spa, where all kinds of massage and spa treatments are designed to balance the senses and relieve daily stresses. Morning salutation yoga or meditation class is opened daily to welcome any travelers seeking peace. ■

All the amazing offers are available to discover with rates from VND3,450,000++ per night per suite. Contact the resort for accommodation and Con Dao air-ticket assistance: +84 (0) 913831500 (Reservation hotline) or reservation@songliving.com



Woof Rider

Take your dog on your next motorbike trip exploring Vietnam

Text by **Jesus Lopez-Gomez**
Images Provided by **Vespa Adventures**

ON A BRIGHT SATURDAY morning Elizabeth Souba waited inside Café Zoom (169A De Tham, D1) close to Saigon's backpacker area, the takeoff point for Vespa Adventures waiting for her day trip through Mekong Delta with Vespa Adventures Tour. Sunglasses? Check. Long pants? Check. Small Yorkshire terrier carried as one

would a child inside of a doggie-sized backpack? Check.

Vespa Adventures (vespaadventures.com) is one of the only tour operators—perhaps the only one that offers motorized tours—that is officially dog friendly.

Christine Na, Vespa Adventures lead guide for the Mekong Delta tour, said that the tour company usually operates under a strict “no pets allowed”-policy.

So, “this is a special occasion,” Na said. “This one is tiny and just fit [sic] enough on the bike.”

Her greatest concern was whether the other tour participants had a pet allergy and any discomfort that would cause. A larger dog would cause balance problems for the bike on tour, Na said. But Elizabeth’s 3-kilogram pup? No problem. “This is actually the perfect size.” Both Na and Elizabeth laughed as Monty shot a curious look around the café tracking the drinks being placed on the table during the driving break.

“I feel like I have a baby on tour,” Na said with a smile.

Elizabeth sent a photo of Monty in advance to make sure it wouldn’t be a problem, “and my boss said, ‘don’t worry, it’s just like a baby (sized) one,’” Na laughing.

“Steve (Mueller), the owner, I think his kids go to my school?” Elizabeth, a counselor at Saigon South International School, said. “I hate leaving him all day long.”

While riding and throughout most of the tour, Monty would remain inside of the bag under Elizabeth’s chin. The Mekong Delta tour wandered in to remote parts of the region rich in rice paddies and space. The tour included a stop at two traditional rice liquor makers, a temple and an incense stick maker. Monty walked along with the other tour participants here.

Monty garnered curious, interested looks from local Vietnamese living or working at the various stops of the tour. Monty even won attention from another dog wandering the wet market. There, a black dog wandering amid the narrow street’s wet market stalls went to Elizabeth and stood on its hind legs in an attempt to get a better look at what was in her bag.

For Elizabeth—one of many pet-owners who’ve bonded with a pet for

medical support—Vespa Adventures’ willingness to allow her to bring her dog was more than just a kind gesture. Elizabeth’s Yorkie is an Emotional Support Animal, or ESA, an animal that provides therapeutic value to her. A pet that qualifies as ESA has received its designation from a licensed mental health professional. Elizabeth started training Monty as a young pup, giving him formal obedience lessons and coaching him to become a pet therapy animal.

“This is not required to be an ESA but having a new puppy, was a good idea for me to train him young. I work within the mental health field and have provided pet therapy for clients in the past and my goal to not only have Monty as my own support animal but work with others in another therapeutic approach,” Elizabeth wrote in a follow up email.

Elizabeth comes to Ho Chi Minh City from Korea, one chapter in a decade of traveling the world. She has lived in four countries and kept another Yorkshire Terrier for companionship before he died in 2017. She said they’ve been critical to her emotional well-being while abroad. Monty looked content to ride through the countryside in her bag, but regular stops where Monty could walk with the tour group, wander just a bit and be held by the incredibly dog-friendly drivers of Vespa Adventures meant he didn’t have to. “[M]y guide was amazing with Monty,” Elizabeth said. It took a minute to settle in amid the noise of the traffic and the motion of the Vespa, but “he was able to get in to the groove with the ride quick.”

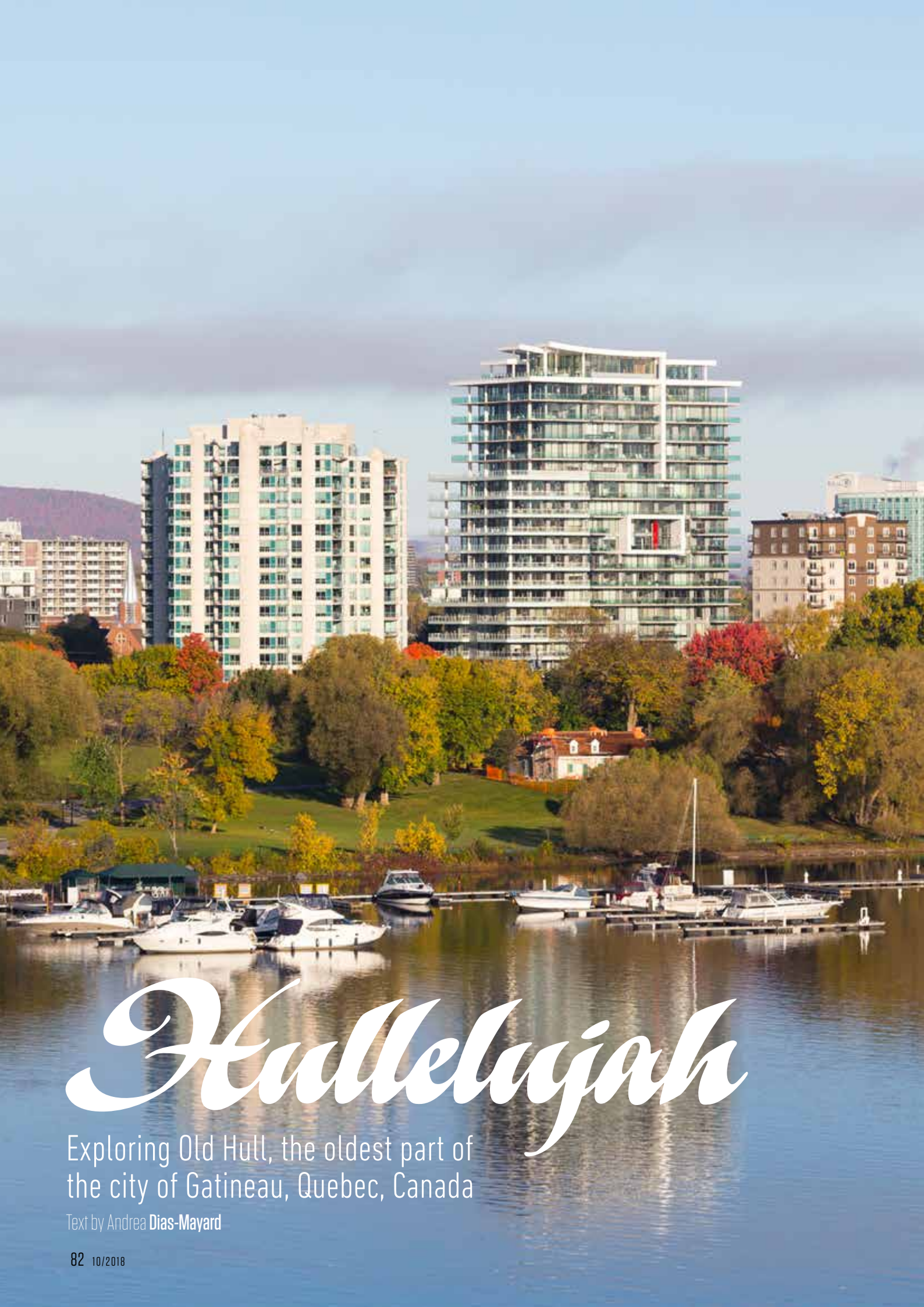
Interested in embarking on any of Vespa Adventures’ motorized adventures with your



dog—“Cats too!! We are cat lovers,” the tour company’s lead marketer Mario Orellana wrote—or other non-human loved one? Bringing your pet is as easy as adding an addendum to the online registration form when you book on vespaadventures.com. Pet owners need only list their pet as one of the special requirements the tour company asks about in the web booking form.

The dog can’t literally ask to be your “ride or die” on all of your adventures in Vietnam, true. But that doesn’t mean he or she doesn’t harbor the secret urge to be there with you at all times in their little heart. ■





Hallelujah

Exploring Old Hull, the oldest part of
the city of Gatineau, Quebec, Canada

Text by Andrea **Dias-Mayard**

AFTER DECADES OF TORONTO

living, my husband and I moved back to our hometown of Ottawa this month. We love the nation's capital and our traditional lifestyle here. But our mistress city lies on the Quebec side of the Ottawa River—Old Hull (now part of Gatineau).

Our quiet walks in the gentrified shadows of an old industrial town, wonderful meals on terraces, and visits to spectacular indoor and outdoor cultural exhibits feel clandestine. Many tourists to Ottawa (and locals) have yet to discover the surprises that await them here. It's only a matter of time.

Across the Alexandria Bridge

Many bridges lead to Hull. The Alexandria Bridge that begins beside the National Gallery of Canada is our favorite. One cannot stroll along the pedestrian boardwalk (there are separate lanes for people, cyclists and cars) without stopping to appreciate the unparalleled view—the river below dotted with undulating boats, the Neo-gothic style Parliament buildings behind, and the architectural masterpiece of the Canadian Museum of History straight ahead.

My last visit to the museum was well over a decade ago. While the totem poles of the First Peoples of the Pacific Coast in the Grand Hall stand majestic as ever, I am drawn to the newer galleries. At The Canadian History Hall I'm fascinated by the six-inch incisor of a beaver from 20,000 years ago when they stood as tall as men. At the Medieval Europe gallery, the carved ivory King from the Lewis Chessmen (circa 1150-1200) is very Harry Potter-esque.

Outstanding Restaurants in Hull

For many, the museum is the only reason they cross the river, but everyone should stay a little longer. Close by is a little slice of Europe. A pocket of Laval Street is closed to cars, making eating and drinking on the umbrella-lined terraces of historic brick buildings a quiet escape.

At Troquet, I savor my brie, prosciutto and apple baguette while co-owner Eric



The Canadian History Hall

Gaudreault talks proudly about the work he and the other independent business owners (there are no chains here) are doing to create something distinct and colorful. "It's not a vibe that's easy to find," he says.

Next to Troquet is Les Imposteurs, a creperie we try another day. We eat buckwheat crepes filled with wild mushrooms, blue cheese and snails, drinking cider beside an open wrought-iron balcony. From our vantage point, we take note of Aux 4 jeudis across the street where I'm told the young and old mix easily over a pint, and watch movies and listen to music on the terrace all summer long.

For the perfect date night, we try Soif Bar À Vin (not far from Laval Street). We sit at a high-top table on the back terrace, surrounded by colorful planters of edible flowers, lettuce and herbs. Their wine list is unmatched, thanks to internationally renowned sommelier-owner Véronique Rivest. I'm grateful we've left just enough room, after sampling many delicious small plates, for dessert—a tart of lemon curd, strawberries, haskaps (a northern berry) and toasted fennel seeds.

Insider's Tip: If you want to drink beer while learning about Hull's history (during Prohibition, the city was a portal for smuggling), visit the beer museum at Les Brasseurs du Temps. For a non-alcoholic option, re-hydrate at CHA-YI teahouse (best iced tea ever).

Old Hull Neighborhoods

While undergoing gentrification, Hull remains authentic to its working-class roots. A good example is on Hanson Street. La filature, an artisan workshop and gallery, is housed in the old Hanson Hosiery factory, the old signage still visible on its brick façade. Adjacent are working class homes that lead to stately ones from the later 1800s and early 1900s, where captains of industry lived.

Continuing on our heritage walking tour, we stroll past the handsome 1800s stone Theatre de L'ile (Hull's first water pumping plant) to the Ottawa River. We arrive beside the shuttered E.B. Eddy factory buildings, once a major employer in the pulp and paper industry. We rest for several minutes beside a contemporary sculpture (one of a few) to gaze across the river.

Walking in Paradise

One place you should not miss is the exquisite MosaiCulture Gatineau in Jacques Cartier Park. This is horticultural paradise. Think Edward Scissorhands but with 100 times the breadth and imagination. Opened for Canada's 150th, it has expanded to 45 stations of artistic wizardry from over 5 million hand-planted flowers and plants of several hundred varieties.

Don't miss the Tree of Birds "sculpture," an intricate depiction of 56 species threatened with extinction. Plan to stay, and enjoy freshly squeezed lemonade, gelato and other treats (no chains here either) on the patio in front of the sculpture of Glenn Gould's piano and the twirling floral ballerina.

Although my husband and I grew up in Ottawa, we couldn't believe that it took us this long to discover the real Hull. We won't continue to make this mistake. We will get to know our secret city even more intimately in the months ahead. ■



Alexandria Bridge

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For full review, please visit: www.oivietnam.com

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The Island Lodge

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

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For full review, please visit: www.oivietnam.com

Kids & Education



Person-First Language

Focusing on who students are as individuals - instead of on learning differences or other descriptors - starts with empathy

Text by **Cristina Santamaria Graff**

AS EDUCATORS STRIVE TO BE

inclusive of all children, one way to begin is to actively use person-first language, a form of linguistic etiquette in which we describe a trait or diagnosis as something a person has rather than as who they are—e.g., “a person with diabetes,” not “a diabetic.” This is a way to honor and welcome students with different abilities. Indeed, how we discuss and describe our students profoundly impacts their sense of inclusion in the classroom.

To begin using person-first language, we should initially try to understand its purpose and meaning. At its core, person-first language seeks to acknowledge the inherent and equal value of every individual, before attaching any other descriptors or identities the person may view as secondary or not intrinsic. Communicating using person-first language begins with empathy.

Countless individuals from various backgrounds, races, social groups, communities, or experiences are familiar with the isolation created by a lack of person-first language. This includes people who happen to have physical, emotional, cognitive, learning, or other differences.

Think about how you personally prefer to be viewed. Momentarily, let's imagine you have purple-colored eyes. Would you want to be known as “that purple-eyed person over there,” or by your name and the core identity you choose for yourself? Would it seem awkward, exclusionary, demeaning, uncomfortable, or limiting if others always identified you as “that purple-eyed person”? Would you perceive it as most valid to mention your eye

color only if eye color were the focus of the discussion?

Real-World Opportunities

Every day, educators experience numerous possibilities for applying person-first language. One common scenario is when we're referring to a person having a genetic pattern of trisomy 21. In this case, it's not appropriate to say the person is “Down's” or “Down.” The correct term for the condition is “Down syndrome”—but the person's name should always be used first. One should say, “Mikaela has been diagnosed with Down syndrome,” and not “Mikaela is Down's,” or “That Down syndrome girl is Mikaela.”

In this example, Mikaela is first and foremost a unique individual with many qualities and valuable contributions that are not necessarily linked to her genetic diagnosis. The fact that she happens to have Down syndrome is therefore not usually primarily relevant. It is a secondary aspect of her identity, and only she (or if she's a young child, her family or guardian) can and should determine its relevance.



In the same way, a person with a cognitive, congenital, or physical difference or a person with an identified learning difference, health condition, or need for certain assistive devices or communication tools is always an individual first, deserving to be referenced as such. Wholistic inclusion requires avoiding the anonymous or primary grouping of distinct persons under singular characteristics, labeled disabilities, or broad qualifiers.

A person is never “sped,” “retarded,” “a spaz,” “nonverbal,” “handicapped,” “deformed,” “mental,” “slow,” “wild,” or so forth. Instead, when truly necessary to the discussion, someone may be referenced as “having a cognitive difference requiring modifications,” “using a wheelchair,” “living or diagnosed

with Type 1 diabetes,” “experiencing tics,” “having cerebral palsy,” or “managing a mental illness.”

This is a simple practice that takes effort. Given the inherent offensiveness of some of the aforementioned language, such guidance may seem obvious. Yet while person-first language is a critical and often simple step toward a more authentic practice of inclusion, in reality consistent effort and ongoing open discussion are required for long-term success.

Perspective Matters

We should also try to take account of how people want to be referred to. For example, consider individuals with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. There are as many preferences for terminology surrounding this particular diagnosis as there are individuals having the condition. Some believe autism is inherent to their core identity and therefore find no exclusion in being called autistic. Others may even take offense at the suggestion that primary reference of autism should be avoided. Still others perceive the diagnosis as only secondary to their personhood and therefore not relevant or appropriate to use as an initial introduction or reference.

Such situations may carry the potential to feel confusing or overwhelming. However, it’s important to remember that missteps and misunderstandings can be expected as a part of growing toward creating more inclusive language and thereby more inclusive communities. We’re all constantly learning. Particularly because person-first language seeks to value the individual in each unique situation, those who work to incorporate it in their communication will always be learning.

Thus, when we encounter a new circumstance for which we do not know the appropriate person-first language to use, we can always simply ask. ■

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Smartphone Dilemma

Take Two, We Used To Daydream

HAVE YOU EVER FOUND

yourself picking up your phone a moment after you put it away? Do you slow down your walking so you can send a couple of texts? Ever stand behind someone texting while you patiently waited to place your order only to hear them say “ummmmm” when they get to the counter? If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you’re not alone. The smartphone is becoming ever more interrupting to our daily lives. As much as it is an essential tool, if not controlled, it can become an addiction and annoyance.

The scenarios above are just your typical nuisances of living in a world with phones. Like dropping your phone on your head on the sofa or scrolling the news in the restroom and letting it slip into the toilet, you’re not really harming anyone but yourself.

Today, we’ll take a closer look at how the times we spend on the screen, phone and computer can impact our focus, relationships and even careers. We’ll delve into examples you’ve probably experienced, where someone’s phone suddenly becomes more important than the person talking in front of them. Whether it be the close ties we have with our current family, the developing ties with new contacts or the only ties our kids can form, there has to be a balance between social media and being social.

It’s easy to forget, with all the media that is plugged into our society, that phones didn’t always exist. Sure, we had computers and TVs for generations.

My parents used to say, “Too much TV will fry your brain.” It didn’t, and they still watch TV, too. But there is a huge difference between a television and the media in our pockets; TV shows end, sports games finish, news channels stop at 11, unless of course you’re watching C-Span in America. The modern smartphone is designed to keep you looking at it—notifications from countless apps keep you on their easy-to-use interface and ask you to refresh every minute for “breaking news.” Phones vibrate, ring, buzz and chime while we are doing a task and, sometimes, make us forget what we were originally doing.

Even the radio is on your phone these days in the form of a podcast. Podcasts are great for many reasons, including entertainment and education. Want to learn something new? There’s a podcast for that. Download one, but do yourself a favor and delete another app in place of it. I often delete my podcasts because they are producing more content than I can listen to in a given day. Every podcast I listen to has an advertisement to another great podcast I “may like.” So many of my favorite thinkers and storytellers have much to say. Tony Robbins, Tim Ferris, Malcolm Gladwell, NPR, can you guys please shorten your episodes? Whichever podcast hosting platform you use, the podcasts within them are advertising to get you to use it more. Don’t get me wrong, it’s great for meditation, traveling, tuning out our noisy neighbors or blasting music for a workout, but how much of the material

can you actually retain. Don’t our brains need to just think for themselves every now and then? Even the steady sound of traffic can be therapeutic after listening to multiple episodes of the highly entertaining series called *Serial*.

A similar algorithm on Netflix will tell you what you may want to “watch next.” You have about five seconds to decide if you want to cancel the next show or continue watching. The auto play feature is intended to keep you on the screen and away from anything else important in life. If you watch a YouTube video, this same feature will play a similar video in just a few seconds. I listened to a fantastic TEDtalk by Zeynep Tufekci At TEDGlobal>NYC: “We’re building a dystopia just to make people click on ads.” She spoke about how clicking on those recommended YouTube videos can send you down a rabbit hole of stranger videos and conspiracies. Then I noticed even TED.com uses an algorithm to keep me watching their videos too. Before I knew it I had about eight more videos in my playlist. With four hours of videos to watch every day, how can we find to take care of our bodies? Yuval Noah Harari, Author of *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* put it simply, “Today we may be living in high-rise apartments with overstuffed refrigerators, but our DNA still thinks we are in the Savannah.” Our bodies are not designed to do what they are doing. We should be out developing quality relationships, having face to face conversations and interacting with our environment.



Hey, Mr. Tamborine Man

When it comes to maintaining relationships, the phone, computer and social media can be a huge help. It's great for staying connected with friends and family. Liking the videos and photos of my friends' babies makes me feel like I know what's happening in their lives. It gives us something to talk about when I return home. In the history of mankind, it never been easier to communicate with someone. It has also never been easier to end a conversation. As the author of *Leaders Eat Last*, Simon Sinek says, social media is "great for maintaining relationships, but not building relationships." It wasn't until I returned home to visit my mother a few years ago that I realized how much time I wasted on my phone. I had to send a couple of more messages and emails before I could finish my sentence and eat breakfast with her.

"One second, Mom. Let me just finish this email," I would say as I desperately tried to look like I was finishing up something important. The truth was that it wasn't an email that couldn't wait and the reality is I have no recollection of what the email was about. I do, however, recall who I was sitting across from. I was only home for 10 days that Christmas year and I spent a lot of them filtering through spam, work emails and group texts. Chris Rock said in his latest Netflix stand up *Tamborine*: "I was married for 16 years in the era of the cell phone, which means my 16 years is actually longer than my parents' 40. In 16 years, I had more contact with my ex-wife than my parents had in 40 years." After leaving that Christmas I vowed I would never let my phone come in between me and my close relationships again. The next time I saw my family they would have all my attention.

But a shift happened the following year that blew my mind. In less than 12 months my mother was now the one who couldn't put down the phone. It's not her fault by any means and, of course, I love her even if she had important texts to send. But when a ding on her phone interrupted her, she would get lost in it for 10 minutes (I love you mom. I know you're reading this. You may be the only one reading this, actually). My mom is addicted. She wakes up with her phone next to her bed and sends message while sleeping and can't go back to sleep. She's losing 2-3 hours a night of sleep because of her addiction to her phone. She doesn't have the ability to see that this is bad because it has become so commonplace in our society.

Home isn't the only place I've seen the phone take away our attention. The gym used to be the place where you socialized. Though some would argue about the need for this, you only wore headphones if you didn't want to talk to people. Now you can

exert flatulence as loud as you want, and no one will know its origin. People may be listening to their music, but in between sets they take out their phone to "check in," selfie, scroll or some other nonsense. Phones at the gym are a distraction, period. My oldest and biggest brother, whose been working out his whole life, loves to rave about how he's at the gym for 3 to 4 hours a day. In between sets he'd check his phone, update his Instagram, stalk his ex girlfriend, then do another set. Lifting with him was easy because I had so much down time. I found myself doing squats and jumping jacks just to get my heart rate up. I'd be waiting for the weight rack while he was working out his thumbs. In Vietnam, I've seen people do sit-ups with their phone in hands. I get it for the treadmill. OK, exception made, and I'm guilty, but the sit-ups? Really?

Is it rude to tell people they are on their phone too much? Why do we get defensive? I know I do when someone catches me. You ever see someone walking and texting? You might have said to yourself "ugh...watch what you're doing." Chances are that was you at some point, too. Psychologist call this fundamental attribution error. We blame our poor behavior on external variables, but blame others behavior for their internal variables. We consider ourselves to be just looking for directions, but to someone else say, "this guy has no idea where he's going!"

"People watching" used to be a thing at parks and malls. Now we have phone stations to charge up if our battery dies. When we waited for an elevator to arrive we used to daydream. We used to imagine where else we would be, or reflect on our conversations with others. We would think about far out ideas and just let the mind wander. Will smartphones and social media make us lose our creative ability to daydream? I fear the day people are just walking straight into traffic because they are staring at their screens. When we daydream we reflect. We remember. We focus on relationships we had or want to have. When we scroll through a news feed like Instagram we focus on what others have and rarely reflect on our own possessions. To be fair, not everyone uses it for pointless scrolling. Many people, and teachers I know, use it to enhance their network and find good lessons. As a society, most of us aren't taught how to use it appropriately and end up just scrolling because there is nothing else to do. Checking the phone for notifications gives us that dopamine we crave. Similar to a drug, our brains like it, but it's short lasting. We keep going back to the phone for those updates and quick chemical shot to be released by our brain's neurons.

There is a certain value to reflecting on our own experiences and even face-to-face with others who shared

those experiences with us. Two cases I documented recently: I went to get my haircut at my usual *gio dau* place and saw a young lady taking selfies. From my angle she appeared to be on Snapchat retaking the same several poses for 20 minutes. She didn't look away from her phone once. She had no idea what was going on around her. Another time I saw a couple on a swing set along the beach. The girl was swinging with joy looking out into the ocean. Her boyfriend barely took his feet off the ground and sat there scrolling away on his phone. We need to focus on the people around us, more than the people we follow.

A recent article by ESPN writer and former pro NFL player Jason Witten titled "How Twitter has become NFL locker room poison," sheds light on how even athletes can lose focus. They are neck deep in social media and they must to maintain their brand and stay relevant. Many people can make money and receive endorsements this way. Witten highlights how people can use social media for good purposes. "Look at what J.J. Watt was able to accomplish last summer when Houston was devastated by flooding. We're talking millions of dollars for an incredible cause." But other athletes end up getting themselves fired or in a contract dispute because of something they said or posted during halftime.

After looking at how social media and cellphones can impact our relationships, our careers and our daily focus, I want to reiterate it does have powerful potential. Revolutions can spur change because of a tweet. Corruption can be captured and criminals can be prosecuted. Millions of dollars can be raised to help good causes. But keep in mind, we need to practice positive and healthy ways to use these tools if they are going to be permanent fixtures in our life. The wrong photo can cost you a job. Too much time on it can cost you sleep or a relationship. Parents, look your kids in the eyes. Walk with them, play Uno with them. Put your phone on airplane mode, so you can still capture those great moments with your camera. Be present with your loved ones now more than ever. Social media isn't going away any time soon. Relish these moments you have in person while you can.

Here are some other quick fixes that might change how you use your phone:

- Keep the phone out of reach when you're with important people.
- Delete your work email account from your phone.
- Put the phone on airplane mode while at the park with loved ones.
- Use "xtab" Chrome extension to limit the number of tasks you work on.
- Do a digital detox for a day or even a week.
- Leave the phone in the gym locker.
- Don't charge your phone next to your bed. Keep it in another room. ■



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Breaking the Mold



As you watch your child grow, remember that each child develops at his or her own pace and the range of normal is quite wide

ONE OF THE MOST TOPICAL

issues we deal with as pediatricians in Japan is the problem of childhood developmental disorders. Just as in many other developed countries, societal stressors can cause difficulties for both children and adults, but they can be especially problematic for those children suffering from these conditions.

There has recently been considerable attention given to this phenomenon in my home country, with cases of autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disorders receiving much attention in Japanese society. It's interesting that in countries like Vietnam, especially in developing areas, such conditions seem to be less common. It could be that there are fewer trained pediatricians capable of diagnosing them, but it could also be that in a less stressful cultural environment, such disorders are far less likely to have obvious manifestations.

The problem is that more often than not, these children cannot speak clearly about what they are feeling and experiencing, because of their stage of development or their family environment—or sometimes because of the communicative limitations caused by a developmental disorder. Younger children especially don't have the skills to speak out; they don't have the words to describe how they feel, and they don't know how to approach parents or adults. These are the things that a pediatrician needs to think about when seeing a patient. We need to examine them physically, but we also need to think about all the other factors related to their symptoms.

What is Normal?

Parents often really worry about whether or not their child is normal or abnormal, but the most important thing is how they live their lives. The central issue is that those children with developmental disorders often *suffer* from their daily living, though they look healthy.

Japanese people, as with most Asian people, prefer to behave as a collective. I can see in Vietnam that people like to “match” each other, which is very similar to my country. However, certain kinds of people don't fit the mold.

In Japan, we are taught to behave nicely before others and act as one. This is a skill we have to learn, and it really does require skill to see how other people are feeling and behaving, but these children with developmental disorders, although they are generally clever, cannot understand and accept what is going on, which can cause significant stress.

Seek to Understand

To help somebody in this situation, we first need to understand their *character*. For example, a child suffering from autism spectrum disorder, when we give them a small toy like a car or train, may just look at certain parts, unlike most babies who tend to look at the whole. They will fixate on features like the car's little light, and they will have a special interest in that. The things they are interested in are different from others. This shouldn't mean that they are abnormal; this should be considered a kind of skill, a character.

Sometimes in old Japanese TV shows, we would see small children who had a certain skill, who at three or four years old could identify the brand name of many different cars, or the special names of certain trains. What is important to note here is how they can use their skills for themselves and for society. We need to accept and understand what skills they have. These disorders cannot be cured, so we need to understand the character of those whom we deal with, and understand how they suffer because of their character.

Some children who have this kind of disorder might be able to perform sixth grade math at first grade level. Their skills are very amazing, but sometimes their learning disorder prevents them from writing things down or taking notes—so they cannot do well at school, especially in Japanese schools that are very strict about writing.

My job is to think about what the children are like, and explain to parents how to raise a child with such disorders, how to develop their good characteristics. If they teach their child to use a computer instead of writing down notes, maybe they can exhibit their good characteristics more, and



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we don't even need to think about their difficulties. It's the same as if someone loses their legs in an accident—if they fit prosthetic limbs, they can run again, sometimes even faster than a healthy person!

There are many children who suffer from some sort of developmental disorder who go on to lead meaningful lives. There are many professional people who have some communication disorders who simply focus on their areas of interest; they just dig and dig, and intellectually they are very competent. They have difficulties in communicating with others and in understanding their surroundings. But as long as their characters can be fully expressed, they can lead happy lives for themselves and for others.

All children have the power to grow up. We parents or families should also trust our children, and we need to see them as individuals, and not raise them as if by an instruction book, which will only serve to create undue stress and pressure for these children. ■

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