



VIETNAM

11-2018

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This Month's Cover

Image by James Pham

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Datebook

What's on this month...

NOVEMBER 8-9

What: Solar & Energy Storage World Vietnam 2018

Where: Hotel Nikko Saigon (235 Nguyen Van Cu, D1)

About: Vietnam is among the countries with the world's highest annual sunshine allocation on the world's solar radiation map. This is an advantage for Vietnam in its efforts to develop a solar power industry, in the context of increasing demand for electricity and the potential risks of traditional electricity production sources.

The event will talk about the Vietnam solar power grid and energy storage application areas within the scope of government organization, association, power grid companies, power companies, energy companies, mine owners and other



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Datebook

What's on this month...

NOVEMBER 9



What: ZADIG

Where: The Observatory (10th floor, 85 CMT8, D1)

About: Zadig, is one of the leading names in Paris' contemporary scene and one of the main forces responsible for the return of the City of Light to worldwide prominence as a center for forward-looking techno. A participant in the '90s French rave scene in the hardcore and acid days, Sylvain Peltier found his true inspiration with the arrival of Mills, Surgeon, and Beltram and labels like Tresor, Lost, and Synwave and the techno that his style remains rooted in to this day. After moving to Paris in the mid-2000s, Zadig became quickly involved in the beginnings of what would become the present-day Parisian upswing, making an early release in 2006 as Day is Dying on the Rouen-based Euro Visions label. In 2009 he returned, this time as Zadig and this time to stay, quickly forging a relationship with the important Syncrophone label and distributor in Paris.

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

NOVEMBER 14



What: Vietnam Foodtech Exhibition 2018

Where: SECC (799 Nguyen Van Linh, D7), 9:30am - 5:30pm

About: The event features the latest technologies in the food processing industry, due to a rising demand in Vietnam. The exhibition is a great platform for professionals and manufacturers in food technology to showcase their most recent products to the local food processors and producers. Vietnam Foodtech 2017 aims to assist further development of a sustainable food market in Vietnam. Vietnam Food Tech attracts 456 exhibitors from 21 countries, 600+ booths and 15,026 visitors, the exhibition covered across 10,000 square meters of exhibiting space of the whole SECC.

Contact: Email nhinguyen.adpex@gmail.com for more info

NOVEMBER 17

What: Screening of *Suicide: The Ripple Effect*

Where: The Hive (94 Xuan Thuy, D2), 7pm, VND320,000

About: Counselling With Naomi presents this special screening of *Suicide: The Ripple Effect* in Saigon. At age 19, Kevin Hines attempted to take his life by jumping from the Golden Gate Bridge. Seventeen years later, he still struggles with many of the same symptoms that led him to attempt to take his life, but he is on a mission to use his story to help others stay alive. Kevin has also been one of the key catalysts in helping end a nearly 80-year long fight to construct suicide prevention net on the iconic San Francisco Bridge. Kevin takes a journey to better understand the ripple effects his suicide attempt had on his family, friends, and the first responders who helped save him. He's also working to shine light on inspirational individuals, families and organizations who are using personal pain to help others find the hope they need to heal.

Contact: Book tickets at fan-force.com/screenings/suicide-the-ripple-effect-the-hive-saigon/



NOVEMBER 23-25

What: Charity Cycle Adventure

Where: Hue to Hoi An

About: Over the last 8 years, the annual saigonchildren Charity Cycle Adventure (CCA) has welcomed enthusiastic cyclists from all over the world, who have ridden a total of over 2,300km, and raised over USD350,000 for unprivileged children. This year, they invite riders to join a three-day, fully supported and guided ride from Hue to Hoi An, and on the way conquering the famous Hai Van pass next to Danang. They are encouraging participation from experienced riders and less experienced cyclists as they have designed a route to accommodate both groups.

Each rider is asked to pay a registration fee of USD475 to cover all the ride's costs, which includes food and accommodation, a cycling jersey, guides and support vehicles. Flights from HCMC to Hue and Danang to HCMC can be booked through Indotrek, this year's ride support company or directly by each rider. Each rider is also encouraged to get their family, friends and colleagues to build a network behind them, in order to raise a minimum of USD500, which will go directly to support saigonchildren programs. A special fundraising tool kit will be provided to help you achieve your target.

Contact: Visit www.facebook.com/groups/saigonchildrencca for more info



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Datebook

What's on this month...

NOVEMBER 23 & 24



What: Saigon Players' Rocky Horror Night

Where: The Hive, Saigon rooftop (94 Xuan Thuy, D2), VND300,000 per ticket and it includes a loot bag of props (includes a balloon, rice, newspaper, glow stick, noisemaker, confetti bag, party hat, paper plate, sponge, cards, paper & pen)

About: It's that time of the year when the Saigon Players put on their annual Rocky Horror Night—an interactive screening of the cult classic film, *Rocky Horror Picture Show!* The event will feature shadow actors and audience participation bits. This year, it also coincides with their 15-year anniversary so be sure to come as they will have a rockin' party after. Proceeds go to non-profit organization Xuan- Les Enfants de l'Avenir.

Contact: Reserve tickets at saigonplayerstickets@gmail.com

DECEMBER 17-JANUARY 4, 2019

What: Life Skills Winter Camp

Where: ISHCMC Primary Campus (28 Vo Truong Toan, D2)

About: International School Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC) Primary Campus launches ISHCMC Life Skills Winter Camp 2018 with the goal of facilitating unique life-skills learning opportunities for students of all ages. Each week has a different theme with

project-based learning experiences through a mix of sports, teambuilding activities, cooking classes, weekly project and life-skills. The Winter Camp Program consists of a two- or three-week program developed for children 5 to 12 years old. The tuition fee includes all learning resources, snacks, lunch and a free school bus for students registered before October 31. The Life Skills Winter Camp is open to students from all schools and visiting families from outside Vietnam.

Contact: Email Camp Director Steve Lanning at steve@inspireeducamps.org for more info



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TROI OI!

The country in numbers



>102,000

VIETNAMESE LABORERS WERE SENT to work abroad in the first nine months of this year, according to the Vietnam Labor Export Association. Around 96,800 people went to work in Northeast Asia. Taiwan continues to be the largest market for Vietnamese migrant workers with 47,700, followed by Japan with 44,000. Meanwhile, only 930 laborers were in Southeast Asian nations. The five largest markets of Vietnamese labor are Taiwan, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Romania and Saudi Arabia. The Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs aims to send 111,000 workers abroad by the end of this year. Last year, over 134,700 laborers were sent abroad.

11,172

CARS WERE IMPORTED IN THE FIRST NINE MONTHS of 2018, up 5,142 units from the same period last year, according to the General Department of Vietnam Customs. Of the total, more than 10,800 were imported from Thailand and Indonesia. The remainder came from Japan, the US and Germany. Cars with nine or fewer seats shipped to ports in Ho Chi Minh City accounted for more than 51 percent of the total imported to Vietnam. Of these smaller vehicles, 93.5 percent came from Southeast Asian countries and benefited from the regional import duty exemption, in line with the ASEAN countries' commitments to lower tariffs from 2018. It is predicted that tens of imported auto models will enter the Vietnamese market in the last months of this year, including Mitsubishi Xpander, Mazda BT 50, Ford Everest, Toyota Wigo and Honda HR-V.



~11,000

VIETNAMESE WOMEN HAVE BREAST CANCER annually, and over 4,500 of them die of the disease annually. Medical experts say early diagnosis and detection is very important in the prevention and treatment of breast cancer, especially for older women. To raise people's awareness of breast cancer, Cho Ray Hospital will provide free screenings of breast cancer for women over 40 years old from October 12 to November 23 as part of the program "Breast cancer screening at the age of 40." Patients will receive an examination, breast scan and mammography. Additionally, talks and consultations will be included in the program.

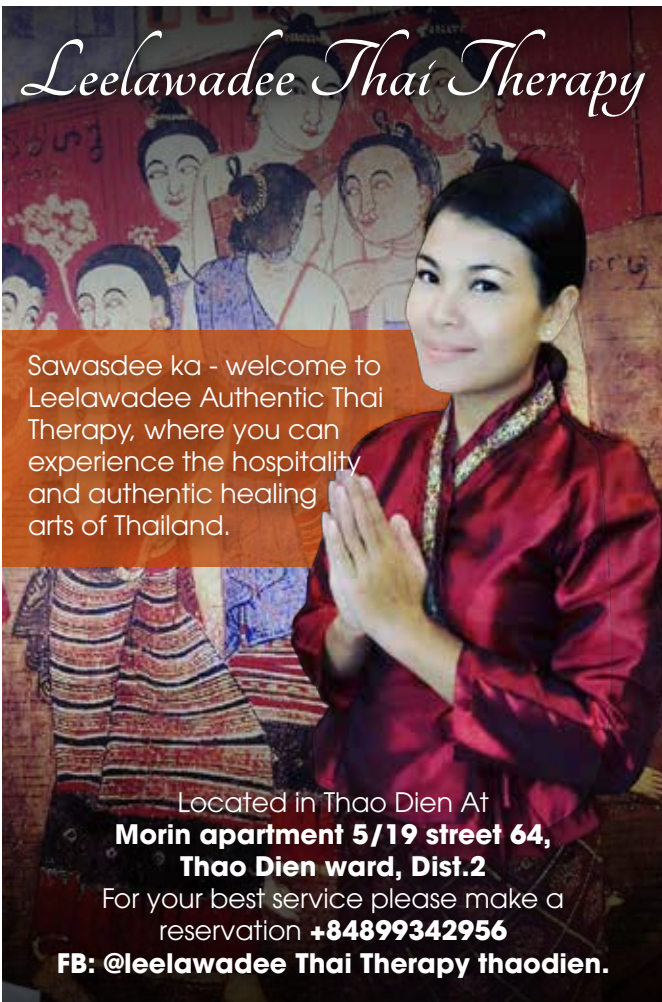
USD1.6 BILLION

EXPRESSWAY DETERIORATES AFTER RAIN.

Many potholes have appeared on the Danang-Quang Ngai Expressway just a short time after being put into operation, however, investors claimed that the damage was caused by rain and not low construction quality. Many clusters of five to 10 potholes were mostly found along the road from Tam Ky to Danang City. The authorities are still monitoring other sections. Three possible causes include heavy trucks, diesel leaks and rainfall. The traffic volume has increased from 2,000 to 6,000 vehicles a day since the road was opened to traffic. The project is guaranteed for two years so the contractors will cover the repair cost.



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Mutiny in the Garden

An exhibition of new
paintings by Lien
Truong

Text and Images Provided by **Galerie Quynh**

BORN IN VIETNAM AND BASED in the US, Lien Truong employs a rich pastiche of styles uniquely her own as she explores the cultural dynamics of domination, assimilation and resistance throughout history. The show takes its title from a new body of work inspired by *The Course of Empire* by the Hudson River School painter Thomas Cole. Despite Cole's opposition to Manifest Destiny during a time of rampant genocide against the Native Americans, the romanticized landscapes produced by the Hudson River School ultimately fed the public desire for westward expansion, evincing the disturbing ease with which art can be yoked to the ends of empire—a phenomenon also evidenced by Abstract Expressionism, which was collected and promoted by the CIA for propaganda purposes during the Cold War.

Critically borrowing from the aforementioned painting movements (and many others), Truong's *Mutiny* paintings feature sweeping Ab-Ex brushstrokes juxtaposed with landscapes in the style of Cole, as well as figurative elements inspired by Japanese war prints, which the artist paints on silk and then attaches to canvases. The backgrounds are divided by a two-color gradient, generating a hybrid space between the horizon line in western painting and the void in Asian art. Asian style wave motifs allude to imperialism and immigration, while elsewhere Truong reproduces textile patterns from around the globe, carefully selected for their embedded histories of exclusion or assimilation, as well as for their contemporaneity to specific incidents referenced in the paintings.

Tattered fragments of the Confederate flag flutter in the titular work *Mutiny in the Garden*, alongside French, American and African textile patterns and a view of The Great Dismal Swamp—a place of refuge for escaped slaves in the lead up to the American



The Peril of Angel's Breath

Civil War. In the painting *The Peril of Angel's Breath*, textiles from Japan and Vietnam intersect with an image of the Manzanar internment camp for Japanese-Americans during World War II as a mushroom cloud billows overhead. Such references to narratives of resistance and protest are prevalent throughout the *Mutiny* paintings. One thinks of the iconic civil rights figure Fred Korematsu, who fought the legality of Japanese internment taking his case all the way to the Supreme Court. Truong inverts the gaze of power and turns History Painting on its head; an inversion reflected in the background color gradients, wherein the dark tones appear above the "horizon" and light tones appear below, as is rarely the case in western landscape paintings. The exhibition also features a new series of miniature oil paintings titled *Translatio Imperii*, denoting the divine right of kings to rule in succession. Disrupting the white male-dominated lineage of painters who make up the canon of modern art, Truong appropriates the faux abstract expressionist brushstrokes of Roy Lichtenstein, turning them into

windows looking onto what appear to be bucolic landscapes, which upon closer inspection reveal themselves to be war zones, painted in a manner reminiscent of the Hudson River School and pockmarked with craters from American bombing campaigns.

Mounted in ornate black frames, each piece is fitted with a brass plaque bearing the bombed country's name and the year of the bombings. The matte black from the frame spills onto the canvas, consuming it almost completely; only the "brushstroke" of the "heroic artist" pierces through the veil of darkness to reveal traces of violence on the other side. Exemplifying the concept of heterotopia as defined by Foucault, Truong's work constitutes a space in which contradiction and otherness can exist. Acknowledging the conflicts and fault lines that run throughout our post-modern society, she nevertheless continues to trace vectors of escape and redemption. ■

Mutiny in the Garden exhibition is on until November 29 at Galerie Quynh (118 Nguyen Van Thu, D1)



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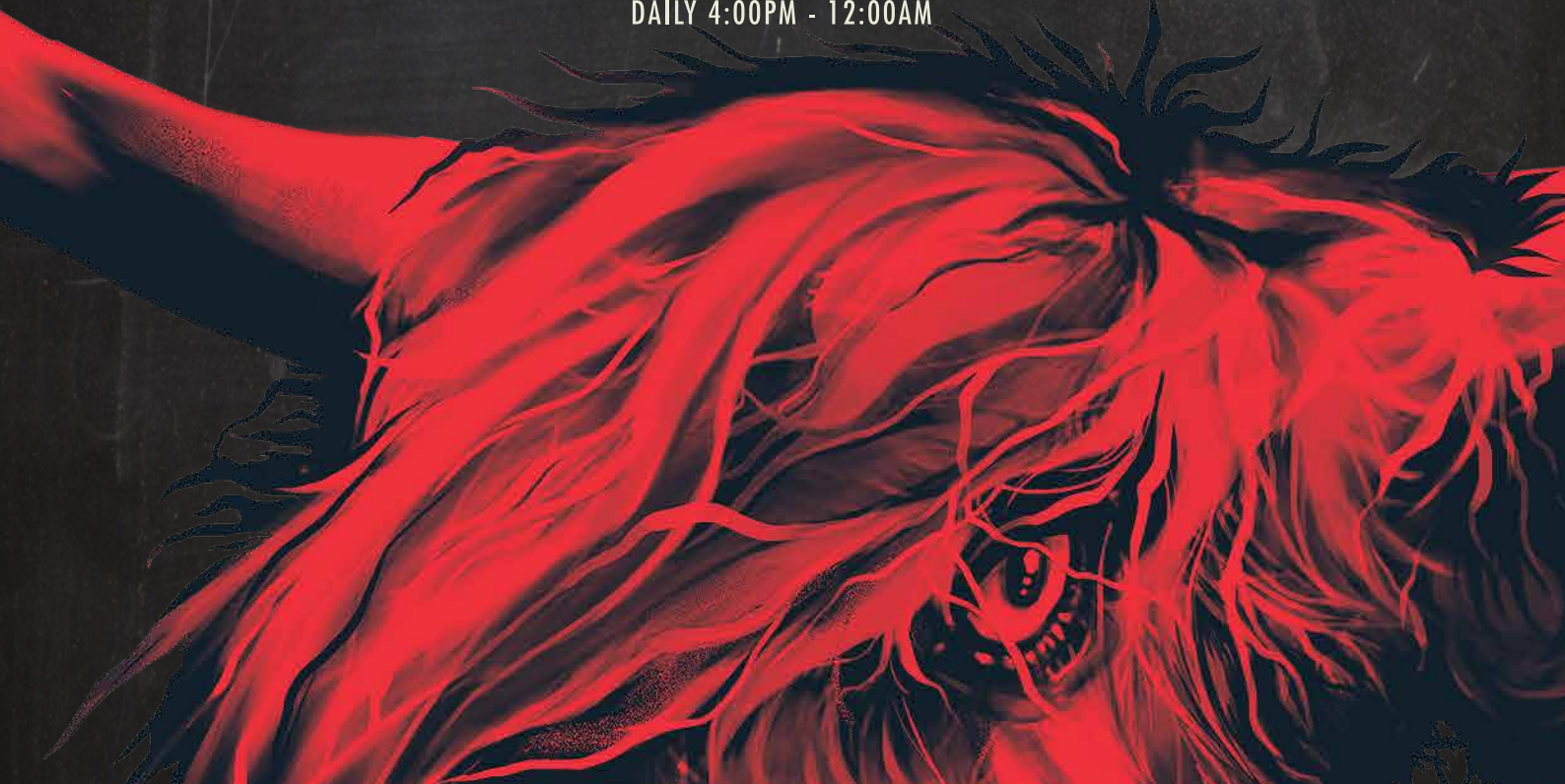
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Fatherhood

I am 28 years old, from Uruguay, and currently living in Hanoi. I am single and would like to become a father. Could you please tell about the options available to me?

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR brave decision to be a single father at a young age. I understand how hard it is to come to this consideration. Normally, a single man who wants to start a family on his own in Vietnam has two options - surrogacy or adoption - but there are some legal restrictions that I will explain.

Is Surrogacy Legal in Vietnam?

Many families welcome a baby through surrogacy when they are not capable of giving birth naturally. However, having a child through surrogacy is far from easy, regardless of where you're residing in the world. Vietnam has its own restricted regulations and it is not a feasible option for you to pursue this course here.

In January 2015, the new Law on Marriage and Family entered into effect in Vietnam legalizing noncommercial gestational surrogacy under strict conditions. This new privilege is especially for heterosexual couples without a child and the wife is unable to give birth naturally. They also put some restrictions on these surrogacy regulations: the surrogate mother must have a family link to the husband or to the wife, and is absolutely certified by a competent health organization that she is a suitable age and eligible for gestational surrogacy. Amongst other specific conditions, a single man is not allowed to have a child in Vietnam via a surrogate mother under the current regulations.

It is said that there is a black market in surrogacy in Vietnam, but we strongly oppose and advise you not to go this route. The first obvious reason is because it is illegal and you will face serious penalties from the authorities. Moreover, and more importantly, it is risky for you, the baby and the surrogate mother (illegal surrogacies are often performed in poor sanitary conditions). Additionally, the surrogate mother may suddenly change her mind to keep the baby or at a later date may try to request to have the child returned to her. You

will not be the parent of the child, from a legal point of view, and your family will be exposed to uncertainty, insecurity and substantial risks.

Are You Ready For Adoption?

You are now 28, young and full of energy. I mention this because energy declines with age and you need to take proper care of your child not only financially and physically but also mentally. We often read about celebrities adopting children from developing countries, and there are more and more single fathers by choice. Footballer Cristiano Ronaldo has a son, also called Cristiano, who was born in a San Diego clinic in June 2010. The singer Ricky Martin has twins, Matteo and Valentino, born in a Los Angeles clinic in 2008.

Fortunately, the legislative changes in Vietnam are quite open for the adoption a child in Vietnam by a foreigner with an aim to give the best living conditions for children. Under the regulation of the Law on Adoption, which came into force on January 1, 2011, the inter-country adoption is provided between Vietnamese citizens and a foreigner, between foreigners permanently residing in Vietnam and between Vietnamese citizens either of whom settles down abroad.

In order to assure the care for and education of the adopted child, the conditions of the adopting person, such as having full civil act capacity, being 20 years or older than the adoptee, having health, financial, ethical qualities, and accommodation conditions are required by the competent authorities in Vietnam.

As far as we know, this is no cooperation agreement on adoption between Vietnam and Uruguay; therefore, you might not be on the adoption priority list, which only accommodates foreigners who are citizens of countries with cooperation commitments regarding adoption. However, both Uruguay and Vietnam

adopted the La Haye Convention on May 29, 1993 on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Inter-country Adoption—this is hopeful.

The procedure of inter-country adoption would be applied both for a foreigner currently working or studying in Vietnam for at least 1 year and foreigners permanently residing in Vietnam. If you are adopting a specific child, the foreigner needs to prepare and submit a dossier including a written request for adoption, written permission for adopting a person in Vietnam, and other materials proving your identification, health condition, income and property recognition, marital status and so on. This dossier, together with the introduced child for an adoption, will be submitted to the provincial-level justice department where the adoptee permanently resides. The consideration and examination procedure will take at least 15 days to 1 month for a final decision.

If the adoption is not for a specific child, you may submit the registration dossier to the provincial-level justice department and after taking some complicated internal consideration, the authorities will examine and find a suitable child for you. The authorities will register the adoption under the law on civil status registration and organize a meet-up at the head office of that Department of Justice and normally it takes around three-and-a-half months. Upon that moment, the father-child relationship begins. Once every six months for three years from the date of delivery and receipt of the adopted child, you have to notify the Ministry of Justice the child's health, physical, mental conditions and integration with the new environment.

However, before submitting the dossier for an adoption in Vietnam, we recommend that you consult with the Consulate or Embassy of Uruguay in Vietnam if they have any further requirements.

I wish you and your future child all the best. ■



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



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Bit by Bit

Through distribution of eco-friendly products and education, a couple hopes to make Vietnam a little less plastic

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

LAST YEAR, LAUREN SINGER became a viral sensation when she published a video on her YouTube channel Trash is for Tossers about how she was able to fit all of her non-recyclable plastic waste from the past four years into a single mason jar. For many people, this video highlighted the issues with plastic waste that seem trivial on a small scale but when used daily by the whole world, they become a huge problem.

Living a zero-waste lifestyle is undeniably difficult. If it was easy, everyone would be doing it and there wouldn't be companies selling eco-friendly products and encouraging people to become aware of the worldwide

plastic pollution. Daisy Dao, the co-founder and product manager of Saigon-based company A Little Bit (ALB, www.alittlebitvn.com), saw Singer's video last year. It resonated with Daisy, 21, so much that she decided she wanted to start making a change to the plastic consumption in her lifestyle. "After seeing that clip I realized all of my home tools come with plastic, from my toothpaste and toothbrush, to the comb that I use every single morning," she says, also adding that Vietnamese families on average dispose of two kilograms of trash per day, much of which is plastic waste.

Daisy and her boyfriend, Ryan Pham, 26, the main investor and CEO of ALB, are

both dressed in cotton clothing, sporting canvas bags and sipping their drinks through plant straws—an idealistic symbol of Vietnam's future generation. The café Running Bean was chosen by Daisy for our interview because they use plant straws and offer a discount to customers who present their reusable straw when buying a drink. Before we start, Daisy hands over a bag of soap nuts—dried berry shells that grow in the Himalayas—that can be used to make your own washing up liquid and shampoo as demonstrated in one of the company's latest Instagram videos.

A Little Bit began selling their products, including bamboo straws, hand-printed cotton storage pouches,

reusable mesh grocery bags, canvas shopping bags and cotton cup holders, just three months ago at a flea market in District 2. The stall became the best-selling booth at the market, surpassing the couple's expectations. They also received their first wholesale order the same day. Though, as we chat, it becomes clear that ALB is more than just a little stall selling eco-friendly products.

"[We] are still shocked by the current pace of development. We are now approaching the opportunity to export to the EU, perhaps [our] nearest goal is to standardize the production process and meet EU standards," says Ryan, a serial entrepreneur who set up his own sneaker customization business a few years ago.

So, what makes ALB different from other companies selling similar products? "We are licensed for selling food and drink because the straws are made from plants and [we] check to make sure there are no harmful chemicals in the product—this is our advantage over other retailers, we take responsibility of what we sell," explains Ryan. Also, every product is personally checked for quality before reaching the customers. This can mean they often sit with their team—consisting of Ryan's mother, Ryan's best friend Henry who is in charge of wholesale, and Daniela, who is in charge of e-commerce and social media—in their office in District 11 checking over 20,000 bamboo straws by hand. This level of commitment to delivering products that are faultless, except for their natural and harmless flaws such as dark spots in bamboo, are what have put this duo ahead of the game.

It's clear that Daisy and Ryan carry a certain amount of guilt when asked about Vietnam's current status as Asia's third-largest contributor to plastic pollution in the ocean. "I think it's because single-use plastic went deep into Vietnamese subconscious for many generations. A plastic bag is the cheapest thing when you go to the market, you don't even need it but the cashier will still give it to you anyway," says Daisy. Ryan adds that the aim of the company is to not only to distribute high-quality eco-friendly products but to educate those who want to switch to a more eco-friendly lifestyle but do not know how to.

"We have two types of customers: those that really care about how to improve the environment and those that just want to be trendy and feel good about themselves," says Ryan. "These [latter] people come and go. I want to look after the people that really care and show them other ways they can contribute and help the environment." Their aim is to grow a community where people can purchase reusable alternatives but also educate themselves about how to reduce their plastic waste.

The pair voiced their frustrations at the abundant use of plastic in Saigon. "We take our own lunchboxes when we get street food for them to put it in but



when we walk away, we see they still put little plastic bags of sauce and plastic utensils in the box! Why do they think we bought the box?!" Ryan exclaims. Despite this, the two are motivated to get their products in the hands of millions of people in Vietnam. "Every single day, food stores will dump over 1,000 foam boxes into the landfill and all of that will be broken down into small pieces so that many marine animals will misunderstand what it is and eat it," says Daisy. "In the future, we will provide food packaging products made from Bagasse, the dry pulp left when sugar cane juice is extracted, which is biodegradable and safer for the user's health. We hope that we can supply for many restaurants and food stores in Saigon," Ryan adds.

The company sources all their materials locally and production is done in Vietnam. "We are

Vietnamese and we want our products to be Vietnamese, to set a good example," says Ryan. "Many bamboo products that are sold all over the world come from Vietnam's bamboo trees in the north and we're really happy that most of the older Vietnamese generation supported us from the early days. They said, 'How wonderful it is that the bamboo straw is reusable and biodegradable as well as good for the environment and our health.'" The cotton used in their grocery bags, pouches, and cup holders is also sourced in Vietnam, which can be difficult because polyester is easier to find and cheaper.

Along with getting their products ready to export, the pair will target more businesses in Saigon. Ryan adds that large and high-end businesses are highly respected by locals and foreigners and he hopes that this will cause a ripple effect to show that everyone can do a little bit to help the environment. ■



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Bed, Bath & Beyond

About dognapping, we always walk the dogs in an enclosed neighborhood and always go in groups.

What exercise/play programs do you have for the dogs?

There are 2 times (mornings and afternoons) during the day where they play and walk and about 2 to 3 hours each time. Our staff will be monitoring them closely to check on their behavior, like exhaustion, shyness or aggressive, then we will manage the activities to fit their needs. For example, bigger dogs need longer walks to calm down—we even have a treadmill for them to walk on during rainy days or extremely hot days.

What advice can you give to first-time dog-owners who are looking for a place to board their pets?

- Bring your pet to our place for a short time to introduce the place to them so you and your pet will know the place is safe.
- Make sure that your pet is up-to-date on their vaccinations. Have a copy of your pet's veterinary records with you.
- Bring your pet's food or let the boarders know if there are any special feeding instructions needed, such as if your pet is on a special diet.
- Bring your dog's bed or favorite blanket, along with a few toys.
- Let the boarder know of any unique health issues, such as allergy, heat exhaustion, etc.
- Stay calm and happy when dropping your pet off and saying goodbye. This can help your pet feel more relaxed when being in new surroundings. ■

For more info, visit www.facebook.com/Bedandpetfirst or 14A6 Thao Dien, D2.

Mai Thu Ha and Ha Ngoc Thu Hien, founders of Bed & Pet-first, talk about expansion, pet health and the dos and don'ts of boarding your fur-baby

Images Provided by **Bed & Pet-first**

Bed & Pet-first (B&P) recently renovated, what changes and upgrades have been made to the villa?

We upgraded our room system, such as a new ventilation system, additional air conditioners to better control the temperature and humidity, brand new cat rooms, homemade foods and more. Our future plan is to bring a big outdoor space to our furry friends to exercise and socialize.

You have three French bulldogs, tell us about them and why they inspired you to open B&P.

Yes, I have three French bulldogs, two boys and one girl. I guess every ambitious business started personally, especially this kind of business where we really have to love our furry friends in order to deliver a good service. This kind of caring and service has to come from the heart, and it is very challenging to pursue perfection. As a dog-owner I had a difficult time finding a place that I can leave my three dogs at for many reasons: size of the room, lack of exercise and social times, risk of infection because most places are also vet clinics, so the dogs normally come home stressful. So I decided to open B&P to fill these demands. The purpose is just

to have a place that our furry friends can be totally relaxed as well as their owners. It is our main goal to become the first leading pet hotel in Vietnam.

How did you come up with the name "Bed & Pet-first."

The name is taken with the meaning that we provide a really good bed for you pet, and everything about or for them comes first.

How do you ensure the safety of the animals in your care? Not only making sure they are safe from injuries and diseases, but also from dognapping. What happens if there is an emergency?

Regarding the health of the pets, we have a pet health checklist:

- We require a health record book and vet info.
- We check the health of the pet when checking in and if the pet is not in good health, we will refuse to check them in.
- After playtime, our vet will check the pets before they return to their room.
- In case of an emergency, we will contact the owner to confirm the owner's choice of action and bring the pet to the vet that the owner has already provided info of.





Love is in the Air

Photographer: **Chanh**
Model: **Kim Phuong**
Makeup: **Tho**
Clothing: **Valenciani by Adrian Anh Tuan**
Boutique: **26 Ly Tu Trong, D1, HCMC / 16A15**
Ly Nam De, Hanoi

Sometimes a designer presents a collection that makes you lose the cool adult exterior you've spent years refining and melt in a puddle of white lace, big bows and obsession. That's exactly what happened when designer Adrian Anh Tuan's Romance collection show popped up in our feeds today. All pillowy ruffles, delicate lace, and floral bouquets, the collection looked like a literal dream come true.









Water

A photograph of a mangrove forest. In the foreground, a large, tangled pile of fallen, light-brown branches and roots sits on the ground. Behind this, numerous tall, slender mangrove trees with dark trunks and dense green foliage rise up. The ground is covered in a thick layer of green vegetation. In the background, a body of water reflects the greenery and the sky. The overall scene is lush and vibrant.

thru world

Stand Up and Wave



Gain a new appreciation for Saigon's much-maligned waterway through a fun, accessible new sport

Text by **Rebecca Jones**
Images by **Vy Lam**

WHEN I MOVED TO SAIGON IN 2017, one of the first things that struck me was the river: and not in a good way. From my balcony located close to Bui Huu Nghia in Binh Thanh District, I had a bird's eye view of that particular section of the city's waterway, the smell of which would knock me sideways when the wind was blowing the wrong way.

As such I was more than a little hesitant when I was tasked with trying out one of the latest sports to hit Saigon: stand up paddle boarding. All the rage in Australia and increasingly Indonesia and the Philippines, paddle boarding involves standing upright on a wide inflatable board and yes—you guessed it—using a paddle to make your merry way. Think of it as a cross between surfing and rowing.

While the danger factor of this sport is effectively zero for those doing it under supervision on a city river, my chief concern was what might happen to my skin should I fall in the water. And with my center of gravity sitting about

six inches to the right, this was almost certain. However, chatting with Khoi, one of the founders of Saigon Paddle Boarding (SPB; www.facebook.com/SUPrental), helped to put my mind at rest.

From SPB's idyllic launch point at a local riverside restaurant nestled in the heart of Thao Dien, Khoi explained how he has seen the river improve over the years:

"Around 15 years ago there used to be a cement factory very close to here and the river was really very bad. Since then it has improved a lot—around here anyway. Of course it's not super clean now, but it's clean enough to do this and, you know, the important thing is that we get people engaging with the river. People won't care about something until they've touched it."

Khoi is passionate about nature, and about getting Vietnamese people involved in it. He has operated his tour company Group Five Adventure since

2015, with which he takes groups of Saigoneses trekking and camping into the jungle of southern Vietnam. With a smile he recounts how many of the people on these trips, especially the children, had not seen a sleeping bag before their trip, let alone a cow.

A former gymnast, Khoi is also passionate about exercise, and is equally keen





lazily down the river I tried my hand at padding too, and within five minutes found that it was—indeed—very good exercise. When I finally plucked up the courage to stand on the board I also found that it was much easier than I thought and—miraculously—stayed upright and dry the entire time.

As Khoi predicted, I had a lot of fun paddle boarding, which is indeed an accessible sport for almost anyone. The most enjoyable part of the journey, however, was being on the river. As I watched the life of the people on its banks—from the guards of the million dollar houses in Thao Dien to local men hazarding a quick catch on the banks further down, I was filled with a new appreciation of Saigon. Watching the orange and pink sky fade into darkness from the river's softly churning water I felt very, very grateful to be there. It is, as Khoi puts it, 'clean enough' for that. ■

The price to rent a paddle board is VND250,000 for three hours, with an extra VND50,000 charged for every extra hour, or VND500,000 for the whole day.



on stand up paddle boarding for its rigorous cardiovascular qualities, as well as its proximity to nature. In-fact, just before I hopped on the board with my guide Le (or Russell, as he prefers to be called) we watched Khoi paddle-in with obvious difficulty, red faced from fighting the tide.

"Woah! It's hard work today!" After checking my worried glance with a reassuring nudge, however, he added: "But it's good! Good exercise. We need to get more people exercising. Especially kids—kids today sit around a lot, at school or playing video games. It's not good for them. And not as much fun as doing a sport like paddle boarding. You'll see!"

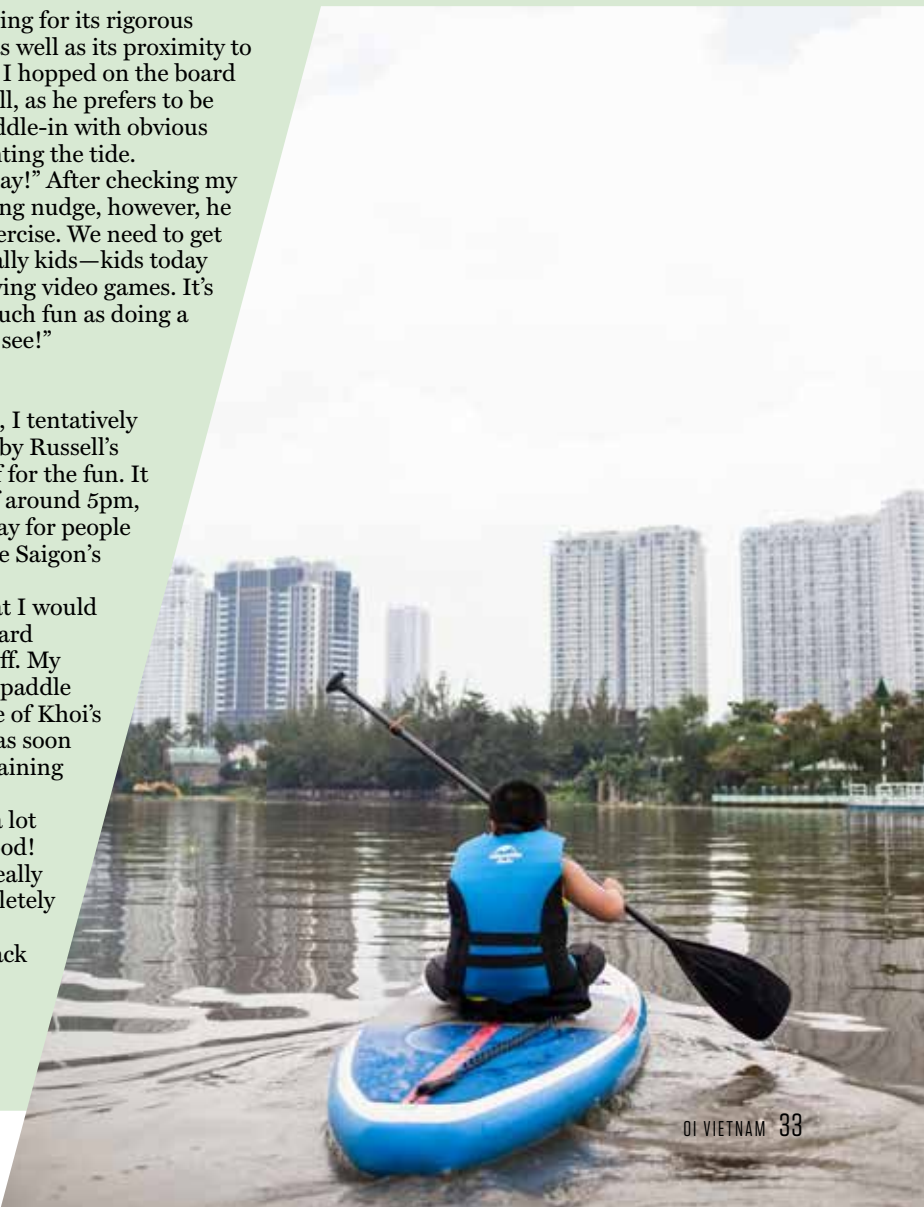
Riding The Waves

After securely fastening a life jacket, I tentatively climbed onto my board, held steady by Russell's experienced hand, and braced myself for the fun. It had been decided that I should set off around 5pm, one of the most popular times of the day for people to take to the river with SPB so as to see Saigon's spectacular sunset from the water.

With a wave of relief I discovered that I would essentially be a passenger on Russell's board and so, crouching low at the bow, we set off. My guide explained that he had only taken up paddle boarding a few months ago after seeing one of Khoi's advertisements on Facebook, however he was soon hooked. After taking one of SPB's 10-hour training courses he is now a qualified instructor.

"I'm a career musician so I've never done a lot of sport—only some soccer, but I'm not very good! But when I read about paddle boarding I was really interested. Now I do it almost every day. I completely forget about the time when I'm doing it. Once I ended up so far up the river I had to take a taxi back to the center with the board!"

Russell's skill on the board was clear, especially when a passing boat sent a few rolling waves our way—which he navigated with ease. As we ambled



From Land to Water

How Saigon is rediscovering its aquatic spirit

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

THE SAIGON WATERBUS

(saigonwaterbus.vn) is only about a year old, but the project's creators see it as a spiritual successor to Vietnam's lasting historical partnership with the nation's water resources. The first boat left Bach Dang Station in November 2017, but the idea visited the project's creators in the early 1990s.

Nguyen Kim Toan, director of the ferry operator Daily Limited Company, was then working with Larry Hillblom, a US businessman who'd parlayed a parcel-by-mail service into the global courier giant DHL two decades prior. Before Hillblom died suddenly in a seaplane accident in 1995, he had an abiding interest in doing business in Vietnam. Most of his investments were in Saigon, such as the Novotel Hotel. Nguyen and Hillblom met while the American was developing the Riverside Apartments in District 2. Hillblom used a small boat to ferry the apartment's residents to downtown Saigon.

"This story encouraged Mr. Toan" to consider using the city's waterways for a larger transportation project, Nguyen's translator Tran Quang An says. The project will celebrate a year of operation this month. At the moment, the Saigon Waterbus operates 30 trips daily that take Saigon's travelers and a few commuters along a 10-kilometer route via a fleet of 75-seat boats. The entire trip takes about an hour from Bach Dang Station in downtown District 1 to Linh Dong Station in Thu Duc District. There are three stops between and more ports being built: a dock in Binh Thanh District will be built in 2019 and another in will be built in Thao Dien the same year.

Currently, about 85 percent of the boat's passengers are tourists and the remainder are commuters. Nguyen said he expects the commuter representation to grow as the service offers more stops. A second route is planned that will serve passengers in District 4.

The Project's Lineage

Nguyen, the "father of the project," his interpreter Tran says, sees the Saigon Waterbus as an heir to Vietnam's waterborne past. Nguyen explained that Vietnam has risen to its current socioeconomic position due largely to the nation's abundant waterways. That's evident in the waterborne traders who fostered early economic growth in the nation's history as well as the agricultural community's skillful use of water in the cultivation of staple crops like rice.

The Saigon Waterbus project made sense to Nguyen because of the place waterways have in the nation's history, he says. The city is framed and bisected by a network of them including the Dong Nai, Saigon and Mekong rivers. He was inspired by the prior Saigoneses who worked to develop the city's network of canals. As Nguyen speaks, he points to a massive barge bearing a small mountain of fist-sized, gray stones gliding over the Saigon River. "That would require maybe 500 trucks to deliver" by road, says Nguyen. "Water has made the city and the broader nation possible in important ways."

The last stop in the boat's route in Thu Duc is just a short ferry ride to Binh Quoi Village 2, a peaceful area outside

of the buzzing city. Nguyen says the waterbus ought to be used to explore some of the city's lesser-known sights, like Thanh Da Peninsula, an area of Ho Chi Minh City with relatively little development and abundant ecological treasures. Traveling by boat is a calmer and more pleasant experience than getting to these destinations by overland travel, says Nguyen. The boat's pace is such that passengers are encouraged to take time and soak in the sights of the greenery around the river. ■





Trapped by the Boat

Questioning when to protect and when to
abandon “tradition”

Text by Jesus Lopez-Gomez
Images Provided by Yen Chi Huynh



AS A LAST CONCLUDING PROJECT in the Australia International School's international baccalaureate arts program, students must show at the student art show that ends the school year. A substantial portion of their grade, the International Baccalaureate Visual Arts Exhibition is a serious visual arts showcase that draws on the student's best work in a variety of mediums: painting, sculpture, photography.

For the show this year, the school converted one of their hallways into an exhibition hall. The spare, near brutalist architecture style of schools filled with art gave the place a prestige like a formal gallery. The massive boat you would have seen dry docked in the middle of the exhibition hall may have broken the spell. The piece gives rise to more questions that it does understanding: Why a boat? Why is a boat in the middle of hall? And, perhaps the most pressing question to any artistic experience, *what does it all mean?*

We'll start with the last question: it means a lot of things, according to the artist Yen Chi Huynh, who is currently studying in the US. The first meaning is perhaps the boat's oldest, most culturally significant meaning, the boat as a home base. "In Vietnam, [the] boat is a part of their life," says Yen, explaining that some Vietnamese live waterborne lives physically centered around the boat as a home rather than a house. "They were born with it, raised with it, live with

it and I believe if they are asked, they would call the boat home."

The other meanings are more recent and particular to the artist. In the broader stretch of the human narrative, the boat is a kind of novel and powerful technology, an important asset to the earliest people that settled Vietnam facilitating trade and travel. But for waterborne Vietnamese—a broader analogy to the community's attachment to tradition and convention—Yen's dry boat offers a different reading of the tool: "Their whole life, they are 'trapped' by the boat. It is a paradox because boat is to take people away, from [one] place to the other, but these people, are trapped by the boat their whole life."

Yen did not make the boat herself. The boat was purchased for her by her teacher at the school. Yen took the boat and painted two large eyes on the hull as you'd see on any large boat floating in Vietnam. She provided the final visual arrangement, which included a rope and a pole serving as a mock dock.

The practice of painting eyes on boats to ward off both real and imagined dangers dates back to as far back as ancient Egypt, but the practice migrated to Southeast Asia throughout time and is observed in Laos and China as well as Vietnam, as was documented by *Vietnam Heritage Magazine* in 2013. The magazine reported that the US Department of Defense had investigated

the practice in the late 1960s and found that a legend originating in Nha Trang may hold some explanatory power for this phenomenon. According to these US researchers, the Vietnamese were telling a story about an ancient king who ordered large sea serpent's eyes tattooed on his subjects and painted on his boats because many were being mauled by sharks in sea travel.

For Yen, the eyes are uniquely Vietnamese and helped anchor her boat firmly within the world around her. "I painted the eyes of the boat to make it look similar to the Vietnamese traditional boat design. It represents Vietnamese society," she explains.

In the lense of modernity, in which nothing is magical and the only behemoths in the sea are the battleships jockeying for power in contested waters, the tradition seems novel and even cute. It's easy to walk away with this kind of impression seen through the modern lens. Even the US army's reading of the phenomena reads a bit romantic.

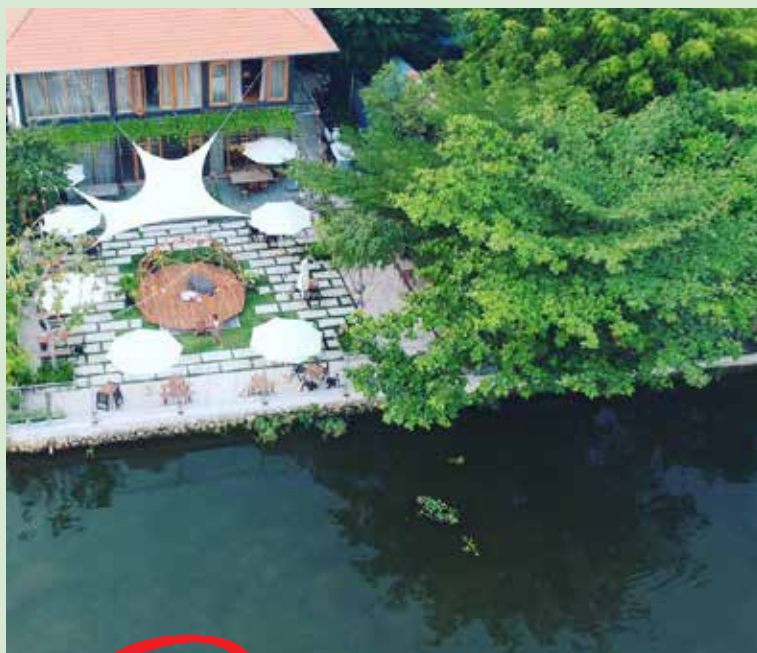
It's there, the rosy view of all traditions, and resisting this that Yen's piece is most active.

"This idea was inspired when I saw some images of floating markets in Vietnam. They really caught my attention, how people just live on it their whole life," she continues. While beautiful and important, "I think it reveals a sad truth is that not everyone could access to the modern world. Most

of the children in those families only finish high school, even before that, school is not their focus. They learn to catch fish and make a living in at an early age and soon, they [quit] education." In allowing people to live this way undisturbed, "[m]any considered it as how we protect the beauty of our culture and tradition, but is it? Is that the only way? The [lives] of these people [are] repeating through generation, that is what I know."

Of all her pieces in the show, Yen remembers the boat got the most attention of any of her contributions. Yen showed her boat with an artist statement explaining much of the above. With all the context, she says the piece was upsetting to some people. Some of the piece's critics asserted that her generation should do more to protect a traditional Vietnamese lifestyle like this one, she recalls. Still others appreciated having the practice reframed by someone who could speak about it meaningfully. If there is an edge to the piece, Yen says it's pointed at thoughtless adoration. "It is to some extent an ironic image of how the society just considered it as a beautiful tradition but did not put more thoughts into it, about [its] impact one's life, the development of the countries. The main reason of the idea is allowing people to have a different perspective on what they are considering as beautiful or a special thing about our country." ■





Same R&R

Relax and re-use by the river

Text by **Rebecca Jones**

Images by **Vy Lam and Provided by Schiller**

SCHILLER RIVER CLUB

(www.facebook.com/schillersaigon) is not just another expat bar, well—at least that's what German owner and founder Ben Schiller is aiming for. Located way out of town in Thu Duc, this riverside venue is far removed from the hustle and bustle of the city, a key factor behind its inception. Hosting everything from daily yoga and wellness workshops to internationally renowned DJs from Berlin, Schiller aims to bring a well-balanced mix of relaxation and rejuvenation to the city's social scene.

Perhaps more importantly, however, through its own business practices and by hosting events raising awareness of pollution and sustainability issues, Schiller hopes to lead the way in cleaning up and preserving the city's main waterway, which many customers come to enjoy. We caught up with Ben at the venue's first-ever "Ecocentric Festival," where he explained

the ideas behind his new project, as well as his hopes for the future.

So, Ben what brings you to Saigon?

I originally came to Saigon in 2001 to visit a friend of mine who was involved in furniture design, but well—nearly 20 years later and I'm still here! When I first arrived there was no clubbing scene and very few foreigners, only Pham Ngu Lao which held together a few backpackers and, of course, some English teachers. There was no District 2 at this time, in the sense of today at least. Of course all of that has changed now.

Is Schiller your first business venture?

Not quite. My first project was with my lovely wife Ha: we opened a small coffee shop on Dong Khoi in District 1. After that became successful, I sold it and started building a house in Thu Duc on the riverside, which is the

Schiller River Club we have today. In 2005 I also opened one of the first house music clubs in Saigon called Club Berlin. At the time it was not so attractive for everyone as we tended to stay away from mainstream music—we always played our type of music, but maybe we were a little ahead of time with that. We still play the same music at Schiller today, but it's vastly more popular with the younger generations than it used to be.

Why did you choose to locate Schiller so far from the city center?

I chose this area because it is close to District 1, but also draws ambience from the passing river that Schiller River Club overlooks. After 15 years of living in the city I needed a break from the noise and the traffic. I feel that everyone else appreciates relaxation time as well, which has been the main positive



feedback we've had from our customers.

The place feels very eclectic, what was the concept behind it?

I want a space where anyone can come by and feel relaxed. We have hosted a wide variety of different exhibitions, artists and performers and plan to keep doing so. During the week, my wife runs yoga workshops and treatments and we have art exhibitions showcasing young Vietnamese artists; recently we hosted yo yo from Hanoi, which was very well received. On the weekends, we usually have DJs but the difference with our music is that we cater more towards chilling and relaxing than dancing.

What do you do to reduce your impact on the river?

We have always been driven towards keeping our environmental footprint to a minimum: we integrated glass and

bamboo straws from the very beginning, for example. We also don't use plastic water bottles: they are made from glass and a deposit is taken and then refunded when they are returned. During events we provide free refill stations so everyone is welcome to reuse their water bottles, which is something I'd like to see a lot more venues doing.

Was this why you hosted the Ecocentric Festival?

Yes, we wanted to run an event that highlighted both the river itself—by virtue of our location—and what we and other local businesses and organizations are doing to help keep it clean. We were supported by a range of different companies: Coconam, which sells glass and bamboo straws made by local people; Refill my Bottle; and Royal Saigon, who supplied organic and vegan food including cashew cheese. And, of course,

my friend and colleague Nia: without whom it would never have happened!

Are you happy with how the festival went?

Yes, very happy! We wanted to keep everything as environmentally friendly and ecocentric as possible: while we had fun things like DJs, flying yoga and laughing yoga, we also had businesses there involved in recycling, the environment and sustainable living. It all came together really well. In fact, I felt really proud after the festival: usually there is a huge clean-up after an event, but after Ecocentric there was very little litter. Everyone was at the festival enjoying themselves, yet there was very little cleaning for me to do the next morning! The best part is that I feel that no one had to make a big change to achieve that—which is the message we wanted to get across. ■



River Life





Sam Beumkes captures everyday life along the Saigon River, from exercising and fishing to trading and walking man's best friend, there's something about the stillness of the water that makes life a little bit calmer in this bustling city.







Deep-Rooted Solutions

How Mangrove forests can protect the coastal areas and rice fields of the Mekong Delta from storms and flooding

Text by Jesus Lopez-Gomez

IT SEEMS LIKE THE TIME OF dramatic pronouncements of climate forecasts: a United Nations report released in October said humans have just over a decade left to reverse the course on climate change, and this should be a time of strong action to avoid complete disaster.

Similarly, strong action is needed to reduce the risks of climate change in the Mekong Delta, which will lose a third of its land area within the next century if nothing changes, according to water researcher Joep Janssen. “The Mekong... is one of the world’s most threatened deltas. If drastic measures are not taken, one third of the delta may be wiped off in 100 years,” he wrote in an email response to questions on the subject. It’s not a warning that’s gone unheeded. Janssen has studied ways Vietnam is preparing for climate change both through national effort as well as through international partnerships, including an ambitious project to use large scale mangrove restoration projects to act as an ecological ballast for the area.

In fact, this project dates back to the 1990s when Vietnamese authorities, alarmed by the rate at which the trees had been lost due to harvesting, began to restore the forests. The mangrove trees’ deep roots make it a perfect tool to prevent erosion, Germany’s international aid arm Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) wrote in a brief describing their ongoing partnership with Vietnam that formally started in 2011. Together with financing from Australia, the international partnership has led a mangrove restoration project that currently involves five provinces. The GIZ has found that the resurgence of

mangroves has created a larger stream of fish and crabs sold commercially as well as growth of other native sea life and bird populations.

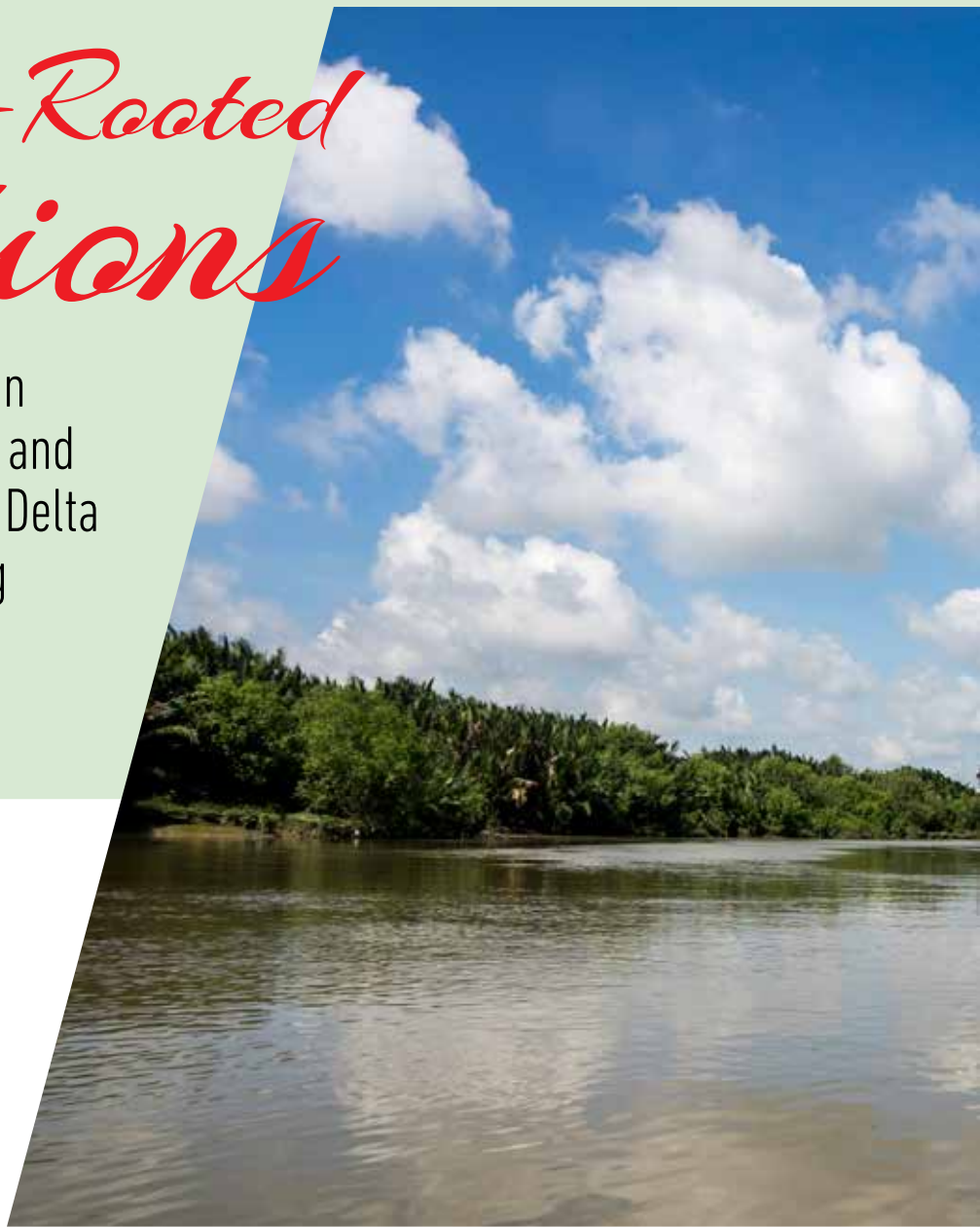
Janssen has taken personal visits to the sites that are playing a role in climate change abatement projects. There are 10 sites about the Mekong Delta area southwest of Ho Chi Minh City where the mangroves restoration is occurring, including the Mangrove restoration project in Bac Lieu, where locals had realized the trees would flourish to an even greater extent with the benefit of bamboo trees.

Much of Janssen’s work has been in translating the rich body of scientific evidence that has been created in studying the Mekong Delta’s future in an increasingly carbon-rich atmosphere. One of the findings that’s caught his attention is the three-millimeter-per-year sea level rise that’s expected due partly to ice melt at Tibetan Plateau. Often referred to as “The Third Pole,” the Tibetan Plateau is expected to recede greatly as will all of Asia’s glaciers; a third are expected to disappear by 2100.

But in the near term, Janssen’s analysis shows that water levels may actually fall first due to upstream dams in China that feed the Mekong Delta’s waterways. Janssen said this is expected to cause a range of effects including reduction in commercial fishing and landmass loss. The mangrove tree project aims to mitigate the latter specifically, Janssen said. But without intervention, Vietnam’s coastal people will be the first to feel the effects of climate change due to massive ice melts. Or it could be the industrial groundwater extraction and subsequent rapid erosion, about 3 centimeters annually, that compromises the Mekong Delta first.

Janssen expounded upon a range of different threats—including one in which weakening soil fertility and crop production foments greater soil erosion—but each has a similar outcome if left unchecked: the steady disappearance of the Mekong Delta region.

An architect by training, Janssen worked primarily as a developer for urban landscapes in the Netherlands





specializing in using water to increase the aesthetic value and liveability of Dutch cities. Janssen decided to shift his work's focus after watching the 2006 documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* and refocused himself on studying the changing relationship humans would have with water as the Earth absorbed the effects of carbon emissions.

Both Janssen's native Netherlands and Vietnam share similar obstacles as low-lying lands, he noted. He began studying the country and a central question began to emerge: "I was curious if the Vietnamese people are able (and

resilient enough) to tackle the challenges now and in the near future." He took a journalist's approach to the question and took it upon himself to travel the country to personalize and deepen the scientific research he was reading on the matter. In 2015, he produced the book *Living with the Mekong* reporting his findings. Part history and part climate analysis, the book is a document reporting both the findings of extensive research and conversations with the affected Vietnamese populations.

Janssen said projects like the mangrove tree restoration effort will have

a large, positive effect on the region, but greater efforts are needed due in part to the sheer complexity of the problem. For example, the dams may tame the rising stream waters as Asia's glaciers melt, but a river sentiment-starved Mekong Delta will surely sink, "which is bad news for all delta citizens," he observed. The effects of climate change will be unevenly distributed, and the Vietnamese people living at the nation's southern tail are in the direct line of fire. "Coast people are facing the consequences first, because villages will slowly disappear in to the sea" unless immediate, forceful action is taken. ■

Floating Downstream

With Tet slowly peering around the corner, Vietnam's waterways will soon be busier than ever

Text by Alex Green



THE GENTLE ‘PUT-PUT’ of a single-cylinder Chinese diesel engine is the soundtrack to the waterways of Vietnam. While large, modern, metal-hulled freighters and sand barges have taken over much of the heavy lifting required for Vietnam's rapid modernization and industrial development, the more traditional wooden boats, skiffs, barges and coracles still ply their trade along Vietnam's thousands of miles of rivers and canals.

American Ken Preston has dedicated himself to studying the large variety of Vietnamese boats, and regularly makes trips across the country to seek out relics of Vietnam's maritime tradition. It is a quest that began almost half a century ago. “I was born in August 1946, which made me just about the perfect age to tour Vietnam for free as soon as I finished college. Fortunately, I had an easy war compared to many. Nobody killed me,

or even made a very serious attempt at it. More importantly, I didn't kill anyone else,” he recalls. Despite such inauspicious beginnings, Ken has an enduring relationship with Vietnam and its people, aided by his bodyguard and interpreter, Mr. Mui. After several years examining boats in North America, looking for the “perfect boat,” a work that grew from Ken's childhood experiences as a fisherman and boatman in Alaska, he set off for Vietnam in December 2004, with the aim of “photographing every type of boat in the peninsula.” Unsurprisingly, he remains engaged with the task to this day.

The freighters of the Mekong Delta are particularly iconic; almost all have red-painted bows with a pair of large oval eyes to watch for traffic and help the captain find his way back to safe harbor. While there is a lot of variety to the Mekong Delta freighters: some with large deckhouses to transport dry goods, some with a floodable

central live well for fish transportation, others simply with a flush deck for loading more robust cargo, all are built to a similar plan. “All start with an exquisitely curved barrel stave hull. The hull is built right up to the deck edge with no frames whatsoever, formed entirely by the curve of the planks, which are pre-bent at each end. These boats are as well-fitted together as a lute or a whisky barrel, and are endlessly adaptable,” he explains.

The freighters are most commonly between 40 to 60 feet long, and are built in a scant three months. “While the hull is an exquisite piece of construction, they are often rather frumpy looking when finished. They are generally powered by a long-tailed outboard motor, a wonderfully simple unit that is ideal for the shallow and often rubbish-laden waters of the Mekong Delta, tangled with rafts of water hyacinths. The whole unit can be picked off and rebuilt as needed, and the prop



much traffic.

It is unsurprising that the Mekong freighters, so characteristically Vietnamese themselves, play a leading role in one of Vietnam's most iconic celebrations, Tet. For Tet, the sugarcane and scrap metal cargoes are replaced with brightly colored bouquets of chrysanthemums, marigolds, bougainvillea, *mao ga* flowers, lavender, kumquat trees and, particularly in southern Vietnam, the *ochna integerrima* or *mai vang* ("Mickey Mouse plant"). Even the smaller ferries can carry more than 500 small flowerpots, while larger boats handle the kumquat and *mai vang* trees. Together, the gathered boats create a riotous explosion of color, bringing together plants from across the Mekong. One of the most notable gardening regions is Sa Dec, located near the Tien River and once known by the French as *le jardin de Cochinchine*. Sa Dec boasts 400 hectares of land on which more than 2,000 different varieties of flowers are cultivated, and the months before Tet are the busiest of the year for this fragrant and beautiful little town.

The assorted transport boats of the Mekong bring the produce of Sa Dec to the banks of Saigon, and one of the most vibrant flower markets of the Tet period takes place along Tau Hu Canal in District 8. The captains moor their craft over several kilometers, and hundreds of boats blooming with all manner of flowers line the bank of the canal, nosing onto the street. Saigon explodes with color and fragrance during Lunar New Year, and the blooms spill onto the street in front of the boats. Every Vietnamese family bedecks their home with flowers for Tet, some of the larger kumquat trees can be sold for up to VND5 million—traders make a good profit at this time of year, made all the better for carrying such a pleasant cargo. ■

can easily be hoisted out of the water to clear any blockages. The outboards are almost always started in the air, an unnerving sight when in close company!"

Many of the larger boats also have covered living quarters for longer journeys, extending over the stern. Protruding beyond this is an area for hanging laundry and for slinging hammocks so provides some respite from the sun. Despite the various additions to the superstructure, when cruising light these boats are fine river crafts, nosing along at a good pace. They are, however, more often than not seen loaded right down to the waterline, trusting to their exquisite construction to carry heavy cargo without foundering.

Overloaded

One of the most common cargoes, especially during Lunar New Year, is sugarcane, though the crop is providing bittersweet sustenance for farmers. Sugarcane is ubiquitous, and the

VND5,000 *nuoc mia* refreshes and revitalizes Saigon's busy commuters at almost every street corner. The Mekong's wooden freighters constantly serve this demand, piling their boats high with sugarcane, loaded crosswise, to be sold at waterfront markets or taken to refineries on the outskirts of the city.

For the captains that work these boats, it is a life that is at once lazy and full of industry. Floating soporifically downstream under the beating heat of the sun is work in itself, and this easy motion is only achieved with a lifetime's knowledge of the river and its traffic. Working a heavily-laden freighter in narrow waterways, navigating between dozens of other craft, requires constant vigilance and careful management of the engine and tiller bar. It is a privilege to watch a skilled captain at work. The Saigon River is incredibly tidal, and when the tide is coming in, it is difficult for any large boat to make any progress. Many instead choose to anchor, which can be a complicated process in itself amongst so





A Leather Lifestyle

MOST OF THE TIME, A BAG IS just... a bag. But in those rare instances, a bag transcends functionality and becomes a piece of art. Founded by Huyen Nguyen in 2008, “NE-YUH For Her” and “CINCINATI For Him” combine the best of Italian vegan-tanned leather and high-quality Vietnamese craftsmanship to fashion the most exquisite of handbags and accessories for men and women.

“I think it’s wrong to promote Vietnamese labor as being cheap,” says Huyen in her stylish, vintage-inspired boutique just off of trendy Dong Khoi Street (60-62 Mac Thi Bui, D1).

“Vietnamese craftsmanship can be extremely high-quality, producing something beautifully handmade.”

With a background in French literature and years spent working and traveling abroad, both of Huyen’s lines showcase an international flair and sensibility, all wrapped up in Old World romance. “Our products are designed to be discreet but noticed at the same time,” says Huyen.

Both Cincinati and Neyuh embrace sustainable fashion, using only leather that’s been treated with organic material and natural tannins derived from the bark, leaves and branches of trees and plants. This expensive and time-consuming practice yields leather that is rich and deep in color with excellent durability, developing a unique patina with use.

Huyen’s “CINCINATI For Him” collection (an aesthetically-pleasing spelling of the US city where a young Donald Trump cut his real estate teeth) veers towards classic designs with superb attention to detail in everything from hardware to stitching, and includes sumptuous briefcases, functional clutches for everyday carry, and stylishly light travel bags.





“NE-YUH For Her” (Huyen’s name spelled backwards) has both classic and fashion-forward pieces. Huyen is especially excited about a brand-new collaboration with RhusArt, using their groundbreaking technology to print directly onto genuine leather, a look previously achieved only by using synthetic PU leather or printing onto a plastic film. Joining an elite list of world-renowned designers like Karl Lagerfeld and Carolina Herrera who have also collaborated with RhusArt, Huyen’s new pieces feature patterns and colors that have been permanently printed onto the leather, almost like a high-definition tattoo, preserving its natural texture and touch.

In addition to her RTW collection, Huyen offers a “Build Your Bag” option where true fashionistas can customize leather type and color, lining, hardware and more, as well as “Worth-It Rewards”, a service to help select the perfect corporate gifts. See more at www.neyuhleather.com





Wine & Dine

ITALIAN TRATTORIA OGGI / IMAGE PROVIDED BY LOTTE LEGEND HOTEL SAIGON





Legend *Dining*

For an evening of surf-and-turf dining, head no further than OGGI

Text by **Paul Y. Kim**

Images Provided by **Lotte Legend Hotel Saigon**

ONE OF MY FAVORITE MOVIES is *Lost in Translation*. Melancholic and lonesome, but funny, beautiful, and fulfilling at the same time. It has the strange ability of making me yearn to feel alone and out of step with the rest of the world. The iconic scenes of Bob Harris drinking whiskey with the soft croons of the lounge singer in the background and the beautiful Charlotte trying to listen earnestly to the drab superficial conversations from the Hollywood types came rushing through my mind as I ate at **Italian Trattoria Oggi**, the Italian trattoria hidden inside the **Lotte Legend Hotel Saigon** (Ground Floor, 2A-4A Ton Duc Thang, D1). The hotel itself seems to be isolated from the bustle of Saigon's District 1 center, a stone throw away. Maybe it was the lounge act from Russia singing Bee Gee tunes or the Korean tourists who had too much to drink revelling on the leather sofas, but I felt like I was in the Vietnamese version of the movie. Even though I was with beautiful company, I could picture myself basking, dining and imbibing in solitude here and be utterly content.

The surf-and-turf (VND630,000++) at Oggi will appeal to any food critic. The popularity of this dish seemed to have waned over the years to my beguile, but the decadent self-indulgent pairing of filet mignon and lobster tail still remains in a special place in my culinary heart. I love the way meat and seafood play

off each other. The flavors they bring out in each other can be magical. Oggi cooks the filet perfectly while the lobster is moist and tender. They provide an accompanying mushroom sauce that subtly enhances the beautifully succulent filet mignon. Maybe a warm herb butter could have been used as well for the lobster? Sometimes less is more. Oggi adheres to this in many ways, as shown in the sparse assortment of grilled vegetables that accompanied the surf-and-turf.

The lamb chops (VND620,000++) were appreciated as well - grilled and lightly seasoned with just salt, pepper and rosemary herb. It appears as if their specialty, or signature, are with grilling red meats. The lamb was soft enough that chewing could be considered optional.

Oggi leans more towards an international menu than specifically Italian, not to say Oggi isn't delicious. We weren't shown a wine list, because the management carefully preselected the course and wine pairing for us. They paired our meal with a Chilean wine, Cosecha Tarapaca Cabernet Sauvignon. There are probably not that many wines that are better than



that, unless you are willing to spend more than USD5++ for the bottle at retail. The night ended with desserts, a baked Alaska (VND168,000++), a scoop of strawberry and vanilla ice cream with fruit compote and meringue, and a mango flan.

Perhaps it's not about being taken to a different place in your mind or

even experiencing the familiar. Like Bob Harris and Charlotte in *Lost in Translation*, it's about repression of gratification, not achieving the emotional payoff of the expected status quo, misinterpretations, misunderstandings—and the feelings it causes and as the film communicates—that's ok. ■





Dinner at Grandma's

Traditional Vietnamese home-cooked food inspired by grandmother's recipes

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

ENTERING NGOC CHAU GARDEN (116 Ho Tung Mau, D1) is like walking into a Vietnamese home, specifically the owner Mr. T's family's home. Mr. T grew up in a traditional household in southern Vietnam with his grandmother's cooking being a staple of his childhood. Named after his younger sister, Ngoc Chau, the restaurant, opened in September 2015, aims to create a wholesome Vietnamese experience, where customers come to enjoy the atmosphere, the traditional decor, and the friendly service as well as the delicious home-cooked dishes. The manager of the restaurant,

grew up in central Vietnam and has been working at Ngoc Chau Garden since it opened, like many of the staff here including the head chef.

"This is not a business, this is a place where customers can come for a Vietnamese experience, it is a community," says HV. The restaurant holds the traditions of Vietnamese food at its core; as they would be in a traditional family home, dishes are put in the middle of the table and shared among friends and family. "He [Mr. T] remembered the food cooked by his grandmother and then by his mother when he was growing up and wanted to recreate this here at Ngoc Chau."

The menu consists of over 100 dishes that are freshly cooked to order, including many southern favorites as well as dishes inspired by northern and central Vietnam. "When people think of Vietnamese food, they think of *bun cha* and *pho*, but it is not complete without staple family home cooking," says HV, as we sit in one of the four seating areas chatting over a glass of iced Jasmine *tra da*.

Spread over three levels in rooms framed with bamboo-paneled walls and furnished with dark wooden furniture and fishing baskets that hang from the ceilings, Ngoc Chau Garden can comfortably seat 150 people at any one time. The third floor is a mezzanine floor that can be hired for private functions and parties.

As we wait for the chef to prepare some bestsellers, HV tells me her response when customers ask for recommendations. "We don't have 'best foods,' if customers





Fried rice with garlic



Stir-Fried Beef



Goi cuon



Dau hu sot ca

our favorites we will ask [them] what meat they like, what tastes they like, and if they like it spicy or not, then we will recommend what to have so that they can make the best choice for them."

Each dish on the extensive menu has been photographed especially and appears next to the Vietnamese, English and Japanese descriptions, which accommodate the majority of their customers. "The food and the photos of the food are the same," says HV as she explains that they remain transparent with their customers and will also tell them if they think they are ordering too much food for the number of people.

As the food arrives on banana leaves positioned on traditional woven plates, it does not disappoint on presentation. The Vietnamese grilled pork patties with citronella (VND125,000 for 4 patties) is a dish inspired by Hue. To make this dish, pork minced with garlic is molded onto and cooked onto sticks of lemongrass, which subtly infuse the meat with the flavor. However, the fun comes when preparing the dish. HV demonstrates by placing lettuce, carambola (a sour Vietnamese vegetable), mango, pineapple, Vietnamese basil and finally the pork into rice paper and wrapping into a roll before dipping it into a spicy, peanut sauce. We also sample Ngoc Chau's stir-fried beef (VND100,000), which is deliciously tender and bathed in a juicy, pepper sauce with baby corn and green beans.

The vegetarian menu does not punish anyone for being meat-free with exciting dishes like stir-fried Tonkin flower with garlic (VND80,000) and vegetarian sour soup with Egyptian Riverhemp (VND80,000). Don't be afraid to wash your meal down with Ngoc Chau's homemade wine (VND75,000 per



glass) brewed especially by Mr. T's mother and left to age for five years. There are three flavors to choose from: strawberry, passion fruit and dried banana. This is no ordinary wine as it comes with a 20-30 percent strength. Ngoc Chau Garden also makes a wide range of their own teas, smoothies and juices as well as serving local beers and a wide selection of local and international wines.

With the warm, approachable nature of this restaurant, whose staff are just as happy as their full-bellied customers, there's no reason why this family-oriented dining experience won't continue to grow. ■





Beef Ribs

Anything But Simple

Located on one of Saigon's most coveted downtown streets, a new bistro pairs romance with fusion fare

Text by **Carly Naaktgeboren**
Images Provided by **The Little DOOR**

THE LITTLE DOOR BISTRO

(49 Ton That Thiep, D1, www.facebook.com/thelittledoorbymrsimple) welcomes diners with a soft, warm glow from inside. Stark white tables illuminated by vintage bulbs, a sleek espresso bar and a display of delicate baked goods greet us as we enter the ground floor café. Ascending the staircase, the atmosphere becomes increasingly more romantic with each step as we curve around a decorative ladder garnished with vines and hanging lights. The first floor is a classic dining room with balcony seating that offer stunning views of the city and the ornate Hindu temple across the street. The top floor is a cozy space with an impressive glass ceiling, velvet couches and even more intimate tables.

Sway With Me softly plays over the speakers on the first floor as candlelight flickers across the white table, accented



Salmon



Truffle Soup

are offered by the bottle, as well as a selection of beers.

The menu is bistro style, not too many options, just enough that there is choice without losing quality for quantity. The dishes are fusion, classic Western reworked with Vietnamese flavors. Everything is fresh and housemade, down to the Worcestershire sauce, Chef Michael loyally following the ideology that “if you want something done right, do it yourself.”

Perusing the pages, there is one ingredient that appears at nearly every turn: mushrooms. Truffles are a specialty at The Little DOOR, as well as shitaki, which are aged three years, kept and prepared with great care. The mushrooms are a delicacy and a rare found treat. We decide to order the truffle and mushroom soup (VND315,000) to begin—the mixture of truffle and shitake is not something to be missed. It is served at just the right temperature for immediate consumption, succulent with earthy tones blending evenly for a rich, creamy finish. We also opt for an order of the stir scallops with white wine (VND170,000). Artfully presented on a perfectly symmetrical plate, the two thick scallops are exquisitely buttery and lightly topped with tomatoes and capers.

The songs of crooners continue to accompany our dinner as we prepare to dig into our mains. We select the red wine braised beef ribs (VND275,000) and the seared salmon with white wine sauce (VND290,000), both of which are impeccably and colorfully presented. The braised ribs fall off the bone and practically melt in my mouth. They are subtly spicy with a rich, peppery finish. The salmon is light pink accented with garnishes of deep orange and magenta. It is delicious, delicate with a robust taste.

Finally, it's time for dessert, and I am eager to try some of their sweets, with all cakes and pastries baked in house. After much deliberation, we decide to get one fruity and one chocolate dessert: the berries cheesecake (VND55,000) and the tiramisu (VND50,000). The cheesecake has a thick base and light red coating with a solitary raspberry on top—it is

tangy, sweet and superbly dense. The tiramisu is brought in a trendy jar, the flavors layering onto the spoon with each scoop, rich and smooth. We also taste a specialty California cheese roll (VND50,000), which has a flaky crust, salty and sweet, and filled with warm melted sweet cheeses.

The Little DOOR Bistro flawlessly blurs the line between cute and chic, making the diner somehow feel both at home and elegant all at once. Descending the stairs, we leave satisfied and with the knowing feeling that this will not be our last visit. ■



Scallops



Berries Cheesecake, Tiramisu

in steely blues and silvers. The crisp walls are decorated with modern mirrors, the high ceilings meet a full wall of windows and the lights are gently dimmed. My partner and I each order a glass of the house red wine, an Italian Il Pumo Negroamaro (VND80,000 per glass). The red is balanced, both dry and fruity, making it easy to drink. Other wines



Cheese Rolls



Turkey for the Soul

Text by **Christine Van**
Images by **Vy Lam and**
Renaissance Riverside Hotel Saigon

Giving thanks at the Renaissance Riverside Hotel Saigon

IT'S ABOUT THIS TIME OF YEAR when North Americans celebrate Thanksgiving, a holiday borne out of a tradition of communal feasts following the fall harvest. Many families have the custom of relating what they're thankful for while enjoying a cornucopia of home-cooked favorites.

However, in an age where we mindlessly "like" Facebook posts, "heart" Instagram photos and "favorite" tweets dozens of times a day, it's ironically harder to express gratitude for our own offline lives. Enter the "Gratitude Journal," a trend that's taken off in the last few years as a way of expressing thankfulness for the little things that happen every day and not just on holidays. Benefits include increased psychological well-being, enhanced positivity, reduced blood pressure and better sleep. Oprah herself kept one for a decade and while her list of 5 daily things to be thankful for have included predictably fabulous events like

"Maya Angelou calling to read me a new poem", you don't have to be friends with world-famous Grammy winners to come up with your own list.

So it was that we found ourselves one autumn night at the festive buffet at **Viet Kitchen** at the **Renaissance Riverside Hotel Saigon** (8-15 Ton Duc Thang, D1), ready to add another entry to our gratitude journal. Granted, it was not hard to feel blessed sitting in the industrial chic space, vintage lighting casting a soft glow on sleek walls of polished stone and ceramic tiles, listening to strains of upbeat, live music coming from the nearby lobby RBar, and watching the traffic zip by through floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking busy Me Linh Square and the Saigon River beyond.

I thought about how important it is to savor the simple things in life. In Saigon, that could be scooping out the flesh of a fresh coconut or a biting into a juicy mango that drips down your chin and



hand. Tonight, it's a hot spiced mulled wine with a stick of cinnamon that tastes just like autumn, instantly transporting me back to warm sweaters, changing leaves, and long walks.

Journaling about everyday moments often involves noticing small acts of kindness by strangers, like the fruit lady on the corner who always throws in an extra tangerine or the guy at my favorite noodle place who remembers to bring me a little bowl of sate sauce unbidden. Tonight, I'm thankful for our young waiter who noticed that we forgot dipping sauce for our jumbo peel-and-eat shrimp, part of a visually stunning cooler of all manner of artisanal salads and deli items, from a roasted pumpkin and feta salad to gorgeous prosciutto and a mouthwatering assortment of cheeses. Before we could say a word, he brought over little bowls of salt and pepper and lime, the quintessential Vietnamese seafood condiment. Clearing our carnage of plates, he then considerately laid out finger bowls with slices of lime.

I'm also thankful for living in beautiful Ho Chi Minh City. Yes, the monsoonal rain, illogical traffic and endless honking can wear you down, but I'm grateful to live in this part of the world, with easy access to so many of the world's best cuisines. We visited Viet Kitchen's live seafood station where everything is cooked to order and challenged the chefs to take us on a regional tour using products so fresh, the crabs were literally clawing their way out of the display baskets en masse. Soon enough, we were gorging on clams and shrimp in a spicy Thai broth, grilled cockles and New Zealand mussels in butter and garlic, lobster in a sweet chili sauce, and the aforementioned crabs



flash fried in chili and salt.

Keeping a gratitude journal has also made me more mindful of saying "thank you" to people, especially to close friends and family, the people you tend to take most for granted. As we feasted on festive roast turkey smothered in silken gravy with all the trimmings including roasted corn and fall vegetables, creamy mashed potatoes, and a soul-satisfying stuffing, I thought about how a traditional turkey dinner is almost always enjoyed with family and close friends. Because roasting the turkey to golden perfection and putting all the fussy sides together is such a time- and labor-intensive task,

if someone takes the time to make you a turkey dinner, it's usually out of love. As we enjoyed a final plate of iced sugar cookies and cappuccinos, I looked back on a wonderful evening spent with a dear friend and felt thankful that a long, leisurely festive dinner provided the perfect occasion to remember to always be thankful. ■

The Festive dinner buffet is available on Thanksgiving Night (November 22nd), and then starting from December 22 - December 31 at VND1,590,000++/person including free flow house wine, beer and soft drink.

TURKEY ON THE RUN



For a more intimate dinner at home, Viet Kitchen offers "Turkey on the Run". For just VND2,588,000 net, enjoy everything you need for a traditional Thanksgiving dinner at home, including a 6-7kg roast turkey, mashed potatoes, grilled vegetables, and two sauces: red wine and cranberry. A complimentary bottle of Australian red wine is sure to set a festive mood. All that's left for you to do is deciding who's doing the

dishes afterward. The "Turkey on The Run," is available from November 22 - December 31 and must be ordered at least 24 hours in advance.

Drink to Your Health

Treat what ails you at this moody,
apothecary-themed speakeasy

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



Double cheese hamburger



Bespoke bourbon drink



Drinking and Healing (2nd floor, 25 Ho Tung Mau, D1, Sun-Thu 6:30pm-2am; Fri&Sat: 6:30pm-3am) follows this exact concept. Sure, for those from Paris and New York this renaissance of associating old tyme pharmacies with speakeasy digs is not a new concept or even a novel concept. Prescription Cocktail Club just south of the Louvre on the other side of the Seine and Apotheke located in Manhattan's Chinatown, are the first ones to come to my mind. Drinking and Healing is the Vietnam answer to those and the return of restorative cocktails.

Drinking and Healing is located on the 2nd level of a 150-year-old French colonial building about 100 meters away from the Saigon River. The old building is beautiful and full of romantic character just by itself. The interior is dark and the lighting is moody. There's a DJ (every Friday and Saturday night) at a dedicated DJ booth playing old school hip hop from the likes of A Tribe Called Quest and Biggie Smalls. (Am I so old now that hip hop music from the generation before me is used to create a loungey ambiance?)

The lighting is too dark to show the exposed original refurbished colonial architectural structure. Instead you are instantly drawn to the bar section and the very "Instagrammable" neon lit sign directly next to the smoking section balcony.

The drinking menu has a bespoke section with options for flavor profile (ie. sweet, spicy, creamy) to alcohol base (vodka, gin, bourbon, whiskey, etc.) and then ingredients (cinnamon,

pineapple, herbs, etc.). I selected the drink to be sweet, with a bourbon base to be flavored with citrus and rosemary, similar to a Brown Derby, but with rosemary—which I quite enjoyed. My companion chose a simple gin and tonic, which I found to be an excellent choice to see the girth of talent from the mixologist, which he perfected and the drinks will only get better from here. You also have the option of telling the mixologist what ails you and he or she will determine the best potion. Then, of course, their more classic and signature cocktails are listed on separate pages.

What also makes Drinking and Healing stand out is their selection of liquor and infusion program. They have a special private collection that is not available for distribution in Vietnam and over a dozen wines and liquors infused in-house with herbs, spices and fruits. You can even request for a custom infusion and if the mixologist agrees, will have it ready for you after 2 weeks when the infusion process is complete.

Drinking & Healing also offers a food program as well, some small sharing plates like chicken wings or you can indulge with a burger with melted cheddar cheese and an added baked cheddar cheese plus crispy bacon. The chicken wing lollipops were lightly fried and served naked, but with the traditional Vietnamese chili sauce on the side. The burger can compete with any of the joints in Saigon that specializes in serving hamburgers. It might be the remedy in itself. You might just leave Drinking and Healing exclaiming—I'm healed! ■

UP UNTIL RECENT HISTORY, apothecaries in the West offered alcoholic concoctions in the hopes of remedying what ails you. Everything from headaches to joint pain to stomach issues to dental hygiene were "cured" with booze. For one to get a proper stiff drink, one would not go to the local watering hole but to the dentist or pharmacy. I specifically recall being in rough shape at work due to unknown causes, but what I expected was a combination of a flu and a stomach virus. Lunch break arrives and I go to the tavern just simply to get out of the office and the bartender commented the moment I entered that I looked terrible. He quickly whipped up a hot herbally tasting tea with whiskey and campari. The effects were almost instantaneous. I felt like a brand new man. Before the readers start commenting about the medical reasonings: advantages and harmful disadvantages, I just want to say that I didn't care at that moment—it worked!



A classic gin tonic



Chicken wing lollipops





Four by Four

Grilled King Prawns

For amazing views of the Saigon's cityscape and delicious sharing plates, head to the top at OnTop Bar

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

OPENED IN 2012, **ONTOP BAR**, located on the 20th floor of Novotel Saigon Centre (167 Hai Ba Trung, D3, opens at 5:30pm), has breathtaking views of Ho Chi Minh City. On a clear night this is a great place to sit outside on the terrace, enjoying the breeze and a sprawling landscape of urban architecture that continues to expand further and higher.

Once we relaxed on a soft cushioned seat and settled in, a member of the wait staff offered us one of their signature cocktails, a Vietnamese-style mojito, which includes lemongrass and chili (VND165,000++). It was good, with the sourness of the lime contrasted by hints of spiciness. As we waited for the food, a look around the venue shows a

cosmopolitan mix of expats, business travelers and groups of young, hip locals. Club music plays in the background, however, it wasn't too loud where conversation was impossible.

We were here to try their new combo—four plates of food and four beers for VND488,000++, a great value and an excellent way to start or finish a night out. We sipped our signature mojitos as the first plate arrives, chicken wings and calamari. Though we was warned the chicken wings could be spicy, they were actually quite tame, yet large and with an ample coating of batter, the meat tender and juicy. The calamari was savory as well.

The next plate placed on our table was triangles of chicken quesadillas. This, to



Bonsai Martini

our delight, had all of the necessary sides, including a scoop of sour cream, one of guacamole, and one of Pico de Gallo. Filled with shredded chicken and bell peppers, with a light layer of cheese, the quesadilla was filling and flavorful, with the guacamole and sour cream giving it a rich, creamy texture.

We made it about halfway through the quesadilla before plate number 3 arrived with three types of skewers—two with lamb, two with fish and two with beef—with chunks of bell pepper buffering each piece of meat. The large squares of white fish were tender and mild, while the lamb had a succulent Greek-style seasoning to it. With our belly reaching capacity plate four and



Beef, Lamb and Fish Skewers



Muddle



Ginger Mash

final arrived, grilled king prawns with mango salsa. The tangy, sweet salsa with the moist, tender prawns was an excellent dish to finish with, as it was a lighter, more complementary plate after some of the heartier plates before it.

With four beers and our four plates of food for VND488,000++, it's a terrific deal, especially the added value of the view. It's perfect for a night out with a few friends. They also have a full menu, which includes European charcuteries and tapas. Beyond the signature mojito, OnTop Bar boasts some interesting signature cocktails like Muddle, which includes Jim Beam, tamarind cordial, Benedictine liqueur (DOM), kumquat and lime leaf; or Ginger Mash, which has gin, pineapple juice, St Germain (elderflower liqueur) and lime juice. So, whether you're looking to hang out with colleagues after a long workday or looking to kickstart the weekend chilling with friends, start by looking up. ■





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.

The good thing is, you're not alone wondering just what "fine wine" means. It's still debated by wine critics and buffs too; they can't agree either

IF YOU ASK PEOPLE ABOUT FINE WINE, WHETHER they are experts or not, their minds automatically jump to either Bordeaux or Burgundy. For over 100 years, these two places have been considered the producers of the best wines in the world, and usually when people refer to fine wines the wineries making wines in Bordeaux and Burgundy come first, sometimes with no other areas being considered as close competitors.

Perhaps a century or so ago, this was the case, although personally I think that a lot of this reputation is just that—reputation, and thanks to a good marketing effort. If you are a wine lover, and regardless of what you like, you should be able to find fine wine in almost every country with a history of producing wine.

But, what is fine wine anyway? There is no formal definition of what criteria a particular wine needs to follow in order to be labelled as "fine wine." In fact, many people tag wines as "fine" based on their prices. Let's be simple and define "fine wine" as a wine that is outstanding.

Go back in time, when the famous Bordeaux and Burgundy classifications were established, not many wineries age wine, with most of the wines available in the market being young, and some others fortified, so it was not that difficult for the likes of Chateau Margaux to differentiate themselves from the rest.

However, today globally more and more wineries are focusing on quality rather than quantity, and hence making better and better wines. The response by the French to this was the concept of "*terroir*". Let's say that our wines are exceptional because of the combination of soil, weather and climate, which I can live with, but what about now that we are in the age of climate change? Not so exceptional anymore?

One of the countries pioneering real fine wines is Chile, not many wineries do so, but if you have the chance, give a try to Montes, Sena and a few others who, whether using Bordeaux blends or not, are delivering amazing wines. In fact, some of them are beating the Bordeaux top five in blind tastings.

But you don't need to leave the old world to find real gems. Surf Italy, especially the Piedmont region to enjoy great Barolo wines, but also Super Tuscans like Solaia, or some of the wines from Brunello di Montalcino or the great Amarone. You should also try a good aged Rioja or a Ribera del Duero, or if you are more into Burgundy, discover Mencia wines in Bierzo, just to mention a few. ■

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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/



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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



Sai Gon Grill

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



Red Door

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



River Restaurant

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



Also Try...

3T Quan Nuong

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

**Top Floor, 29 Ton That Hiep, D1
028 3821 1631**

Banh Xeo 46A

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

46A Dinh Cong Trang, D1

Cha Ca La Vong

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

36 Ton That Thiep, D1

Com Nieu

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

**59 Ho Xuan Huong, D3
028 3932 6363
comnieusaigon27@yahoo.com
comnieusaigon.com.vn**

Cuc Gach Quan

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

**10 Dang Tat, D1
028 3848 0144**

Hum

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

**2 Thi Sach, D1
028 3823 8920
www.hum-vegetarian.vn**

May

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

**19-21 Dong Khoi, D1
028 3910 1277**

Mountain Retreat

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

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

Nha Hang Ngon

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

**160 Pasteur, D1
028 3827 7131
www.quananngon.com.vn
8am - 10pm**

Temple Club

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

**29-31 Ton That Thiep, D1
028 3829 9244
templeclub.com.vn**

The Hue House

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

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

INTERNATIONAL



Butcher MANZO & Craft Beer Bar

Butcher MANZO & Craft Beer Bar

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

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

028-2253-8825

www.butcher-manzo.com



Madcow Wine & Grill

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

30th Floor, Pullman Saigon Centre

(0)28 3838 8686



twenty21one

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

Crispy shredded duck spring rolls and Bacon-wrapped dates stuffed with Roquefort blue cheese

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

21 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3

TWENTY21ONE



Saffron

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

51 Hai Ba Trung, D1
(0)28 3824 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

KUALA LUMPUR





Press and Release

Text by Carly Naaktgeboren
Images by Vy Lam



The result of a full-body Thai treatment is often an exciting and powerful mind/body healing experience





For more info and booking, visit their www.facebook.com/LeelawadeeThaiTherapyThaoDien or call 89 934 2965.

IF YOU'RE NOT LOOKING CLOSELY FOR IT, you just might miss it. Hidden within the winding roads of Thao Dien is a shaded street lined with boutique apartment buildings and decorative foliage. An array of colorful signs points you in the direction of Morin Apartment and housed on the first floor of this building is the retreat that is **Leelawadee Spa Authentic Thai Therapy** (Ground floor, Morin Apt, 5/19 Street 64, Thao Dien, D2).

Instantly relaxing at the first whiff of lemongrass, glints of ornate ruby and gold decor catch the eye and detailed tray stands are topped meticulously with bowls of ginger, lime, scrub and essential oils. The waiting area contains seats for foot reflexology, and beyond this is a room for aromatherapy and hot stone massage, overlooking a charming private garden. The room holds two beds, making it a romantic setting for partners or a personal escape solo.

However, for a traditional Thai massage, you are ushered to a room just above the waiting area with two thick massage beds resting on the floor, typical in Thai massage style. Thai massage can be quite intense and first-timers are warned that they may leave feeling somewhat sore for a day or two, but once the soreness subsides, a fluidity and lengthening within the muscles is unmistakable. This is why it can be extremely beneficial for those who lead active lifestyles.

Traditional Thai massage incorporates stretching and posing, utilizing ancient yogic principles and building connectivity holistically. It was conceived 2,500 years ago as a confluence of Indian, Chinese and Southeast Asian healing practices and was said to have been founded by Shivago Komarpaj, the Buddha's personal physician. Masseuses are skilled in acupressure points, which they trigger in order to relieve stress. This helps blood circulate and ultimately refreshes the entire body.

You are fully clothed as the massage does not use oil, but can if requested. Once the feet have been scrubbed and cleansed while seated upright in a chair, the recipient lays down face first on the bed. It begins with the feet, then carries on to the legs which is a focal point of the massage, slightly differing from other classic styles that may focus more on the upper body. Once the legs have been alleviated, the back, shoulders and arms are next. There is a laying of hands and pressing, following the lines of the body. After this, you are asked to sit up and are stretched, rocked, twisted and pulled gently to complete the session.



Traditional Thai massage is VND350,000 for one hour, and VND500,000 for 90 minutes. If traditional Thai massage seems intimidating at first, they offer other various styles of massage, as well as facials, hot pack compresses and waxing. Double and triple rooms are available for couples, families and groups. Masseuses are experienced and will adjust any portion of the massage for your comfort, especially if this style is new to you.

Leelawadee Spa was opened a year ago by owner MiMi, who moved to Saigon from Bangkok for, "just a few months," five years ago. After learning the technique of traditional Thai massage in Thailand and working in spas both there and in Ho Chi Minh City, she opted to open her own and built it with the vision of the spa-goer in mind, "I like to get massages myself, so I understand what people look for when they look for a good one. I want to share this experience," she explains. MiMi has succeeded. Feeling utterly blissful, you leave Leelawadee with a renewed sense of connection to your body and ancient tradition. ■



Meals on Wheels

Because who doesn't want to eat better food without having to battle your way through a supermarket

Images by **Thuy M. Do**

Fitfood

ANYONE WHO PREPARES THEIR own meals knows how time-consuming the process can be—from shopping for groceries and prepping the ingredients to cooking time and cleaning dishes. Though there is no shortage of food delivery services in Ho Chi Minh City, there is a rapidly growing niche meal delivery industry that caters specifically to the health-conscious consumer. The meal subscription delivery service targets busy individuals and professionals who seek healthy eating options with the convenience of prepared meals delivered to their doorstep.

Though widely popular in the US and neighboring cities like Bangkok and Singapore, the meal subscription service has only been introduced to Vietnam in the past few years. The subscription service works as a meal plan, which is typically designed for people who seek healthy eating, weight management, fitness or vegetarian meals. Most meals are based on Western recipes and some Asian fusion, and are portion-controlled with specific calories and macro nutrient ingredients, dependent on the plan.

How Does It Work?

The meal plans are prepared mainly for lunch and dinner and delivered during the weekdays only. Most suppliers offer a weekly menu and some a-la-carte options as well. The weekly menus normally rotate throughout the month and are updated weekly on the supplier's website and Facebook page. Orders can be placed one day in advance, though orders for a-la-carte meals can be made within the same day. Customers can check with individual suppliers for their ordering guidelines. Most have a Facebook page, so questions and orders can be made via Messenger for instant replies or by email. Most offer free delivery, and the meals are delivered on the day they should be consumed.

What To Expect

The most common feedback for first-time meal plan subscribers is the flavor and serving portion. Those who choose the weight management meal plans tend to comment on the blandness of the food, which is expected considering

that the meals are designed to be low in fat, with no preservatives and no sugar. In general, opinions vary widely on what is considered tasty among the meal plans. The best advice is to try the different plans and suppliers and decide for yourself what is most suitable for you.

First-timers may also find that the serving portions are smaller than what they are accustomed to and may initially need to supplement their meals with healthy snacks. According to Kim Thai, COO of Fitfood, "as it is a normal body reaction to sudden calories deficit, we recommend all customers to take some snacks or supplements/fruit/juice in case they feel dizzy or hungry."

Though advertised as fresh, the meals from Fitfood and SmartMeal are delivered cold for food safety purposes and should be refrigerated if not consumed immediately. FlavorBox and House of Chay's meals are prepared upon being ordered and typically arrive warm and ready to eat.

The Purveyors

Fitfood: Value for Money

Fitfood is the first meal subscription service in Ho Chi Minh City and is popular among female office workers who are seeking healthy options for lunch and dinner. Fitfood sources its vegetables from VietGap-certified suppliers in Dalat, and its meals have no MSG and are low in sugar content. The meal portions are based on Harvard's Healthy Eating Plate with the focus on various complex carbs (brown rice, brown bread, sweet potato), colorful veggies and lean meat (chicken breast, skinless chicken thigh, boneless fish).

Types of plans: There are more than 150 different meals in their database, and the menu changes weekly. There are 4 types of packages: Full (3 meals a day) is the most popular package; Fit (2 meals a day) is for weight management; Meat Lover (2 meals a day) is designed specifically for gym-goers seeking to gain more muscle; Vegetarian (2 meals a day). The meals are delivered once a day in the morning.

Price range: VND550,000-VND900,000/2 meals per day for a 5-day plan.

Suitable for: Those seeking a healthy and convenient food delivery service with value for their money.

FlavorBox: Scratch to Table

FlavorBox has been operating for two years with a focus on providing tasty wholesome food based on a diverse range of nutritious recipes. Their food philosophy is "scratch to table," where nearly 90% of every component of each dish is prepared in-house. According to co-founder Burt Chutkan, "we are foodies at heart and realize that people want to enjoy eating without guilt, so we hope that we can bridge that gap with the tasty healthy meals we offer."

Types of plans: There are 3 meal plans: 'Hearty' meals are the heaviest and most savory, and can contain carbs and cheeses. 'Light' meals are essentially low-

carb meals. These meals include elevated salads, grain bowls and curry. The 'Keto' meals are the newest addition and contain food that meets the Ketogenic diet, which eliminates carbs and sugar, with the nutritional content targeted at burning fat. A unique feature to FlavorBox is the ability to build your own meal plan from the a-la-carte menu, which changes every 10 days. Food is delivered within an hour after an order is placed and arrives warm and ready to eat.

Price range: From VND675,000-VND750,000/1 meal per day for a 5-day plan. Monthly meals are discounted by 10%.

Suitable for: Those willing to pay more for a gourmet meal.

House of Chay: Eco-conscious

House of Chay is a lifestyle brand for the conscious consumer, offering a nutritious vegetarian meal-delivery service. Meals are cooked fresh daily with no MSG, preservatives, GMOs or white sugar. Unlike other meal plan providers, House of Chay's key business is actually its online market for farm-to-table groceries, and eco-friendly personal and homecare products. House of Chay embraces a 'zero-waste' approach, and 80% of its packaging is biodegradable.

Types of plans: A-la-carte menu is available and changes monthly. Weekly subscription menu changes every week and includes minimum 20 vegetables, fruits, lentils and nuts. Meals are prepared fresh and delivered within 30-60 minutes.

Price range: VND1,300,000/10 meals or VND450,000/3-meal trial plan.

Suitable for: Health- and environmentally-conscious consumer.

SmartMeal: Tailor-made Meals

SmartMeal focuses on making healthy eating easy with 4 meal plans that are a fusion of Asian and Western flavors. SmartMeal customizes the serving portions based on body type and calorie intake with 5 options of



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

calorie levels, ranging from 1100kcal to 3000kcal per day.

Types of plans: There are 4 plans: 'Low-carb' is based on the Ketogenic diet and is ideal for those hoping to lose excessive body fat; 'Body-building' is most effective with a workout plan and is high in protein, veggies, and a balance of complex carbs; The 'Health-eating' plan is designed for busy people whose main goal is to maintain a healthy lifestyle; 'Vegetarian' is calorie-controlled, low in fat and sodium, and is plant-based. Upon ordering, customers can choose either 2 or 3 meals per day and provide daily caloric intake for tailor-made serving portions. Delivery is once a day.

Price range: From VND700,000/2 meals a day for a 5-day plan.

Suitable for: Weight conscious consumers with specific weight management goals in mind.

The Pros and Cons

The upside of the meal subscription delivery service is the savings in time and money, in addition to the convenience of having meals delivered to any location, whether it's your home or office. It especially benefits individuals who are seeking a healthier meal alternative while managing portion and caloric intake.

While the meal plans may be a good way to try new dishes and flavors, the downside is that there may occasionally be some dishes that may not appeal to your taste buds. Because it's part of a fixed meal plan, you're not able to choose or replace the meal (unless there are specific health reasons). Additionally, environmentally-conscious consumers might be deterred by the amount of waste, since each meal is packaged in a single-use plastic container with plastic utensils. Currently, most vendors do not offer an eco-friendly option, but it is something they should seriously review and consider for long-term sustainability. The exceptions are House of Chay, which uses biodegradable packaging and offers disposable utensils with their meal delivery, and SmartMeal, which only uses paper packaging for its vegetarian plan. ■



FlavorBox



SmartMeal

The Golden Triangle



If you are looking for the center of all the action in Kuala Lumpur, then this is most certainly it

Text and Images by **David Muller**

KUALA LUMPUR IS SAID TO derive its name from the muddy confluence of two rivers—The Gombak and The Klang—merging, the swirling waters were originally muddied by the explosion of tin mining upstream during the early 1800s that drew many Sumatran and Chinese migrants to the region and helped lay the foundations for Malaysia's present-day cosmopolitan capital city.

This year Malaysia celebrated its



The hotel's construction was completed just three days before the country's Independence in 1957, making it and the Malaysian nation 61 years old. The hotel has hosted many foreign dignitaries and famous people such as Sir Robert Menzies, the former Prime Minister of Australia, and even "The Champ" Muhammad Ali.

Dinner in The Federal's Kontiki restaurant was a smorgasbord of seafood, carving stations, desserts and delights that was well worth the RM78 per person. After dinner, sipping cocktails and listening to the live music from the piano player and singer duo performing in the verandah lounge was a pleasant way to finish the evening on our first night.

Hiring a minivan for the afternoon, our first stop was the KL butterfly park, which houses an estimated 5,000 butterflies, a museum and gift shop. Inside the enclosure is a tropical garden wonderland where sparks of vibrant colorful winged specimens dance among flowers, foliage and fountains.

The next stop was the Sultan Abdul Samad Building. Formerly housing the British colonial administration, it is now home to both the Ministry of Communications and Multimedia and the Ministry of Tourism and Culture of Malaysia. Across the street is the Kuala Lumpur city gallery. Outside at its entrance is the "I [heart] KL" sign, which is a favorite place to pose for the perfect postcard picture.

We then headed for the 421-meter tall Kuala Lumpur tower, the seventh tallest tower in the world. Unfortunately, a sudden tropical rainstorm, accompanied by thunder and lightning, caused the tower to be closed to the public. So we quickly jumped back into the minivan and headed for the undercover central markets.



independence on Friday, August 31st and Vietnam celebrated its independence on Monday, September 2nd. So, if you happened to work between KL and HCMC you could enjoy a four-day long weekend. Utilizing the holiday, we flew down to KL on the Friday for our annual company staff trip. We found the city's buildings adorned in Malaysian national flags for the holiday.

Driving into the city, the Petronas Twin Towers come into focus as the

defining apparition that materializes on the skyline in the last 10-15 minutes of the journey to Kuala Lumpur's golden triangle. The area that extends between Bukit Bintang, the Jalan Sultan Ismail five-star hotel strip, the Jalan P. Ram-lee party street and the entire Kuala Lumpur City Centre.

The Federal Hotel had the delicate fragrance of sandalwood incense as we entered the lobby to check in.

Established in 1888, the markets sell a variety of art, jewelry, handicrafts and knickknacks. I was lucky enough to buy a limited edition Royal Selangor (Disney approved) Star Wars edition quality pewter Yoda figurine.

The sun had set and we were dropped off at the Petronas Twin Towers, KL's most famous attraction. When it was completed in 1999, the Twin Towers were the tallest buildings in the world. Although no longer holding that title, today the towers still remain as the tallest twin towered structure in the world. Suria Mall at the base of the towers has over 300 specialty stores and is one of the best shopping malls in Malaysia for luxury items. An interesting fact about the construction of the towers is that tower 1 was built by a Japanese consortium while tower 2 was built by a Korean one. The Koreans won the race and completed construction of tower 2 first. A great place to snap a high-quality shot of the towers while enjoying a drink is at the lounge bar located on the 32nd floor of the Traders hotel.

At Changkat Bukit Bintang you can drink late into the night in an entertaining part of the golden triangle. Here, upscale Chinese food can be found at the Opium bar or classic British pub food at the Magnificent Fish & Chips bar, where a Mini Cooper is almost driving out the building and exploding off the balcony.

No Lion, Tigers or Bears, Oh My

Before leaving HCMC I checked online what shows were playing in KL and discovered that the Moscow Circus was touring Malaysia. The Bolshoi and Nikulin Moscow circus companies have combined to put on an eight-month tour throughout cities and towns in Malaysia. Sunday night was their last performance in KL before heading to Penang. In recent years, the Moscow Circus has revolutionized itself and discontinued using live animals, and now has a human team of trapeze artists, acrobats and



clowns. In KL, the big tent was set up on a field outside the Amcorp Mall, well-known for its weekly flea markets.

An entertaining clown in baggy trousers held up by suspenders kicked off the show by using a duck whistle to whip the crowd into a frenzy. Then came the illusionist dance duo, Mykhaylo dressed in a yellow suit like Jim Carrey in the film *The Mask*, while Lyana did a dazzling outfit change every 30 seconds to the crowd's amazement. Juggling three balls is a skill but juggling six or seven balls gets applause and awe from the audience. The high wire act and flying trapeze acts were supported by skilled workmen behind the scenes who adjusted pulleys and cranks to keep the wires and cables taut and in place so that the performers could complete their many somersaults and death-defying antics.

Come Monday and the circus was packing up the big tent and departing

for Penang, while we headed to the airport to return to HCMC. Inside the international terminal is a large display of large model airplanes of all the carriers that arrive and depart from KL. It's a good place to take the final travel shot to complete the weekend album. Independence Day was the last national holiday in Vietnam for the year and so it's back to work until New Years 2019. A great weekend of entertainment, fine hawker food, performances and great shopping had come to an end. The melting pot of cultures in KL lends to a diverse range of different threads that makes a city's tapestry rich in heritage, culture and cuisine. ■



>>The List Business

INSURANCE

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Ruby Tower | 81-83-85 Ham Nghi | Dist. 1

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Sales Office - Hanoi
VCCI Tower | 9 Dao Duy Anh | Dist. Dong Da

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23-25 Thai Van Lung, D1

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90-92 Dinh Tien Hoang D1
www.insuranceinAsia.com
advice@insuranceinAsia.com

Liberty Mutual Insurance

Liberty Mutual is a 100% US-owned general insurer licensed to provide insurance services directly to Vietnamese individuals and state-owned enterprises as well as motor insurance.

15th Floor, Kumho Asiana Plaza, 39 Le Duan, D1
028 3812 5125

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9th Floor, Yoco Building
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A12-A13 Nguyen Huu Tho, Kim Son Project, D7
028 6298 9203

Animal Doctors International

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

1 Tran Ngoc Dien, Thao Dien, Q2
(028) 6260 3980
animaldoctors.vn

Saigon Pet Clinic

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33, 41 street, Thao Dien, D2
www.saigonpethospital.com
028 3519 4182

Sasaki Animal Hospital

The hospital is managed by a team of skilled doctors from Japan and Vietnam. Services include grooming and general care.

38-40-42 Nguyen Thi Thap, Him Lam, D7
www.sasakihospital.com
028 2253 1179

>>The List Travel



Ana Mandara Villas | Dalat

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

www.anamandara-resort.com



La Veranda Resort Phu Quoc MGallery by Sofitel

Discover the elegance of colonial Indochine style on Vietnam's Phu Quoc Island with a stay at this 19th-century seaside mansion. An award-winning beachfront resort, it has 70 well-appointed rooms, an organic spa and fine-dining restaurants ideal for romantic getaways, spa breaks and family holidays. Experience an inspired summer at La Veranda with 05 offers starting from USD155++.

Tran Hung Dao Street, Duong Dong Beach, Phu Quoc Island, Vietnam
(0)297 3982 988 - contact@laverandaresorts.com
www.laverandaresorts.com



Lotte Legend Hotel Saigon

Fronting the scenic Saigon River and only 5 minutes walking to famous Opera House, Dong Khoi Street and Le Thanh Ton Street for shopping, dining and entertainment, Lotte Legend Hotel Saigon, the most beloved 5-star hotel in Ho Chi Minh City, combines natural beauty and sheer opulence to provide the best for the discerning traveler. The breathtaking resort-setting and its distinctive architectural interior gives a feeling of luxury and tranquility.

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



Mia

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

Bai Dong, Cam Hai Dong, Cam Lam, Khanh Hoa
02583 989 666
www.mianhatrang.com
info@mianhatrang.com



Sheraton Nha Trang Hotel & Spa

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

26 - 28 Tran Phu, Nha Trang, Khanh Hoa
0258 2220 000
www.sheratonnhatrang.com



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

Also Try...

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

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

Cham Garden Restaurant

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

32 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, Phan Thiet
+84 252 3741 234
www.chamvillas.com
www.facebook.com/chamgardenmuine

InterContinental Nha Trang

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

32 - 34 Tran Phu, Nha Trang
(0258) 388 7777
www.nhatrang.intercontinental.com

Pullman Danang Beach Resort

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

Vo Nguyen Giap, Khue My, Ngu Hanh Son, Danang
0236 395 8888
www.pullman-danang.com

The Island Lodge

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

390 Ap Thoi Binh, Thoi Son, My Tho
0273 651 9000
www.theislandlodge.com.vn

>>The List Health & Beauty

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Kids & Education



Cultivate Curiosity

Curiosity comes in different forms, and we can encourage it in the classroom to help our students thrive

Text by Amy L. Eva

WHAT MAKES YOUR STUDENTS curious? When do you see their faces light up with interest at school? At home, my teen stepson is all about cars, all the time. My daughter is currently obsessed with astrology, while my husband can talk for hours about Roman history (really!). It's worth noting that my kids' passions aren't related to school at all.

As educators, we have the opportunity to create more spaces and places for joyful exploration. Our classrooms can become curiosity centers where students share what fascinates and energizes them.

But each student will be curious in their own way. According to fascinating new research, there are several different types of curiosity—which affect what students are interested in and what that interest looks like. If we welcome and celebrate all types of curiosity at school, we cannot only help our students learn but also contribute to their well-being in life.

The Five Dimensions of Curiosity

Researcher Todd Kashdan claims that curiosity simply can't be defined as a single trait; it actually has multiple dimensions. After synthesizing years of research in the field, Kashdan and his team conducted three studies of nearly 4,000 adults in total to test a new model of curiosity. They found evidence for five specific dimensions of curiosity:

1. "Joyous Exploration"

Curiosity: You are filled with wonder and fascinated by the world—like when you travel to a new place, discover a new artist you love, or pursue a new hobby like geocaching.

2. "Need to Know" Curiosity: You feel uncomfortable because there is a gap in your knowledge, and you have to fill that gap—like when you're prepping for the science fair, and the robot you built just went belly-up, literally. What do you need to know in order to fix it? (This dimension is technically called "Deprivation Sensitivity.")

3. "Social" Curiosity: You want to know more about another person, so you watch them and talk to them—like when you try to find out what makes your new friend laugh.

4. "Accepting the Anxiety"

Curiosity: You tolerate any uncomfortable feelings that may come with a new experience, and they don't hold you back—like when you join a new hip hop club even though you don't know any of the other members. (This dimension is technically called "Stress Tolerance.")

5. "Thrill Seeking" Curiosity:

You take risks because you enjoy new and exciting experiences—like when you run for president and give a speech at school or go snowboarding for the first time. You don't just

tolerate the anxiety; it actually feeds you.

Although these dimensions have only been studied with adults so far, it's worth knowing that people who took Kashdan's curiosity survey fell into four specific curiosity types:

1. The Fascinated (28 percent): high scores on all the dimensions of curiosity, especially "Joyous Exploration."

2. Problem Solvers (28 percent): medium scores on all dimensions, but a high score on "Need to Know" curiosity.

3. Empathizers (25 percent): medium scores on all dimensions, but a high score on "Social" curiosity.

4. Avoiders (19 percent): low scores on all curiosity dimensions, especially "Accepting the Anxiety."

We don't yet know the benefits of each particular type of curiosity; however, research suggests that curiosity in general can be quite rewarding for young people.

Why Is Curiosity So Important?

Apart from intelligence and effort, researchers claim that curiosity—"a hungry mind"—is actually one of the three key predictors of academic achievement. We spend a lot of time pondering our students' ability levels and whether they have the capacity to persevere in school, yet curiosity, the least-studied ingredient in the mix, may be the most vital.

For example, researchers at the University of Michigan recently discovered a link between curiosity and academic success in early childhood. In their 2018 study of 6,200 children, Prachi E. Shah and her team found that curious kindergarteners had higher scores in both



reading and mathematics.

Other research with teens in Hong Kong indicates that, when school is more challenging, curious students perform better than their less curious peers on academic achievement tests. According to a 2014 study, our brain chemistry actually changes when we become curious, which helps us to learn and remember information.

And in terms of students' well-being, a study of over 400 Serbian teens found that students with high levels of curiosity reported greater life satisfaction, positive emotions, hope, and purpose in life. In a 2018 study, more curious teenagers also tended to be more self-compassionate. If you are open to exploring and appreciating new experiences, you may be more kind and accepting of yourself—and the unpredictable nature of life.

Broader research with adults also suggests that curious people tend to be more tolerant of anxiety, humorous and playful, emotionally expressive, and non-defensive and non-critical. Curiosity appears to be a force within us that not only enhances learning, but opens us up to more positive perspectives and experiences.

Five Tips For Cultivating Curiosity

Whether our classroom is filled with "The Fascinated" or we have a lot of kids who seem to be "Avoiders," what would it look like if we all focused a little less on student performance and a little more on curiosity?

1. Model and encourage academic risk-taking. If "avoiders" are struggling with accepting the anxiety that comes with new experiences, we can help them by modeling risk-taking, all the time, in our classrooms. Solve a math problem on the board with your students (and mess up). Or write a poem, live, in front of them while sharing all the stops and starts and moments of struggle that occur as you think aloud.

Students need to see us falter, and they need to feel like it's okay to be unsure of themselves when they try something new. Otherwise, we will continue to have "avoiders" in our classrooms.

2. Normalize fear and anxiety. For people who score highly on "thrill-seeking" curiosity, risk-taking actually makes them feel more excited and alive. They thrive on the anxiety. What can we learn from them?

At the very least, there are ways to accept the fear we sometimes feel rather than fight or ignore it altogether. Mindfulness and self-compassion practices provide us with practical tools for tolerating stress and navigating the frustration, fear, or anxiety associated with trying new things. You can adapt simple practices for your classroom like Mindful Breathing, the Self-Compassion Break, and the Body Scan Meditation and share them regularly with your students.

3. Provide challenging group



project options. Based on the research mentioned above, we know that curious students do not necessarily get higher grades and test scores unless they believe that school is challenging (and perhaps worth their time?).

So, this tip packs a punch. According to a 2016 report, not only should students' learning tasks be challenging (and well-scaffolded), but they should also center around group *inquiry* (e.g., experiments, expeditions, and other research) driven by *higher-order questions* (the why's and how's) and supported by *cooperative group structures* where students can work interdependently.

For example, you might create a geometry scavenger hunt where second graders work in cooperative pairs (with designated roles) to find a range of shapes in their school or playground (like triangles, squares, and rectangles); then they can explain why the shapes they select meet the appropriate criteria. Or you could design a project around an environmental issue of your students' choice. Assign students to cooperative groups where they work together to research the issue, debate the pros and cons, collect school polling data, and finally vote on the issue.

4. Link the boring stuff with things kids want to know. Of course, learning isn't always fun and exciting; there are some things we just have to know and do, whether we like it or not.

For those skills, try to find ways to make learning more enticing. If you need to teach students to write topic sentences or research papers, have them choose something of interest to explore (an animal they love or a musician they're obsessed with, how cars work or how to run a political campaign). Or, if you need to teach

basic measurement skills to elementary students, get them outside measuring their three favorite playground objects (or their pets at home). If you want to teach argumentation skills to secondary students, have your students examine the pros and cons of active social media use. Wrap the interesting stuff around the seemingly boring stuff; it will be much more memorable.

5. Let curiosity drive goal-setting and growth. Research suggests that curious people may also be more hopeful and purposeful. So why not think more about how curiosity can inform your students' short- and long-term goals? What units and subjects most excite them at school? What do they dream about exploring, but haven't yet? What careers are most appealing and interesting to them?

In a 2015 study, researchers discovered that curiosity actually makes progress feel more satisfying. In other words, when you meet a goal that is driven by your authentic desire to learn, you may get a more lasting boost in well-being. In this case, your academic goals become less about performance and achievement and more about personal growth.

Finally, what if we, as educational leaders, took this message to heart ourselves? If we focused a little less on numbers and a lot more on our own professional learning together, wouldn't school be more fun for us, too? How might a widespread focus on curiosity shift our school climate?

With all of the standardized tests and academic hoop-jumping we do these days, we need to hold on to the fun and joy of learning—all of us. We can take advantage of our human capacity for curiosity and all the energy, interest, and enjoyment it brings. ■

Beyond Academic Excellence, We Develop Character



Text and Images Provided by International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP)

THE GREAT NEWS FOR THE international school sector is that the demand for qualified international education is becoming increasingly accessible to families in Asia. Many institutions are being celebrated for their Western-style teaching, student diversity and vibrant learning environments. To tackle the question of why international schools are so popular recently—especially in Ho Chi Minh City—we speak to Hai Le, Head of Marketing and Communications at International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP, www.issp.edu.vn) to examine the trend and to discuss the benefits that an international education will bring to students, which is not just their ability to pass exams.

In fact, the trend has influenced regional plans for development. “In Ho

Chi Minh City, the business and financial hub of Vietnam, a significant number of new bilingual and international schools are predicted to open as a result of the new regulations increase government quota on local students who can attend international schools in Vietnam. Additionally, the desire of the growing middle class to expose their children to an international environment, cultural awareness plus needs of Vietnamese families returning from spells abroad, is fueling a significant rise in provision of international education,” says Hai. Another reason is, as the economy is growing fast, the increasing number of expats coming to Vietnam for long-term work promise higher demand for international schools.

Many parents put a lot of thought and deliberation into choosing an





to being surrounded by loving people, their parents, grandparents 24/7, and school is their first time spending most of their day away from those people. You may want to look for a teacher who is very engaged and caring. At ISSP, we always set a very high expectation for teachers, support them in continuously adapting the best practices and open a lot of opportunities to pursue further professional development.”

International schools have to adhere to an international curriculum. This curriculum often incorporates an appreciation for other world cultures into the learning process. Parents should consider international schools that use a curriculum that is accepted around the world and is accredited by CIS (Council of International Schools) and NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges).

These are important factors, to be sure. But there is another, just as important, consideration that parents should be mindful of—that is the spirit of community fostered within the school. Although there is no government quota on local students who can enroll in ISSP, ISSP’s top priority is always to ensure availability for international students and to maintain a diverse student intake which reflects the international nature of the school. “We believe the best school is the school that is appropriate for your child, not only in terms of academic achievement, but also developing character,” says Hai.

Growth in Personality

Sometimes, good test scores can be an indication that a school is doing a very good job of educating its students, but other times it can be an indication that the school is teaching to the test. Standardized tests only measure about a third of the curriculum that should be taught in the school, which means if the school is only teaching the test material, your child is missing out on a lot.

Most international schools celebrate differences in culture and personality. Often, this appreciation for difference fosters an emotional maturity in children. Understanding that no two children are the same, every ISSP student is treated as a unique individual. With outstanding academic results, it’s clear that the school has succeeded in its personalized education approach. In addition to academic excellence, ISSP’s core values, honesty, care, respect, responsibility and wisdom, are integrated in the school’s culture, which means the lessons are not just limited to the classroom. As a result, students adopt the mindset of being lifelong learners and responsible global citizens. At ISSP, all students tend to work through various daily tasks and challenges to move themselves to the next level. Students even learn to live on their own, which often fosters a sense of independence. Children who learn to overcome the challenges presented in international schools usually gain confidence and maturity in the process.

Beyond education in the classroom, participation in after-school activities is also an important aspect. Designed to reinforce the international curriculum, the after-school activities provide a wonderful opportunity for our students to make new friends, have a playdate, explore their passions or simply enjoy a variety of age-appropriate activities that expand their learning. “But after-school activities do more than just provide creative or athletic outlets for students. Sports, arts, music, world languages and enrichment activities at ISSP benefit students academically, teach valuable life lessons and contribute their skills and knowledge to serve the community outside of school,” Hai adds. ■

international school for their children. After all, educational institutions often employ different teaching approaches and curriculum that influence each child’s lifelong learning. If you have felt overwhelmed about deciding between many schooling options, you’re not alone. In the course of searching for the most appropriate international school, there are three important factors parents should take into account, including the teacher quality, international curriculum and environment.

In early years and elementary school, the relationship between teacher and student is key. “The connection between child and teacher is much more important than any curriculum,” Hai continues. “Think of it this way: your 2- or 3-year-old is accustomed





Infectious Disease

What you need to know about infectious disease

SOME DOCTORS WOULD TELL you that everything is infectious—in some ways, even certain psychiatric diseases are contagious! In medical terms, however, infectious diseases are those illnesses caused by external organisms—including viruses, bacteria, parasites, and some less-common vectors such as fungi and sporozoites. Some of these are easily transmitted between humans, while others are contracted from animals. They are external infections, external invaders that can cause damage.

Most people who contract such a disease won't need to see an infectious disease (ID) specialist. Specialists usually deal with special or unusual infections, or cases where standard treatments aren't working. An example might be when a patient's condition is not responding to normal antibiotic treatment—an ID specialist will assess the resistance of the bacterial infection to antibiotics, and choose a more appropriate antibiotic or drug regime in complicated patients.

ID specialists work in a fascinating medical field—the domain of discovering diseases, diagnosing them, finding a treatment, and most importantly discovering how to prevent infection and arrest the spread of a disease.

When assessing means of treatment and control, it's very important for an ID specialist to take into account three things: the potential transmissibility (how fast and easily a disease spreads), morbidity (how many people potentially become ill rather than just carry the infectious agent, and what the severity of the illness is) and mortality (how many people who become ill may die) of any given disease. The most alarming infectious diseases—which could be described as plagues—would be highly transmissible, cause many people to become sick, and have a high death toll.

Most diseases circulating in the world today are not combinations of those three dreaded factors—they are not highly transmissible while at the same time having a high rate of infectivity and causing death in high proportions. Influenza spreads extremely rapidly, although most people who contract the virus suffer only cold-like symptoms for a period of one to three weeks. HIV is transmitted only seldom via intimate contact, but it almost inevitably causes severe morbidity and fatality without treatment.

Some infectious diseases can be diagnosed clinically. The doctor is presented with a cluster of symptoms or a distinct visible symptom that may be readily diagnosed; the aspect of a chickenpox rash, for example, is easy to recognize—so you don't have to isolate the virus or take blood to check for antibodies. You just know it when you see it.

At other times, you may see a patient who has a chronic cough or some prolonged fever, and it's not clear what the infection is. You may need to use tests—sometimes attempting direct isolation of the organism when you find it in a place where it shouldn't be, such as observing mycobacteria in the sputum that tells you a patient is suffering from tuberculosis.

Then you have indirect identification, not by isolating the organism itself, but by finding antibodies produced by the immune system—telling you that the immune system saw a certain organism and reacted against it.

Simply finding antibodies does not necessarily give you the answer, however, because we all carry antibodies to various kinds of infections that we may have recovered from in the past. Our bodies maintain a stock of antibodies to protect against any future possible reinfections of illnesses we've fought against before.

Sometimes doctors mistakenly diagnose a disease simply by not understanding what the test means—finding antibodies to a disease doesn't necessarily mean that disease is creating the problem right now, it may be something from the past.

However, if we identify early forms of antibodies, or a rapid increase in the concentration of antibodies within a short time period, then we can be fairly certain that the immune system is reacting to a live infection. In such cases, you can connect the presence of antibodies to the disease of the patient.

The part of the world where you live is also an important consideration when making a diagnosis. An ID specialist should know the local incidence of certain diseases. If you're in New York and somebody comes to you with a prolonged fever, you will not jump on the possibility of tuberculosis as you might here in Vietnam, because there are different incidences in different parts of the world.

This is the importance of an ID specialist, who should choose the right diagnostic tool, know how to interpret tests, and decide which will be the right medication to use, given the local epidemiology.

Infection and its consequences are in perpetual balance between the surrounding potential organisms that can affect us, and the ability of our immune systems to develop the means to handle and control them. This is why people with a weak immune system are more at risk, whether they are babies or elderly persons, or those with a background condition that affects the immune system—which includes poor nutrition. By keeping the immune system healthy and staying up to date with vaccines (including the annual flu vaccine) we are far better equipped to fight off diseases. ■



A French native with years of in-depth experience in medicine, **Dr. Serge Gradstein** studied infectious diseases following his work in Kaplan Hospital in Israel—which has the largest HIV clinic in the country.

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