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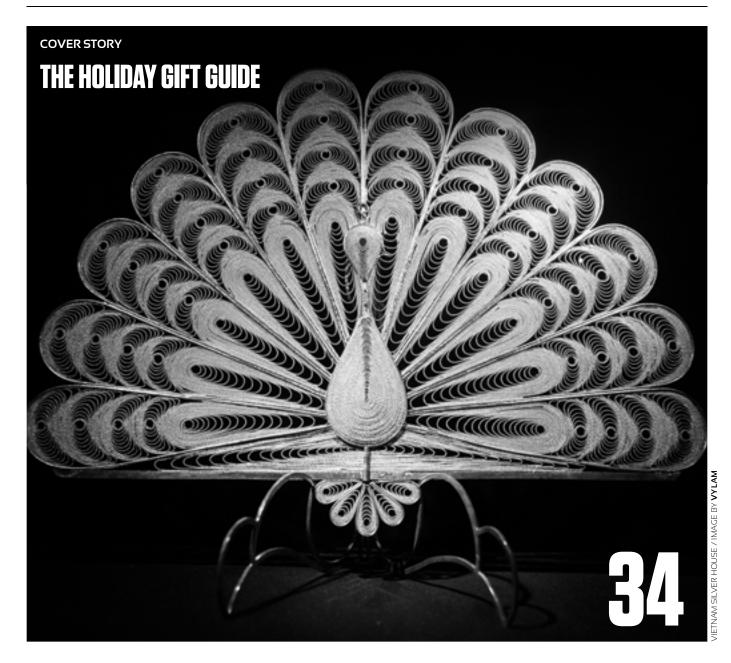
The kingdom of winter awaits you.



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Bryan 9A*

Awarded \$ 7550 USD

Jae Kyun 9A*, IA

Awarded \$ 15100 USD

Nicholas 10A7

- maximum IGCSE Grades in 2018 -

Awarded \$ 22650 USD

University Scholarship Winners 2018:



Joint 1st place
Josephine and Jee Yoon

4A*

Maximum grade for each AS & A2 Levels

Awarded \$ 4000 USD each



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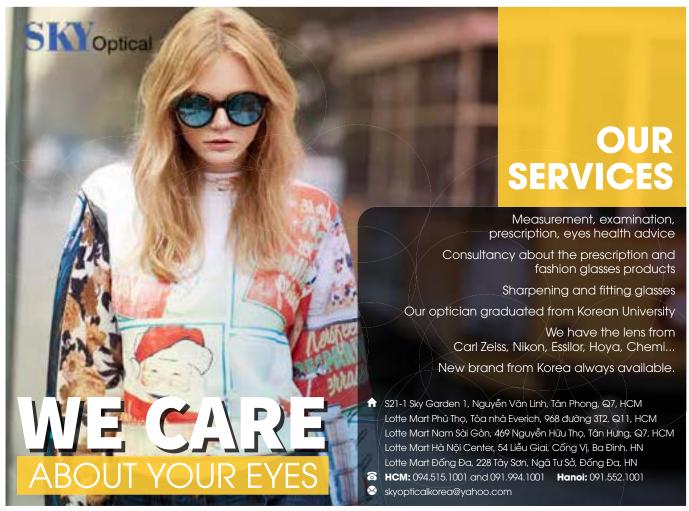
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 $Preparing for the {\it first day of school}$

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People believed that in order to get ahead in life, you had to speak the majority language







Survival

A solo exhibition of paintings by Hanoi-based artist Nguyen Minh Nam

Text and Images Provided by **Craig Thomas Gallery**

WITH HIS LATEST COLLECTION

Survival, Nguyen Minh Nam continues to explore and develop his unique esthetic as he delves deeper into his particular fascinations, which include the female form, traditional architecture and, most prominently, the continuing evolution of the roles and mores of women in Vietnamese society and in its

collective imagination. In choosing the title for the exhibition Nam says, "I mean to speak of things that were as well as things that remain, their influence and their very souls."

Nam does not use a stereotypical cliché of a woman who is nothing more than an object. These women are thoughtful, observant, vulnerable, anxious, sad but also self-confident, provocative and seductive. The face as a store of emotions leaves Nam's women more than mere seductresses or lovers. His women are emancipated beings who demand as a projection surface the dissociation with our own emotions as well as with present time.

Nguyen Minh Nam reflects on cultural processes closely related to the intense observation of the course of his time. Vietnam has undergone amazing economic transformation in the last twenty years, manifesting itself in booming cities and burgeoning populations. A new generation has grown up without war, benefiting from the economic boom and driving it forward. The structural changes in Vietnam have transformed the worldview of the country's people and led to an expanding generational gap.

"Traditional and modern culture collide and I want to bundle exactly this dualism in my oeuvre," says Nam. At the same time the artist emphasizes very consciously that he does not want to criticize the past or the present, but wants to show the disruption that the younger generation feels as well. In addition to the artistic confrontation with cultural change in society, "there is also the message of not forgetting the old traditions and appreciating their generation with their views and ideas, even if the world is turning faster and faster."

Nam's compositions create an impressive picture of a changing society. His painting technique is virtuoso and in the true sense of the word not only frees layers of paint but also layers of time. His oeuvre is a wealth of allusions and juxtapositions that inspire to think further about its changing processes and to not forget the Vietnamese cultural assets and traditions.

Survival is showing at Craig Thomas Gallery (279(i) Tran Nhat Duat, D1) until December 10, 2018.

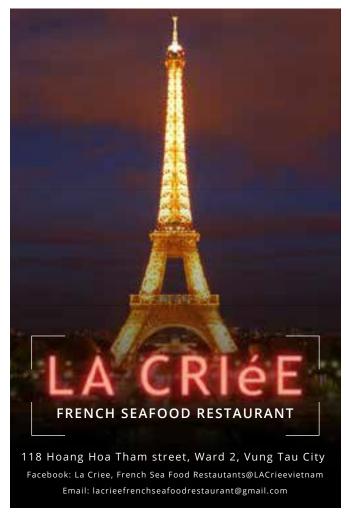


Nguyen Cau - Praying - 2018 Oil on canvas - 100 x 80 cm









The country in numbers



VIETNAMESE STUDENTS ARE IN THE US,

according to the US Embassy. The Institute of International Education's (IIE) annual "Open Doors" Report for the 2017-2018 academic year shows that Vietnam remains the sixth leading country of origin for all international students

in the US with 24,325 students, up 1,887 students from the 2016-17 academic year, an 8.4 percent increase, the embassy said. Of the 24,325 Vietnamese students in the US, 69.6 percent were undergraduates, 15.2 percent were graduate-level students, 8.6 percent enrolled in optional practical training, and the remaining 6.6 percent were pursuing nondegree programs. Vietnamese students contribute USD881 million to the US economy. Engineering, business and management, and math and computer science remain the top selected fields of study by international students in the 2017-18 academic year. Math and computer science were the fastest-growing fields of study with an expansion of 11.3 percent from the 2016-17 academic year, followed by legal studies and law enforcement with a climb of 10.4 percent from 2016-17. The top 10 states for international students include California, New York, Texas, Massachusetts, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Florida, Ohio, Michigan and Indiana.

VIETNAMESE PEOPLE DIE ANNUALLY from lung cancer. In 2018, Vietnam reported 164,671 new cancer cases and 114,871 cancer-relating deaths. More than 300,000 are living with cancer nationwide. Worse, most are diagnosed late which makes treatment less likely to succeed and reduces the patient's chances of survival. The Director of the Cancer Hospital, Professor Tran Van Thuan, said lung cancer is popular in both male and female. Annually, the world has approximately 2.09 million new cases and 1.76 million deaths due to lung cancer.



OUT OF 88 COUNTRIES IS WHERE VIETNAM RANKS IN THE

2018 global English Proficiency Index. The 2018 global English Proficiency Index has been announced by EF Education First following a survey of 1.3 million people in 88 countries and territories that do not use English as their mother tongue. According to the 2018 ranking,

Vietnam stood seventh among 21 surveyed countries in Asia, behind Singapore, the Philippines, Malaysia, India, Hong Kong and South Korea.

Among the five categories namely very high, high, moderate, low and very low, Vietnam was ranked at the position of being moderate. The survey from EF Education First also showed that southeastern and Red River regions have the highest English proficiency in Vietnam. In Vietnam, women's English proficiency is better than men. Sweden claimed first place in this year's index, becoming the country with the best English proficiency in the world. Singapore was the only country in Asia listed in the index's top 5.



WAS SPENT ON BEER BY VIETNAMESE PEOPLE IN 2017,

according to Minister of Health Nguyen Thi Kim Tien. Also last year, around 305 million liters of

spirits and nearly 4.1 billion liters of beer were consumed, which means each Vietnamese consumed an average of 42 liters of beer, Tien said. At the current rate, Vietnam ranked third in Asia in terms of volume of beer consumed in 2017, only behind Japan and China, and was at the top in Southeast Asia.

Tien added that the treatment of six types of cancer caused by alcohol in 2017 cost nearly VND26 trillion, accounting for 0.25 of the country's GDP, while cost of dealing with alcoholrelated traffic accidents accounted for 1% of GDP, or VND50 trillion. The beer industry expects to produce 4.1 billion liters in the next 4 years, and up to 4.6 billion liters in 2025, according to the Vietnam Beer Alcohol and Beverage Association. By 2035, this number is expected to reach 5.6 billion liters. Accordingly, beer production in the next two decades will be 1.5 times higher than the beer output in 2017.











IS THE SPENDING BUDGET PLANNED FOR THE TET 2019 FESTIVAL. The Thi Plant of the

Tran Thi Phuong Lan,

Deputy Director of the Hanoi Department of Industry and Trade, said the plan on preparing goods for the New Year and the Lunar New Year in 2019 will focus on increasing essential commodities. These include rice, meat, seafood, eggs, processed foods, fresh vegetables, dried agro, forestry and seafood products, confectionery, wine, beer beverage and fresh fruit. The total value of goods under the plan is estimated to increase by 10 percent compared to the VND28.5 trillion spent this year. The volume of goods in stock will also increase by 10-15 percent compared with normal months of the year to meet consumer demand during those occasions and to make sure goods are still available after Tet, Lan said. Hanoi's goods will include 190,600 tons of rice, 44,000 tons of pork, 14,600 tons of chicken, 12 tonnes of beef, 256 million eggs, 254 tons of vegetables, 3,000 tons of confectionery and 200 million liters of beer and beverage.

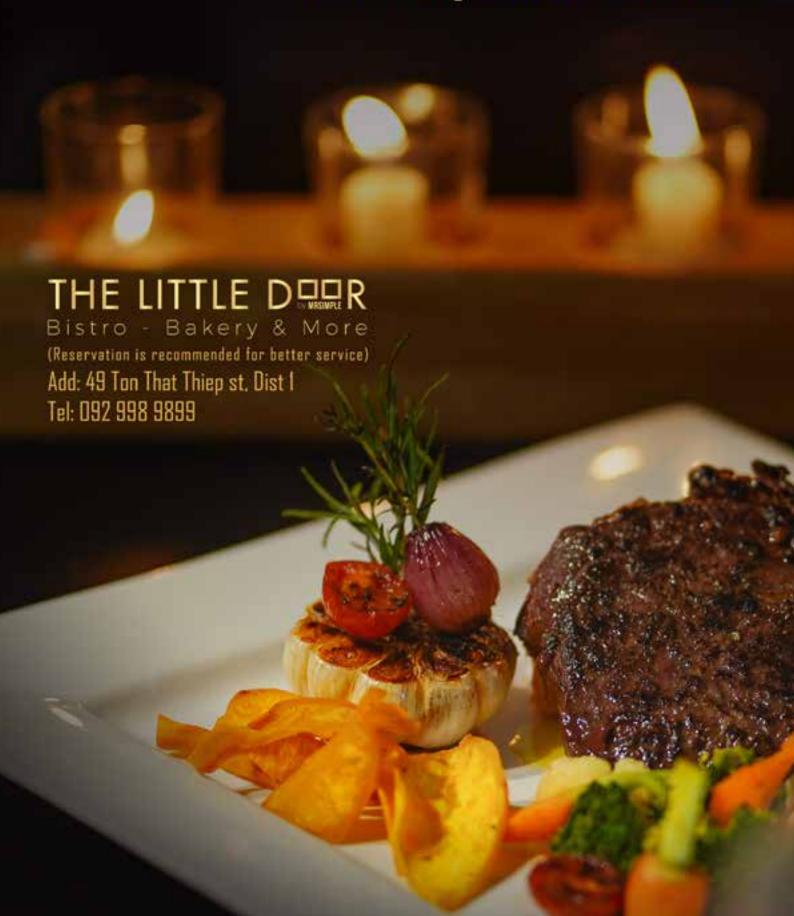






Depends on how it's cooked. Done rightly, on a charcoal or pan-seared, it should be smokey, and a bit earthy like a mushroom with a different texture. It's like this: It's juicy, with striated texture, hopefully some fat, crispy on the outside with a tenderness that melts in your mouth.

You have the right steaks from THE LITTLE DOOR!



TELL TAIL SIGNS



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

Worm Worries

The importance of deworming your pets

DEWORMING YOUR PET IS AN

important part of its regular health regime. Even if pet-owners take good care of their pets, one cannot avoid worms because our pets are at constant risk of a worm infestation. Regular deworming of your pet is also an essential part of its general health, you may see no signs of worm infestation but that doesn't mean that they aren't there.

How does my pet get infected?

The adult worms shed eggs through the feces of the infected pet. Other dogs and cats become infected by licking or sniffing the infected feces. Roundworm eggs can have 'paratenic' hosts such as earthworms, cockroaches and birds. If your pet ingests one of these it will become infected.

An important fact is that most puppies and kittens are born with worms, which is why they should be dewormed at 2, 4, 6, 8 and 12 weeks of age, and then every three months for life with an all-wormer. Pregnant and nursing mothers should also be treated during mating, before the birth of their litters, and every three months.

The four most common types of parasites that affect our domestic pets are:

- Roundworms
- Tapeworms
- Hookworms
- Whipworms

Worm Warning Signs

Weakness and listlessness, diarrhea or vomiting, weight loss despite a good appetite, abnormally swollen stomach. Any of these listed signs are reason to visit your vet and most likely get the course of parasite treatment.

Some of the listed worms like tapeworms, roundworms and hookworms can be passed from our pets to humans. Fortunately, in most cases, infection with zoonotic intestinal parasites can be avoided by taking simple precautions like practicing good hygiene.

If you aren't sure whether your pet is protected from parasites, ask your vet for advice next time you visit your vet hospital. If you are a little late with your intestinal dewormer, it is safe to give anytime and you might even see some worms in your pet's droppings—that just tells you the deworming is working!





COMPLIMENTARY PLATE OF FOIE GRAS AND SCAMPI PRAWN

01-31 December 2018

This month, Atrium Cafe Restaurant special offers for all guests a plate of foie gras & scampi prawn at our lunch buffet.

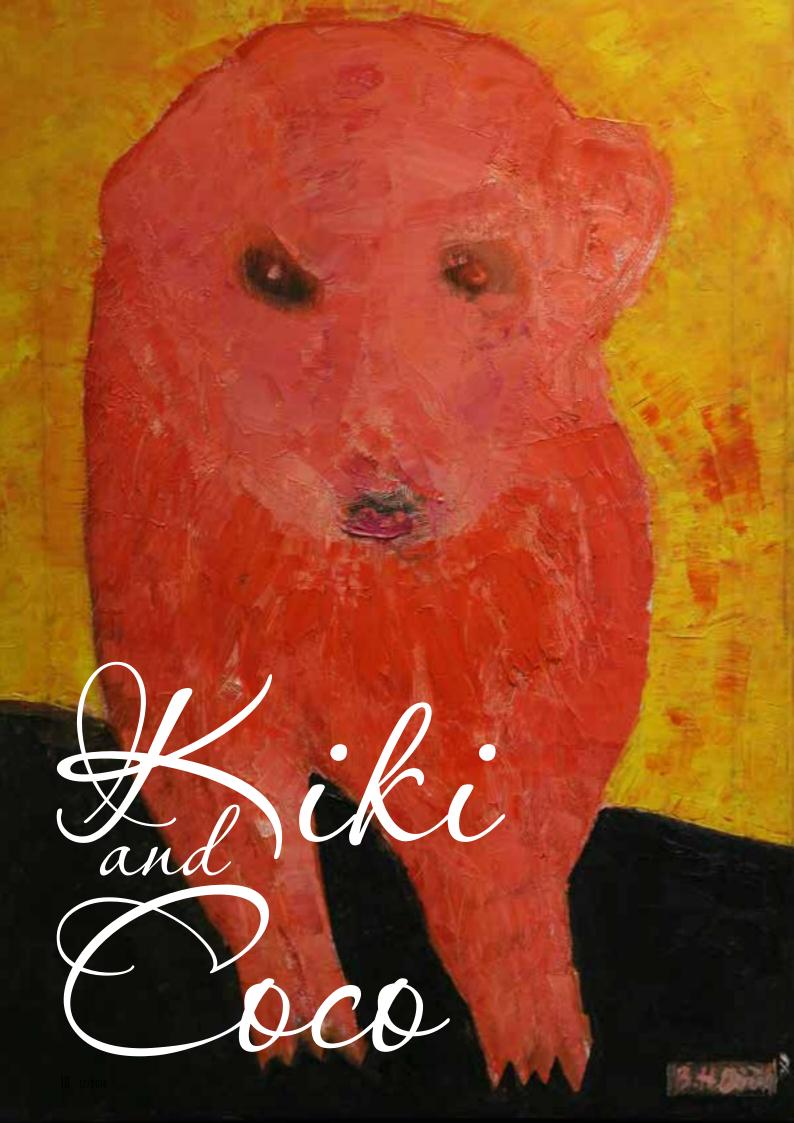
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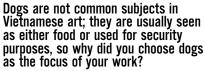




Hanoi-based painter expresses love, sadness and passion through his more than 300 dog paintings

Interview by **Christine Van** Images Provided by **Bui Hoang Duong**

How did you become an artist? Where did you study? Are you self-taught? Before I became a dog-painting artist and before I can express my art on oil, pastel, acrylic and Vietnamese traditional lacquer, I went to China to study calligraphy and explore the Chinese traditional painting techniques. After that I lived in Australia for four years to work and study. I also like many young artists' works, like installation art, video art, street art, performance art, etc., as long as they are producing their art with passion. I came back to Vietnam in 2013, which was when I started to collaborate with other artists on art projects. Until 2015, I had to create my own artwork and express myself through pieces that I painted of dogs using a wide range of art materials and techniques. In all of my projects, I do study and research, however, there are many things that I realized I have to do on my own, independently.



I don't think that dogs are only seen as food or security in Vietnamese culture because for a long time it was a part of our folk culture. In the Dao culture, an ethnic group residing in Vietnam, China and Laos, dogs are seen as a holy animal. There are many legends relating to the worshipping of dogs, but the dog idolatry culture in Vietnam was more evident through paintings, wood and rock sculptures. These sculptures are found in front of temples and pagodas, images of dogs are also engraved into wood and ceramic objects—these images project very kind and human-friendly messages. I have been doing Four Ban Ho (Caine King) for my solo exhibition this year.

During the Nguyen Dynasty, Gia



Long King raised four Phu Quoc dogs. They protected and took care of Gia Long King. After they died, the King granted them as his four precious generals, who protected him in the war. After seeing how smart and loyal they are, the French decided to preserve the Phu Quoc dog breed.

From all the stories I've heard, dogs are very important to a lot of us here in Vietnam, they aren't only kind but also very sweet. I see loyalty, selflessness in every dog I've raised. I can share so many stories about this, but the most important thing for me is that I take good care of them and they are kind to me in return.

My decision to use dogs as the main subject of my artwork in 2015 was due to a personal experience. However, I started to incorporate images of dogs into my paintings since my student years. My exwife and I raised our two dogs, Kiki and Coco, from 2005 to 2015. We treated them











as our children and we had a beautiful time raising Kiki and Coco together. After getting a divorce, I spent a year living and wondering about how I can come back to them. I wonder what is left of me? That was the biggest question that I had to answer myself. Then I found my own way, my own answer. That was when I knew Kiki and Coco had to be featured in the art project I was working on.

Who are the dogs in your paintings? Tell us about them.

Nearly 400 of my artworks are mostly about me, expressing my daily emotions like sorrow, happiness, loneliness, in love, hatred, peace... KiKi and Coco inspired me to draw more dog paintings. I draw dogs with inspirational stories of people. Sometimes, I take inspiration from the folk culture like the Buddha, the Fairy... sometimes I pick up my friends' stories and sometimes I make observations of my beloved ones to put in my artworks. When I put myself in the position of a dog, I grow to love and appreciate the stories behind my paintings even more...I think of dogs as human beings. Just a short story relating to them already makes me so emotional and can't help but thinking about them. I do not choose what I draw, but I just know that I am the happiest when I draw dogs because I have had many emotions, tears and loneliness while working on the pieces. I silently work on them by myself, listening and following my daily emotions as it gives me inspiration for my projects.

Many people told me to follow other art styles like hyper-realistic, expressionism or pop art. I don't mind the art style I am currently following, I think it is more important that I let my emotions inspire my artworks and I get to personally control how I want my work to be. I also want to share the new vision that I have for myself through my unique paintings of dogs. Moreover, I care about the value of dogs in artworks and how dog idolatry is expressed under different perspectives.

What are people's reactions to your dog paintings?

This is a very interesting question because I wonder this myself. I don't really know what the audience think about my artwork and whether they like it or not, but I am sure that there will be a moment of enjoyment or curiosity for them.

After the group and solo exhibitions, I made new friends who enjoy art and like to collect paintings. They also shared their stories with me. When I am drawing, I forget about my surroundings. I am very happy when I get to think and paint, as time passes, my passion for art becomes richer every day.



IF YOU'VE GONE OUT LOOKING

for live rock music in Ho Chi Minh City you've probably come across the band Ly Le Quyen (www.facebook. com/lylequyens), or as they say it in English because of phonetic similarities, Little Wings. If you haven't and you're interested in rock music, you should. This rock trio consists of Ho Quang Hung on guitar and vocals (Fender Custom Shop Rory Gallagher Signature Stratocaster), Huynh Bi on bass (Fender American Standard Jazz Bass) and Nguyen Huong Bao Hieu on drums (DW collector drum kit with Sabian HHX cymbals).

The current iteration formed more than three years ago in September 2015 and has been performing gigs ever since, fusing elements of rock from the '60s, '70s, '80s and '90s. As Hung describes it: "It's a mix of rock n' roll and the new wave sound of the '80s we grew up with, like Tears For Fears, but also the Beatles from the '60s or Nine Inch Nails from the '90s, so it's a mix of styles. Mostly we like music that creates imagery, that kind of thing, so music that tells a story, sort of like it's the soundtrack to a movie. Music that creates imagery is more interesting to us, and we mix it with kind of a raw sound from psychedelic music from the '70s. Of course we do covers, but we rearrange some of them. Like, we'll take a Steve Miller Band song like *Abracadabra* and rearrange it and give it a more modern sound."

From The Beatles to Nine Inch Nails is quite a diversion in rock styles, as the members of Ly Le Quyen acknowledge, with each bringing various influences to the group. Bi explains his influences, "I started by playing guitar with a

traditional rock n' roll style. I mostly liked blues or funky music. The guitarists who influenced me were Jimi Hendrix, Joe Satriani and Slash. I started playing as a guitarist, but when I joined the band I switched to the bass, so I play the bass with more of a guitar style." To which Hung adds, "So Bi plays it like a big string guitar, not a bass. Each of us has different influences, but for me it's things like the guitar style of Jimi Hendrix or newer sounds like Nine Inch Nails that have been a big influence."

have been a big influence."

Mentioning Jimi Hendrix as a primary influence has to be at the top of the list for any rock guitarist's list, so does that mean Hung does a lot of soloing when he plays? Does he shred, if you will? He smiles and replies, "Actually, no. The one who is always doing the soloing is the drummer. I think he's the









most educated one in the band, because Bi and me, we are self-taught musicians, but Hieu, he is professionally trained."

Hieu, whose music school
Musicology in Thao Dien we conducted
the interview in, is a classically trained
percussionist. "I started to learn music
from the conservatory of music, playing
symphonic music with an orchestra for
six years, like timpani or the xylophone,
before going out and playing more pop
music on a drum kit. I then played on a
TV show for six years as part of the house
band, backing up many of the most
famous singers in Vietnam, as well as
getting work as a session musician. Then
after that I met Hung, and we just like
rock so we stuck to that."

Ly Le Quyen plays mostly covers, including tunes from bands such as Tears for Fears, Red Hot Chili Peppers, The Beatles, David Bowie and Nine Inch Nails. For example, they cover NIN's *Terrible Lie* and *Head Like A Hole*. "I think Nine Inch Nails has their own sound, so it's great material," says Bi. However, there are a lot of layered sounds to a Trent Reznor-produced song that seem difficult for a live rock trio to make. "We have a kind of music station we use for the synthesized backing tracks. Before we had another member who added those layers, like sound effects, but he left the band so now we control the backing tracks and sound effects," explains Hung.

When they perform it's in English, the language of the songs they cover, but also the language they've chosen for their originals, yet they typically get a mix of foreigners and Vietnamese who enjoy their music. Hieu clarifies, "It depends on the place we play,"

So, where can you catch them? "We're regulars at Yoko, Acoustic and RFC (Rock Fan Club), but we also play some other places for events, but those three are where we usually play. We play one or two gigs a week. Usually you can find us at Yoko on a Friday night, often quite late, from 10 or 10:30pm until midnight," says Hung.

While the performances are not enough to make a living from, that isn't their motivation says Hung: "It's mostly just about having fun. It's not about earning money; it's more about living, more about energy for us. We really love the music and each other as brothers. So we have an agreement about how to do things so whenever we have a problem we go back to the agreement to solve it. For us, it's fun when you do it right."









After moving to Hanoi, graphic designer Eisen Bernardo realized how motorbikes were integral to life in Vietnam, not just as a mode of transportation but for running errands. "Every day I see amazing, funny, bizarre things being carried on motorbikes. This is just my way of documenting my favorites. It is kind of metaphorical for me. Like a daily reminder that in life we should put our burdens behind us. Our baggage should not obstruct our vision. No matter how heavy or bulky our loads are, just continue driving!" he says. For more of Eisen's "Vietnam sOOperbikes!" illustrations, follow him at www.behance.net/eisenbernard

















You have worked in many different countries before becoming the General Manager at La Veranda Resort Phu Quoc · MGallery by Sofitel. What are the advantages of working in various countries and different cultures?

When you work in various countries, the cultural diversity is a joining of a variety of backgrounds, race, gender, age or religion, working as one team with one goal. Knowing how to create relationships and understanding the cultural nuances help contribute to our efficiency and creating a competitive advantage.

For travelers who love the beach, why should they put Phu Quoc on their list? Phu Quoc in a nutshell is the ideal 'island sanctuary' for travelers to Vietnam to visit. Fringed by white sand beaches and enveloped by the bluest waters, Phu Quoc has an unspoiled coastline and is Vietnam's largest island. Just 50 minutes from Ho Chi Minh City by plane, its the

perfect sanctuary for peace and tranquility. For those who love beaches, Phu Quoc is truly a paradise with many unspoilt beaches including Sao Beach, Long Beach, Khem Beach and Rach Vem Beach.

Aside from the beaches, travelers will love Phu Quoc's year-round heat. The average temperature being around 27 degree Celcius, with the dry season beginning in November and lasting until March make it a fabulous beach escape destination.

You started in F&B as a chef, how did you make it to the top as one of Accor's Geneal Managers? What particular difficulties did you face along the way? How does this background benefit you in your current role?

It was a big move out of the culinary field back to studies within Accor and joining the IHMP program that has made it possible to continue my growth in the industry. Working mostly in hotels



throughout my career, it seems like a natural progression for a career and it has been an amazing step into this role of General Manager at La Veranda.

Where does La Veranda stand on its environmental impact on the island of Phu Quoc? What eco-friendly initiatives are implemented in the resort?



program with a vision of promoting Positive Hospitality to act in favor of the planet.

At La Veranda, we perenially review our resort operations to find new ways and means to advocate for the planet. We recently implemented a no plastic straw policy. A simple gesture when you think about it but this means not throwing out thousands of straws each year. For awhile now we have in place the following: 1) usage of silk tea bags only, 2) use of refillable shampoo/ conditioner/liquid soap bottles, 3) waste segregation, and 4) usage of organic toiletries.

The biggest move for us was when 3 years ago we put together our own fully sustainable organic garden. It is 1,000 square meters in size within the



confines of the property. We create our own organic fertilizers using Japan's EM-1 technology, do our own vermiculture, and make our own organic fertilizers. This means that all our salads and herbs come from our own farm and we are certain it's clean and 100% chemical free.

What five hashtags would you use for La Veranda?

The first two hashtags I would use to describe La Veranda would be #ColonialIndochine and #Elegance. This is perfect as more than a century of history is built into the walls and ornate furnishings of La Veranda. You can see the decor as a tribute to our founder Madame Catherine's storied family connection to Phu Quoc and colonial Indochine.

The third hashtag I would use for La Veranda would be #TropicalGarden. Aside from its iconic colonial Indochine structure, the resort has this lush tropical garden that cocoons the luxurious 70 rooms and villas. #Romance would be the next hashtag that I think fits in with what La Veranda has to offer. Intimate dinners, private escapes, magical moments are what romance is made of at our property. Last year, we won Asia's Best Luxury Romantic Beach Resort from World Luxury Hotel Awards-the "Oscars of the Hotel Industry." This is simply testament to the great romantic experiences that guests can have at La Veranda.

Finally, La Veranda is also all about



#Wellness. Just last month, the resort was awarded the Readers' Award for Best Spa 2019 from Conde Nast Johansens, which means that the spa experiences we create for our valuable guests is truly worldclass. Next year, 2019, we will open a brand-new wellness center with vision of guiding people back to their natural state of wellbeing. So, watch out for this.

We will soon enter 2019, what vision do you have for La Veranda in the new year?

'French luxury in a family environment' is my vision for La Veranda in the coming years. We will keep what makes us unique and lovely, which is a luxurious getaway at a beautiful French colonial mansion by the sea, but twist it towards a family environment. La Veranda will offer familyfriendly retreats in an ever luxurious setting inspired by the long-gone slow, simple and refined French colonial era.

Christmas and New Year are around the corner, what events has La Veranda planned?

All MGallery hotels around the world will celebrate the 2018 festive season with the theme of "Art De Noel: The Enchanted Journey", we have created a travel-inspired festive season that brings our guest along on a delightful journey. You will see festive decorations around the resort with travel themed ornaments like planes, suitcases, globes, ships, hot air balloon.

For La Veranda's Christmas and New Year's Eve glamour parties, we've decided to take guests to a journey to the past. Our Christmas Gala takes guests to Old World 60's Saigon during the heydays of the ao dai clothing and the Prohibition Era for the New Year Gala.

Finally, we are proud to present the "Art of Christmas" series from December 20 to January 20. Guests can choose to join any of our series of workshops, events, or promotions to experience the charm of La Veranda through various activities.

Visit www.laverandaresorts.com for more info

RIDE ON, BROTHER

A custom bike built to commemorate a loved one who has passed

Text by **Jesus Lopez-Gomez** Images Provided by **Huy Mai**





—dubbed the Cubu (pronounced "koo-boo")—is a perfect demonstration of how two people can look at the same thing and see something completely different. To the casual observer, the beastly custom bike can look something like Optimus Prime, an unapologetically tough-looking machine that eschews the common shell that covers bike parts and instead boldly displays an exposed mechanical skeleton carrying the organs of a motorcycle.

To Mai, this hand-built bike that he taught himself motorcycle building with, is family. "Brother" is the word he used when

he was coaxing his bike on his wedding day. "I said 'Cubu, be good. Be a good brother," Huy remembers. The bike would break down about two days afterward he adds with a laugh. On his wedding day, Huy and his wife rode at the head of a nuptial motorcade. His wife rides pillion in a red dress holding her wedding bouquet while Huy drives. His handsome black suit is

an interesting contrast to the brawny, silvery Omega frame of the bike.

Describing the photos, Huy again uses the familial name he's given his bike. "I wanted my brother to be at my wedding," Huy explains. For some bike enthusiasts, the relationship with their respective machines can take on similar conversational tones. It is not a bike, but their "baby." They may indicate their bike saying, "There she is."

This is very different from Huy's relationship with his bike, which is more literally fraternal. Cubu is short for "Malicubu," a nickname for Huy's late younger brother who died suddenly







engineer in Bao Loc. Growing up, the former remembers watching his father build electric generators by hand using outdated automobile engines. "He's like a hero in my life," says Huy.

Huy remember that he and his brother were given machines to play with when they were younger, but Huy says his father never gave them explicit guidance to teach his children to work with machines. Machines parts were Huy's toys until his dad saved up enough money to buy the two a Playstation, which was greeted with great fanfare. "He didn't push [engineering on us] at all."

Huy's decision to give himself an education in motorcycle construction was similarly also his own. After taking a ride to Da Lat with his wife on a 250cc Honda bike they both took a liking to, he made an impulse purchase with a local mechanic who was selling theirs. It was in very poor condition, Huy remembers. The bike, the one which would become the Cubu he built years later, barely made the 2-kilometer ride home. He had a larger vehicle take the big to Bao Loc where he could begin rebuilding it.

First, he had to figure out how to build a motorbike. Huy was at a comparative advantage to his father who also self-taught himself machine building in a pre-Internet age, where his only resources would have been books and endless trial and error. But even with the web and his dad's help, Huy still estimates it took him around 2,500 hours to build the bike. That's about how much time it would take someone to learn basic Greek and then Urdu, according the the US State Department's foreign language training program. Mai says his preferred mode of study tended to be centered around raw relentlessness: keep studying until understanding is reached.

"When I was studying, I would study until I understand it. Then, I would move on to a different thing," he says simply. This is how he learned how to machine his own parts and how to build all aspects of this never-before-seen bike, like the French-inspired steering system that ditches the typical bike's use of a handlebar-and-telescoping-fork system for a more complex one that uses a system of parts that articulates right and left turns through joined bar that move in unison turning the front wheel. The whole set up creates a lower bike profile more common to cafe racer.

As difficult as it was, Huy says quitting never entered his mind. He learned his lesson about quitting when he took on his cross-country run. About 700 kilometers into the run, not yet halfway through the length he would need to go to complete his run, he hit a wall. Unsure if he could proceed forward, he rested for five days during which the conviction to finish overcame all else. After that time, "I decided I would never quit again," he says. That relentlessness seemed to serve him well in building the

Cubu, a bike which stands peerless even here in Vietnam's bike-rich automobile

environs.

Looking at his bike, it's suddenly Looking at his bike, it's suddenly evident how much contemporary bike design devotes to softening the edges of the motorcycle's raw, hard machine-ness. An aluminum or plastic shell over each motorbike seems in some way necessary to protect the viewer from the bareness, the brutalness of its power. The Cubu is, in that way, maybe more honest and upfront. Whatever adjectives and feelings it recalls, it is as a matter of fact one of a kind, incomparable, like the motorcycle's namesake.

"I wanted to build something for him. Something like him, something never before built, something there will never be... again," says Huy.



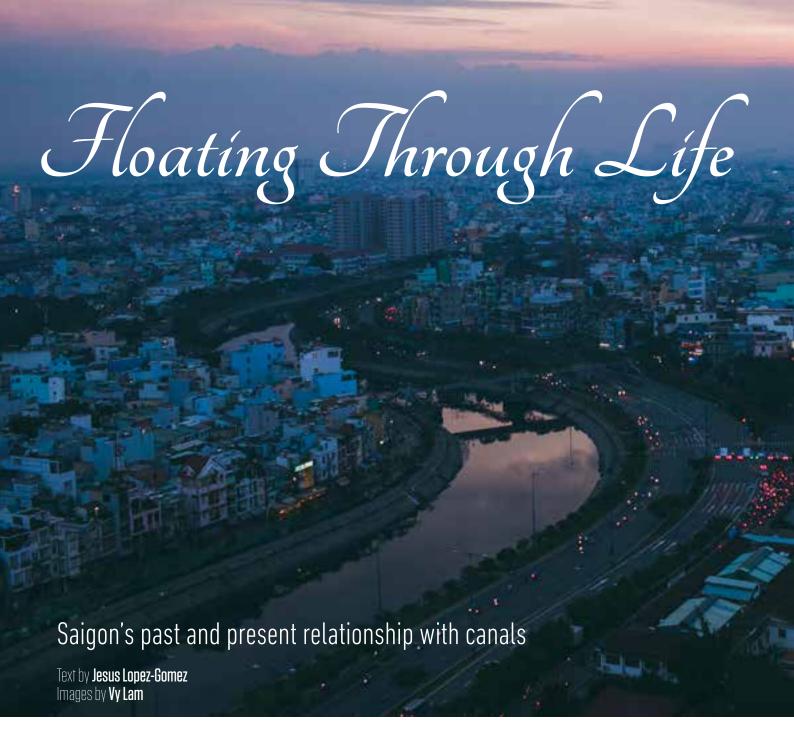












IMAGINE FOR A SECOND THAT

Nguyen Hue, the wide promenade leading up to the vibrant, stately People's Committee headquarters, is not the pedestrian-rich strolling area that it is today, but a giant harbor filled with commercial boats shipping fruits and other goods. That's a pretty close approximation of the Grand Canal as it existed in the late 19th century, the centerpiece of the city's once canalcentered urban planning.

According to water researcher and historian Joep Janssen, there are few pictures of the Grand Canal as it existed at that time, before it was filled and converted into the hard surface it is today. But the surrounding area remains the economic and political center of the city, a lingering vestige of the once-important canal. In his book documenting research on Vietnam's water history and issues *Living with the Mekong*, Janssen retold the story

of a French-led effort to build the city's canals, which at its peak included a system of manmade waterways instead of the existing Ham Nghi, Pasteur and Le Loi streets. The canal system formed a ring around the city center connecting to the Saigon River.

The resulting city urban landscape neatly partitioned the city's dwellers. On land lived the governing French elite that ran colonial Indochina with Saigon as its political heart. On the water were the city's poor, who lived in floating dwellings along the city's banks.

Janssen's research found that city's planners intended to build an "island city," what his work found to be the first urban master plan of Vietnam.

According to Janssen's research, the French had an ambitious plan to almost completely remake the city starting with the 1859 destruction of the Citadel of Gia Dinh, "which, ironically, had been built by the French themselves 70 years

earlier...," Janssen observed in his book.

The city of Saigon was built for 500,000 inhabitants, which it reached 80 years after the French settled it in 1859.

Janssen's research showed that the city was originally meant to be an answer to the already prestigious British colonial cities of Singapore and Hong Kong. The French made the city in their image hiring Parisian urban planners to build the city's first parks and these new circular intersections called "roundabouts" that wouldn't become popular until the mid 20th century. Made in the French image, Janssen said the imperial rulers once called Saigon the "Paris of the Far East." The ruling French were regularly challenged by Vietnamese living in the Mekong Delta, Janssen found. The canal system was built in part to offer defense against would-be invaders. He writes that the strategic military importance of the canal began to wane as the city moved beyond the established borders of the



original urban plan.

Just a generation after the canal system had been constructed, the waters began to fester. In spite of being a critical artery for the city's imports and exports, Janssen's research found that the canal system was a breeding ground for waterborne diseases. After much debate, the city's leaders elected to fill many the city's canals just 20 years after the network had been completed.

Many of the canals were converted into wider-than-necessary streets (such as Nguyen Hue), but many remain still. As anyone who lives in the city today can tell, the city's canals are a major feature of the cityscape. The same people may also tell you that the existing canals are plagued with the same problemsnamely lack of sanitation and diseaseas their forerunners. The city's ever increasing population and the lack of available space to build new homes has pushed residents, specifically the poor, to the banks of the city's canals and beyond, according to Janssen's research. He spoke with one woman who, like many of her neighbors, had built a hut that rested on stilts above the Te Canal.

Building on along the city's waterway edges has both narrowed those waterways and led to a degradation in water quality. "As the number of inhabitants increases, the quality of the water in the city decreases. The people living by the river dump their waste in the canal. Rubbish is floating everywhere. The black water smells and is swarming with mosquitos," Janssen writes in his book, quoting a woman he interviewed living on the canal.

Mirroring the past, Saigon residents Janssen interviewed said the city's poor were clustered in shacks near or on the canal while the city's rich are living away from the water. Janssen researched a battery of international aid projects that have worked to rehabilitate Saigon's canals, including a wastewater treatment and flood mitigation effort centering on the Tan Hoa-Lo Gom Canal in District 6. The effort called in involvement from a variety of international partners, including the World Bank.

In his book, Janssen predicts the canals will continue to play an important role in the development of the city, not the least of which is the city's effort in flood prevention in response to climate change. His research shows that if the sea level rises by one meter as it's expected to in the years leading up to 2100, as much as two thirds of the city may be threatened by flooding.

The work of reviving and activating the city's canals will surely have a variety of payoffs. The Tan Hao-Lo Gom Canal project has canal sanitation as a core deliverable, but the project also delivered help for the nearby residents, many of whom were legally classified as migrants with temporary residence permits, according to the Belgian authorities who reported the project's outcomes in a paper issued in 2014. The project delivered new apartments, urban landscape improvements and a water purification lagoon among other improvements

improvements.

Area residents had previously had inconsistent access to municipal to the constant access to the constant access

Area residents had previously had inconsistent access to municipal electricity and water services, the Belgian authorities reported. The apartment block and green space that replaced the area's slums were lauded in their reporting. The report describes the government's investment as "inexpensive," noting the District 6 project has been discussed in United Nations conferences and studied by a range of academic institutions including Texas A&M University and Ho Chi Minh City's post graduate schools. A picture of the a three-story apartment that was built to rehouse the city's residents is included in the report. It's taken low to catch the upside down reflection of the building along the adjacent canal.

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Tan Hao - Lo Gom Canal project



The Collaboration of the Colla



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YOU'VE PROBABLY SEEN THEIR

signature pink jungle to jars popping up lately in stores around Saigon. The brand's sleek, minimal packaging and catchy name has gotten on our radar as a seriously good-looking coconut oil.

Maggie Shen, an Australian-Chinese model, designer and entrepreneur, founded Coconut Religion in 2018. She came from an international career in luxury beauty and launched the brand's first range of raw coconut butters in September after realizing there were no high-quality coconut oil on the market for beauty care. Her research found the best coconuts were found in the jungles of Ben Tre, which led her to moved to Vietnam with a one-way ticket and a



mission to find the sweetest coconuts, and so began an eight-month adventure sourcing, designing and creating the products.

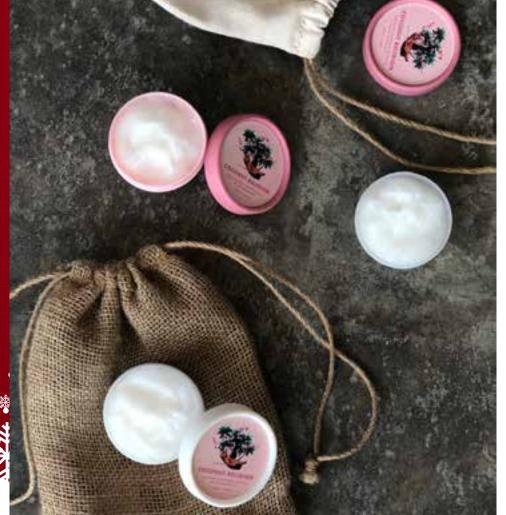
She's developed a creamy coconut butter, which stays in a balm even in hot weather. "You either love coconut oil or you don't know about it—it's nature's best-kept beauty secret, perfect for travel as it's a do-it-all. But the universal problem was that coconut oil leaks everywhere and so was a real a hassle for travel. I created a raw coconut butter that doesn't become liquid, and never leaks. It's been a passion project from day one, as I set out to make something that I wanted and needed, which wasn't yet available on the market, with the best coconuts from Vietnam," says Maggie.

Troi Oil

"I didn't know a word of Vietnamese and everyone kept saying 'troi oi' to me when I first moved to Vietnam. I thought, well, what I'm making is the Troi Oil—oil smelling so good it's sent from above. Inspired by the addictive energy and youthful vitality that permeates the pulse of Saigon, I designed the brand with a pink tropical oasis, and an exuberant woman bursting out of the coconut canopies with a lust for life and a love for coconuts singing 'Troi Oil!'" adds Maggie.

As for the brand's interesting name, it's a nod to celebrate her holistic approach to wellness, and to celebrate the abundance of health and beauty benefits that coconut butter has to offer. It also has a literal meaning too, Maggie discovered that the Coconut Religion was actually a religion that existed in the '70s in Vietnam, in the same jungles her coconuts are sourced. It's not pure coincidence that her passion project led her to uncovering and bringing back the Coconut Religion in Vietnam and hopefully, now, with the rest of the world.

Coconut Religion's full range of products are available at VND280,000 at L'Usine, Kokois (24 Thao Dien, D2) and Zuzu (48A Tran Ngoc Dien, D2). For more info, follow Coconut Religion's Facebook or www.coconutreligion.com.





THERE'S ALWAYS BEEN AN AURA

of mystery surrounding silver, purported to do everything from improving circulation and promoting healing to staving off infections and warning to the presence of toxins. Even the art of silversmithing has been shrouded in secrecy, especially in the Vietnam of the 18th century, when only craftsmen from China had the skills needed to fashion the highest-quality silver items for royalty and nobles.

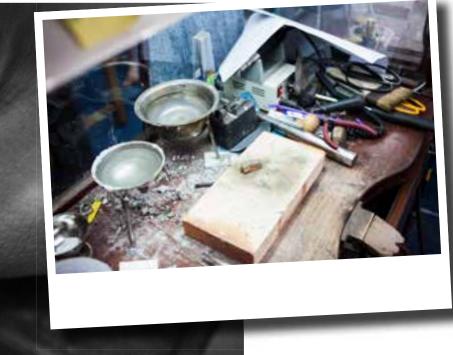
According to lore, a man named Cao Dinh Do went to great lengths to penetrate the secretive, closed-off community of Chinese silversmiths who serviced the Nguyen lords in the capital of Thanh Long in the mid-1700s. Driven by a fascination with silversmithing, the son of farmers learned Chinese to the extent he was able to pass himself off as a Chinaman and apprenticed with expert craftsmen, learning not only how to work with silver but also how to build the tools and machines needed. Once fluent, he moved to Ke Mon, just outside of Hue, and established a silversmithing community there, spreading the art across Vietnam.

Following in his footsteps is Le Qui Ky, co-owner of **Vietnam Silver House** (68 Nghia Thuc, D5). Set amidst Chinatown's so-called "gold and silver street", a row of shophouses catering to the city's wholesale jewelry market, Vietnam Silver House is a jewelry shop, museum, and workshop housed in an attractive three-story building.

"Vietnamese craftsmen are as skilled as anywhere in the world, but no one

knows because we traditionally produce for other brands, much like the shoes we make here for Nike and Adidas," Ky laments. In an effort to introduce the world to the art of Vietnamese silversmithing highlighted by its finely detailed craftsmanship and unique designs, Ky has opened Saigon's first silver workshop where in two hours, guests can fashion a ring or bracelet to call their own.

After visiting the museum for a look into the history of silversmithing and watching a short video on modern metalworking, guests head into the brightly lit workshop and start by selecting a ring or bracelet from the extensive catalogue. I pick a simple silver ring, but tell Mr. May, the head trainer, that I like the hand-hammered look.



"Let's make that instead," he smiles, giving me a piece of silver wire that is alternately my enemy and my friend as I work through the various stages of silversmithing, including sawing, annealing (heating the metal to keep it soft), filing, soldering, hammering and, finally, polishing.

There's a certain satisfaction to creating something worthwhile with your own two hands, no matter how clumsily, a feeling of accomplishment that can't be bought. "You're doing great!" says Mr. May, playing the role of cheerleader and physical trainer as he calls out words of encouragement while adjusting my jackrabbit tempo on the foot bellow to power the torch. Luckily, silver is a forgiving metal,

Luckily, silver is a forgiving metal, and to be shaped and reshaped without too much difficulty. "It's not like a wing where if you make one mistake you have to throw the garment away," points out Mr. May. While 925 is the international standard for sterling silver jewelry (i.e. 92.5% silver and 7.5% other

metals), Vietnam Silver House uses a proprietary blend of 950 to better retain its brightness in Vietnam's tropical climate.

I happily spend the morning sawing through the wire and filing down the ends (supposedly with the strength of a firm handshake, but my wobbly technique ends up meaning the joints don't line up perfectly), and shaping it around a tapered, cylindrical rod called a mandrel. At this point, it looks like a sad, lopsided oval, but Mr. May shows me how to evenly pound the ring with a mallet to make it perfectly circular, every now and then, flipping down his magnifying visor to better inspect my (shoddy) work.

We soon move over to the soldering station where I put the blowtorch to a tiny piece of silver, watching it change from solid to liquid, melting to seamlessly join the ring. I quickly dip it into a water bath to cool the metal, followed by various pickle solutions to help the solder adhere and to clean the ring, before adding texture by making little dents in the ring with a pointed

mallet for a handhammered finish. After more rigorous filing and polishing, the ring finally looks like something I'd actually wear. "That's the beauty of making something by hand," says Mr. May. "Each piece has a soul to it that you won't find in mass produced items."

For those who'd rather buy than make, the ground floor showroom has beautiful yet surprisingly reasonably priced pieces for sale from the most notable silversmithing villages across Vietnam: incredibly detailed filigree work from Dinh Cong near Hanoi, silver carvings from Dong Xam in northeastern Vietnam's Thai Binh Province, and wonderfully intricate jewelry from Ke Mon, just outside of Hue. "These ancient villages produce stunning work, but they don't know much about marketing themselves," says Ky who himself comes from a background of marketing and market research. Ky hopes to propel the Vietnam Silver House brand onto the international scene, highlighted by modern takes on traditional Vietnamese motifs such as lanterns, conical hats and dragonflies as well as iconic city landmarks for a wearable souvenir of Saigon.

The silver workshop costs USD35 and includes a visit to the museum, all tools and instruction, and 3 grams of silver, enough to make a ring. More silver can be purchased for a modest supplement to make larger items, like bracelets. Reservations one day in advance are strongly recommended. For more info, visit www.facebook.com/VietnamSilverHouse







PLAGUED BY RED SPOTS AND

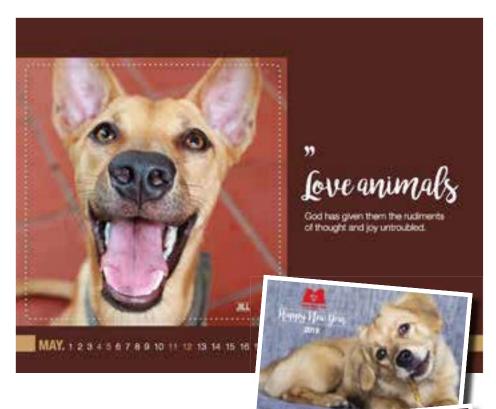
itchy skin, Saigon Suds, founded by Rachel Arn and Megan Eichelberger, started as a personal effort to combat the exhaust fumes and pollution patches left on their skin after a day in the city. Learning from the kitchen of their apartment in District 7, colors were tested, scents perfected and recipes accumulated. Using quality ingredients and sourcing regionally produced materials; they use the traditional coldprocess method of making soap. This method naturally produces glycerin, a humectant that helps your skin retain moisture, leaving it soft and smooth. Glycerin helps to formulate bars that are both moisturizing and cleansing, while keeping individual skin type in mind. Goat milk and oatmeal soothe sensitive skin, activated charcoal and tea tree oil remove toxic build-up, and coconut milk and cucumber purée relieve dry skin.

Starting with handmade soap and graduating to more complicated endeavors, their product list now includes shampoo bars, face oils, conditioner bars and liquid hand soap. An alternative to over-the-counter shampoos, Saigon Suds shampoo bars contain no harmful chemicals or ingredients that are impossible to pronounce. While commercial shampoos strip the hair of natural oils, they use rosemary, grapefruit, ylang ylang and lavender essential oils to promote healthy hair growth and a high concentration of castor oil to lock-in moisture. Canine friends also bark about the Woof Woof dog shampoo, made with oat milk and neem powder to repel fleas and relieve itchy skin. Look for their solid conditioner bars and moisturizing face oils to further remove chemicals from your beauty care regime.

Saigon Suds continues to operate on a small scale, interacting with their customers and using customer feedback for the development of new products. Dedicated to promoting the products of local businesses, as well as supporting the zero-waste movement, they challenge you to test naturally-made products against their over-the-counter chemical alternatives. Saigon Suds is 100 percent palm oil free with no added parabens, SLS or detergents and many vegan options are available.

For more info, visit Saigon Suds at www. facebook.com/saigonsuds





Funever and the second second

your month and see where your time is going. A calendar with a lot of cute things is, well is never unwelcomed.

Among the items available through **Bright Solutions Vietnam's** (www. facebook.com/brightsolutionsvietnam) textile product lineup is a fabric ABCs book, finger puppets and cloth Christmas decorations. There's a

distinct style to Brights Solutions' work that can be described as playful, soft in the emotional sense as well as the physical. The tone belies the serious work of Brights Solutions' organizational objectives. The company retails cloth goods made by underprivileged Vietnamese women. The women Bright Solutions serves come from a range of backgrounds and life experiences including domestic violence and social marginalization, but what binds them all together in common is a lack of opportunity and economic empowerment. Bright Solutions acts as not only a vendor for these women, but also as a vocational training organization and an entry point for their products to join an international market. To ensure quality, vendors receive training and coaching from the company to both produce well-made products and build the life skills necessary to enhance their standard of living.

"We consider equipping women of all ages with life skills and relational skills just as important as providing them with access to a self-supporting trade and sustainable income," Fiona Briers, founder and director, said in a statement. Bright Solutions is a partner in the United Nations gender equality and poverty reduction goals. It's nearly time to don the holiday dress and put up those decorations. Among Bright Solutions' soft selection are Christmas ornaments. If you feel inclined to deck the proverbial halls this season, this is a great way to go.



FOR MANY, THE JOY OF GIVING

can be marred with the realization that gift-giving itself is a dressed up episode of consumerism. But what if you want to actually be charitable this season and buy your gift conscientiously? A number of Saigon charities and organizations sell gifts that directly benefit important causes, like womens' economic empowerment and animal welfare. We're collected a few of them below.

If you're looking to do more than just buy a thing in your gift giving, consider buying something from animal shelter ARC Vietnam (Animal Rescue & Care). The animal shelter offers mugs and bandanas whose purchase benefits the dogs, cats and other creatures in their care. Their showcase item, however, is the ARC Vietnam calendar (VND200,000; sold at Saigon Pet Clinic (33 Street 41, D2), Saiga's House (23 Street N4 - KDC Hoan Cau, D7) and Kokois (24 Thao Dien, D2), which takes you through 2019 with photos of their cute wards. A hard copy calendar can be an important tool to help you visualize

NEED MORE IDEAS?

Coffee seller Maison Du Saigon (www.facebook. com/maisondusaigon) has a range of products including mugs and coasters that benefit their sustainability initiatives. The company partners with local makers and is an important access point for Vietnamese artisans to sell their goods in Canada.

Rose Bakery (www. facebook.com/ littlerosebakery) has cookies and cakes for celebrating the holiday season. The bakery is a business that supports the Little Rose orphanage as well as local schools served from the organization.

Mekong Creations (www.facebook.com/ MekongCreations)is one of Vietnam's best-known NGO of handcrafted goods. It's a great place to find something unique including a handmade denim tote bag or one of the store's coveted quilts. Money spent there goes toward social welfare programs that aim to strengthen the presence of local artisans in the international market.





IN A WORLD OF MASS

production, finding something truly one-of-a-kind is nigh impossible. Enter Mayhem Saigon (136/1 Le Thanh Ton, D1). Opened in 2013, Mayhem is one of the city's first and certainly best-known vintage shops, home to all kinds of clothing and accessories you can be sure no one else in Saigon will have.

Head all the way down an alleyway filled with nail ladies busy doling out mani pedis just steps from Ben Thanh Market, and you'll find Mayhem up a set of stairs to the right. Browse through two cluttered-chic floors of hipster nirvana stocked with vintage clothing sourced mainly from fashion-conscious Japan, along with denim from the USA and some women's winter wear from South Korea. While 80% of the stock is gently used clothing, the other 20% is new from up-and-coming local designers with a cool aesthetic.

In a recent visit, we snagged an eclectic mix including throwback Jordache overalls, a men's shirt from Japanese designer Takeo Kikuchi, a shirt from British designer Paul Smith and a new structured linen jacket. "We try our best to verify branded items," says the store manager when asked about the authenticity of the designer labels mixed in with lesser known yet trendy brands. "Anything in doubt is removed or destroyed."

The appeal of a trip to Mayhem lies in the thrill of finding a hidden gem among the neatly organized racks of clothing for men and women, including unisex yukatas, jean and leather jackets, vintage dresses and more. New stock arrives every two months or so, making each visit a new adventure. Who knows? You may just walk away with a unique gift that literally no one else has, like a black leather bomber jacket with real fur collar from YSL or a Balmain velvet suit jacket, both of which have recently been spotted at Mayhem.

Parking is free with a voucher available from the cashier and remember to sign up for the excellent membership card which basically gives you 10% off all vintage items and more. For more fashion inspiration, check out @mayhem.saigon on Instagram and @MayhemSG on Facebook.



Throw Away The Wrapper Give the gift of sustainability with package-free gifts for your eco-conscious loved ones

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

THREE YEARS AGO,

Quyen Nguyen read the book Plastic: A Toxic Love Story, which changed the way she would think about plastic for the rest of her life. "Before that, I never thought about plastic staying on the earth long. The articles and videos I saw before this book that showed the plastic in the oceans were not relevant enough to me to make a change," explains Quyen, who has a background in supply chain

consulting in Vietnam.

Around the same time, Quyen and Helly Tong, now

business partners, became friends after sharing their concerns for the abundant plastic use in their home country, Vietnam. The pair spent the next few years brainstorming various business ideas that would deliver alternatives to plastic use directly to the local consumers. Initially, Quyen along with Helly, a popular public influencer in Vietnam who promotes living an ecofriendly life, noticed that many of the articles and publications highlighting the problems with plastic in Vietnam were all in English. "Expats and

foreigners are already very aware of the plastic issue, so we decided our end goal is the Vietnamese people," Quyen adds. Having settled on an idea, the pair

began plans in the early part of 2018 to open Vietnam's first non-food bulk store that encourages customers to bring in empty containers and fill them with the non-food products that the store sells for a lower cost than buying them in shops. Laiday Refill (83 Xuan Thuy, D2) officially opened in October after months of building relationships with eco-friendly suppliers that operate in the reuse-recycle-reduce circle in

Vietnam and neighboring









talking to suppliers, we realized there are a lot of products that people need, and want plastic-free alternatives to." Quyen continues to explain how Laiday Refill now has over 200 products divided into refillable products and reusable solutions.

As we chat, Quyen explains that Laiday Refill is not a 'zero-waste' store as this puts too much pressure on both themselves and their customers. "We are simply less waste; less is okay," says Quyen, adding "the bristles on bamboo toothbrushes are made from nylon, we can't deny this but we are using plastic in the best way and this is what we want to show people." Alongside the 20 types of refillable products that span homecare and personal care, the shop also sells a number of reusable solutions that range from sanitary items, such as menstrual cups and washable pads, to everyday items, such as bamboo toothbrushes, razors and canvas shopping bags.

While the store enables customers to make a positive impact on the environment by encouraging the act of reusing old containers instead of buying new ones, it also benefits the local economy. Seventy-five percent of the store's refillable and reusable products are produced in Vietnam in order to reduce the CO2 emissions and to keep it very much Vietnamese; the other 25 percent,

which come from India, China and Germany among others, are only imported because Vietnamese manufacturers are not yet producing them. "When the Vietnamese products are ready, they will replace the imported ones," adds Quyen.

Why is this kind of store important to the people of Vietnam now? Vietnam is one of the top five contributors to marine plastic pollution in the world. "Each day, Ho Chi Minh City alone releases 70 tons of plastic packaging and over 50 tons of this, is plastic bags," explains Quyen. With Vietnam's plastic problem increasing at an alarming rate, there is no better time to show the Vietnamese population that there are simple alternatives to plastic use out there than now.

"The younger generation in Vietnam lacks the intrigue as to where their products come from and where they go after they have been used," Quyen explains. The pair hopes to also target schools with educational programs about reducing plastic use. "Children are pure, impressionable and have great empathy with animals. They will be the ones to pass on the message to the next generation; they are important in educating the country about how you can live a sustainable lifestyle."

The store's slogan "Lai đây, lại đầy" is a play on the Vietnamese language; whilst the six letters are the same, the accents mean they translate into "Come here, get refilled again." Highlighting even more how important it is to the Quyen and Helly that curiosity is spiked by the store and the local people find it approachable.

As you begin to explore the beautiful earth-like decorated store where glass containers lined the shelves, you begin to realize how many things can be swapped for a non-plastic alternative. This is the reaction many people have when they first enter the store, Quyen tells them to "just buy what you need, then after

you get used to it, come and buy more," in order to prevent unnecessary waste. Quyen explains that the store's beauty was something they put a lot of thought into, "We only have one time to convince, impress and surprise people. Living green is often not considered beautiful in many of the locals' eyes. We have made a lot of effort to convince people that living green doesn't mean you have to sacrifice anything, especially not beauty." Continuing with a clear passion shining through, Quyen adds that the store has various colors, fragrances and solutions for the same product for this exact reason so that they can convince people to make the change to less plastic.

A recent poll by Sky News revealed that 84 percent of consumers share concerns over the amount of plastic waste during the Christmas period and half of those polled would rather receive unwrapped gifts. 2018 is the year to ramp up the fight against plastic pollution as now, more than ever, it is in the forefront of the world's mind. What better way to go into the new year than giving the gift of a free conscience but also opening up loved ones to the endless opportunities to reusable and refillable products. The gift of sustainability is one that will continue to benefit, not only the Vietnamese population but also the entire world. If you can't find what you're looking for it in the store, request it and Quyen and Helly will work hard to source your plastic-free alternative.











ESPECIALLY THIS TIME OF YEAR,

who wouldn't want a personal shopper? Someone with an eye for aesthetics who can curate gift selections down to a manageable list, taking out all the work and leaving just the joy of giving?

Zuzu Concept Store (48A Tran Ngoc Dien, D2, down a little lane just past Snap Café) is the next best thing, marrying the French flair of designer Olivier Polmanss with the Japanese penchant for elegant simplicity of Tomoko Ukai. Located in a beautiful wooden house painstakingly transported from Central Vietnam and reassembled in a tranquil garden setting in District 2, Zuzu Concept Store showcases some of the owners' favorite products. "Zuzu, which means 'little pearl' in Mandarin, symbolizes

our quest for perfection and authenticity. We believe that the simplest things are the best,"

says Olivier, whose designs can be found throughout the store, including contemporary art that doubles as storage, ki vases with rounded bases inspired by the Japanese idea of resilience, and aromatic boxes made of cinnamon bark.

Zuzu is all about distinctive products that have a story behind them, like the unique wearable art from Wara Designs, or vintage hand-painted ceramics from Song Be, just north of Saigon. "I love that these ceramics are getting a new life," says Tomoko. "I think they're more beautiful than new because they were actually a part of someone's life before," she says of the gorgeous (and surprisingly reasonably priced) plates and dishes that were painstakingly

collected over multiple forays to local communities to find ceramics leftover from a nearby factory which closed down in the 1960s.

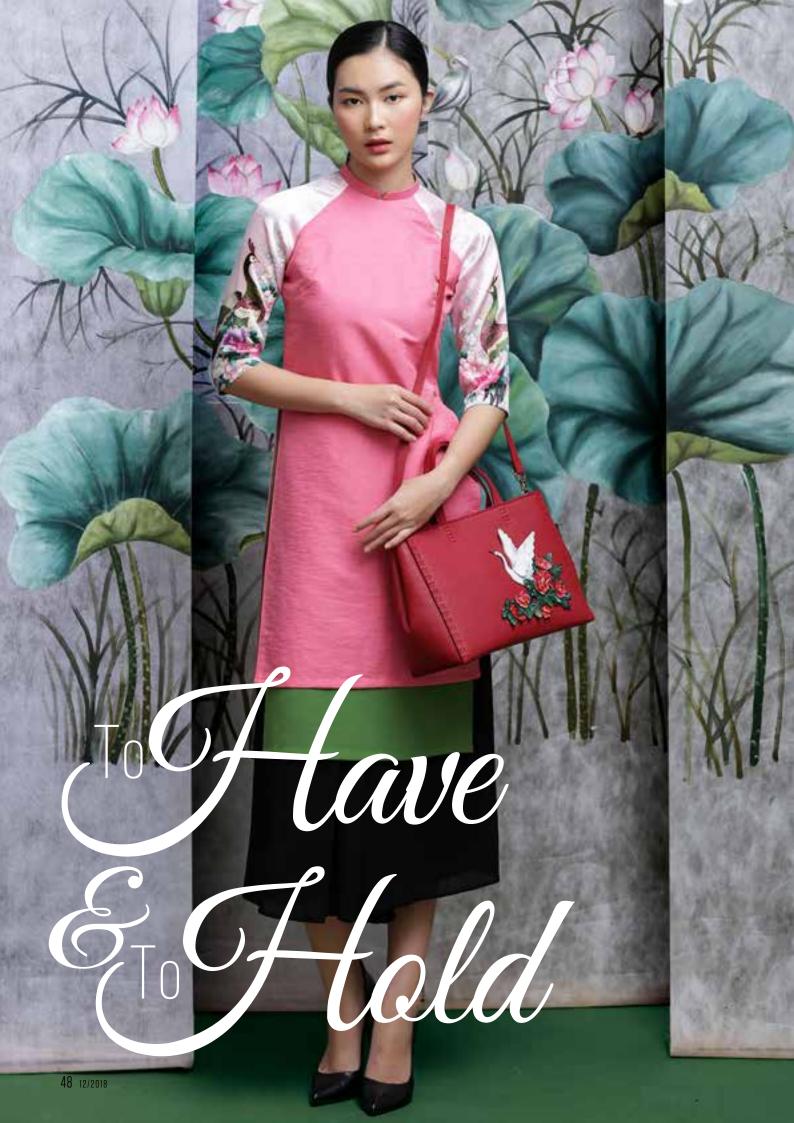
Tomoko's background in fair trade has also led to Zuzu carrying a wide selection of organic food products, like cashed butter, dried fruit,



teas from Dalat including passion fruit, hibiscus and dandelion, and coffee sourced directly from the Ede ethnic group in Buon Ma Thuot and grown without the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. Zuzu also hosts a farmer's market every Sunday with organic products from Dalat and Dak Lak and a chance to talk directly with the farmers.

Stay longer and enjoy breakfast or delicious, homemade French pastries, along with a good selection of teas and coffees in the Zuzu café. There's also a beautifully shaded garden in the back which can be used for intimate parties or simply to while away the afternoon. Keep up with all the latest events by following @zuzuconceptstore on Facebook and Instagram.











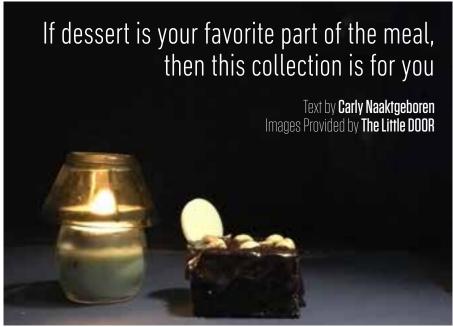












MY RETURN TO THE LITTLE DOOR BISTRO & BAKERY

(949 Ton That Thiep, D1; www.facebook. com/thelittledoorbymrsimple) had always been imminent, something I greatly looked forward to. This time I return with the privilege of tasting a selection of their desserts and housemade baked goods—each crafted with extreme care, following the philosophy that dessert is something special, a pleasure to be enjoyed piece by piece. Sitting in my royal blue chair, the first few of the decadent sweets varying in colors, textures and styles are placed before me on the glossy white table.

I pick up my petite spoon and dip it into a tall, slender shot glass of Panna Cotta with Rum (VND45,000). It cuts smoothly into the cream colored concoction, slicing off a rich bite. The thickness and acidity from the alcohol leaves the diner feeling satisfied after a meal, not requiring too much or leaving



meticulously made so as to not become too moist, just enough to taste the contrast with the ganache. The cake is finely balanced, and even though it is luxuriant, it has a surprisingly light finish.

Now, I excitedly break my spoon through the glazed sugar topping of a lustrous golden Creme Brûlée (VND60,000). Held within an adorable pink ramekin, it's freshly torched. Beneath the layers of caramelized sweet and voluminous custard is a layer of cranberries, a fresh take on the classic dessert. The berries are included to give the decadent, fatty flavor some balance of sour and sweet. And, as a person who has more than once uttered the words, "I don't really like creme brûlée," I truly love this creme brûlée.

The dessert tasting is completed with a scoop of housemade chocolate ice cream (VND40,000) and specialty sea salt coffee (VND55,000). The single scoop of chocolate was just enough, its rich and creamy thickness reminiscent of fudge from a vintage American drug store on a hot summer day, sprinkled with mocha shavings. The Little DOOR also offers housemade ice cream in vanilla, matcha and red wine. The sea salt coffee nicely finishes off the extravagant sampling. Upon stirring the sea salt cream from the top down to the bottom, the saltiness and bitterness from the espresso cleanses my palate after indulging in all of that sweetness.

The panna cotta is my, and the bakery's Chef Michael's, favorite. The Little DOOR Bistro & Bakery specialty desserts are unique and exquisite, the only of their kind. The precision with which they are made is due to practice, dedication, and adhering to only the highest of standards. As Chef Michael says, "baking is like golf, you must be concentrated. If anything is wrong, it's gone. You have to do it again. You have to focus." And with that perfectionist mentality, the desserts are a genuine treat.





them overly satiated.

Sharing a plate with the shot glass of panna cotta is a slice of Berry Cheesecake (VND55,000), the mixture of cranberries, raspberries and blackberries is soft in order to complement the firmness of the cream cheese. Made purposefully light, it eases the guilt of over indulging. It is topped with a berry jam that stands out, but doesn't take away from the cake filling. The cheesecake is set in a delectable crust made of coconut and housemade graham crackers. The outside is then delicately burnt to create variance in flavor without affecting the inside texture.

I continue on my sweet journey with a sizeable piece of Black Forest Cake (VND55,000). This cake is made specially with only ganache and sponge cake as the filling in order to allow the diner to taste each layer with every delicious bite. The sponge is

















IT'S THAT TIME OF THE YEAR

for Christmas festivities and excitement for the New Year! Where time spent with family and friends is one of the best gifts to give. We are excited to share another festive season with you and look forward celebrating one of the brightest and merriest of holidays at Pullman Saigon

Get into the Christmas spirit on the 22nd and 23rd of December at Food Connexion. It's the perfect spot for an early weekend dinner buffet with your loved ones festive season. Decorate your own ginger-bread cookies while kids play at their own playground. Keep the festive spirits going on Christmas's Eve on the 24th of December and Christmas Day on the 25th of December with traditional roasted turkey, festive ham and an extravagant seafood dinner buffet. Whether you are looking for a perfect night complete with kid's entertainment, live music or a festive brunch, check out Food ConneXion as your destination for Christmas!

Up at Pullman Saigon Centre's 30th floor, Mad Cow Wine and Grill is going Mad with festive set dinner menus for Christmas's Eve and Christmas Day! Join Maddie and the Gang for a Madly delicious 4-course dinner and wine pairing and celebrate Christmas above Saigon!

Celebrate New Year's Eve with an extravagant seafood buffet at Food ConneXion! Enjoy a variety of seafood, a delicious carving station and a delectable dessert counter. This feast is designed for you and your family to celebrate the end of the year and the start of a new one!

Mad Cow Wine & Grill is going Mad for the New Year with a New Year's Eve set dinner and wine pairing! Enjoy mouth-watering dishes above the city with the Gang who are more than ready to start the New Year MAD!

Join us as we welcome the very first seconds of 2019 with the party of the year at Pullman Saigon Centre! You're invited to the New Year's Eve countdown party complete with free flow drinks, DJs and dancing! Take your pick to celebrate at the Rooftop Bar on the 31st floor or at the exclusive Maddie's Terrace at the 30th floor for a perfect destination for spectacular views of Saigon for the New Vear!

Start your year well with a New Year's 2019 buffet! Our culinary team at Food ConneXion will prepare an elaborate buffet spread that will make the 1st January 2019 one to remember! Featuring all the highlight seafood and dessert for both brunch and dinner, Food ConneXion is the place to be for your first day of the new year!

HOW MUCH?

Food ConneXion:

Christmas Weekend Dinner Buffet: 6pm to 10.30pm

VND1,800,000 /adult,VND720,000/ child, (6 – 11 years old)

Christmas's Eve Dinner Buffet: 6pm -10:30pm:

VND2,200,000/adult, VND880,000/ child (6 - 11 years old)

Christmas Day Brunch Buffet: VND 640,000 NET per adult (food only)

VND 320,000 NET per child (6 – 11 years old)

VND 350,000 NET per adult for free flow beverages

Christmas Day Dinner Buffet:

VND 980,000 NET per adult (food only)

VND 490,000 NET per child (6 – 11

years old) VND 350,000 NET per adult for free flow beverages

Mad Cow Wine & Grill:

Christmas's Eve Set menu with wine pairing: VND2,380,000/person Christmas's Day set menu with wine pairing: VND2,380,000/person

Table reservation: +84(0)2838388686 or email H7489@ACCOR. COM



One of the city's best festive buffets, bringing classic holiday cuisine to Saigon

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

IN THE OPEN, AIRY DINING

room with soft, indirect lighting is the setting of a festive holiday buffet at Viet Kitchen at the Renaissance Riverside Hotel Saigon (8-15 Ton Duc Thang, D1). On one side of the room are large picture windows showing the traffic of Ton Duc Thang and the Saigon River beyond that, while along the opposite side are food stations. Once seated at a table by the window, our server offered us a choice of a glass of white or red wine. After choosing the white we were told about the numerous seafood options available as well as the more traditional holiday courses and the highlight being, of course, the whole roasted turkey ready to be carved.

There is a do-it-yourself salad station, however, I went for a prepared salad—a ham and white bean salad with avocado, onion and cherry tomatoes that was tossed in a subtle vinaigrette. I then added a green salad with arugula, walnuts, apple, pear and chunks of blue cheese. Both salads were incredible—the slices of avocado added depth to the ham and bean salad, which eventually had me going back for a second plate.

For our second trip, we headed over to two stations: the sushi and sashimi, and the charcuterie selections. The mix of black and green olive, the toasted almonds, the thin slices of cured European ham, the selection of artisan cheeses were heavenly. Beside the charcuterie selections was an array of freshly baked breads with butter and olive oil on the side, which was an excellent accompaniment to the cured ham and traditional cheeses. We savored the bold and fresh flavors of every bite from both stations.

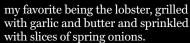
One emphasis of the buffet is their wide array of seafood options, specifically shellfish, which is locally sourced. When we returned to the table the server had delivered freshly grilled lobster, crab and king prawns—all were remarkable, with











with slices of spring onions.

After a bit of people watching, both from within the restaurant and outside the windows, we headed to the hot station of Western classics. I fixed a plate with slow cooked pork, a large helping of turkey imported from the US and a selection of the best traditional sides; mashed potatoes, stuffing, cooked red cabbage, roasted carrot and onion, and topped it all with turkey gravy. We savored the tender meats and delectable sides in large flavorful bites. I was surprised by how dynamic the juicy chunks of pork were, and the cinnamon and sugar accents of the cooked red cabbage.

For sweets, there's a lot on offer, from fresh fruits to cookies, cakes, tarts, pies and ice cream. There are creamy fruit tarts and fruit flavored ice creams if chocolate isn't your thing, there's a rich pumpkin tart as well, but for those with a palate for chocolate, there's a huge selection. I opted for a scoop of chocolate and vanilla ice cream covered with chocolate chips and chocolate sauce, along with puff cookies with cream and a slice of chocolate mousse cake—and with that finale I can say that a good time was had by all.

Everything at the Renaissance Riverside Hotel Saigon holiday buffet was extraordinary. On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, guests will be treated to a warm glass of mulled wine and live caroling.

Viet Kitchen is ideal for friends, families and corporate holiday get-togethers because of its openspace design and communal tables. The festive buffet dinner at VND1,590,000++/person (free flow house wine, beer and soft drinks).









TURKEY ON THE RUN



The holidays are some of the most joyous but stressful times of the year. Not only is it a gathering of family from far and near with the inevitable personality clashes and idiosyncrasies, it's the strains of putting together the Norman Rockwellperfect dinner. This holiday season why not give the gift of time and family harmony with a complete turkey dinner with all the trimmings? Let Viet Kitchen take all the work out of the holidays with

a 6kg turkey that serves 10-12.

Notoriously a difficult meat to keep moist due to its low fat content, Renaissance Riverside Hotel Saigon roasts its turkeys to perfection, a delicate balance of temperature, time and basting, carefully packaged to ensure it reaches your dinner table in all its right-out-of-the-oven glory. Included is a bottle of wine, two sauces, stuffing, mashed potatoes and grilled vegetables, ensuring that even the pickiest eaters will be rendered immobile in that blissful tryptophan-induced state of lethargy that comes only after a festive holiday meal.

Available from now until December 31, 2018. The turkey is priced at VND2,580,000 net (or VND2,280,000 net without a bottle of wine). Order 24 hours in advance by phoning (028) 3822 0033, ext 2309.

CHEERS! WINE COLUMN

Gifting



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 art of getting it right

WITH SEVERAL FESTIVE SEASONS

around the corner many companies and people are browsing wine lists, considering wine to buy as present for their clients and loved ones, but what should they buy?

Giving wine as company present for Christmas or Tet is very common in Vietnam. When giving a gift to their clients companies should consider that what they give is an expression of how much or how little they value their customers.

In Vietnam, sadly, many companies spend as much money in the box/wrapping than in the bottle, sometimes even more, however, it should be noted that although the first impression of a nice box will be welcoming, but if the wine itself is cheap or tastes bad that is the memory that will remain. Furthermore, a bad wine inside a beautiful box may imply that the goods/ services sold by the company are the same: pretty on the outside but actually terrible in what matters, so be careful.

In general, companies have a budget per customer, so spend it wisely and focus on quality rather than on quantity. People who love wine will always prefer to receive one good bottle of wine rather than a full case of average or bad wine. If you are on a budget, forget about giving French wine, especially Bordeaux, which is overpriced, go for good-value-for-money wines like those from Spain, Portugal, Argentina or South Africa. If you are choosing Chile, make sure that you go for premium or super premium because most Chilean wines are associated with being cheap plonk, an association you don't want for your company, do you?

What about buying wine as presents for friends and loved ones? More or less the same rules apply: don't go for cheap wine if you are giving it to a wine lover. I really hate when someone brings me a bottle of cheap bad wine, rather than giving me pleasure it creates a problem because I will not drink it, I will not give it as a present to someone else, but I still need to store it.

If you want to impress wine lovers, look for something unusual—uncommon regions or uncommon grape or both—this will show that you care and you dedicated some time to find something nice for someone you love, and he or she will appreciate it, plus unusual grapes and regions usually produce cheaper wines than the famous ones.





IN RECENT YEARS, JAPANESE

cuisine has become increasingly popular. In Saigon, Vietnam's busiest city, there are many high-quality Japanese restaurants and **Yoshino** is one of the best places you can visit in Saigon for authentic Japanese cuisine. The restaurant is named after the famous place Yoshino (吉野), an ancient town in Japan, and its main mission is to provide exceptional service and authentic Japanese dishes. "We try to make Yoshino the ideal venue for authentic sushi, sashimi and nabe addicts," says Chef Choi.

Yoshino will enchant you with its delicate traditional "omakase" set dinner, together with an extensive a la carte menu. The restaurant also features a variety of fresh seasonal fish and Wagyu beef imported weekly from Japan. The dishes are based on authentic



Japanese recipes with the freshest and finest seafood and ingredients. You can witness how the chefs create your dishes. Each season has characteristics that are deeply rooted in foods, and the seasonal dishes at Yoshino are a unique feature associated with cultural traditions Offering business executives the ideal Japanese lunch option is Yoshino's Lunch Kaisaki set menus, which include an 8-course option featuring Chef's choice of appetizer, soup, sashimi, fish, beef, sushi, and udon or soba (from VND880,000++/set). For those who crave for Teishoku experience, they can enjoy a sumptuous 20-option menu priced from VND270,000++. Crafted to highlight the authentic flavors of Japanese Izakaya, Yoshino's a la carte menu showcases a robust choice of Japanese classics.

Dining at Yoshino is as close as it comes in Saigon to a full-spectrum restaurant experience in Japan. With a beauty cherry blossom painting on the pagoda-like ceiling, cleverly reflected in black marble flooring or the large mirror over the sushi counter, reflections of food and tables meet the eye everywhere you look—creating a sense of theatrics. Worthy of a special mention is the spaciousness, with a capacity of 100 guests: one Westernstyle private room and five Japanese style private rooms (Horigotatsu style) with traditional reed mats—it is here that dining encompasses both food

and surroundings to become a complete cultural experience.

Yoshino's sake menu runs deep—at least a dozen choices, from home to premium sakes (Daiginjo), from sakes with pear or lemony flavors to earthier ones that evoke straw or mushrooms. They can be served chilled or heated, allowing their subtler flavors to emerge—servers can be your guides here, so don't be shy asking for advice. Or bypass sake altogether for shochu or go for local wine and beer. Rather than accents to a meal here, these drinks can serve as stewards that open the palate to an eclectic lineup of Japanese small plates, as well as raw fish cut like jewels by our chefs.

This festive December, Yoshino restaurant will present a very authentic menu for Christmas Days only two days December 24 & 31, 2018. Christmas Eve Kaiseki Dinner includes 8 courses and a glass of sparkling sake (VND2,150,000++/ person). Especially for New Year's Eve, the best of tradition is Osechi, a traditional New Year's cuisine. Osechi is not easily available at Yoshino because it's eaten only on several days beginning on New Year's Day. The Traditional New Year Celebration set lunch & Matsu Sake is priced at VND1,300,000++/ person, and the Traditional New Year Celebration set dinner & Matsu Sake is priced at VND1,700,000++/ person.

Yoshino Restaurant – 2nd Floor, Lotte Legend Hotel Saigon, 2A-4A Ton Duc Thang, D1. www.lottehotel.com/saigonhotel. Tel: (028) 3823 3333 Ext. 222.

Wine & Dine

ROOFTOP BARS



Liquid Sky Bar

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

21F - Renaissance Riverside Hotel Saigon 8-15 Ton Duc Thang, D1 / 028 3822 0033



Rex Hotel Rooftop Bar

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

141 Nguyen Hue, D1



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

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

SUNDAY BRUNCHES



Indulgent Sundays @ Nineteen

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

19-23 Lam Son Square, D1 hotel@caravellehotel.com / 028 3823 4999



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

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



MICROBREWERIES & CRAFT BEER BARS



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 I, HCMC. Offering a taproom, restaurant, and rooftop beer garden where customers can enjoy local brews and food crafted with ingredients from the Fast to the West.

181-185 Ly Tu Trong St. District 1, HCMC 0913060728 booking@eastwestbrewing.vn facebook.com/eastwestbrewery www.eastwestbrewing.vn



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/



Have you ever been standing higher than the fireworks?

That best moment which seems not to happen in real life now can be sightseen from one of highest restaurants in Sai Gon. Take a visit to EON51 Restaurant & Lounge at the end of the year with your lover, enjoy our fine cuisine under the sky light blossom, it will definitely be an unforgetable memory in time.



CAFÉS



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



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



Café RuNam

No disappointments from this earnest local cafe consistently serving exceptional international standard coffee. Beautifully-styled and focussed on an attention to quality, Cafe RuNam is now embarking on the road to becoming a successful franchise. The venue's first floor is particularly enchanting in the late evening. **96 Mac Thi Buoi, D1**

www.caferunam.com



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 I. 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



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



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 ca phe sua da served here. **27 Ngo Duc Ke, D1**



FRENCH



Le Bacoulos R

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



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



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





We are Smoky BBQ ribs online restaurant. Beef brisket (at least 1kg): 650.000 VND/kg Beef ribs (2.3 - 3.2 kg): 600.000 VND/kg Pork ribs (1.8 - 2.4 kg): 450.000 VND/kg

Facebook page: Long's Smoke House Delivery: (+84)968.790.890 Email: longsmokehouse@gmail.com



ITALIAN



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

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, DI 028 3822 3329 tonyfox56@hotmail.com www.ciaobellavietnam.com



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



Also Try...

Casa Italia R Filling, hearty Italian fare served with a smile in the heart of District I. 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

The luxury Park Hyatt Saigon is home to Opera, an Ine luxury Hark 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, DI

One of the original Italian eateries in Ho Chi Minh City, Pendolasco recently reinvented itself with a new chef and menu, and spurned 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, DI 028 382I 8I8I

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, DI

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 directy 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 R

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 O28 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, DI**

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 whole atmosphere of the place evolves the Dest 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 R

Five Oysters serves authentic and excellent Seafood & Vietnamese food with SG 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



Cocated 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

Rooftop 7th floor, Saigon Royal Building 91 Pasteur, Ben Nghe Ward, D1 Opening time: 4pm-11pm 0916622662 www.saigongrill.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 fusbal 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.

36 Ton That Thiep, D1

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, DI 028 3848 0144

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

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

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 DI. 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

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

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

The Hue HouseLocated on the 10th floor roof of the Master Building, The Hue House opens 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-mariated ribs come with 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

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, laidback 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 offered 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

TWENTY,

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



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...

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

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

02862663535 www.blancrestaurant.vn

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

15 Dong Du, D1 O28 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.

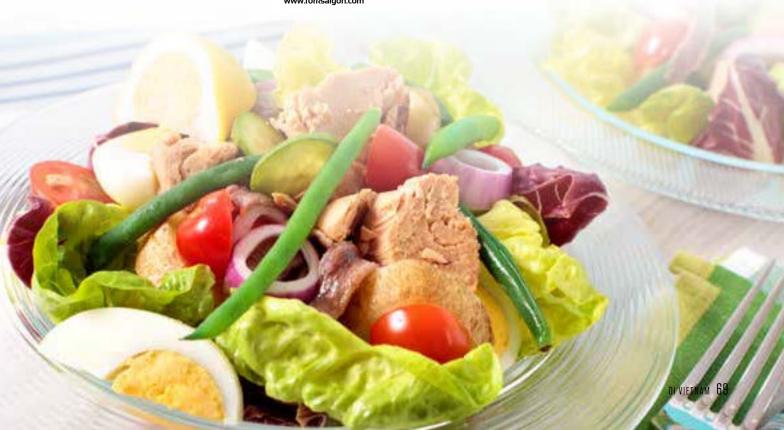
178/180D Hai Ba Trung, Da Kao, D1 02862632525 www.noirdininginthedark.com

Tomatito Saigon

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

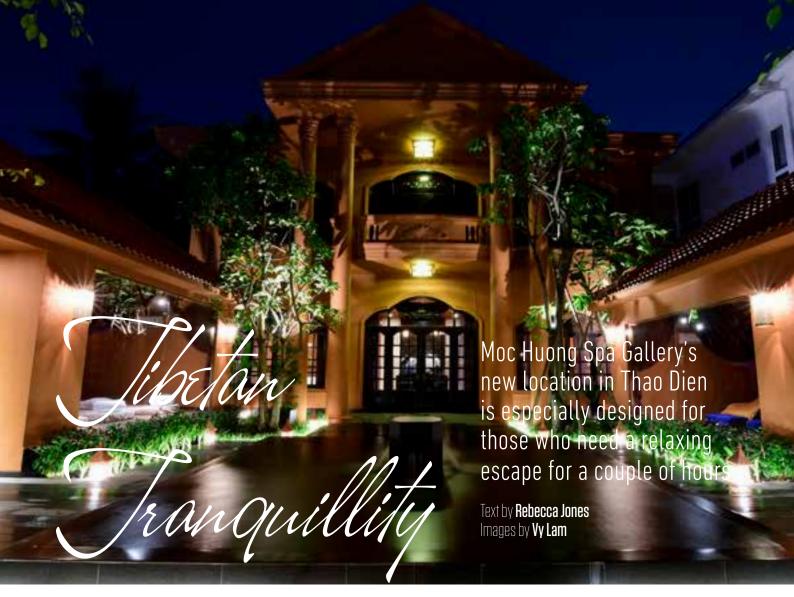
171 Calmette, Dist 1, Ho Chi Minh City

www.crhcmc.com/tomatito www.facebook.com/crhcmc +84 (0) 2862 881717









A TRIP TO THAO DIEN IS OFTEN A

relaxing experience of itself. Nestled in former wetland, the spacious expat enclave often feels a world away from the crowded hustle and bustle of District 1 or neighbouring Binh Thanh; it's wide tree lined roads contrasting sharply with the packed steamy *hems* of the latter locales.

Heading to this peaceful riverside district for a spa day, then, feels all the more indulgent. Indeed, this is exactly why the owners of Ho Chi Minh City's premier spa brand Moc Huong chose to locate their latest venue here, with their inaugural venue in the Ben Nghe area, District 1, having become a little too cramped for comfort.

Manager of the new branch, Tam, explains: "With Moc Huong Spa Gallery, we hope to create an oasis that people can come and escape to, enjoying a few hours relaxing in peaceful, spacious surroundings. Our District 1 branch caters more to those needing a quick massage, or tourists, which has its place, but here we wanted to create something a little more special for people that live in the city."

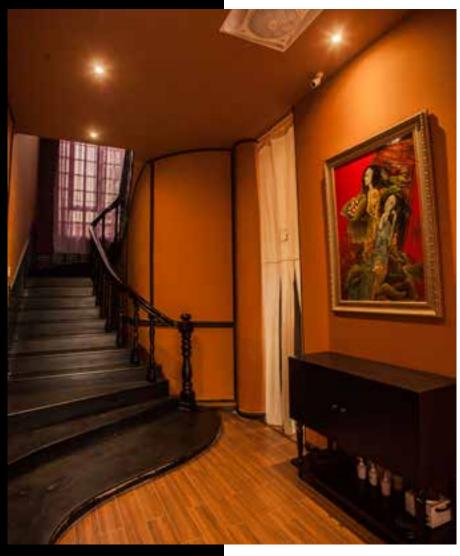
Indeed, arriving at Moc Huong Spa Gallery is enough to set even the most anxious person at ease, its gracious French colonial inspired exterior exuding an easy, oriental elegance. Painted a Mediterranean terracotta



hue, the expansive, newly renovated building overlooks a courtyard featuring a picturesque water feature, the slow trickle of which is audible from inside the therapy rooms that flank it.

Designed to accommodate families and groups, the rooms are dedicated

either to foot massage or Thai massage. As one might expect, both are immaculate and sumptuously appointed, the former featuring plush reclining chairs while the latter houses six soft beds from which clients are pummelled and pulled back into shape as only the Thai's know how.



On my solo visit, however, I headed inside the main house where I was to enjoy the spa's latest treatment: The Moc Huong Healing Bowl Massage. Incorporating both Tibetan singing bowl therapy and deep tissue massage, the treatment is an all-round, indulgent experience designed to synchronize body and mind that is being offered exclusively at the new Thao Dien branch (the second in the area).

"This is a really special treatment for us. Only two of our 70 therapists are able to do it as it takes many years to learn how to use the bowls properly. It is designed to be a mix of meditation and massage, with the bowls helping to put people into a deep meditative state before their treatment. It is very good for treating stress and anxiety," Tam assures me.

For my treatment I was assigned to Manh, otherwise known as 'number five', with Moc Huong operating a number system for all of their masseuses. This, Tam explains, helps their foreign clients to rebook the skilled therapists that have administered their treatments.

After changing in to the spa's signature brown waffle robe, I was led to my therapy room, where Manh first bathed my dusty Saigon street feet before rubbing them with lemon-grass

infused rice bran oil. This, I later found out, is used throughout the spa, with all ingredients sourced to ensure the highest and purest quality.

The treatment began with the singing bowls: large bronze cylinder's that emit a humming, hypnotic drone that was originally intended to aid monks in their meditations—and indeed still do. For the first 15 minutes of my massage Manh expertly played these around my body, inducing a near coma as I drifted peacefully along with the vibrations.

As Tam had promised, this prepared me perfectly for the treatment that followed, which combined elements of traditional Vietnamese massage with a predominately Swedish deep tissue approach. The emphasis was certainly on relaxation, with Manh's expert hand again encouraging me toward sleep. Indeed, were it not for the whir of the air conditioning unit, I may have quite peacefully napped.

Emerging, suitably chilled, I rejoined Tam in the plush reception area. Over a cup of warming ginger tea we discussed my treatment, with the manageress producing a singing bowl to demonstrate how the sounds are created. Taking a bowl myself, I soon discovered why only two of the spa's therapists are able to offer the treatment; it certainly takes a practiced hand.

As Tam explains, ensuring that therapists are fully qualified and experienced is an important hallmark of Moc Huong, and one she takes very seriously:

"I've been in the spa industry for over ten years now. I used to be a massage therapist myself and so I understand how a treatment should be. I like to keep a close eye on everything to make sure customers get the right experience. For many people, an hour or two is a lot to take out of a busy day, so this really should be the best way to spend that time," she says.

Indeed, those seeking a little relaxing indulgence would arguably be hard pressed to find a better place to spend those hours than Moc Huong Spa Gallery.

Moc Huong Spa Gallery is located on 26 Ngo Quang Huy, D2. The Healing Bowl Massage is priced at VND400,000 for 60 minutes up to VND650,000 for 120 minutes.









A ROMANTIC GETAWAY FOR

two. A few leisurely weeks by the beach to truly unwind. A raucous family holiday filled with waterslides and edutainment activities. A luxe retreat where pampering is the order of the day. What may seem like four separate vacation destinations can now be found under just one roof at the newly completed InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort, less than an hour's flight from Saigon.

Sporting a "less is more" philosophy, understated luxury is the driving force behind the landmark 1,000th InterContinental property situated along Phu Quoc's up-and-coming marina, just 20 minutes south of the main town of Duong Dong. Serendipity awaits as you begin to notice subtle touches of luxury everywhere you look—the plush, textured carpets underfoot, the hand-painted artisanal chocolates and overflowing fruit tray that resembles a Dutch still life

waiting in your room, automated blinds that open up to sweeping beach views best admired from an oversized soaking tub, delightful HARNN bath and body amenities, or a delicate blooming orchid in your guest room for that touch of home.

The concept of hidden luxury extends to the design of the property itselffour accommodation wings that fan out like a starfish from the central Sky Tower, neatly creating distinct spaces that cater to very different types of travelers. Looking for a fun-filled family getaway? Kids can be kids in the Planet Trekkers Children's Club that includes a mini-water park, cooking school and games room, all presided over by staff who are certified teachers. There's even a 130-seat theater screening familyfriendly movies with complimentary refreshments. Couples looking for a quiet retreat need never cross paths with young noisemakers while ensconced in











an oversized bird cage-like cabana by the two cascading pools, sipping on tropical drinks and catching rays, or dining in Lava, the brand-new upscale Asian fusion restaurant set right on the beach. If just a few days by the water doesn't cut it, make yourself at home in a 1-, 2-, or 3-bedroom apartment-style suite in the Sky Tower where you can whip up a home-cooked meal in the kitchenette using gourmet ingredients picked up from the Mercado on-site, or settle in on the plush living room sofa and revel in unobstructed ocean views. Discerning guests looking for a slightly more refined holiday can head to the dedicated check-in lounge for Club InterContinental rooms and enjoy the use of private spaces, elevated services, and premium amenities throughout their stay, including an exclusive swimming pool and evening cocktails and canapés.

While certain room categories are a privilege, most of us would agree that a spa day on holiday is a basic right. With that in mind, we walk down a tree-lined path to the HARNN Heritage Spa, a gorgeous collection of bamboo villas designed by renowned Vietnamese architect Vo Trong Nghia that seem to float around a lotus lagoon. Soaring bamboo arches create a cathedral-like atmosphere, a soothing combination of light and space that sets the mood for a signature Bamboo Massage designed by HARNN especially for the resort. For 90 blissful minutes, a rolling bamboo stick wielded by strong hands knead tired muscles, banishing stress and tension. Aimed at restoring the natural balance of body and mind, the spa focuses on a different ancient Asian element each day. Ours was Wood, which





was cleverly woven throughout our treatment, from the welcome herbal tisane of bael fruit and white mulberry to the woody, citrusy scent of Cymbopogon used in the villa.

Already feeling on cloud nine, we head up to the InterContinental's spectacular new lounge on the 19th floor of the Sky Tower, the highest point on the island of Phu Quoc. Conceived by Australian designer Ashley Sutton, famed for his fantastically whimsical spaces, INK 360 is truly spectacular. Outside, the wraparound terrace is a family-friendly space for taking in stunning views of Phu Quoc's amazing sunsets while inside, the ocean comes alive in the form of gigantic tentacles reaching out from behind the bar, octopus chandeliers dangling from the ceiling, and gorgeous mother of pearl and white marble tiles that mimic the seafloor. Once the sun goes down, the space takes on a more adult vibe, helped along by a resident DJ who spins the tunes while talented bartenders serve up innovative cocktails. "All of our ingredients are made fresh daily," says Resort Mixologist Giuseppe Carneli, "and that's the difference between a good drink and a memorable one," as he puts together an Uncle Ho's Penicillin, a delightful concoction of Scotch whisky, lemon juice, Phu Quoc honey with a bite provided by fresh ginger syrup, all infused with smoky lapsang souchong tea and black cardamom. INK 360's own kitchen crafts delicious sharing platters including tapas and Japanese yakitori, making it the perfect spot to start or end the evening on the paradise island of Phu

InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort features 459 rooms, suites and villas, each a minimum of 49 sqm. Doubles start at USD xxx, including breakfast. For more information and reservations, visit www.phuquoc. intercontinental.com or contact the Reservations Team by phone +84 283 978 8888 or by email: reservations. icpq@ihg.com



LOOKING TO BEAT THE WINTER

blues, we find ourselves on a short flight from Saigon to Phu Quoc in search of sand, sea and sun. Once ensconced in our bungalow set among lush gardens conveniently located between Novotel Phu Quoc Resort's main building and the beach, we quickly settle into a wonderfully relaxed routine, feeling the stress of city life melt away faster than the mango ice cream we can't get enough of.

Apparently, the kids didn't get the memo that holidays are made for sleeping in, so they get up with the sun, eager to check out the day's activities put on by the Kid's Club. After an energy-fueling buffet breakfast at Food Exchange, Novotel's all-day dining restaurant, we ride bikes or go for a walk around the manicured grounds. Some mornings, it's tennis or the gym for the adults while the kids wreak havoc in the Kid's Club next door, chock full of toys and games (including a very cool video game table that responds to touch), organized activities like origami and

painting, and field trips to the garden or the playground.

In the early afternoons, we head down to Ocean Bar, Novotel's poolside snack lounge and the resort's happening social hub. All around the half-moon infinity pool overlooking the ocean, families and couples laze about on sun loungers, sipping on colorful drinks and achieving just the right shade of bronze all while pondering the eternal question: beach or pool?

This time of year, the water on the Novotel side of Phu Quoc is glassy and crystalline, a natural swimming pool where you can float on your back with zero effort, wondering how you ever got so lucky. The shallow, warm water is perfect for kids all the way to the edges of the marked swimming zone, which even then, only comes up to neck-level for an adult. The calm water is also great for the complimentary watersports on offer, including kayaking and stand-up paddle boarding.

Happily, Ocean Bar and its infinity

pool are literally 10 steps from the soft golden sands of the palm-tree lined beach, so there's really no need to choose. Some days we claim a table outside under oversized market umbrellas, cooled off by the island breezes that carry with them the sweet scent of frangipani, seawater and suntan lotion. Other times, we seek the shade of the open-air lounge done up in modern stone, bamboo, and wicker, an upbeat playlist providing never-ending good feels.

Novotel has also pioneered an all-inclusive option, and it makes mealtimes, hell anytime, completely stress-free. The colored wrist bands turn out to be worth their weight in gold as they mean no more furtive glances to the right side of the menu, no bills to sign, and no agonizing on whether it's too early to order a Cuba Libre or too late to order second (or third?) frozen mojito. For our family, it makes fiscal and common sense.

The kids quickly become BFF's with the servers at the sunken bar, downing



One day, we break up the routine by hopping on one of the resort's many electric buggies and heading across the street into the Novotel villas, an idyllic community of 3-, 4-, and 5-bedroom villas. The villas have their own facilities, including a spa, Kid's Club, and gym, and guests can move freely between the hotel and villas. The villa side is much quieter, and we have both pools practically to ourselves. We also stay for dinner at the a la carte Tropicana Restaurant, and agree that the Dragon Maki and the

Beef sautéed with fresh peppercorns are excellent choices.

With so much to do and the luxury of space in both the main hotel section as well as the villas, Novotel Phu Quoc Resort is the ideal beach getaway for couples and families. Doubles start at VND2,700,000++ including buffet breakfast, and kids under 16 stay free when sharing a room with parents. The all-inclusive option can be booked together with the room or purchased on-site.









mocktails like they're going out of fashion, alternating between the healthy "Vitamin C" with apple, cranberry and lime juices, and the "Bora Bora" for all its pretty colors of a Polynesian sunset involving pineapple and passion fruit juices with a splash of grenadine. The light bites stave off afternoon munchies, whether a smoked chicken Panini with Edam and bacon or classic fish and chips. What remains a constant, though, is the ice cream chaser, delicious scoops of salted caramel or our family-fave of black currant sorbet with shavings of Phu Quoc pepper for a lingering bellywarming heat that complements the tropical clime.



In the late afternoons, while the kids are off feeding the raucously colored koi in the lotus ponds or catching a movie in the Kid's Club cinema, we retreat to the Lounge Bar with its jazzy vibe and excellent, thin crust artisanal pizzas, watching the legendary Phu Quoc sunsets in blazing shades of red and orange.

CORPORATE CASTAWAYS



Everything that makes the Novotel Phu Quoc Resort ideal for couples and families also makes it perfect for corporate events, including meetings and team building retreats. The spacious pool decks are excellent for gala dinners under the stars while memorable team building events can be set up on the private stretch of beach. There are conference rooms and function rooms for up to 70 participants and a

dividable ballroom which can seat up to 400. The 3-5 bedroom villas can also be an economical choice with their own spacious living and dining areas, fenced in yard for barbeques, and fully-equipped kitchens.



Why the capital of Sichuan is China's happiest city

Text and Images by James Pham

THERE'S AN ANCIENT CHINESE

proverb that says "the young shouldn't go to Chengdu, and the old shouldn't leave," speaking to the laid-back lifestyle of this city of 10 million. The gateway to Western China and the capital of Sichuan Province, Chengdu is known for many things, including adorable Giant Pandas, mouth-numbing spicy Sichuan cuisine including fiery hotpot (served up by some 20,000 hot pot restaurants), and for being China's only major city to have remained in the same location with the same name for more than 2,000 years.

More recently, though, it's garnered the accolade of being China's happiest city, a title it's maintained for five years running.

"The magic of Chengdu has nothing to do with the places you go to," says Jordan Porter, a Chinese-speaking Canadian who moved to Chengdu in 2010. "Chengdu is more of a feeling than it is a site. In Beijing, you go to the Great Wall. It's great. It's literally got 'great' in the name. In Chengdu, you'll miss out on what's special if you go look at stuff. The beauty of Chengdu is in its slowness, in random encounters, and its subtle charms. You



have to let it sort of wash over you."

I decide to do just that, letting the happiness of Chengdu wash over me. Instead of long day trips to see some of Chengdu's more famous sights, like the 71m-high Leshan Giant Buddha, I instead spend my days hanging out in the park, checking out street art and eating my way through copious amounts of spicy Sichuanese food.

Admittedly, my sum prior experience of Sichuan (sometimes spelled "Szechuan") cuisine had been limited to dishes on take-out menus which always seemed to have an inordinate amount of chili pepper icons next to them. "Sichuanese cuisine is known to be spicy, but in reality, it's more about strong flavors, either spicy, sweet or sour," says Bo Liu of Lost Plate Food Tours as we tuck into a meal of rabbit with dried chilies and spicy tiger skin peppers named after the mottled markings they acquire from being seared in a superheated wok. "The cuisine is also recognized for its numbing sensation because it's the birthplace of Sichuan peppercorns," he adds about the ingredient half responsible







for Sichuan cuisine's distinctive combination of searing heat from dried chilies (only recently introduced to China a few hundred years ago by Western European explorers) and the citrusy peppercorns which contribute a longer-lasting tingling effect. That dynamic duo of tingling and spicy is known as "mala" and is found in a wide range of Sichuan specialties, from spicy cookies and thick sweet water noodles doused in chili oil to doubanjiang, a fermented bean paste that forms the "soul of Sichuan cuisine", flavoring everything from mapo tofu to hot pot broth.

To find out more about these potent seeds, I head to the Wukuaishi Wholesale Spice Market awash in the browns and reds of chilies and peppercorns. A man next to me grabs a handful of peppercorns and inhales deeply, testing their potency. Recent research has found that the active ingredient in Sichuan peppercorns interact differently with our cell's receptors than regular chilies. Instead of a burning heat, they trigger a sensation of touch and vibration which test subjects put at 50 hertz, the same









vibration that courses through most Asian power grids.

We walk over to the tea section of the market, also a product native to Sichuan, as is oriental persimmons and even red kiwis. In fact, Sichuan was once known as the "Storehouse of Heaven" for its rich agricultural heritage, including that of the fertile Chengdu Plain watered by an ancient irrigation system tapping into the Min River. In ancient times, Chengdu was on the Tea Horse Road, a trade route through the mountains ferrying Sichuan tea and spices to Tibet in return for sturdy ponies.

Modern-day Chengdu remains a gateway for many Tibet-bound travelers, the closest city from which to fly or travel by train to Lhasa and a good place to wait for travel permits. For a taste of Tibet, I head to Little Lhasa, Chengdu's Tibetan quarter and spend the morning alongside sunglass-wearing Tibetan monks with bright sneakers peeking out from under their robes. Together, we browse the

stores filled with dzi beads, handwoven carpets, and brightly colored paintings.

Later that evening, I find myself at Qi Ba Gong She, a vintage café that translates to "70s and 80s Commune". Up a set of creaky wooden stairs, hip Chenduers lounge about amidst stacks of old books, vintage paraphernalia, and throwback movie posters. Over glasses of 100-proof baijiu, a clear liquor made from distilling sorghum, Bo talks about the importance of the 70s and 80s when China first opened up to foreign businesses under Deng Xiaoping's Open Door policy. "It was a significant time in modern Chinese history as it marked the end of the Cultural Revolution and the beginning of an open economy," he says. "The music we're hearing now is from either Hong Kong or Taiwan, the first breeze of freedom to reach mainland Chinese people."

More reforms came in 2000 which saw the beginning of China's Great Western Development Strategy aimed at



helping cities in the country's southwest catch up with coastal giants like Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. Colloquially known as the "Go West" program, the central government provided funds to invest in more infrastructure to lure businesses inland. One of the first to benefit was Chengdu with its flat, spacious land, thereby marking its rise as one of China's fastest growing second-tier cities.

One afternoon, I taxi to the northern part of town, once home to the city's more upscale neighborhoods. Now, many buildings stand empty and abandoned, waiting to be demolished and replaced with modern high-rises. The locals joke that a 30m-tall statue of Mao Zedong in central Tianfu Square had already predicted the shift to the city's south, as it depicts Chairman Mao with an outstretched arm pointed to the south, his back to the north.

Wanting a glimpse into the future of Chengdu, I hop on the subway and take it almost to the very end, emerging in a metropolis of gleaming, new buildings and immaculately landscaped streets. I walk slack-jawed through Global Center, the world's largest building and the crown jewel of "new" Chengdu, home to a 14-screen cinema, Olympic-sized ice rink, 400m-long indoor beach and wave pool, and a 990-room luxury hotel.

In a modern fulfillment of the Chinese proverb "Heaven is high and the emperor is far away", Chengdu authorities have parlayed access to funds and relative freedom from the central government into a futuristic business hub, home to



upwards of 300 of the Fortune Global 500 companies. Things are going so well that city officials have recently announced plans to launch an artificial moon in two years, as if conquering the world is not enough.

Could all this be the secret to China's happiest city? Great food, cheap rent, and good jobs?

"Chengdu isn't beautiful but it has a great work-life balance," says Jordan. "It's got a lot of young, artsy people who are very liberal socially, and there are lots of tech jobs where people can make money but still enjoy themselves. People here prioritize an enjoyment of life beyond money and work hours."

I tell Jordan about my taxi driver who asked me to get out and walk the rest of the way to my destination instead of dealing with the morning traffic. "That's so Chengdu," he laughs. "He could make more money just waiting in the car but didn't want to."

I notice more of Chengdu's unruffled approach to life as I walk around town, watching people play mah-jong on the sidewalk on a weekday afternoon, lazily feeding fish from baby bottles in People's Park, or just taking in street art at Taikoo



AN INSIDER'S VIEW OF THE CHENGDU FOOD SCENE

As told by Jordan Porter, selfproclaimed "food dork" and founder of Chengdu Food Tours

There's an intense focus on food in Chengdu. Every part of the culture manifests itself at the table. There's an Epicurean relaxed approach to living, and the celebration of food and fun. This is best experienced at tea houses, at markets, at incidental meetings on the street and most of all at restaurants or in kitchens. Everything in Chengdu takes place around food and the magic of the people and the city shine best through meals.

Chengdu is also self-sufficient, food-wise. In three hours, you can be 3,000 m above sea level in what looks like a Tibetan village. Or drive to a farm, enjoy the fresh air and eat foraged vegetables and free-range rabbits and chickens which the farmers will cook up. If it's peach season, everyone will go out there and take advantage of the side industries.

People here are also tied to their food sources because they go to the market every day. In North America, so much of the food is processed. Here, it's not a bunch of hipster words like "farmer's market", "farm-to-table", or "locavore", it's just fresh, local, seasonal food all year round. There's no pretention. Every grandma makes her own pickles. There's just an amazing connection to food woven into the fabric of Chengdu society. Food is never just food.

Li, a hip, open-air shopping area where the young and beautiful come to see and be seen, strolling by the likes of Roberto Cavalli and Givenchy.

On my final day, I visit the original "Chengdu & Chill" resident, the Giant Panda. The lushly forested mountains surrounding Chengdu are home to nature reserves and scenic parks housing more than 30% of the world's highly endangered pandas. Within two hours of Chengdu are three places to see the pandas: the Giant Panda Breeding Center just on the outskirts of the city; the Wolong Panda Center, a UNESCOrecognized sanctuary; and Dujiangyan Panda Base, the newest of the three. I've chosen to go to Dujiangyan, not only to avoid the crowds, but because it's the only center currently offering a volunteer program.

There are a few dozen of us and we all don work suits and split into small groups to look after the panda enclosures. I've never been so happy sweeping up panda poop (mainly blobs of fibrous bamboo, not unlike chewed up sugarcane), hosing down floors and carting around bundles of bamboo, all within feet of the beautiful creatures. There's an option for visitors to pay around USD 300 to sit next to a juvenile panda for 20 seconds for pictures and a quick back rub, but I'm happy spending my breaks just watching them roll around and act cuddly. The best part of the day comes when we get to hand feed them snacks through a fence, getting lost in those large, liquid brown eyes.

There's just something about pandas that make people happy. When I tell a friend about my plans, she responds that whenever she's down, she locks herself in the bathroom and watches panda videos. In person, they're even more adorable, climbing and tumbling off things, lumbering around, or laying on their backs, both hands stuffing bamboo into their faces. Watching them go about their lives, without a care in the world, I wonder whether these original Chengdu residents have known the secret to happiness all along.

IF YOU GO

The Sofitel Chengdu Taihe luxury hotel makes a wonderful base from which to explore the city. Centrally located just a 25-minute drive from Chengdu International Airport, Tianfu Square and the city center is only a 15-minute walk away. The Sofitel Chengdu Taihe's 262 rooms and suites boast a contemporary-chic aesthetic, marrying the French elegance for which Sofitel hotels are known with subtle Chinese touches. Set on the banks of the Funan River, the riverwalk directly in front of the hotel is an excellent place for a morning run or to watch the locals practicing Tai Chi. For more, visit www.sofitel.com

I took two food tours while in Chengdu, and both were very good for different reasons. Lost Plate's founder (www.lostplate.com) is from Chengdu which means the places we stopped at were very local and pretty well hidden, including a residential apartment that served some excellent spicy dumplings and a hole-in-the-wall joint that made yummy little cakes (the place where you entered was literally a break in the wall). We traveled by tuk-tuk between stops which turned out to be a good thing as an unlimited amount of beer is included in the tour. Overall, it felt like you were with a hip friend who had great anecdotes to tell and who also knew all the best, quirky spots to eat.

On the other hand, the walking

On the other hand, the walking tour by Chengdu Food Tours (www. chengdufoodtours.com) was a little grittier, appealing to the "fly restaurant" foodie crowd who don't mind a more local experience as long as good food is involved. I loved walking through the market and gaining insights on local products while

interacting with the friendly sellers.
Our guide also had an "in" at many of
the places we visited, helping us bypass
the very long lines. I also appreciated
the in-depth commentary which went
into the stories behind the food.

I visited the Dujiangyan Panda Base with the help of Windhorse Tour (www.windhorsetour.com) who were absolutely brilliant at logistics. I tried emailing the base directly for information about the volunteer program, but got no response, so was very glad to have someone on the ground to help arrange everything from completing a medical clearance form to securing a car and driver for the day and dropping me off at the airport afterwards. E-mail communication was quick and easy and the information provided was very detailed and accurate.



What do you get when you combine the French art of living well with Chengdu's already laid-back Epicurean vibe?

The answer is the Sofitel Chengdu Taihe, 262 rooms and suites in the heart of Chengdu. I make this pretty property my base for exploring all that Chengdu has to offer, conveniently just a 7-minute walk to the nearest metro station. Tianfu Square with its giant statue of Chairman Mao and the trendy retail space of Taikoo Li are just a few stops away to the north, while the Tibetan Quarter and the touristy shopping street of Jin Li lined with Qing Dynasty-style shophouses are just a few minutes' ride by taxi. A vibrant nightlife scene is also within just a few minutes' walk along the river to Jiuyangiao Bar Street, just next to the 400-year-old Jiuyan Bridge, home to scores of colorfully lit bars, pubs and restaurants.

Embracing Chengdu's leisurely pace of life, I wake up early and walk along the Funan River just in front of the hotel. Once known as the JinJiang or "Brocade River" after one of ancient Chengdu's most famous exports, nowadays it acts like a sparkling green necklace around the neck of Chengdu as it winds its way through the city. While there's no longer any boat traffic on the river, its riverwalk is ideal for an early morning jog, past graceful practitioners of Tai Chi. I head in for a hearty buffet breakfast at La Brasserie where a feast of Western and Chinese favorites awaits. In a nod to local cuisine, the chef at the noodle station calls out to diners hawker-style, enticing them to try a bowl of soup, and it's impossible to resist his humor and enthusiasm.

After a full day of exploring the fascinating markets and neighborhoods of the city, it's a pleasure to come home to the Sofitel Chengdu Taihe, walking through the grand lobby swathed in marble and bookended by gurgling fountains, all in an art deco chic aesthetic. Lilies, bird of paradise, and even palm trees bring some of the outside in, giving the space a tropical, natural vibe. Upstairs, my suite overlooking the river provides some much needed respite from all of the day's walking as I sprawl out on the plush sofa in the living room and catch up on the day's news.

One of my favorite routines is heading up to the Sofitel Lounge for a late afternoon snack and multiple cups of cappuccino served up by the smiling staff. The spacious lounge, done up in tones of brown and gold, is a great place to watch the riverscape below while nibbling on French macarons, little petit fours, and savory croissant sandwiches.

One misty morning, I delay heading out and go up for a swim instead in the heated indoor pool bathed in natural light thanks to a vaulted skylight. I notice the neat row of treadmills in the nearby gym looking out over the river from floor-to-ceiling windows and it's almost inspiring enough for me to put on my sneakers.

Later, I invite a local foodie back to the hotel to learn more about Chengdu's





amazing food scene. We meet for afternoon tea in Le Rendezvous, a swank lounge tucked discreetly off the main lobby. The clusters of oversized armchairs in amongst large pieces of artwork create cozy pockets of space where we talk about chilies and peppercorns and all things Chengdu while munching on delectable French desserts.

"Chengdu is all about a relaxed life style," says General Manager Ricky Tang over dinner at Tianfu Xuan, Sofitel's contemporary Chinese restaurant. "People play mahjong in the park, drink tea, and go walking by the river." This region has long been known as China's "Land of Milk and Honey" for its excellent produce which is on full display this evening, including a dish of stir-fried asparagus with mushrooms stuffed with shrimp, and a chicken soup flavored with abalone and mushrooms from the mountains around Chengdu, perfect on a chilly autumn evening. The fiery chilies





and mouth-numbing peppercorns that Sichuan cuisine is known for are found in the mapo tofu, where the tofu serves as a vehicle to deliver the potent sauce made of chilies and Pi'xian fermented bean paste, as well as the excellent spicy beef with peppercorns and macadamia nuts, the chunks of beef flash-fried so as to be crispy on the outside but melt-in-your-mouth tender inside.

Sated in mind and body, I crawl into the signature Sofitel MyBed for a heavenly night's sleep, ready to do it all over again tomorrow.

The Sofitel Chengdu Taihe offers affordable luxury in the heart of Chengdu. Select from 162 rooms and 100 suites, all boasting French elegance like Lanvin bath amenities but with a subtle Chinese touch. Facilities include three restaurants, heated indoor swimming pool, 9-room Touch SPA with dry sauna, and more. For more information or to reserve, email: sofiteltaihe@sofitelchengdu.com or visit www.sofitel.com

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An Open House

EtonHouse International Pre-School at An Phu is now in its fourth year of operation. Oi sat down with their new principal, Leean Woodland, to learn more about what sets EtonHouse apart

Interview by **Daniel Spero** Images Provided by **EtonHouse An Phu**

As the new principal at EtonHouse An Phu, what is your main focus?

The three most important things to me are children's health and safety, their achievement and progress and their psychological happiness. Within that frame, the school also has a very strong focus on inclusion, making the concept of equal opportunities as real and meaningful as possible,

We genuinely welcome every nationality, religion and culture as well as children with all types of physical and cognitive abilities. If we don't have something in place to allow a child access to every aspect of the curriculum then we will do our very best to put any equipment or procedures in place to allow the inclusion of all children who find their way into our school.

What can parents expect to see when they visit the school?

Besides parents being able to see the sheer diversity of students at our school, I feel happy that the parents should be able to feel the warm, happy atmosphere of children learning in a motivating and fun-filled environment, with inspiring, caring and dedicated teachers in every classroom. At EtonHouse An Phu we have a very 'open door policy' where parents are welcome to walk in unannounced into the learning environment at any time. We feel absolutely confident that parents should be able to see and feel the warm constructive atmosphere whenever they visit. Of course we have many wonderful and stimulating resources but we do feel that the most important resource is the teacher and the atmosphere of the learning environment.

What are some of the steps you've taken to be inclusive to such a diverse student body?

We offer 1 to 1 support for children, often

specialist support, for children who need that extra bit of help to move around the environment or to follow our curriculum, and regularly meet with specialists from related fields so that the children can reach their maximal potential. We also adapt our resources, level of explanations and learning experiences to meet all types of abilities, including gifted children. Even the many mainstream children in the same classroom have differentiated; individual programmes to match their various rates of learning and their interests and needs. We also celebrate cultural diversity by the positive

Are the students learning only in English?

International Children's day etc.

promotion of multi-cultural aspects

through celebration of each child's main

cultural festivals, through embedding

the positive promotion of equality and

diversity in the everyday curriculum

and through special events such as

through flashcards and resources,

We currently have 7 classes; the five international classes are taught in English and two of our classes are bilingual. The bilingual classes use Vietnamese and English interchangeably throughout the day. But we have always found that children learn more than one language very quickly at this age and our teachers are very skilled at teaching children who are non-native English speakers. As English though is the main language through which all children can communicate, the level of learning is usually very rapid indeed.

What is the curriculum and developmental focus based on?

ication

We have five curricular areas, but ours, following EtonHouse Singapore's Inquire-Think-Learn framework, is not a prescriptive curriculum. Our curriculum is also inspired by Reggio Emilia philosophy where learning is open-ended and flexible. Since we support the children to develop independence and freedom of thought, we teach according to the child's interest. For instance if the children are interested in animals, we will teach maths or science through that interest. They will then understand basic mathematical concepts in a fun and long lasting way. I also give the teachers the average of what children attain if they went to a regular kindergarten so they do not lose sight of the minimum learning requirements by age group in mathematics and reading. At EtonHouse An Phu, there is an emphasis on teamwork; so the children do a lot of projects together.

EtonHouse International Pre-School at An Phu serves children as young as 18 months in their pre-nursery program to 6 year olds in kindergarten. They offer half days, full days as well as an afterschool enrichment program. For more info, go to www.etonhouseanphu. com or visit them at Level 2, Somerset Vista, 628c Hanoi Highway, D2, HCMC.







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Text and Images Provided by ISSP

WHETHER YOUR CHILD IS

entering international kindergarten or a local school, they are moving into a transformative and important time in their educational lives. A child's first day of school can be emotional in more ways than one. The child might be crying, the parent may be emotional, and the whole process can seem daunting or overwhelming.

Rae Lang, Deputy Head of **International School Saigon Pearl** (ISSP, www.issp.edu.vn)—the only early years and elementary school in Vietnam fully accredited by both CIS & NEASCsays parents' concerns are often in regards to the school curriculum, qualifications of teachers, safeguarding of the children, is the school right for a

child, and will my child be happy here. While these are all valid questions, she says a child's first teacher is their parent and a child's education begins at birth. Parents can help ease the transition by having a positive attitude and being enthusiastic about the upcoming change-if you are excited and confident, your child will be too. Encourage the whole family to have a positive outlook, to ensure the child's start is as smooth as possible. Rae answers some common questions parents ask, as they prepare to send their child to early years school for the first time.

As parents, how can I emotionally prepare my child for their first day at school?



The best way to prepare your child is to reassure them and talk to them about what the first day may be like. Reassure them that you will be there to pick them

up when the school day is over, even go to the school prior to the start day and show them where you will wait for them, said Rae. She also recommends if it is possible, for the child to meet their new teacher and class, prior to beginning school. This will help the child to understand and may lessen anxiety. Constant reassurance is key, Rae believes.

Are children who go to early years more ready for kindergarten?

Children who are exposed to an engaging environment where there is plenty of opportunities for social activities, rich oral language, time for exploration and interactive experiences such as taking visits to parks, outdoor playground or zoos, will be ready for kindergarten. This may be in the home environment or an Early Years schooling environment, said Rae. Starting a new school is an anxious time and can feel stressful, she said, and it can happen at any age. In most cases, children begin to feel more comfortable in the new environment within a few days, however every child experiences change differently and must be allowed the time to settle in.

There is often confusion about what age is right to start a child at school. What would you recommend?

Children are naturally curious and are full of wonder. An environment where the child is stimulated, encouraged to develop their curiosity, independence, ask questions, explore and engage in rich conversations-either at home or in a school environment, that is what is important. A strong oral language environment supports the academics; reading, writing, maths, science, but also through conversations and interactions the social and emotional side is developed such as: co-operation, listening, turntaking, and negotiation skills.

At home, parents can encourage independence and responsibility by allowing the child to eat by themselves, dress themselves, pack their own bag, make their own bed, or be responsible for tidying up their room.

Is there a set of skills that a child should know before entering international early years & elementary school?

Not necessarily. One of the most important things children learn in our school is character, Rae said. In ISSP, a child is given many opportunities to build their character. Opportunities are infused into the curriculum to develop the soft skills of friendship, perseverance, resilience, leadership, responsibility, and co-operation.

Years ago, it was more common for children to enter kindergarten without receiving an early years education. With the abundance of good early literacy materials, and a variety of early years schooling, children can enter school with a basic understanding of letters, sounds, pre-reading, pre-writing and number skills These are important foundation skills, and sit alongside the soft skills of character development. Together these prepare the child to enter school.

How can I tell if my child is happy in school?

When your child arrives home ask them how their day went. What was something funny that happened at school? What did you do at recess time? Tell me something new you learnt or got better at. Was there something you found difficult to learn, and how can we make it easier for you to understand it? From these questions, you will be able to fathom how your child is feeling about school. If they are able to answer, engage in the conversation with you, then they are most likely enjoying being at

school. Spending time talking with your child about their school day, will give you an insight. If you have any concerns I encourage parents to speak with their child's teacher.

What are other signs that my child is not thriving in school?

All children are different and express themselves differently. As a parent you will be know your child and be able to notice anything unusual, or slightly out of character. If the child is anxious to go back, or if you have any concerns, it is important to keep an open line of communication with your teacher

At International School Saigon Pearl, we believe in building strong relationships with the child, parents and community. Having strong communication is part of building that relationship and trust. If you have questions, talk to the teacher, Rae said.

My family speaks a language other than English at home. Is this good for the child?

In Vietnam, families often place their children in a Vietnamesespeaking daycare. When they enter an International School, it is generally their first time being exposed to an all English-speaking environment.

At ISSP we believe the Mother Tongue is important. Children who have a strong mother tongue often transfer the skills from the mother tongue into English.

However, language acquisition takes time, and it is important we are realistic and manage our expectations around the rate of language acquisition. After 3 months, your child may not have English, but they would have grown their English vocabulary, have a better understanding of the spoken language, and may be trying to use words or phrases.

Giving your child opportunities to practice their English in a supportive environment, praising them for their attempts and any small successes, will give them confidence to keep learning and using the new language. A school with a strong English as Additional Language program will be able to support you and your child, as they develop their English levels.

What can I do to help my child succeed in their early education?

Parents need to be positive about school, Rae said. Children thrive on routine, and a schedule at home is extremely important. Making sure the child has a good night's sleep and eats well at home is crucial. She urges parents to relay to their child how much they loved school. Making negative comments about school, even if it's just a complaint about waking up early, can have negative effects on the child's outlook. Negativity breeds negativity, while positivity breeds success.





"People believed that in order to get ahead in life, you had to speak the majority language." - Simon Ager

LANGUAGES ARE THE ROOTS OF

our culture, we should embrace its beauty, its diversity, and its uniqueness; but sadly this is no longer the case. Globalization has caused major changes to the world's cultural diversity. In this ever-evolving world, people are striving towards learning and speaking the languages that the majority speaks, overlooking the importance of preserving their mother tongues. Vietnam, with its 54 languages spoken by their respective ethnic groups, is no exception.

Globalization has resulted in the increased mobility of people and information, making communication a crucial part of our lives. However, this is the driving force to Vietnam's emerging trend of culture conformity that is very much driving the diversity and distinctiveness of our 54 ethnic languages to the edge of their extinction.

Look to your right: Is it an iPhone or a Samsung that you're seeing? Now, think of your favorite clothing brand that, my friend, is globalization. Globalization has made its way into our life without our awareness but, most importantly, we are conditioned to its presence. "Isn't it better this way?" is what you might have thought. Well, first of all, the internet has assisted the mobility of information and empowered innovations regardless of where you are in the world. Multinational corporations are what drives the Vietnamese economy and enriches the market. However, little does everybody know what we welcome is killing our proud heritage and it is doing it fast, starting from our Vietnamese languages.

The globalized Vietnamese market welcomes foreign investments; consequently the urban areas are under its direct influence and therefore rapid economic growth is inevitable. The distribution of growth is uneven as seen with the rural areas experiencing job losses as well as labor relocation to cities. The phenomenon raises the importance of

speaking the 'majority' language: Kinh, known as the official Vietnamese language. Statistics collected in 2009 showed that Kinh speakers made up 86 percent of the population, followed up by the Tay with 1.9 percent, Thai 1.7 percent, Muong 1.5 percent, Khmer 1.4 percent, and others 7.5 percent (mostly Chinese).

"Today, H'mong people only want to move to the cities to have more job opportunities and a better life quality. This also means that they have to learn Kinh," says Mrs. Giang Thi Dinh. She is a mother of three living in the isolated mountain regions of Sapa. At a young age, Mrs. Dinh was one of the few villagers to quickly recognize the importance of learning the 'majority' language and was soon rewarded with an opportunity as a tour guide in her hometown. She has been working for seven years; this however is not the case for those did not receive an education in Kinh. Nowadays, primary schools in the village have instructors lecturing in this 'majority' language because the H'mongs believe that their mother tongue should only be spoken within the family.

Urbanization is another undeniable and apparent contributing factor of globalization, causing the minority languages endangerment. "Vietnam is rapidly urbanizing. The urbanization process will be an important part of Vietnam's future; ensuring livable cities can compete regionally and globally will be necessary to the Vietnam's economic development strategy," said Victoria Kwakwa, Country Director for the World Bank in Vietnam.

Dak Lak, a province located in the Central Highlands of Vietnam and home to many indigenous people, is recorded to have shown a quick progress of urbanization. In 2004, Dak Lak has 13 cities but after six years, the number has increased to 16. Many homes of the six existing ethnic groups in the area are urbanized to help the growth of the economy. Consequently, their cultures

and languages are shifted to conform to the environment they are put into.

After being alarmed with the effects, let's rethink the question that lies within our conscience: "Is it really better this way?" My answer is no. Sure, globalization has brought countless beneficial results to Vietnam but its negative influences on our distinctive culture aren't being recognized. Younger generations of the ethnic minorities are slowly losing their roots and being blinded with the belief of speaking the 'majority' language. Despite this, no action has been taken towards the issue. We stress the importance of saving endangered species to maintain the agricultural and ecological values, yet why are our attention lacking on endangered languages? Languages shape our cultural identity and without languages of our own, uniformity will be present and therefore take away the beauty in our individuality. The government must seek a solution to preserve the diversity in the Vietnamese culture and enforce a law for local schools to teach students in their mother tongue.

In the near future, we are hoping to see more than just 30 ethnic groups having a voice in their own languages amongst the 54 existing groups.

A recent graduate of ISHCMC, Jasmine wrote this opinion piece while she was in 11th grade for her English class. The topic of minority languages appealed to her after a trip to Sapa four years ago when she explored the diverse cultures that exist within the region. A recent return visit to Sapa shocked Jasmine because the province has turned into a tourist attraction, become more commercialized and lost its distinctiveness. She wrote the article to raise awareness of how globalization has negatively impacted her homeland— Vietnam's economical growth is important but so are its roots and cultural heritage.



Learn more about arthroscopy, a minimally invasive operation to repair a damaged joint



Italian native **Dr. Marco Marenaci**obtained the highest honor marks from
his post-graduate studies in orthopedics
and trauma surgery from the University
Hospital of Perugia, one of the oldest
universities in Italy. He has performed
as first surgeon in over 1,200 major
procedures while consulting for the
national health services in Britain, Ireland
and Spain.

ARTHROSCOPIC SURGERY IS A

revolution in orthopedics, and it has changed the way we operate on joints. This minimally invasive procedure has given us the power to accurately examine joints from the inside, making a diagnosis with 100 percent accuracy. Not even an X-ray, CT scan or MRI can provide such results—with arthroscopy, you can see everything clearly and sometimes even fix the problem immediately.

Arthroscopy is where you make a very tiny incision in the skin around a joint—such as the knee or elbow—and insert a thin fiberoptic scope. This simple device gives us a very clear view of the anatomy of the joint—the cartilage, the meniscus, and all the minute structures between the bones. If there is damage, it's usually quite apparent, and if (for example) you need to repair the damage or remove some tissue, you can cut another tiny hole and insert a separate instrument inside to do the job.

The science of arthroscopy has come a very long way. In the beginning, the procedure was really only used as a diagnostic tool. With the development of new techniques, materials, instruments and tools for treatment, we have learned to use arthroscopy to treat many disorders—especially soft tissue disorders like cartilage tears, meniscal tears, ligament ruptures and damage to other anatomical structures.

A good example is a torn meniscus, which is a very common sports injury. It's a stretchable fibrocartilage within the knee that can easily rip with vigorous activity. 20 years ago, a meniscus tear

was treated with open surgery—a surgeon would open the knee using a five or six-inch incision to get inside the joint and remove the part that was damaged.

With arthroscopy, we approach the same procedure with a very, very small incision. Whereas previously we may have just removed the part that was damaged, with the development of new arthroscopic techniques we can now try to repair the tear with a suture, pulling it together and allowing it to heal.

During my work as an orthopedic surgeon, I have focused my interest on arthroscopy of shoulder and knee and I have seen just how far the technique has come and what it has allowed us to achieve in our practice.

I started my training in Perugia, Italy under the supervision of Dr. Giuliano Cerulli, one of Europe's most respected and highly regarded surgeons. In the early stages, as most practitioners often do, I had the opportunity to learn techniques and practice on cadavers while visiting cadaver labs once or twice a year.

After my specialization, I focused my training in arthroscopic surgery of the knee at the Aberdeen Royal Infirmary Hospital, Scotland and soon after, in Spain. Thanks to the supervision of senior consultants, I developed an interest in arthroscopy of the shoulder. From the start, I was impressed with how this mini-invasive surgery was able to resolve serious issues such as recurrent dislocation of the shoulder.

Regarding this pathology, I clearly remember my first successful case in which, via this arthroscopic technique, I was able to resolve a complex case involving a young man, whose quality of life was severely affected by episodes of recurrent shoulder dislocation. Under this mini-invasive procedure, soft tissue (labrum) damage was repaired, thereby fixing a problem that in most cases requires open and aggressive surgery.

Arthroscopic surgery has an important role in the treatment of injuries to athletes. It has a significant role in the surgical treatment of ligament injuries, such as anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction; and the surgical repair of tendon tear, such as rotatory cuff tear.

I believe that Vietnam's very young population is gradually becoming more and more involved and interested in practicing sports; therefore we will be seeing an increase in sport injuries for which arthroscopic surgery will have a larger role in treatment.

It's important to recognize that surgery is not always 100% successful, and even if it is a very low risk procedure, it is no different for arthroscopic surgery. We must keep in mind that even if they are rare, it is still a surgical procedure subject to complications. I also think that surgery should not always be the first choice, which is the reason why I always try to present an alternative option for patients, so as to give them the chance to explore forms of conservative treatment.

In conclusion, arthroscopic surgery is a procedure that offers great advantages to patients, and can often resolve or improve joint conditions, but it requires specific and extensive training from the orthopedic surgeon.

>>The List **Education**

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS



ABC International School (ABCIS)

Inspected and judged an outstanding school by British Government Inspectors (January 2017), the ABCIS is one of the few schools worldwide awarded

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Early Years Campus: 5C Street, KDC Trung Son, Binh Hung, Binh Chanh, HCMC Primary Campus: #69, Street No. 3, KDC Trung Son, Binh Hung, Binh

Chanh, HCMC

Secondary Campus: #2, Street No. 9, KDC Tan An Huy, AP 5, Phuoc Kien, Nha Be, HCMC +84 28 5431 1833/34/35/36 office@theabcis.com

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A school inspired by Reggio Emilia For children from 12 months to 6 years of age 11 – 13 Tran Ngoc Dien, Thao Dien Ward, District 2, HCMC, Vietnam 028 3744 2991 | 0982 012 860

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The American School

The American School (TAS) is an international school that has been accredited by the Western

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THE AMERICAN SCHOOL

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International School Saigon Pearl (ISSP)

Saigon Pearl (ISSP)
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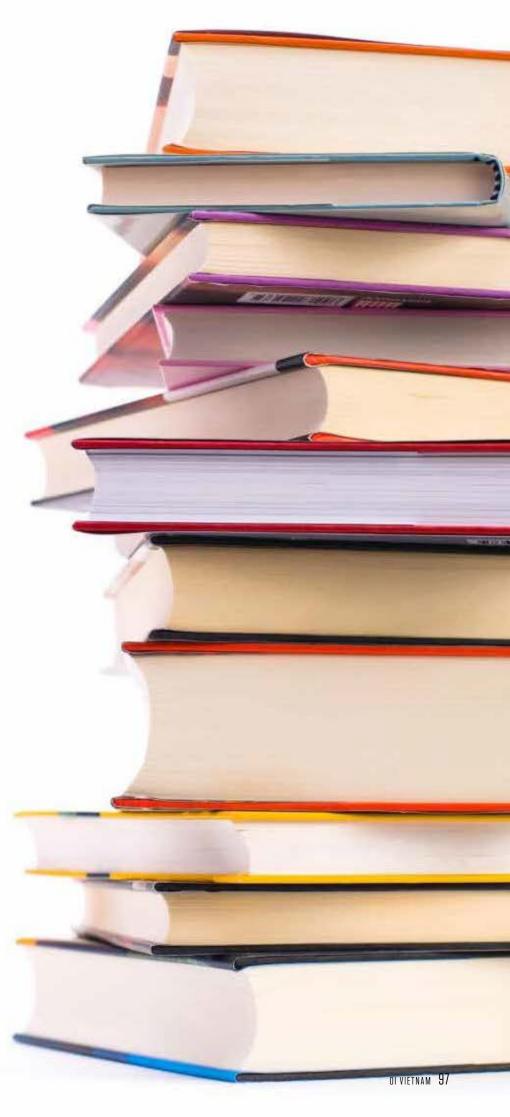
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