



VIETNAM

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*La
Bella Vita*



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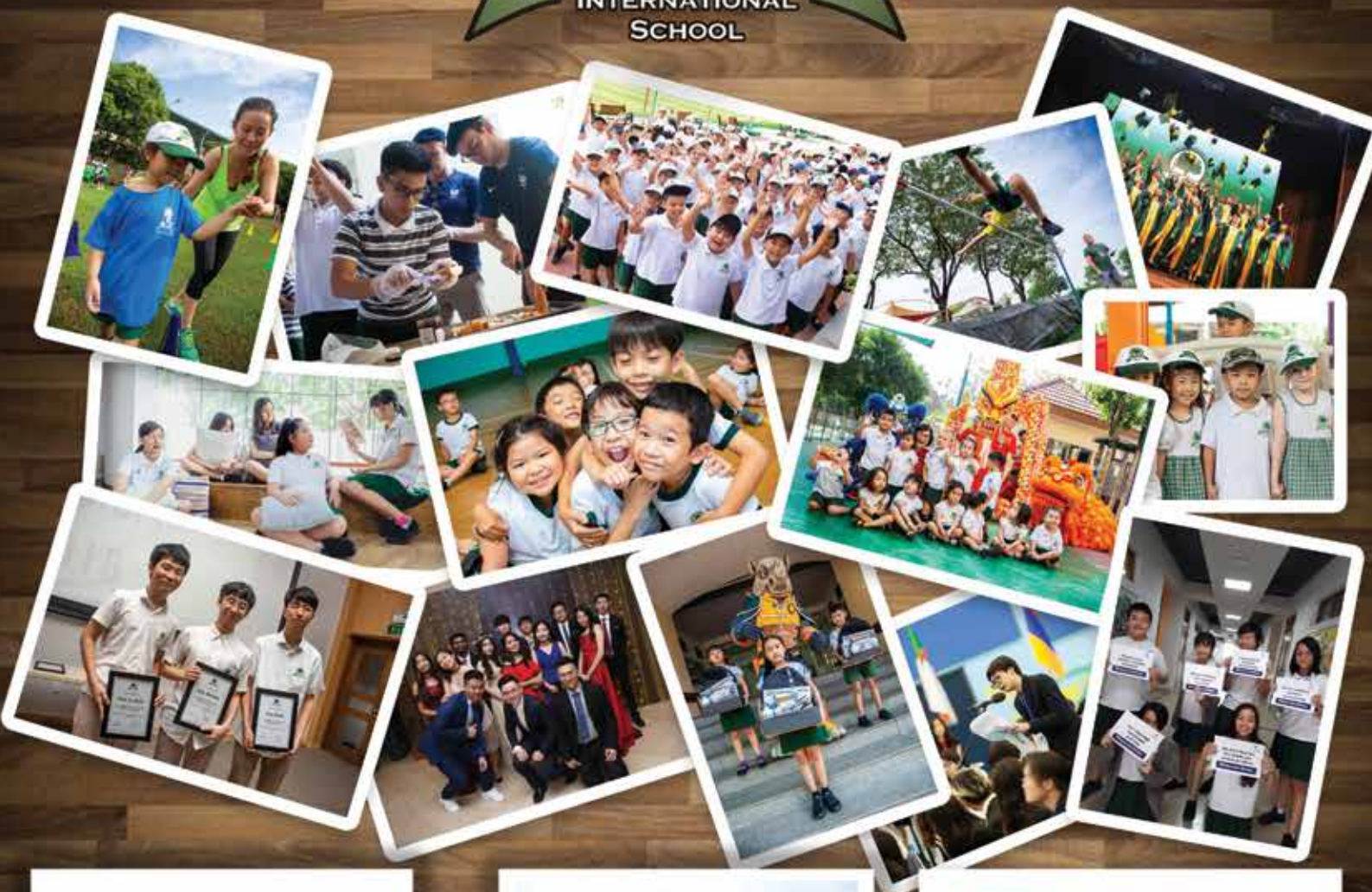
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TROI OI!

The country in numbers



6AM

CLASS TIME SPARKS CONTROVERSY AT A VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITY.

According to the new academic schedule, there will be 17 separate class sections a day at the university, with the first one starting at six in the morning, and the last one ending at 10:10pm. Each period is 50 minutes long and is followed by a ten-minute break.

Classes after 6pm will not be followed by a break so as to be able to finish school as early as possible. While many students expressed strong opposition towards the new academic timetable, the school's professor claims it only benefits students. Many students expressed their concerns and frustration towards the new class times. "Studying from 6am to 10pm can only result in hospitalization," one of the comments claims. On the other hand, some students found it "normal" or did not seem to be concerned with the matter.

140

EXAM PAPERS WERE ALTERED IN A CHEATING SCANDAL IN NORTHERN VIETNAMESE PROVINCE.

Three education officials, who were tasked with scoring exam papers in Vietnam's National High School Exam last year, received money from candidates to help alter answers on 140 test papers, police concluded after a months-long investigation.

Results of the National High School Examination, held every year around June, are used to determine whether a student qualifies for graduation from high school and acts as a placement test for college and university entrance in Vietnam.

In 2018, nearly one million candidates took part in the three-day exam, where they sat for tests in math, literature, foreign languages, physics, chemistry, biology, history, geography, and civics. When exam results were released in early July 2018, suspicion was quickly raised on whether cheating had occurred as test scores by some candidates from Ha Giang, Son La, Hoa Binh and Lang Son, all northern provinces, were unusually high.

One confessed to receiving VND550 million for his involvement in the crime. Meanwhile, another admitted it was not the first time he had manipulated test scores of the national high school exam, having done so in the 2017.



5

MEN WERE SEVERELY BURNED AFTER THEY CHALLENGED ONE ANOTHER TO POUR PETROL OVER THEMSELVES DURING A DRINKING PARTY IN THE SOUTH-CENTRAL CITY OF NHA TRANG.

The five men involved were part of a six-man group that had been drinking beer and grilling fish on a deserted piece of land around 4:25 pm, according to local police. The stunt resulted in two of the men catching fire from the nearby grill before spreading the flames to the other three. Pham Dinh Thanh, deputy head of a hospital department, said two of the men sustained burns on 80 to 90 percent of their bodies, two on 40 to 50 percent of their bodies, and the last on 20 percent of his body.





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Chapter 4: Days and Nights of Revolving Joy

An exhibition of new work by Sandrine Llouquet

Text and Images Provided by **Galerie Quynh**

BORROWING A LINE FROM

The Four Zoas, an unfinished book of mythic poems by William Blake, the title reflects a continuous and elaborate journey of learning and discovery for the artist. The first part of the ongoing project was presented at the gallery in 2013 as *Chapter 1: Where I attempt to drown the dragon*. *Chapitre 2: Midi was realized* at L'Espace, Hanoi, Vietnam in 2015; and *Chapitre 3: les 101 Grandes Déesses* was shown at Le Point Commun, Annecy, France in 2017. *Chapter 4* unveils newly produced works incorporating ceramics, installation, and video that delve into ideas of identity and division, recurrent themes in Llouquet's practice.

Llouquet's practice is often invested in the reading and research of modern thinkers like Foucault, Nietzsche, Deleuze and Jung. In Carl Jung, Llouquet is particularly interested

in his theory of archetypes. Jung's explanation of archetypes looks at the unconscious stories and structures that are passed down through generations despite an individual's particular circumstances of nature, nurture, and geography.

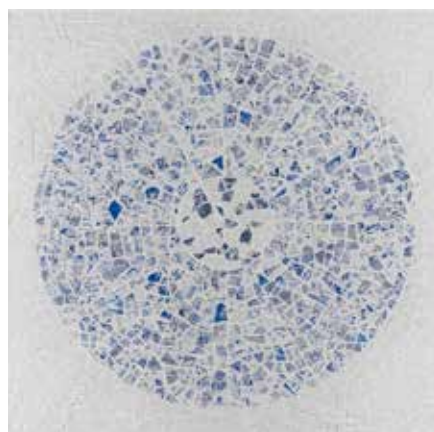
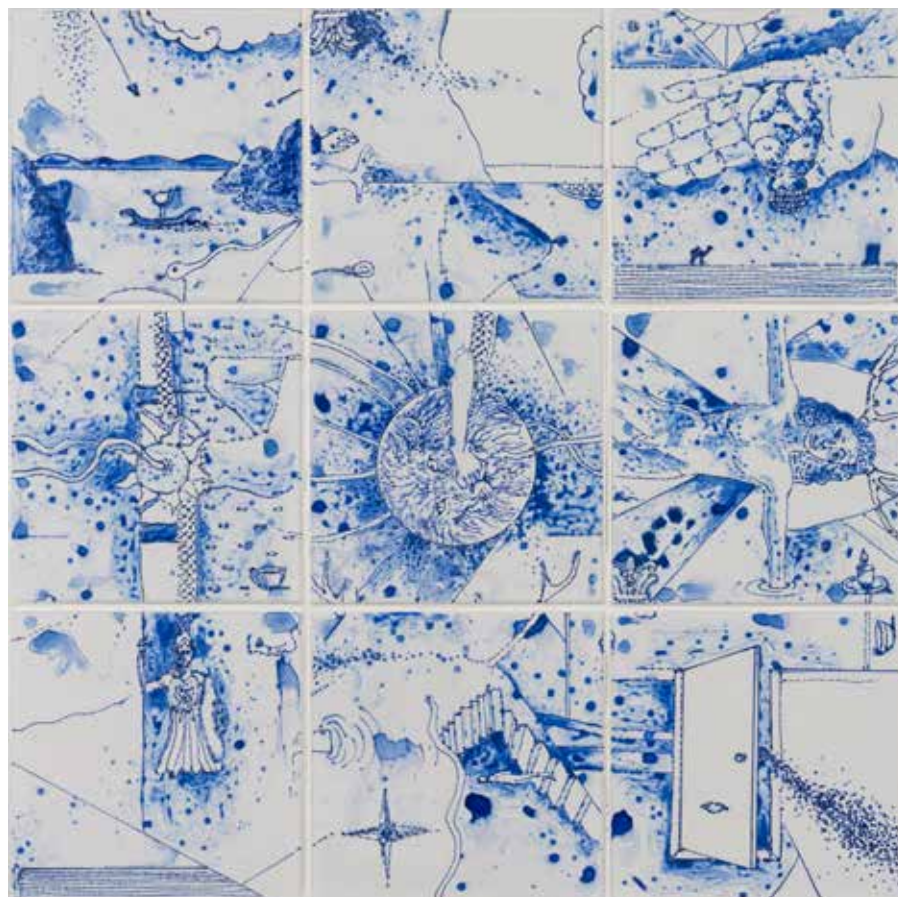
In *The Four Zoas* Blake intended to give his own vision of the psychic history of Man. His cosmic poetry offers an intriguing echo to Jung's definition of the archetype despite Blake having died almost 50 years before Jung's birth. Blake's poetry is an outline of the unconscious forces struggling against one another in the human psyche.

This sense of fragmented, existential profundity is interwoven with Llouquet's broken ceramics. Inspired by a recent trip to Lisbon where she encountered the painted, tin-glazed tile works known as azulejos, Llouquet

travelled to Hue, the imperial capital of Vietnam, to learn more about pottery mosaic, a traditional technique using broken pottery that flourished in Hue in the 17th century.

For her new mosaics, Llouquet takes porcelain pieces, some found and others hand-painted, and shatters them into pieces before reconfiguring the shards into geometric forms. She accumulates images from disparate sources and recomposes them into new patterns and narratives. What is divided and fragmented can now be re-seen as a whole.

Chapter 4: Days and Nights of Revolving Joy unfolds as a progression from the ground floor and mezzanine which offer a mosaic of intriguing images of broken ceramics and fantastical, painted ceramic tiles towards more mysterious charcoal drawings on canvas on the second floor. The second floor back room features *Days and Nights*



of *Revolving Joy*, a new video work of an esoteric ceremony. Viewers must enter a stark room with only bamboo mats on the floor to view the video, which is accessible only after scanning the QR code on their smartphones. Faithful to Llouquet's idea of syncretism, the video is a celebration of various sources from the cult of Isis to Catholic mass to profane celebrations. The mysterious ceremony involves various rituals including dancing, a reading in Esperanto of *Night the First* (the first chapter of *The Four Zoas*), and an initiation rite. Rather than attempting to understand the content with our rational mind, the artist proposes to experience it and grasp it on another level of consciousness. ■

The exhibition will be showing until April 6, 2019 at Galerie Quynh (118 Nguyen Van Thu, D1).



Welcome to the Club

A “resort within a resort” at InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort

Text by **Steven Gaines**

Images Courtesy of **InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort**



A SMALL, TROPICAL ISLAND getaway less than an hour from Ho Chi Minh City, Phu Quoc has for years been groomed as Vietnam’s next “It” destination. Shedding its reputation as a backwater hideaway, the emerald isle has emerged as a bona fide destination for discerning travelers looking for bliss to accompany their beach. Not only have a number of international 5-star resorts appeared on the scene, like the 1000th IHG® (InterContinental Hotels Group) property to open within the Europe, Middle East, Asia and Africa (EMEAA) region, the resorts are upping their game to compete with legendary beach destinations like Bali and Phuket.

Tempted by the idyll of a “resort within a resort”, we booked a Club InterContinental stay at InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort. A week before our arrival, we experienced a tantalizing glimpse of the personalized service

waiting for us when our butler called to see whether he could pre-arrange anything for us. We reiterated that we would have a 10-year-old in tow, and were interested in equal parts family time as well as couples’ time.

On check-in, our butler escorted us to the plush Club InterContinental Lounge with its gorgeously thick carpets and contemporary artwork drawing inspiration from the blues and golds of the beautiful stretch of beach down below. Our butler led the way to our Club InterContinental Panoramic Suite, a corner of heaven on earth with its sweeping ocean views. Over the next few days, we quickly made ourselves at home in the spacious suite combining elegant indoor living with sun-kissed outdoor space, spending lazy afternoons on the oversized balcony or watching a family-friendly movie before bed.

Waiting in the room was also a Planet Trekker’s Welcome Pack,

chock full of puzzles, games, and other goodies. Our daughter giddily filled out her name tag before we all headed down to Planet Trekkers, the resort’s ginormous 250 sqm Children’s Club filled with interactive games and edutainment activities put on by the enthusiastic staff. As a family, we were able to enjoy the mini-water park known as Splash! with its fun fountains, water slides and freeform family pool, staying until everyone was happily prune-skinned and sufficiently bronzed by the sun. One night, we also visited the resort’s 130-seat Theater, the only one on the island. Complimentary for guests, we stuffed ourselves with popcorn, snacks and refreshments, while taking in a movie in this very exclusive setting.

The Club InterContinental Lounge, accessed by special key card, soon turned into our second home at the resort. In the mornings, staff greeted



outdoor wraparound terrace, nibbling on pre-dinner snacks like Phu Quoc crab cakes and beer-battered black cod with chips, drinking in the magnificent views. After putting our little one to bed, we return to the fantastical lounge where giant sea creatures emerge from the walls and hang down from the ceiling in the form of whimsical chandeliers. Sipping signature cocktails like the Coral Mule, a refreshing concoction of Triple Sec, Aperol, Luxardo Fernet Branca, ginger beer, Calamansi and lemon, and the Three Way Mirror, with its eclectic flavors of St. Germain elderflower, strawberry and turmeric dust with a splash of London Dry Gin and sparkling wine, we toast being part of the club. ■

us by name and once they learned our individual preferences, including exactly how we liked our eggs and what our favorite drinks were, gourmet a la carte items appeared at our table as if by magic while we grazed the amazing buffet spread. In the afternoons, while our daughter was away at Planet Trekkers or living out her culinary dreams at the Kids Can Cook kitchen, we lounged around the beautifully landscaped private pool overlooking a postcard-pretty lagoon and the sea beyond. Over the next few days, we often returned in time for a cultured afternoon tea or an evening cocktail and canapés before dinner. We were even able to invite a friend to join us, another perk of being Club InterContinental.

Phu Quoc is known for its amazing sunsets and sunrises, and one early evening, we stake out the perfect spot at INK 360. At 19 floors up, this Ashley Sutton-designed rooftop bar is Phu Quoc's highest point, with completely uninterrupted views of the island's west coast. Other families join us on the



In addition to the Panoramic Suite, Club InterContinental guests can stay in the 136 sqm Penthouse Suite, boasting a large sundeck and cabana with uninterrupted views of the azure Gulf of Thailand. Inside, an island theme is carried through the spacious bedroom and adjoining living room featuring floor-to-ceiling windows while the elegant bathroom has a deep soaking bathtub, separate rain shower, and premium HARNN bath amenities. Club InterContinental also extends to the villas, the resort's newest addition. Located near the beach, each villa comes with separate living room and kitchen, private lap pool and garden area. For more, visit www.phuquoc.intercontinental.com

Oh Soul Natural

The principles of natural ingredients,
thanks to the ongoing Korean beauty
phenomenon

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



KOREAN BEAUTY HAS

infiltrated the rest of the world and there's a reason why the trend is firmly cemented in our skincare routine: *it works*. K-beauty brands are constantly innovating. Natural ingredients are crucial to the mainstream success of the K-beauty space because they deliver astonishing results and have interesting stories behind them, and Soul Story Skincare is no exception.

Vivian Ke Story is the founder of Soul Story Skincare, and is the innovator behind their lightweight, heavy protection sunscreen. She is taking the knowledge of Korean beauty science and bringing it to Vietnam, while also making sure it is a safe, natural and environmentally-friendly product. "The formulation was made being very health conscious, so we made sure that certain ingredients were excluded. For example oxybenzone, it's a very common ingredient that you're hearing right now in the media because a marine safe movement is long overdue and chemicals in sunscreens are actually damaging the marine ecosystem. Australia, Hawaii and Key West, Florida just announced that they aren't going to allow sunscreens that contain oxybenzone and a few other chemicals," explains Vivian.

Adding: "You even see it in children's sunscreen, which is dangerous because the actual ingredient absorbs UV rays, but it also absorbs into our body. It's a hormone disruptor so when young children are growing up, it builds up and accumulates. It's really reducing that risk. And because I grew up in very multicultural communities, it was very important to me that this sunscreen was able to work on any skin type, as well as any skin complexion."

Korean-Canadian, Vivian was born and raised in Toronto then moved to New York City for school, where she began focusing on the quality of her health, and ultimately, to Southeast Asia. That focus naturally parlayed into skincare, "All the products are paraben free and we are using better quality preservatives that are not considered hormone disruptors. The reason I did all this is because not only did I have sensitive skin and severe allergies, then my mom was diagnosed with breast cancer and that made a huge impact. I just wanted to pursue a healthier lifestyle. Once I started doing my research and spending time in Korea I realized, 'Oh, this is good and it's affordable.' So I started digging and was like, 'I'm going to bring this to Southeast Asia,'" says Vivian.

Stepping out and starting her own business was a bold and risky step, "I started doing extensive research with over 342 companies. I hired a cosmetic chemist and dermatologist and we formulated a product. It took a year to launch and it was a big learning curve. I decided to go out on my own and create ones that, based on my research, could be better, healthier products and get them made at CGMP (Certified Good

Manufacturing Practice) facilities. There are about 5,000 Korean cosmetic companies and less than 50 have this certification. So I'm paying more but the probability of having a defect is so slim because to have CGMP it's another level. The reason I did that is because it's a young brand and first impression is a lasting impression and I didn't want to mess around. And, as a woman, I don't want a bad experience for myself or for others," says Vivian.

All of Soul Story's products are carefully and thoughtfully made with natural health and the planet in mind, "I actually had a cleanser that I have reformulated. I removed all synthetic fragrances, which is common in most products. There is an organization called the Environmental Work Group in the US and all the ingredients rank a score of 1 or 2, which is how it effects sensitive skin and how harmful it can be. So that cleanser is going to be one of the purest available. It doesn't have SLS or SLES, which means there are no sulfates. These strip the natural protective lipids on our skin and causes a feeling of dryness. The cleanser, Purifying Cleansing Foam, will be launched in April."

Soul Story Skincare is proud to use a high number of natural ingredients, rather than parabens, which are linked to cancer, and abrasive sulfates. In their signature Warrior Sunscreen which utilizes Zinc for an SPF 50 protection level, Soul Story uses fruits high

in Vitamin C, like blackberries and phyllanthus emblica to boost collagen, reduce wrinkles, moisturize the skin and protect it from damage. It also contains antioxidant rich green tea and goldenberry, which is anti-inflammatory, brightens the complexion and protects the skin from UVA and UVB rays and free radicals. Along with safe ingredients, a high level of sun protection, and Niaminicide, which improves skin elasticity, the Warrior Sunscreen uses an oil free formula to give users an easy matte finish, meaning it looks and feels light and won't interfere with make-up.

Other products include the ingredients: tocopheryl acetate, which is a form of Vitamin E that helps protect the skin from UV damage; Portulaca Oleracea, a succulent that heals skin irritation; and Forsythia Suspensa, a native Asian plant used in ancient Chinese medicine that helps with acne breakouts. None of their products are made to whiten skin, but instead, brighten skin and improve texture. A complete list of all key ingredients used is on their website, giving consumers full transparency into what they are purchasing and why. Soul Story really is a conscious, quality, forward thinking brand. ■

Soul Story Skincare is available for purchase in stores in Vietnam, Singapore, Thailand, and South Korea. In Ho Chi Minh City, you can find their products at Won Directions in District 1, Yu Jung Skincare in District 7, and Salon de Sunny in District 3, or you can visit their website at soulstory.co from which they ship internationally.





The First Generation

It wasn't always this way

Text by **Matthew Partington**
Images by **Vy Lam**

MEANDERING STREETS AND alleyways of Bui Vien Walking Street, tourists and backpackers might be left with the impression that electronic dance music (EDM) has, for some time, been a staple of the nightlife scene in Saigon. The ubiquitous cacophony of commercial dance music and LED-pulsed night clubs draws in travelers from around the world, each competing to lure locals and foreigners alike. Unbeknownst to many of them, there's something beneath this all: an underground community of local DJs and producers pushing the boundaries of electronic music in Vietnam. Since 2012, Heart Beat Saigon (HB) has been at the center of this movement.

Founded by Paul Tonkes (NL) and Christoph Wolter (DE), HB has established itself as one of the maverick promoters of underground techno and house in Saigon. At the time "there was nothing in Vietnam," Wolter says. Previous years introduced popular electronica to Vietnam, but the scene had slowed.

"In 2012 there wasn't much left. I think it was a perfect time to start because there were more foreigners moving to Vietnam. We just missed the music and the nightlife," Tonkes explains. "There was a motivation to say, 'Hey, let's make a party for ourselves.'"

Though the commercial side of electronic music remained popular in Europe at the time, alternative genres were leading the way for nightlife in cities across the continent. Vietnam, on the other hand, had no such development. After receiving a small grant from the German Consulate, Tonkes and Wolter hosted their first event, featuring local Vietnamese and foreign producers such as Bach Huu Tuan Tran (B.A.X.), whom Wolter unironically considers as "the godfather" of melodic Vietnamese electronic music.

"It was just a second floor [room] that we could book," Tonkes explains. "At that time there wasn't much going on in terms of underground events. We had a huge amount of people visiting that night. B.A.X. was involved from the beginning and it was probably the highest headcount of our events ever."

HB now operates as the umbrella of an underground electronic music community, pushing techno and house from local DJs and producers. Alongside two record labels, HRBR (Harbour Saigon) and Pink Room Records, HB hosts monthly events featuring cutting-edge international DJs and producers. It has since become the home to locally renowned technophiles such as Dan Rodgers (1DAN/Flank), Truong Huy Tham (Huy Truong), and newcomer Steffen Sonnenschein (WYAD).

HB's mission "was to engage and

develop a party and community for electronic music, an underground that would mobilize the Vietnamese audience and have a sustainable club scene," Tonkes says. "That's been the angle from the beginning and it still is."

Despite its simple objective, HB's future was never a certainty. The closure of the venue The Observatory in 2017 presented HB with challenges it had not faced before.

"All of a sudden there was a massive hole that no one could really fill," Rodgers says. "The Lighthouse did a good job of keeping things ticking, but it felt like this city was going down again. Now it's coming back. There's Arcan as well, which is a welcome addition."

"After The Observatory closed, Heart Beat essentially lost its home. It looked like Heart Beat might stop forever. If they both disappeared, it'd be a massive loss. At the same time, it's robust. The Observatory is back and Heart Beat is still going. It's a weird mixture of fragility and robustness."

So what exactly is an underground electronic music scene?

"For me, it's hard to describe," Tran says. "Underground music is something personal. You feel real about the music. It's not something you play because other people love it,

but because you love it.”

“To define the underground, it always has to be the alternative,” Rodgers continues. “In Germany, it’s everywhere. People have access to it all the time and there’s a definite commercial aspect to it. In financial terms, if it’s selling a lot it’s no longer underground.”

For producers like Sonnenschein, Vietnam became the perfect destination. Born and raised in Berlin, Sonnenschein moved to Saigon two months ago. As a mecca of techno and house, he was a personal witness to its meteoric rise in Germany’s capital.

“In Berlin, I think every second person is a DJ or producer,” he says. “The scene is totally overrated for me right now. Everybody wants to be a producer, and I think here it’s very cool. When you’re in the scene, you’re really in the scene. I think in three years or five years, techno will be very big in Vietnam.”

“I think Europe is more challenging for many DJs because it’s only the big guys or the cheap guys,” Tonkes says. “The guys who have proven themselves, but are in that middle segment, cannot find enough bookings.”

“The scene is growing up so fast,” Sonnenschein says. “Everyone wants to play in Vietnam right now. My friends in Berlin want to come here.”

“I get so many requests for bookings I can’t keep up with it anymore,” Tonkes jokes.

Despite the ever-changing landscape of the underground scene, HB shows no signs of slowing down. With the inception Pink Room Records and The Obscure’s reopening in 2018, HB has its dedicated techno label and home. Early April will witness the release of Rodgers’ five-track *Fractured EP* under his new techno moniker, Flank.

“This is my first techno release, hence the change of name,” Rodgers says. “I wanted to differentiate and make some boundaries between the house and techno stuff. It helps me to sit down and have a different hat on.”

Unfortunately for Rodgers, sitting down wasn’t always an option.

“I broke my leg last year and had a cast on for a month,” Rodgers says. “I couldn’t physically sit at my desk. So as soon as the cast came off, I needed to get some stuff off my chest. That’s when the majority of the stuff was created.”

“I think that frustration of thinking to myself, ‘you’re an idiot, again,’ was channeled into some music,” Rodgers says with a grin. “That’s where it came from. It’s totally literal.”

“I asked Dan, ‘Do you want to do something?’, Wolter says. “Then he broke his leg. And I knew if he was in that medical condition, you can’t produce anything. In the end, I decided we had nothing to lose. This release for me? I’m astonished, I’m speechless. It’s so good.”

As for Pink Room Records, Wolter explains it’s “only for artists living in Vietnam. I don’t want to limit the style, which is what a lot of labels miss. I just don’t want the house beat there. I don’t want the melody. We’re going for something else.”

Second and Third

On the other side of the spectrum is HRBR. Established in 2016 and currently operated by Tran and Laurent Godet, they release productions from Vietnam and abroad. Classically trained in piano at the Conservatory of HCMC, Tran is an enigma of sorts. Aside from his progressive house productions and hypnotic DJ sets, he scores films, studies orchestral conducting, and helps organize bi-monthly events for HRBR. In short, he’s about as musically eclectic as it gets.

“My head is full of melodies and harmonies,” Tran explains. “I wrote music of my own when I was sad or had trouble. That was true feeling. Then I discovered electronic music in 2008.”

From there Tran began producing ambient electronica. While performing at a Hanoi music festival in 2008, Tran was reintroduced to Wolter in 2012 and became HB’s preeminent native performer.

From the beginning the focus was always “on the music and the fun,” Tran says. “And we brought proper underground music to people here and the proper nightlife. I’m focusing more on releases. For me, it’s important to create something by yourself. It’s your release, it’s your label. International bookings are their names, not our names. That’s the most important thing I want to do.”

Contrarily, Europe has taken note of Vietnamese producers like Tran. Distinguished labels such as Manual Music will be releasing several of his tracks in 2019.

“The whole synergy between being label owner and currently releasing on European labels nowadays will also support HRBR,” Tonkes says. “When his music is picked up abroad and the Vietnamese here are involved, that could have a huge impact. Now it’s up to us to make the labels have strong, high-quality releases on them.”

One can consider this nascent movement as the first generation of a homegrown underground community, though it remains unclear what the future holds.

“I think we are now in first generation, but there is already a second generation,” Tonkes says. “With the third generation it will really take off.”

The recent availability of the internet has also provided an important role in expanding electronica in Vietnam.

“With EDM coming six years ago and Heart Beat and techno, I think it’s the internet that really fueled this,” Rodgers says. “It wasn’t coming from outside DJs. They weren’t coming here.”

“There’s more people playing the music, DJing and even producing,” Tonkes says. “When they grow up, the second generation can inspire the third.”

“People want to have music that they remember as different,” Wolter says. “Techno remembers you. It’s a mirror. People love music like pop and love what they cannot have. People who love techno love what they have. That’s what techno is for me. It’s the pure honesty of your life.” ■



Left to right: Truong Huy Tham, Steffen Sonnenschein, Christoph Wolter, Dan Rodgers, Bach Huu Tuan Tran



Dancers as Diplomats

Using dance to cross boundaries as well
as to promote social change

Text by **Daniel Spero**

HOLDING COMMON GROUND: PATHWAYS TO CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN VIETNAM,

a seminar that's sponsored by The American Embassy, will see a number of movement and dance experts from the US coming to Vietnam for an exciting cultural exchange experience for a variety of planned events focused on the art of dance. Just a few examples of what's on offer include lectures that examine the role of traditional cultural dance forms, how dance creates cross-cultural exchange, an understanding of dance movement therapy, and dance as a voice for social action. In addition, there will be workshops to put some of the theories spoken about in those lectures into corporeal action.

The impetus for this event came when professor of dance Jeanne Travers, an instructor at the University of South Florida whose choreography has been presented internationally, approached Emily Navarra, the director of The Movement Kitchen in Chicago, who previously lived in Saigon for 8 years. As Emily described it, "When she came to me initially about doing this, I thought, this is not only an opportunity for me to come back, but it's a chance to collaborate with Soul Music and Performing Arts Academy (SMPAA) and its students for the first time, and to reconnect with my professor and university classmates."

Adding: "Every American participating in this seminar is a



Spencer Powell



Emily Navarra

product of the University of South Florida Theatre and Performing Arts program and it is an opportunity for them to share their knowledge, have this new cultural exchange and to get to see why I stayed in Vietnam for so long, so I just couldn't pass this up. I applied for a grant and once I was awarded—I began the process of working with Jeanne Travers closely and later—reaching out to Dr. Alexander Tu (of SMPAA) with our proposal.”

Jeanne's participation includes co-creating an original work of choreography with her colleague Lisa Roll. The choreography will be created on dancers from Vietnam who currently perform with Dr. Alex. She will also be teaching a master class in Contemporary Dance and Improvisation and co-teaching two additional workshops with Lisa, who is a Dance Movement Therapist. They combine principles of DMT with improvisation and choreography.

The 10-day event (April 3-13) will also include 20 workshops, as well as several lectures and panel discussions, all capped off with a performance program of 15 works with choreographers from Vietnam and the US. While the events will be conducted mostly in English, there will be a focus on reaching out to a Vietnamese audience. “This seminar is a cultural exchange so it is important that the Vietnamese have a presence, therefore 70 percent of the dancers and choreographers participating are Vietnamese. With that said, we also hope that dance forms perhaps less known or little accessed intrigues students and the public to come and participate or observe the events taking place throughout the seminar. With free admission to the seminar we expect a good local turnout,” says Emily.

Of the various types of dance that will be examined and performed over the course of events it includes modern, contemporary, ballet, performance art, waacking, contact improvisation,



hip hop, African dance and more. Waacking is a type of dance formed in the LGBT clubs of the 1970s during the disco craze where dancers swing their arms in the air to the beat of the music. Contact improvisation is much like it sounds; an improvisational dance where performers become interpretive depending on the movements of their dance partner. While most of the events are designed for an audience that is 16 or older, the African dance workshop entitled *African Dance Form* and led by Spencer Powell is for kids ages 5-16. In this workshop Spencer will give information about the poly-rhythmic nature and movement of traditional African dance, and during this process help the children create their own tribal dance.

Beyond the African dance workshop, Spencer Powell, the



Lisa Roll

artistic director of the Visionary Dance Theatre in San Diego, will be presenting some of his choreography as well as leading other workshops throughout the course of events. This will be his first visit to Vietnam, “I am very excited to experience Vietnam and share my work with the Vietnamese audience and participants. Events such as these provide the ability for me to share the American modern and contemporary dance culture with Vietnamese performers. Not only do they get to watch dance works from other countries, they get to experience workshops by some of the choreographers. Additionally, my own life is enriched by this hands-on experience with the people of Vietnam. This will be a truly two-way cultural exchange event.” ■

For more info and the complete schedule of events and locations, visit www.themovementkitchen.com.

They Got Game

In conversation with Jim Wong, NBA Asia Associate Vice President of Global Partnerships, on the Jr. NBA's plan to promote basketball and an active lifestyle via youth programs in Vietnam

Interview by **Oi Vietnam**
Photos Courtesy of **NBA Asia**

How did you become involved with the program? What is your history with the organization?

I've been with the NBA for six years. Shortly after I joined, I was tasked to grow the Jr. NBA program across Southeast Asia, expanding it from one country (Philippines) to its current state of six markets (Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam). Our Jr. NBA program is now the largest for the NBA in any region.

What are your main reasons for developing basketball here in Vietnam?

We are focused on encouraging more kids to engage in sport through Jr. NBA—the league's global youth basketball participation program—to help instill healthy, active lifestyles among the youth and address the growing epidemic of childhood obesity and inactivity.

As a professional basketball league, our goal is also to promote and grow the game of basketball internationally, with our office leading the growth of the Asia-Pacific fanbase—specifically within six Southeast Asian markets. Vietnam will play an integral role towards achieving our goal of reaching 40 million kids in the region through the Jr. NBA program by 2025.

Is money or brand development a priority?

Both are important in growing a sustainable business, which drives us to

work with partners and stakeholders that share our mission and help bring the NBA experience closer to our passionate fans.

Jr. NBA serves as our platform to teach the fundamentals of basketball and engage with 10-14-year-old boys and girls, a crucial period in which children develop an affinity for brands which is essential in Vietnam where football among other sports remain very popular.

Will this be both for boys and girls?

Yes, Jr. NBA Vietnam is an inclusive program for boys and girls.

Is the program involved only in cities or in rural areas as well?

Since 2014, Jr. NBA Vietnam, through a series of clinics and Jr. NBA Coaches Academy workshops, has been staged in cities including Soc Trang, Can Tho, Ho Chi Minh City, Binh Dinh, Da Nang, Nghe An, Thanh Hoa and Hanoi. We have plans to expand the program and reach more rural areas in the near future.

How did you go about approaching the government for support on this?

In Southeast Asia, we started the Jr. NBA program in the Philippines before expanding it to four countries including Vietnam in 2014. We were aware of the challenges of penetrating a football-driven region and assessed that an ideal route to promote basketball and reach a critical mass would be through the support of the local government.

Since its launch, Jr. NBA Vietnam has received support from the government and key basketball stakeholders in the country. Through our partnerships with the Vietnam Basketball Federation and the Ministry of Education and Training, we recently inaugurated the Jr. NBA Coaches Academy that allowed us to expose teachers to oncourt training and basketball education across eight cities.

We will continue working with the government and key stakeholders and are committed to creating a positive impact through our programs for the Vietnamese community.

The Jr. NBA wants basketball to become an important role in the athletic curriculum of Vietnam and other Asian nations. How do you go about accomplishing this?

The NBA is committed to growing the game of basketball in Vietnam in the long term, as demonstrated by the significant investment involved in staging the Jr. NBA program during the past five years and the enthusiasm shown by students and teachers learning and teaching the sport.

It is crucial for us to continue working closely with the Ministry of Education and Training to jointly build on the existing infrastructure for basketball in schools and develop a curriculum that kids will greatly benefit from.

What in particular about basketball makes it conducive to Asian countries?

Basketball is a growing sport in Asia both

in terms of interest and participation. It is a recreational activity that needs minimal costs and requirements—a hoop and a ball—that can be played as an individual or in groups.

Additionally, it doesn't require a big space and is a sport that is relatively easy to learn. What Asian kids give up in height, they make up for by being agile and quick, qualities that are relevant and valuable to the way the game is played today.

What is the state of the program in the Vietnam right now? What kind of growth have you seen over the five years that the Jr. NBA has come to Vietnam?

Jr. NBA Vietnam has seen its numbers grow exponentially in the last five years, increasing its participation from more than a thousand kids in 2014 to over 1.6 million boys and girls to-date. The program is experiencing its best year, which can be attributed to the NBA establishing partnerships with local stakeholders including Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam Basketball Federation, Sports Skills Academy and Vietcontent.

These relationships paved the way for the launch of the Jr. NBA Coaches Academy workshops that aim to further local basketball development by teaching oncourt training and basketball education to coaches and instructors, who in turn share in the role of facilitating basketball participation among their students.

The overall progress is encouraging but there's still a lot of work to be done as we continue to improve the youth basketball experience for players, coaches and parents.

Does the Jr. NBA have plans for Vietnam in 2019 like they did in previous years? Can you tell me more about the tournaments and how the best players are selected?

This year, we will stage Jr. NBA Vietnam Camps in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi in May and June, respectively, and name five boys and five girls as the 2019 Jr. NBA Vietnam All-Stars based on their oncourt performance and how they exemplified the Jr. NBA core S.T.A.R. values of Sportsmanship, Teamwork, positive Attitude and Respect.

In China, the NBA has become incredibly popular. Do you foresee something like this happening in Vietnam as well?

That is the primary goal not only in Vietnam but across the whole region. Our work does not stop after we've built our fan base as we continue to engage fans post-event, providing a variety of touch points to consume the NBA through retail, TV and social media. As an example, our media partner Vietcontent carries NBA Games and programming and televises six live games per week in Vietnamese, while our Jr. NBA Vietnam website and Facebook page publish locally relevant

content regularly.

We are seeing local participation and engagement head towards a positive direction but for us to develop into a mature basketball market like China, it is essential for us to work with partners and local basketball stakeholders who share our commitment in growing the game and bringing the NBA experience closer to fans.

What makes basketball an appealing sport in certain countries like China, and potentially Vietnam?

Basketball is participated by over 300 million people in China according to the Chinese Basketball Association and continues to be one of the most popular sports due to its accessibility with court facilities spread out across the country. Other formats including 3-on-3 basketball are gaining traction with its inclusion in the 2020 Olympics.

We believe that basketball can eventually grow as the second most popular sport in Vietnam because it is inclusive and requires minimal costs and equipment to start playing.

You have initiatives to promote healthy lifestyles as well as anti-violence in schools. Could you tell me more about these programs?

Through the years, we have collaborated with non-profit organizations and institutions in Vietnam to promote our corporate social responsibility activities through NBA Cares.

With our longstanding partnership with UNICEF, we recently joined them in promoting World Children's Day in November 2018 where we had participants of the Jr. NBA Coaches Academy join the global call to action to Go Blue for every child to raise awareness about the importance of speaking up against violence in schools and bullying and fostering a safe environment for students to fulfill their potential.

Among other highlights, we partnered with the University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Ho Chi Minh City to refurbish their basketball court as part of the NBA's commitment to providing Vietnamese youth with increased access to play the game.

Has Vietnam presented any particular challenges for the Jr. NBA program?

Yes. Given that Vietnam is a football-driven market, we experienced the challenges that come with introducing basketball to the community that included language barrier and access to basketball facilities.

Crucial to the success of the program was establishing the trust and confidence of the government and local community, whom we've continued to build relationships with in making the Jr. NBA program what it is today. The NBA will continue to invest in the Jr. NBA program and is committed to long-term growth of basketball in Vietnam. ■



結 婆
絲 月
桃



Yue Lao

The Remake

Yue Lao

Yue Lao (The Matchmaker Deity) is a god of marriage and love in mythology. She is supposed to unite with a silken cord all predestined couples, after which nothing can prevent their union. In the painting, Yue Lao, riding a phoenix, is tying the couple with a red cord, which represents the wish that the young boys and girls in the family will soon get married to their suitable partners and live happily ever after.

xuan lam

Modern renditions of Vietnamese folk paintings

Text and Illustrations by **Xuan Lam**

FOLK PAINTINGS (*DONG HO*)

folk woodcut paintings, *hang trong* paintings and religious paintings from the northern provinces) have been an indispensable part of Vietnamese tradition, especially during Tet, where it's customary for people to hang the paintings in their homes in the hope of receiving good fortune for the year to come. The subjects of these paintings depict everyday life, ranging from pets, social evils and national heroes to religion. Unfortunately, the tradition has now faded in the face of modernization and globalization.

Folk paintings are a part of my childhood. Walking down memory lane, I could see them in my textbooks, my fable books: vivid paintings of pigs or of

rats wedding hung at my grandmother's house. But the idea for the project *Folk Paintings – the Remake* didn't cross my mind until I visited the National Museum of Fine Arts to find inspirations for my graduation project. Back then, after getting lost in the museum, I found myself in the area for folk paintings, a deserted corner that I hadn't seen before, even though I had been in the museum many times. In this very spot, impressed by the diversity of the museum's collection with so many paintings that I had never seen before, I decided to revamp them using a technique that combines traditional media and modern graphic style.

My technique is a variation of pencil drawing (the most basic technique)

and graphic elements such as the use of gradient and bright colors. Additionally, I added some personal details and touches to the forms and shapes in each painting, but the overall structure remained unchanged. After the first work in the collection was posted on my social media pages, I received a lot of positive feedback from my friends and teachers. And that's how the project was initiated.

The aim of this project is to uphold the traditional values of the folk paintings and inspire the younger generation to discover and cherish their ancient Vietnamese heritage, and also to recreate nostalgia for those who had the chance to experienced it in the past.



The Military Mandarin

In every dynasty the literature mandarins are those who develop exceptional talent for literature and poetry and strategic planning, military mandarins are those who have mastered martial arts and are great military leaders on the battlefields. The painting features the military mandarin with an imposing and august posture, reminding us of a Dharmapala (Defender of the Law) in Buddhism.



Thanh Giong

Thanh Giong, (Phu Dong Thien Vuong), is a mythical folk hero and one of the Four Immortals. He is regarded as a symbol of patriotism and youthful vigor.



Lady Trieu

Lady Trieu (225-248), also known as Trieu Au and Trieu Trinh Nuong, was a female warrior in the 3rd century. She went down in history as a great heroine, a brave commander who kept fighting for the country's national sovereignty. She is quoted as saying, "I would like to ride storms, kill sharks in the open sea, drive out the aggressors, reconquer the country, undo the ties of serfdom, and never bend my back to be the concubine of whatever man."

God of Wealth

This painting is often hung in front of the house during Tet with the hope of welcoming wealth and prosperity into the home. In the painting, the God of Wealth is holding a book in one hand, which represents the acquisition of knowledge, while the other hand is holding a scepter with the phrase: "The wealth comes as abundantly as the water." This is a lifelong dream of all Vietnamese farmers.



The Emperor Riding The Fish

This painting features Ong Hoang Bo, one of the Four Emperors, the third son of Long Vương Bat Hai Dong Dinh. In the painting, the Emperor has a graceful and ravishing appearance, wearing a white large-sleeved ceremonial robe and a *wushamao* (official headwear of the Ming Dynasty), one hand is holding a scepter, representing royal power. Behind him are servants holding a casket and parasol.



Princess of the Forest

She is the ruler of the Forest Palace among the spirits of the Four Palaces in Vietnamese indigenous religion. Legend has it that the princess was the daughter of prince Son Tinh and My Nuong, King Hung's daughter. ■

For more of Xuan Lam's work, visit xuanlam.com.vn



Sit, Down, Stay

When your new puppy, older dog
or rescue needs training

Image by Vy Lam



Django and Adrian

Tell us where you grew up. Did your childhood include a dog?

I'm Adrian Dinh and I grew up in Melbourne, Australia. I had a Maltese Shih Tzu named Charlotte.

What got you interested in becoming a dog trainer?

My aunt gave me her dog to watch for three months, and at the time I was learning how to walk a dog properly, simple commands, and how to have the right energy to be a leader for your dog. After that, I decided that since I couldn't own my own dog I could walk everyone else's dogs, apply knowledge and satisfy both the dog and the dog-owner's lives.

Because the dog training industry is so unregulated, how can a pet parent assure the trainer they are hiring is a "good one"?

Being a self-taught trainer myself, when looking for a good trainer for their dog, above all else, is for the trainer to have a lot of patience, then have great knowledge and experience, and lastly, have the right energy (leadership) for the job.

Are your clients mostly locals or expats?

My clients are mostly expats at the moment, with more time and awareness among the Vietnamese community in Saigon I would like to help locals with their dogs as well.

What are the most common problems dog-owners come to you for?

The most common problems are overexcitement, dog-to-dog aggression, and neurotic behaviors such as excessive barking.

Do you use positive reinforcement or the aversive method and why?

The training method I use is instinctual dog training inspired by Cesar Milan. I believe it's a balanced combination of positive reinforcement and discipline.

The reason I adopt this method is because it respects the natural aspect of dogs, it's easier to understand the dog's body language, and can teach dog-owners the techniques and energy to become a leader for their dogs.

What is your advice to new pet parents on training?

My advice is to create good habits such as setting rules, setting boundaries and creating limitations with your puppy so in the future the older they get, the less difficult the dog will be to train.

What mistakes do you see owners commonly make?

Owners not having enough knowledge and education on the responsibility of owning a dog, and also dog pulling.

Is there one thing you wish all dog-owners knew?

That is to understand that dogs are not only their babies, their names and their personalities, but also that all dogs need to be satisfied of being a breed, a dog and an animal.

Why is training important, regardless of the size of your dog?

Training is important because it creates a healthy relationship between the owner and their dog—able to communicate with each other and other people.

When training a dog what is the most important thing to remember?

The most important thing to remember is the energy of being calm and assertive, and having a lot of patience.

What are your favorite "treats" for training?

I don't use treats for my training unless necessary, I use crispy bacon bits to get their immediate attention, redirect their focus from distractions, and reinforce the

good behavior. The best treat is the owner's affection.

How do you decide on a training program for each dog?

I consult with the dog-owners about their dogs, their background, behavioral history, their short and long term issues that differ with each dog and depending how extreme each behavior is this determines how long the training process will take. Then the sessions proceed by reenacting the situation and showing the owners the correct way of correcting a behavior, and then give the owners homework before the next session.

What's the most rewarding part of your career?

The most rewarding part is being a part of the change and progress in creating a balanced and healthy relationship [between dog and owner]. Giving dog-owners the knowledge and techniques that they may struggle with even after they read books or watch videos.

What's the most challenging part?

That would be owners not finding the time for their dog's training session, cancellations, and some dogs that have mental issues such as trauma and irrational fears.

As a trainer, what are your views on adopting versus going to a breeder?

I recommend adoption rather than going to a breeder because we have too many dogs who need immediate help. Dogs who are mixed breed are more likely to be healthier, less likely to get hereditary diseases and less costly, usually. ■

Dogs respond differently to different trainers so do your research before hiring one, trust your instinct and your dog's responsiveness. It is imperative that you find the right trainer for your dog.



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FLYING FIDO & FELIX

International Pet and Animal Transportation Association specialists meet in Saigon

Text by David Muller



As an **INTERNATIONAL PET AND ANIMAL TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION (IPATA)** member, our first priority is the animal's welfare then a close second is the owner's welfare. The IPATA mission statement reads: "The International Pet and Animal Transportation Association is a non-profit trade association of independent members who are dedicated to the safe and humane transport of pets and other animals."

This year our Asia regional meeting was held in Saigon at the Renaissance hotel, where animal transport specialists met to discuss how we can constantly improve our industry and exchange knowledge for the betterment of our furry friends' travel experience.

The first day of the conference keynote fellow industry experts—airline representatives, freight forwarders, pet shippers, relocation consultants and veterinarians—gave presentations to inform us on the most up-to-date industry information. All these experts are vital links in the logistical chain that gets Fido or Felix from point A to point B, often with one or more comfort stops on the way.

As part of the meeting, IPATA always invites a local guest animal shelter or welfare organization to give a small talk and introduction. It's also custom for each IPATA member to bring a gift from their home country and together we hold a silent auction to raise funds for that local group. Koto Shimoyama from Animal Rescue + Care (ARC) gave an informative presentation explaining to IPATA members what is evolved in

running a shelter and the challenges of educating people on animal welfare and social responsibility here in our local Saigon community.

The second part of the conference was a day of workshops giving one-to-one training primarily for new attendees or members who want a refresher course. Such topics at workshops include "Booking procedure with the Airlines", "How to correctly measure a pet for their traveling crate", "Brachycephalic (Snub nosed) breeds-special care and attention" and "Basic medical first aid specific to animals in case of an emergency." This last one is very important because it's not uncommon to transport, at the owner's request, an older animal or a breed such as a pug that may encounter health problems. In the unlikely case of an emergency, all IPATA animal transportation specialists have special training to deal with any situation we might encounter.

During a move quite often the owner becomes more stressed than the pet,

which in turn makes their pet also feel unnecessarily nervous and anxious too. It's our job as pet shippers to handle difficult, time sensitive travel schedules making the move as smooth, calm and comfortable as possible for everyone in order to reunite your pet with its family as safe, quick and comfortable as humanly possible. ■



Matters of the Heart

What do you need to know about heart disease in dogs?



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.



HEART DISEASE IS AN

unfortunate but tolerable condition for your dog. The heart is the most important organ in your dog's body. It pumps blood containing oxygen and nutrients through the blood vessels to the cells of the body. Most heart conditions involve a decrease in the effective pumping of blood.

There are two main types of heart conditions: one affecting the heart valve and the other the heart muscle. Dogs with either type can be successfully managed through nutrition, exercise and, if necessary, medication. With the right dog food and advice from your veterinarian, your dog can continue to enjoy a happy, active life.

What causes heart disease?

Although there is no single cause, nutritional problems can play a major role in heart conditions. Aging is the most common reason dogs develop heart conditions, but other factors like heartworm can also lead to heart disease.

Other factors that can contribute include:

Body condition: Overweight dogs are more likely to develop heart disease.

Age: Heart conditions in dogs occur more frequently with increasing age.

Breed: In dogs, chronic valvular

disease is more common in small breeds such as miniature poodles, cocker spaniels, Pomeranians and schnauzers. Myocardial disease is more common in large and giant breeds like Great Danes and Irish wolfhounds.

How can I recognize the symptoms?

Early diagnosis and treatment can make all the difference when it comes to heart disease and your dog. As a dog-owner, you should be aware of the signs of heart disease so that you can bring it to your veterinarian's attention as soon as possible.

Here are the most common symptoms of heart disease:

1. Coughing is a very common symptom of many illnesses, one of those being heart disease. Minor coughs will not last more than a few days. If after three days your dog is still coughing, or is experiencing other symptoms, seek veterinary care.
2. Difficulty Breathing: Changes in breathing relating to heart disease may include difficulty breathing due to shortness of breath, labored breathing, or rapid breathing.
3. Changes in Behavior: If you notice behavior changes in your dog, such as tiring more easily,

being less playful, reluctance to exercise, reluctance to accept affection, being withdrawn, or an appearance of depression, these are all signs of heart disease.

4. Weight Loss or Gain: Weight loss is definitely a symptom of heart disease, though weight gain can be as well. More likely than weight gain is a bloated or distended abdomen, giving your dog a potbellied appearance.
5. Fainting/Collapsing: If your dog faints or collapses at any time, seek veterinary help. It may be a sign of many different serious illnesses, heart disease being one of them.
6. Restlessness: If your dog gets restless, especially at night, it may have heart disease.
7. Edema/Swelling: Edema is the swelling of body tissues. In regards to heart disease, your dog may show swelling in the abdomen and extremities if it has heart disease.

Important: A heart condition may not be obvious in the early stages. If you are in any doubt about your dog's health or you notice any of the symptoms above, consult your veterinarian. ■

Pet of the Month



Image by Mel Cartidge

AUGUSTA AND SAVANNAH are two special ARC kittens who are looking for their forever home(s). The pair had been abandoned at a construction site and were crying loudly enough to be found by a passerby. Luckily for the two kittens, that passerby was Traci, an ARC volunteer. Traci took them home and fostered them even though she had cats of her own. Augusta and Savannah are now a little over one year old and have been spayed. They currently are in the cat room in Thao Dien, where they can be found relaxing and hanging out with the other cats.

Since their rough start, the kittens have always been a bit skittish on first meetings with people, but then warm up and become very loving. Augusta, the little white and ginger girl, is typically the most laid back of the two. Savannah, a watchful ginger, is often found grooming and taking care of her sister.

The two have always been together, and all of the volunteers would love to see them adopted together, but that isn't a requirement.

The Benefits of Adopting in Pairs

If you work out of the home a lot, two cats do a good job babysitting one another. They can play, clean each other or, y'know, whatever cats do when humans aren't around. Having two cats allows them to be cats when they are interacting amongst themselves. They mutually nurture and embrace their feline instincts.

Adopting two cats at once puts both of them on even playing fields. If you bring a kitten (or any cat, really) into the home of an older cat, there will definitely be a power imbalance. If you bring two adult cats home at the same time, it's going to be more of a bonding experience for the both of them. Cats are curious and crave constant stimulation.

A single cat may become bored and entertain itself by chewing on plants, climbing drapes and furniture, unrolling toilet paper, or exploring electrical cords and sockets. However, two cats will occupy each other by finding interesting shadows to chase and games to play until they finally tired and fall asleep, too.

Although cats are known to be fastidious self-groomers, having a second cat could help redouble their efforts. They are likely to groom each other and clean hard to reach places that are often neglected. If you find the right match, you can be rest assured that those spots behind the ears or on the neck are being addressed on the regular. ■

If you would like to meet Augusta and Savannah, please contact the ARC cat foster and adoption team at arccatfostadopt@gmail.com

A woman is shown from the waist up, wearing a vibrant blue Vietnamese dress (áo dài) with long sleeves. The dress is adorned with a vertical line of white chrysanthemum flowers and green leaves, with two small orange butterflies embroidered near the center. She wears a traditional light-colored conical hat (áo dài). Her hair is pulled back, and she has a serene expression, looking slightly to the right. The background features a dark, ornate wooden lattice screen. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the dress and the hat.

The Lady in the Hat

Once upon a time when a deluge of rain was falling, there descended from the sky a giant woman wearing on her head four huge round leaves as large as the sky itself and stitched together by bamboo sticks. The leaves protected humankind, then still naked, from the rain. The giant messenger from the sky twirled around the leaves on her head to dispel clouds and rains. Those who followed her were taught how to grow crops. One day mankind dozed off as they listened to stories narrated by her. When they woke up the goddess was gone. The Vietnamese built a temple in her memory and honored her as the Rain-shielding Goddess. Following her example, people went into the forests to fetch broad and round leaves (palm) which they stitched together on a bamboo frame. This was to become an indispensable headwear for the farmers on the fields, boat-women carrying passengers across rivers, travelers under the blazing sun...







Clothing: **Pomelo Flower**
(Facebook: @pomeloflowervn)
Photographer: **BinCio**
Model: **Trang Nguyen**
Hair & Make up: **Phuoc Loi**



La
Bella Vita
Stories From Italians Living in Vietnam



Sistema Italia



An interview with Consul General of Italy in Ho Chi Minh City Dante Brandi

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

WHEN A YOUNGER DANTE

Brandi left a month-long internship in 2001 with the Italian embassy in Hanoi, he walked away with the impression of a country fueled by powerful aspirations. “I couldn’t predict at the time what would eventually become Vietnam,” he said. “The big impression I had was about the dynamism and optimism.”

Brandi arrived in Vietnam long before his country and Vietnam formally started strengthening ties, an international courting led in part by Italian-educated former ambassador Nguyen Hoang Long. The two nations’ increasing closeness led to the signing of a strategic partnership in 2013. The language of the accord is fairly general—lots of unspecific agreements to enhance both parties and loosely worded promises to promote economic and political activity—but it was followed with formal visits by state heads and, in 2014, the establishment of the Italian embassy Brandi leads today as Consul General.

Brandi returned to Vietnam in early 2018 and became the second Consul General to lead the consulate. After serving at a post in London, Brandi said the idea of working inside of a relatively new diplomatic office that still had room to grow and the possibility of shaping that growth were both enormously exciting to him. “When I found out there was a possibility [of returning], I immediately said ‘yes,’” he said.

Since then, Brandi has worked to grow the consulate’s presence with Vietnamese—particularly the country’s young population—while developing it as a resource for the Italian foreign nationals inside of the country. There are about 800 Italians who have notified their government’s foreign services of their residence inside of

Vietnam. Brandi estimates the actual number of Italians living inside of Vietnam is probably about double that number.

While the average foreigner inside of Vietnam may generally profile as a young guy or girl, 20-something, teaching English and doing a gap year finding themselves or that something similar, Brandi said the population his office serves are usually more established career professionals. They may be working as managers or high-ranking figures inside of multinational enterprises, Brandi said citing Nestlé Waters CEO Fausto Tazzi. The Italian businessman oversees a business division based in Ho Chi Minh City that produces La Vie drinking water.

Brandi added that the Italians living in Vietnam are generally individuals with the resources and professional opportunities needed to settle almost anywhere in the world, “... they’re not in Vietnam because they are forced to,” Brandi said.

Opening the consulate in 2014 was a key part of reframing how Italy understood Vietnam economically, Brandi argued. “Vietnam is no longer seen as just a platform for manufacturing.” The emerging consumer class inside of Vietnam is seen as a coterie of potential clients for Italian made goods, foods and pharmaceuticals.

There’s also some reframing to do with the Vietnamese understanding of Italy as a trade partner, Brandi said adding Italy is mainly the three Fs: “Ferrari, fashion and food.” As the second largest source of manufacturing power in the European Union, Italy has unexplored potential for all of its southeast Asia partners.

Trade between the two countries topped USD5 billion in 2018. A forthcoming trade agreement between

the European Union and countries in the Southeast Asia region including Vietnam is expected to grow that number.

Brandi emphasized that trade and relations have strengthened because of, and not in spite of, the Vietnamese government, which he described as “open, much more than one could imagine.”

“I was pretty surprised at the degree of openness,” he added. He said that this willingness to listen and interest in different ways of doing things is something that has set the country apart from nations with stronger and more inflexible leadership regimes like China and Russia. As an example, Brandi said member states of the European Union have always had a strongly affirming stance toward the LGBT community, and that Vietnamese leadership has shown similar interest in strengthening its protections and rights for this community.

One of the first issues Brandi undertook as a new Consul General was to enhance Italian support in Ho Chi Minh City’s efforts to reinvent itself as a smart city. Brandi recalls that there were high-ranking members of the city’s political leadership involved in the effort who he thought were staking an enormous amount of political capital on a project that wasn’t guaranteed to succeed.

“That’s a challenging ambition,” Brandi reflected. Watching the city leadership work to connect the government services with the requisite private partners needed to realize the smart city project created a model he saw that he could replicate in his office’s operations. “It was a teaching lesson to me to see how they developed this process,” he said. ■



VietaIy

Vietnam and Italy
have deepened
cooperation since
the establishment of
bilateral diplomatic
ties 45 years ago



ITALY AND VIETNAM

celebrated their 45th year of formal diplomatic relations in 2018, but that milestone will almost surely be overshadowed by the ratification of an economic agreement that will effectively end taxation of imports between the two, which is expected to arrive soon.

"It's almost ready. Now, it's on to the processing for... administration in Brussels," the European Union's headquarters, the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam, or ICHAM, President Michele D'Ercole said.

Draft language of the trade pact is currently awaiting approval by the European Council. D'Ercole and other observers for the deal expected, immediate ratification to occur last year. He remains confident that the agreement is imminent, however.

The accord, formally known as the European Union-Vietnam Vietnam Free Trade Agreement or often just EVFTA, has been described as a potentially seismic shift for the economic relationship between the union's member states and Vietnam, particularly for a provision within it that would reduce trade tariffs on at over two thirds of goods traded to zero.

Upon signing, taxes on 65 percent of European exports to Vietnam will be eliminated. The remainder would be phased out over the coming decade. Vietnam-made goods traveling to the European Union will be completely tariff-free seven years after signing, and 71 percent would be exempted immediately. With specific regards to Italy, the USD5 billion trade relationship between the two countries is expected to grow enormously by retiring taxes to key industries like pharmaceuticals, D'Ercole said. Italy is the fourth largest exporter of medicines in the union, and Vietnamese consumers represent a large share of their clientele.

It would be inaccurate to see the now-cancelled US-led Trans Pacific Partnership as a causal article to creating the EVFTA, but the D'Ercole opined that the two agreements characterize an openness that Vietnam has had with other nations since the economic reforms of the '90s. D'Ercole cited Vietnam's formalizing economic relations with former Soviet states

as well as joining an ASEAN-EU agreement last year as examples.

"Vietnam is very open and has many agreements," he said. Among the chamber's members are legacy Italian firms like Piaggio and Ducati. These are important actors in the USD1.2 billion worth of Italian goods that arrive in Vietnam, but the import stream has greater representation from perhaps less exciting products like industrial machinery; at USD700 million last year, it was the Italy's top export to Vietnam.

Italy established formal relations with Vietnam in 1973 shortly before the country was reunified. The European nation has maintained a partnership with Italy since the American War, when then-Italian ambassador Giovanni D'Orlandi worked with a Polish diplomat to appeal directly to North Vietnam for a peaceful resolution in 1966. According to Stanford University international relations professor James Hershberg, the envoys had secured commitments from Hanoi leadership to begin peace negotiations that would have brought an early end to the war. Their efforts were foiled when then U.S. president Lyndon Johnson began a bombing campaign on the Vietnam capital.

Cooperation between the countries has steadily increased in modern times. In 2005, former Vietnam President Tran Duc Luong hosted then-Italian President Ferdinando Casini in a state visit in 2005 calling for "multi-faceted" relations. D'Ercole arrived in Vietnam two years after to work as a general manager in Dong Nai with Rino Mastratto Group, a leather supplier and manufacturer. ICHAM was founded a year later in 2008. D'Ercole was elected chairman in 2012.

D'Ercole said he expects EVFTA ratification will increase the volume of ICHAM'S existing business support operations. He anticipates that the chamber will be called on to ask specific regulatory compliance questions, like how to comply with UN-authored labor codes and the 2015 Paris Agreement environmental regulations. If the accord is ratified, Vietnam's business practice standards would in these respects exceed those of the US, which has declined to observe both of these regulations. ■

Her Italian Way



Pascale and Chiara

From Italy, via China, and finally to Vietnam, businesswoman Chiara Squinzi discusses how fearlessness and food fuelled her success

Text by **Katie Kinnon**
Images by **Vy Lam**

UPON MEETING CHIARA

Squinzi, it's clear to see she's an intelligent, empowered and determined woman who isn't fazed by anything. She went from eating a €1 pizza in a hostel on Christmas Day in Shanghai to building a successful healthy living brand in Vietnam. It's no doubt that her Italian heritage of good food and strong work ethic has influenced her along the way.

Before moving to HCMC in 2014, Chiara spent seven years in Shanghai where she developed her passion for healthy living, "I would spend my lunchtime looking at recipes for gluten-free cookies," she says. Chiara quit her job to worked in a store with a demo kitchen, "I was initially hired as an event manager and then we developed a café and I was in charge of the sweets and snacks of the café and then towards the end of my stay in Shanghai I wanted to create my own brand while I was still there." Plans for a healthy living business were developed and La Holista (www.laholista.com) was created before the move to HCMC.

"I felt HCMC could be the Shanghai I loved when I first moved there," says Chiara. HCMC is a city she clearly loves, especially when comparing the work opportunities available to those in Italy. "It's a great opportunity city, the people are amazing, the Italian community has been amazing to me from the first week I arrived. It truly is a fantastic city—it's messy, it's energetic and full of possibilities—and if you work hard

you get rewarded and that doesn't happen in Italy. That doesn't happen at 30, to have your own company and to have people working under you."

Living in Vietnam has obviously enabled Chiara to take advantage of those opportunities, ones that aren't as easily available in her native country. "In Italy businesses are really hard to start, there are big taxes, everything is extremely expensive and you have to have everything notified and notarized and all these procedures take so, so long and especially for food, it's much more difficult than Vietnam. Not that it was easy here, but it is way more difficult."

She adds that women in Italy face additional challenges, "I always felt in Italy as a young woman you don't get much respect, but in Shanghai I could be a manager at 25 and I was earning more than my dad, not that every woman at 25 will become manager but if you do work hard and if you are willing to put the hours in you will get rewarded and in Italy you will only get unpaid internships or fake opportunities."

As with most Italians, Chiara has a passion for food and she channelled that into La Holista. "I grew up cooking, my mother taught me a lot and grandmother taught me even more, it's the little things in food that makes it special, but it's the quality of ingredients that makes it delicious," she says. And despite following a plant-based diet she doesn't like eating salad and instead enjoys the challenge of creating complex dishes that are

delicious yet healthy.

As a certified and qualified Health Coach, Chiara has worked with multiple clients but "when you're a good health coach you lose clients very quickly." So she decided to expand La Holista's services and reach with her own plant-based, cheap and easy-to-find ingredient snack recipe book (published by an Italian company). The popularity of the snacks amongst friends and local retailers grew and Chiara officially became a foreign business owner in Vietnam. La Holista is now run by Chiara and her business partner, Pascale, who are further growing the business by incorporating functional medicinal methods and positive environmental changes into their operations.

Chiara comes from Venice province, in northeast Italy, home to global brands such as Gucci and Ferrari, and credits her hometown for her strong work ethic, "There is a big, strong inner feeling of having to give your best in your work and taking pride in your work and create something that stays with you rather than work for somebody else."

Having spent time with Chiara it's easy to understand how she has become a successful businesswoman. "My family and friends know I have no fear, I moved to China at 22, I have no fear. I go for things and you know I'm not scared of a challenge," she says. And, according to Chiara, her parents clearly agree, often telling people "she'll be fine, she knows what she's doing." ■



It's alive! It's alive!

Meet Manuel Reale, winner of the World Championship Pizza in Parma 2017 and passionate spokesman for dough

Text by **Jesus Lopez-Gomez**

Images by **Vy Lam**

BEFORE PIZZA REALE CHEF

and owner Manuel Reale fires his pizzas, the dough must be awoken from its slumber. But gently. "Pizza dough is alive," Reale said matter of factly. The note is characteristic of Reale's broader views that food is not inert. Precooked dough needs to rest after mixing so it can be "born again." He refers to the yeast at the "mother of the pizza dough."

Sometimes, top performers sometimes get weird. Decorated Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps famously disclosed that his record-setting swims were the result of a "videotape," a visualization of the future winning performances. Reale is also a decorated performer in his field garnering top honors in the Campionato Mondiale Della (World Pizza Championship),

a global contest that's regarded as a standard bearer for the craft. Miss Italy attends crowning the winner. It's a whole thing. Reale has twice won top honors representing the Southeast Asia region and in 2018 won the top prize among all competitors throughout the world.

There is an attention and care that Reale puts into his pizza making that is not obsessive, but more calculated. It's a





tailored, low-touch process that starts with literally limiting the number of times the precooked dough—a living thing that can be made to feel relaxed or anxious and tight—is touched by Reale and the cooks who work under him.

“If you touch too much, it will be stressed,” he observed simply. Reale’s seriousness in word and craft belies his otherwise light manner. In conversation, he speaks fluidly and marks pauses externalized ellipses like, “How can I explain?” He tells stories in which he poses and answers his own questions. “I really like the McDonald’s style,” he said not pausing to register this as an odd statement. Instead, he continued: “Because if you know the story—do you know the story?”

This question is a narrative device only. Reale offered it only to preamble his going ahead and telling the story. By Reale’s telling, he sees the food giant’s success as a kitchen design success. Minimal kitchen staff movements and a neat kitchen are game changers, he argues. “This is an ‘every step-by-step’-process, Reale said.

“Now, people want just open pizza ... already touch pizza,” he said pausing visibly tsk-tsk-ing the restaurateur in haste. One of Reale’s first and formative experiences as a beginning pizza chef was apprenticing with a local *pizzaiolo* who insisted Reale start as a busser.

“I start from zero, eh?” That’s both a well-trod cliché as well as a earnings disclosure: he worked for two month under this apprenticeship for no salary. “10 o’clock: okay, I finish my work. I take off the apron,” Reale said pausing like he’s settling in to a comfortable joke. “I remember it like now.”

“Take out the apron and I say, ‘okay, my work ... finished.’ Oh, which one? You have all pizza kitchen to clean,” he recalled his boss replying. Reale apprenticed under Luciano Passeri, a restaurateur who today oversees a small culinary fiefdom as a partner in commercial interests located in San Diego, Poland and Italy as well.

A teenage Reale may have appreciated the potential power of the figure asking him to detail his stoves in responding to the request with a simple “Ok.”

“Very hard, eh?”

The remark is offered not so much as a self aggrandizement, but just matter of fact, a small note of appreciation and compassion an older Reale appears to have to his younger self. An even younger one saw the pizza maker that remains a touchstone for him today.

“You know how make me enjoy it [sic]? Because I go to the restaurant with my family the first time. I have a look at that guy,” the first pizza chef a younger Reale had taken real notice of perhaps in his life. “So, I have a look, you know? Have a look, have a look.” The last lines are delivered musically in two ways, first going up the tonal scale and then going down the scale.

Reale remembers what he described as a guy who would “play with pizza” before putting on the topping and cooking it to serve. In later tellings of this story, maybe he’ll have a more literary sounding ending for it. Today, though, it’s just an unrehearsed account of a lived experience and ends with just a small note. “Oh,” he said making a sound like one might make after finding lost keys in their home. “When I see that... I started to too like it.”

But why Vietnam? The answer is straightforward: “about that, it’s not my—” Reale paused interjecting the Italian word before the English—“decision.” Reale was originally recruited to work in neighboring pizzeria Pendolasco. “Just because they call me for work. I come here for work. But after that, I can’t say,” Reale said resting for a beat. “Because never in my life I think ‘Vietnam,’ eh? Vietnam,” he said perhaps enjoying the strangeness of the word.

“Pizza Reale” is a nice double entendre capturing both the owner’s name and “royal” in Italian. The four-month-old restaurant itself, however, is not an homage to luxury or entitlement as it is an aesthetic statement on the power of simplicity: simple, tiled flooring above which normal-seeming wood chairs sit at the ready in front of neatly done table placings.



The dining room floor awaits appearances from its star players, maybe the prize-winning Pizza Mondiale, a dish which like a first love defies explanation and in retelling only frustratingly gives hints of thing that was once a real, felt presence: the cool of the artichoke cream and over correctly portioned of savory complements, the nut-meatiness of the porcini mushroom and just a little bit of bacon.

Pizza Reale co-founder Carmine Magnotta, an engineer-turned-culinary professional, said profit ought to be a lower order need in his industry. “Profit is okay, but you need to make an effort for people to come here. You need to give something back,” he said offering his remarks standing while in between personal guest visits. Because our time is scarce—there are, after all, guests already seated waiting service—Magnotta offers just a economical sketch of what might that something be: “Personality, experience. It’s not just about food, it’s about us as well,” he offers before excusing himself. ■



Cultural Crossroads

How an Italian brand became a status symbol among the country's sea of motorbikes

Text by Rebecca Jones
Images Courtesy of Piaggio Vietnam

THERE ARE FEW THAT CAN paint a vibrant verbal picture like an Italian—for anything—even a machine: “An Asian woman riding a Vespa is taking part in a *défiler*—she is making a fashion show, a statement to all those around her that says ‘I am iconic, I am sophisticated and I am premium’.”

These are the sentiments of Gianluca Fiume, Chairman & General Director of Piaggio Vietnam—the maker of Vespa—who since taking up his post in 2017 has made it his mission to bring Italian style, finesse and passion to the daily commute across the Asian nation.

Having spent nine years heading Piaggio's two wheeler operations in Europe, as well as six years managing sales in the Middle East and Africa for Benetton Group, Fiume brings a wealth of experience to Vietnam—one of the fastest developing consumer economies on the planet. This doesn't mean that the job is without its challenges, however.

Fiume explains: “In Europe, our customer base is much more mature. The Piaggio brand is 130 years old and we stand for superior and unrivalled technical quality in the two-wheeler market. Here in Asia our audience is much younger and so we are focussing on different things.

“Here, we aim to delight, entertain and wow our customers. We want to change the daily commute, making it an iconic experience through which customers can express themselves and their superior taste. We want to make ambassadors of every stakeholder, to whom we are devoted—each and every one.”

Luxury Redefined

In Europe, motorbikes are no longer a common mode of transport; dangerous and unreliable compared to cars and public transport, they tend to be the hallmark of rebellious youths vying to upset their parents, or a fast way to deliver mail. And so, by extension, they are anything but a luxury purchase.

Here in Asia, however (and Vietnam especially) the motorbike remains the main form of transport for the majority of people. Our *xe máy*s gets us to work, to our families and to see our friends on the weekends. They are treasured items often lovingly preserved (vintage Honda Cubs as case in point) and this

is the sentiment that Piaggio wants to tap into.

Fiume says: "Here in Vietnam the Vespa is a luxury item, its iconic style is almost unchanged since the 1960s and so it stands for quality and superior vintage. This is appealing to young Vietnamese, many of whom want to stand out from the crowd by owning an iconic and luxury Italian brand."

Starting at around USD2,800 for the Sprint model, Fiume explains that the Vespa is aimed firmly at the aspirational and wealthy youth of Vietnam. After this initial entry point, the executive says it is then the firm's intention to propel customers up the 'Vespa ladder' towards the biggest GTS model, which he says is most popular with older customers.

Italian Aspiration

Employing his inimitably Italian turn of phrase, Fiume says that in order to keep the Vespa ladder "as sexy and fertile as possible" constant investment is required. And this includes a comprehensive marketing strategy that covers all corners of social media, which—the savvy CEO stresses—is essential in the Vietnamese market.

"In a nation where the average person is 31 years old, making sure we are using the platforms our potential customers use is critical. We employ a multi-level strategy across both Facebook and YouTube, through which we deploy numerous calls to action, covering the 'why, what and how' for our brand. We aim to educate, inspire and delight in all of our communications."

Consumer finance is also an essential part of this strategy, with much of the firm's Facebook marketing centering on 'buy now, pay later' messaging. This is something that Fiume says he learned in London—the world's financial center—and which he believes will be the lynchpin of growth here in Asia.

The businessman goes so far as to say consumer finance is going to become *the* new product in Asia, especially here in Vietnam. However, with only an estimated 25 percent of Vietnamese currently in possession of a bank account, he admits it is very early days. As such he is reluctant to reveal the percentage of customers currently purchasing vehicles through consumer finance, but insists that it is a meaningful proportion.

It's not all stilettos and Aperol spritzers on Vespas for Asia, though. Fiume says that the core Piaggio range, which begins at around USD1,500, is still attractive for many here in the Asian market. Nonetheless, this mid-range segment faces fierce competition from Japanese incumbent Honda, so much so it is difficult to imagine a future in which the brand does not dominate.

"Piaggio stands for superior engineering and technical ability and so it has a different mission to Vespa which, unchanged for more than 70 years, is an expression of lasting style and luxury. Every person that rides a Vespa becomes and ambassador for us, indeed it is our intention that every person that comes into contact with the Vespa brand becomes our ambassador.

"For us as an Italian brand it is important that we activate an emotional response with our product; we are devoted to that, and to our customer experience from the beginning to the end. For me, one plus one must make three. If it makes two, I am disappointed." ■



All the World's A Stage

Whether you're going to see a musical spectacular at the Saigon Opera House or an under-the-radar play, seeing live theater in the city is a special experience. Although there is no formal dress code detailing the dos and don'ts of theater dressing, the occasion warrants an ensemble that is more dressed up and glamorous than your usual day-to-day outfits. From floral frocks to chic ensembles, we've got your theater outfit situation covered.











Clothing: **INES** (inesclothing.vn)
Model: **Elite model**
Photographer: **Viet Hoang**
Makeup & Hair: **Cao Quy Duong**

Wine & Dine

BEN THANH STREET FOOD MARKET / IMAGE BY VY LAM







Food, Food and More Food

The Ben Thanh Street Food Market, one of the liveliest places for food and drinks in the city

Text by Daniel Spero

Images by Vy Lam and Ben Thanh Street Food Market

ONCE YOU GET TO Thu Khoa Huan Street there's no missing Ben Thanh Street Food Market. There's a large sign above the entrance, glowing brightly, while below it is the bustle of motorbikes being parked. Behind a row of motorbikes are a number of wooden picnic tables with people eating and conversing, and beyond that, almost 40 foodstalls boasting a vast array of cuisines. It's here, under a high canopy, where you'll find something for everyone: *pho*, *banh can*, *bun cha*, *mi quang* and *banh xeo*. There are also Indian, Korean, Japanese stir-fry, Italian, Thai, American and much more. There's even an oyster bar stand and C16 Station, which offers chili cheese dogs and French fries. There are also drink kiosks where you can have a cocktail, wine or enjoy a bottle or draft from one of Saigon's local craft breweries. And for teetotalers, there are herbal juice and fresh fruit juice options. For those with a sweet tooth, there's ice cream served as well.

As I walked in the first thing I noticed was the buzz coming from the tables. There were tourists of different nationalities sitting side-by-side, strangers enjoying their food and conversing with one another. Sitting at separate tables we often choose not to interact with unfamiliar people, but sitting at the same tables elicits communication among people of divergent backgrounds. For a tourist it's a great opportunity to speak with local Vietnamese, and for the Vietnamese, an opportunity to welcome them while practicing their English. There's also seating in the back as well as in an upstairs area. All told, the three seating areas comprise enough seating for approximately 250 people.

I started by meandering and browsing the rows. Once I had seen it all it was time to make some decisions. The first thing I tried was a roasted pork sandwich with a bun made of that same fluffy pastry



of a *banh bao*. I also ordered corn fritters from the same stall, called Got Bun. The total for both was just under VND100,000. They gave me a number marker to take to my table. I found one in the back where there was more room and as I waited for them to prepare it I went to a stall near the front called Ibia and chose a bottle of East West IPA to go with it. For VND75,000 a bottle, this is a local IPA that rivals any you'd get from an American brewery.

The IPA was cold and filling, while the pork in the sandwich was succulent and tender. For a sandwich fan, this is a great choice and a definite try, a nice fusion between Western style sandwiches and *banh bao*. The corn fritters were fried to perfection, a darker brown around the edges for crispness with a golden brown in the middle for chewiness, and sprinkled with salt and cinnamon. Next time I'm in District 1 I'll be heading back for another round of fritters and pork.

Soon the smell of chicken and pork ribs grilling wafting through the market called me. I ordered two plates, one from Station BBQ with barbequed pork ribs that came with grilled corn on the cob and coleslaw for VND150,000, and the other plate from Chicken BBQ, a grilled chicken leg and thigh with rice for VND100,000. The ribs were thick, the meat tender and the corn fresh, with a touch of grill marks. The grilled chicken was juicy, ample and the marinade subtle and savory. This chicken rivaled any that you'd get at one of the much higher priced BBQ restaurants in the city.

I took a break after all that meat, finishing my IPA and ordering another before I went for my final round, a stall at the front called F3. This is a Japanese stir-fry where you choose from a variety



Corn fritters



Banh can



Grill chicken with rice



Banh bao



Ribs with corn



of noodle types or rice, and then you choose your vegetables, meat, sauce and more to create your own custom stir-fry. I chose a thin rice noodle with broccoli, carrots and onions, tossed with shrimp and a ginger teriyaki sauce. It was as delectable as it sounds, with layered flavors and reasonably priced at around VND100,000 depending on your options.

Ben Thanh Street Food Market is a wonderful experience with a lot of great food choices, which is why it's listed in the top 15 of 205 things to do in Ho Chi Minh City on TripAdvisor. Every Tuesday and Saturday night from 7:30 to 9:30 there's live music with a Vietnamese band playing Western covers. ■

Ben Thanh Street Food Market is located at 26-28-30 Thu Khoa Huan Street and is open daily from 9am to 12am. For more info, check them out on Instagram and Facebook: @BenThanhstreetfoodmarket

Friends and Food

Great coffee, great food and great live music—
Lêla Saigon has something for everyone

Text by Grant Hawkins
Images by Vy Lam and Lêla Saigon

THE VIETNAMESE EXPRESSION
“lê la” is best translated “to go somewhere and hang out with friends.” But for its new namesake in the heart of Pham Ngu Lao in District 1, a more apt description might be “something for everyone.” Serving coffee 10am, fine dining until 11pm, and live music and cocktails until 1am, there’s always something going on at **Lêla Saigon** (138 Le Lai, D1).

Lêla Saigon is the combined vision of its two founders: the chef and restaurateur behind Saigon Grill and Ngoc Chau, and a local artist and drummer with a love of vintage-retro style. These two influences, like yin and yang, shine through at every turn. The ground floor hosts the performance stage and a bar serving snacks, the dining room on the first floor is a quieter atmosphere serving both Vietnamese and Western favorites.

A great night starts with a great cocktails. Try the signature Lela Mojito or a Tiki Taka (both VND150,000) while you drink in the decor in this post-modern mashup. The first floor dining area is a spacious, breezy balcony adorned by classic works of art, updated to fit the speakeasy theme (think geisha woman with AK-47). Tables are broken up by full-size trees and, somehow, a remodelled classic car. At the far end, a row of tables looks over Pham Ngu Lao park, and there’s a pool table in the back next to the bar.

The Western menu includes such favorites as Deep-Fried Calamari and Onion Rings (VND80,000), Fried



Fried Chicken Wings in Garlic

Chicken Wings in Garlic (VND149,000) and Smoked Pork Rib & Fried Potato (VND195,000). The non-adventurous guest will be more than pleased with these bar favorites, delivered hot and fast and perfect with a draft beer or signature cocktail. The presentations are modern and considered, with colorful garnishes and Vietnamese-inspired dipping sauces, and the chef spares no expense sourcing fresh meat and seafood.

For those interested in local cuisine, the chef behind Saigon Grill has compiled an extensive menu of

Vietnamese favorites with ample portions, lovely presentations and creative twists. To start things off, don’t miss the Salmon and Apple Salad (VND80,000), which comes in four small tins, each with a bite of crispy-seared salmon on a bed of fresh fruits in a tart juice—a crispy start and a clean finish. Follow this with the Shrimp Crab Spring Rolls with Herbs and Sticky Noodles (VND195,000). For the uninitiated, this dish does require assembly: grab a piece of fresh lettuce, load it with rice noodles, some local herbs and a hot, crispy fried spring roll, wrap



it up tight and dip it in sweet chili fish sauce. This Vietnamese classic is served beautifully in a pair of baskets and does justice to the well-loved traditional dish.

For your main course, the Mushroom Stuffed Chicken Breast with Black Pepper Sauce (VND150,000) comes at the chef's recommendation. Served on a bed of steamed vegetables and doused in a well-seasoned cream sauce, there will be more than enough for everyone to try a bite, even after you've had your fill.

After dinner, head downstairs where the party is just beginning. Rock 'n Roll favorites from the '60s and '70s are cranked out nightly by the house band and other local acts (and on occasion, I'm told, by the co-founder himself). A full bar and a wide selection of craft beer on tap will keep your spirits high, and the influx of foot traffic from Pham Ngu Lao Park will keep the conversation fresh. The ground floor is both air-conditioned and well-ventilated, so smokers and non-smokers are free to mingle without breaking a sweat. With plenty of room for sitting, standing, dancing or whatever else you're in the mood for, Le La keeps the party going until late every night of the week.



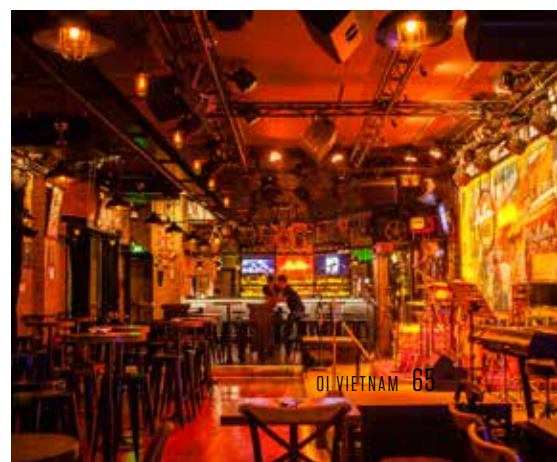
Shrimp Crab Spring Rolls with Herbs and Sticky Noodles



Lê La Saigon has struck a mighty chord since their re-opening in February of this year. This open-air oasis on the city's liveliest corridor offers coffee and breakfast in the morning, fine dining from a renowned local chef in the evening, and live music welcoming guests from around the world nightly. So the next time you're in the mood to *lê la*, you know where to go. ■



Mushroom Stuffed Chicken Breast with Black Pepper Sauce



Bean to Brim

A clean coffee brand to cultivate your caffeine fix

Text by **Carly Naaktgeboren**

Images Courtesy of **Brim Coffee Vietnam**



CLEAN, HIGH QUALITY AND Vietnamese made—these are at the core of Brim Coffee’s mission to build their brand in Vietnam. Brim Coffee has been exporting from Vietnam to the US, Australia, Europe, Korea, Japan and Taiwan since 2018 and is now focused on providing the same delicious, pure coffee beans in the country they were grown and roasted in. With a brand new bright and airy café in Saigon’s Thao Dien, beans and prepackaged phin coffee in filters available for purchase, Brim Coffee is making a splash on the local coffee scene.

Brim Coffee co-founder Dr. Tai Nguyen was in dentistry before launching his career in coffee bean export, “After I had been in the dental field for 20 years, I felt that I needed to do something more challenging and I found that coffee is an industry I would like to be in. The more you learn, the more fascinating it becomes. When I was younger, I had always wanted to own a coffee shop.”

Although all their beans are grown in Vietnam, Brim began solely as an export company. Brim coffee beans are grown, harvested and processed in Cau Dat, Lam Dong Province. Then the roasting and packaging takes place in Ho Chi Minh City.

The decision to introduce the beans to their home country makes sense in today’s Vietnamese café culture, “With a population of 90 million people, and most are young, Vietnam has a huge potential. There are more young people here who like to have a clean cup of coffee that isn’t mixed with other things like corn, beans, and soybeans as people used to 30 years ago. Vietnam for the last 12 years has changed a lot. People like to enjoy clean and proper coffee,” says Dr. Tai. “Not only exporting Vietnamese coffee overseas, we would like to bring it back to Vietnam, to the place where it started, to all the people here,” adds Thao Nguyen, Managing Director.



Dr. Tai Nguyen



With a growing international brand, Brim Coffee is working hard to not only introduce the rest of the world to superb Vietnamese coffee, but to build their own company and the entire coffee industry as a whole where it all began. Says Thao, “I myself, I would like in Vietnam to create a coffee community that means to expand green coffee to everybody, to keep everybody healthy. My wish is that Vietnamese coffee has a small part on the world map. And Brim Coffee cannot do that mission alone, we need more Vietnamese experts, Vietnamese farmers and Vietnamese roasteries, and everyone can join their hands to complete the mission.”

To try a delicious, smooth pour over coffee, your favorite Italian specialty, or pick up beans for home brewing, visit Brim Coffee's cafe location at 222 Nguyen Van Huong in Thao Dien or their website www.brimcoffee.com.vn.

Not only does Brim Coffee sell products for purchase, but they also seek to educate customers on their exceptional grade brews, hosting coffee tastings and workshops around the city, “We have very good, positive feedback from our guests. For example, they say, ‘the coffee tastes so nice, clean like a real coffee’, and that the smell of the coffee is very aromatic, ‘you can sense the aroma of the coffee from a distance,’” says Dr. Tai.

Understanding a customer's preferences and helping them find their perfect coffee match is all part of the job, whether that be Italian style espresso or Vietnamese style pour over, “normally when a customer comes here, we try to express from our heart and with our bean to serve exactly what we have. We have arabica and robusta. We control from the growing to the harvest, processing, roasting and export. We don't use any chemicals when growing the coffee tree until it goes to the cup of the customer. They can feel exactly what is in their cup. We have different styles of roast—light to medium for using in the machine, for the light one we use chemix for pour over. Each kind of coffee has a various kind of taste note,” says Thao.

Their signature take home pour over coffee filters are available for VND220,000 for a package of ten. “About the drip, normally it's exactly like a one time phin coffee, it's easier when you use the paper. We imported it from Japan and you know the quality is really nice. It's easy for everybody when you don't have time to wait. With traditional filters you have to wait five to ten minutes but with this you can have coffee in two minutes. It's easy to travel with and is useful everywhere,” says Thao.

As far as plans for expansion, there are many, “We plan to open more coffee shops and create some more flavors. And intend to introduce Brim Coffee to Asia (Singapore, Malaysia, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, etc) and New Zealand,” says Dr. Tai.





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.

Store & Serve

How to store wine in a tropical climate

QUITE OFTEN SOMEONE approaches me with the following question: “Hey, I just came from Europe/USA/Australia and I brought some nice bottles of wine, how long can I keep them and should I put them in the fridge?”

The answer is, “it depends.” If you don’t have a proper wine fridge or a room that constantly has the air-con on, and most people don’t, then try to drink the wine as soon as possible.

White and rosé wines you can put in the fridge for two or three weeks, the same with unoaked young reds. More than that you risk the wine going bad because one of the “killers” of storing wine is vibration, and the fridge at home has a motor that vibrates a lot and transfers that vibration to the wine. On top of that you will be exposing the wine to drastic changes in light, another wine killer, as you will be opening and closing the fridge several times a day.

If you bring back oak aged wines, your first priority is to have them stored away from light, yes light is another wine killer, putting them in a box or wardrobe will suffice. Find the coolest place in your home but, more importantly, find a place where there are no changes of temperature or they’re minimum; one of the biggest factors that damages wines are drastic temperature variations. So, if you have the air-con on in your bedroom in the night only, the wine maybe better off stored in the living room.

Each home is different, but I am sure all have that special area away from vibrations, light and a relatively constant temperature where you can store the wine. Before I had my wine fridges, in my previous apartment the clothes wardrobe in the spare room was the place: opened rarely, just 3 to 5 degree changes within a full day and no vibrations. Find your wine spot but don’t store any wine too long, as doing so at temperature higher than



15/18 degrees will accelerate the aging process of the wine, some will last months some will not.

However, if you like to have wine at home consider buying a small wine

fridge, the choice in Vietnam is poor but you can find several from 9 bottles and up, and is a good investment if you love wine. The alternative is to invite some friends and drink together. ■

Depends on how it's cooked. Done right, 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!

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(Reservation is recommended for better service)

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Tel: 092 998 9899



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

MICROBREWERIES & CRAFT BEER BARS



BiaCraft

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

90 Xuan Thuy, D2



East West Brewery

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

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



Rehab Station

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

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

Also Try...

Winking Seal

Winking Seal offers a revolving selection of craft beers brewed by the bar. Enjoy their Happy Hour from 7pm to 9pm or come by on a Saturday night to join the beer pong tournament on the rooftop terrace.

50 Dang Thi Nhu, Nguyen Thai Binh Ward, D.1

Tap & Tap Craft Beer

Tap & Tap is the first bar of its kind in Thao Dien. This is a self-serve craft beer bar using the 'Pour My Beer' digital tap system. You can pour as much or as little as you like and sample 20 different kinds of beers in their open air bar and courtyard.

94 Xuan Thuy, Thao Dien, D.2

Heart of Darkness Craft Brewery

Heart of Darkness are prolific brewers - having brewed over 170 different styles of craft beer since they opened in October 2016.

31D Ly Tu Trong, Ben Nghe Ward, D.1

Belgo Belgian Craft Beer Brewery

Inspired by the beer culture of Belgium and Vietnam, Belgo built a unique place inspired by Belgium architecture with its own brewery, offering typical Belgian dishes combined with a local twist.

159A, Nguyen Van Thu, Da Kao Ward, D.1

Pasteur Street Brewing Company

They opened their first Tap Room 'The Original' in January 2015 and now have 5 tap rooms spread out in D.1, 2 and 7. Pasteur Street Brewing Company distributes its beers to approximately 150 locations in Vietnam.

Address 1: 144 Pasteur Street, Ben Nghe Ward, D.1
Address 3: 29 Thao Dien, Thao Dien Ward, D.2
Address 4: 120 Xuan Thuy, Thao Dien Ward, D.2
Address 5: 67 Le Van Thiem, Tan Phong Ward, D.7



Lê La Saigon

Set in a vintage-retro style décor, this open-air oasis on city's liveliest corridor offers coffee in the morning, vietnamese and western cuisine from a renowned local chef in the evening, and live music welcoming guests from around the world nightly. Cafe-Restaurant starts 10AM, everyday live music starts at 9PM.

138 Le Lai street, D1, HCMC.

090 816 61 38

FB: Lelabarpag



CAFÉS

Bach Dang

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

26-28 Le Loi, D1

Café RuNam

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

96 Mac Thi Bui, D1

www.caferunam.com

Chat

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

85 Nguyen Truong To, D4

K.Coffee

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

Opening time: 7AM- 10PM (Sunday closed)

86 Hoang Dieu, D.4 - 38253316/090 142 3103

La Rotonde Saigon

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

77B Ham Nghi, 1st Floor, D1

The Workshop

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

27 Ngo Duc Ke, D1



French Restaurant

Daily Set Lunch
at **VND180.000**

2 courses + 1 soft drink

Le Bacoulos french bistro,
13 Tong Huu Dinh
Thao Dien. Q2. HCMC

02835194058



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



FRENCH



Le Bacoulos

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

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



L'Escale by Thierry Drapeau

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

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

Also Try...

Le Jardin

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

31 Thai Van Lung, D1

Ty Coz

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

178/4 Pasteur, D1 - www.tycozsaigon.com



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ITALIAN



Ciao Bella

Hearty homestyle Italian food served with flair and excellent service. An extensive menu is complemented with daily specials. Arriving guests are greeted with a free glass of Prosecco. Diners sit in a cozy setting upstairs or on the ground floor for people-watching. Big groups should book in advance.

11 Dong Du, D1
028 3822 3329
tonyfox56@hotmail.com
www.ciaobellavietnam.com

Ciao Bella



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

Oggi

Also Try...

Casa Italia

Filling, hearty Italian fare served with a smile in the heart of District 1. Authentic pizza and a comprehensive range of pasta, pork, chicken and beef dishes offers something for everyone. Located a stone's throw from Ben Thanh Market.

86 Le Loi, D1
028 3824 4286

Carpaccio

Rebranded "Carpaccio" after many years under the name Pomodoro, this Italian restaurant still has a simple, unpretentious European decor, sociable ambiance and friendly welcome. A small corner of Italy in Saigon.

79 Hai Ba Trung Street, D1
+84 90 338 78 38

La Forchetta

La cucina La Forchetta is located in a hotel building in Phu My Hung. Chef Gianni, who hails from Sicily, puts his passion into his food, focusing on pastas and pizzas with Italian meat and fish dishes as well delicious homemade desserts. Most of the tables are outside, so you can enjoy a relaxing outdoor dinner.

24 Hung Gia, PMH, D7
028 3541 1006

Opera

The luxury Park Hyatt Saigon is home to Opera, an authentic Italian dining experience open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Try their famous lasagna and tiramisu. Head chef Marco Torre learned his craft in a number of Michelin-star restaurants throughout different regions of Italy during a 14 year career. Dine on the deck alfresco or inside in air conditioned comfort.

2 Lam Son Square, D1

Pasta Fresca

Hidden on a rooftop in District 1, in a secret garden in District 2 and now also found in District 3, Pasta Fresca offer vegetarian friendly pastas.

Address 1: 28 Thao Dien Street, Thao Dien, District 2
Address 2: 13/1 Le Thanh Ton, Ben Nghe Ward, District 1

Pendolasco

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, D1
028 3821 8181

Pizza 4P's

It's too late to call this Saigon's best-kept secret: the word is out. Wander up to the end of its little hem off Le Thanh Ton for the most unique pizza experience in the entire country – sublime Italian pizza pies with a Japanese twist. Toppings like you wouldn't imagine and a venue you'll be glad you took the time to seek out.

8/15 Le Thanh Ton, D1
012 0789 4444
www.pizza4ps.com



JAPANESE



Chaya Restaurant

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

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

Chaya



Gyumaru

Gyumaru is a quintessentially minimalist Japanese dining experience rotating around the style of meat meal Westerners would be quick to link to a gourmet burger, but without the bread. Fresh, healthy, innovative cuisine in a relaxed, cozy environment and regular specials including quality steaks.

8/3 Le Thanh Ton
028 3827 1618
gyumaru.LTT@gmail.com

Gyumaru

Also Try...

Ichiban Sushi

Ichiban Sushi Vietnam serves fine sushi and signature drinks/cocktails in a lounge setting. Featuring one of the most eclectic Japanese menus in the city. The current Japanese venue to see and be seen in – everyone who's anyone is there.

204 Le Lai, D1
www.ichibansushi.vn

Kesera Bar & Restaurant

An Ideal place for your city escape and enjoying Japanese fusion foods. We have the best bagels in town, fine wine and cigars in a custom cabinet and is a must-do for anyone visiting the city.

26/3 Le Thanh Ton, Ben Nghe Ward, Dist 1
028 38 270 443

Sushi Dining Aoi

Sushi Dining Aoi is one such restaurant, where the whole atmosphere of the place evokes the best of the culture. With its typical Japanese-style decor – the smooth earthen tones of the wooden furniture and surrounds, the warmth and privacy of the VIP rooms – it's possible to believe you're in a more elegant realm.

53-55 Ba Huyen Thanh Quan, D3
028 3930 0039
www.sushidiningaoi.com

Yoshino

The decor is straight out of the set of Shogun, with black wood, tatami mats, stencilled cherry blossoms and all the trappings of Japanese exoticism – tastefully done. While Ho Chi Minh City is certainly not short of fine Japanese eateries, this one is particularly impressive.

2A-4A Ton Duc Thang, D1
028 3823 3333

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

VIETNAMESE



Five Oysters

Five Oysters serves authentic and excellent Seafood & Vietnamese food with 5G Green beer at VND12,000 as well as a promo of VND10,000 per fresh oyster daily. There's also a rooftop, a great place to start or end the night! Recipient of Certificate of Excellence 2014-16 from Tripadvisor and Top Choice 2015 by Lianorg.com. Recommended by VNexpress.net, Lonely Planet, Utopia and Saigoneers.
234 Bui Vien, D1



SaiGon Grill

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



Ben Thanh Streetfood Market

Located in the city center there is a food court filled with dishes from all over the world, cooked by indigenous people, at affordable prices. Open most of the day and night, Ben Thanh Street Food Market offers live music on Tuesdays and Saturday night.
26 - 28 - 30 Thu Khoa Huan, Ben Thanh Dist, W1, HCMC
0901 26 28 30 Open Time: 09:00 AM - 01:00 AM
FB: BenThanhstreetfoodmarket
Instagram: benthanhstreetfoodmarket

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 Hanoi Cha Ca salads stir-fried with fish and spring onion. Delicious.
36 Ton That Thiep, D1

Com Nieu

Famous for its inclusion in the Anthony Bourdain *No Reservations* program, the venue is best known for its theatrics. Every bowl of rice is served in a terracotta bowl that is unceremoniously shattered upon serving. Unforgettable local food in a very pleasant traditionally-styled venue.
59 Ho Xuan Huong, D3
028 3932 6363
comnieusaigon27@yahoo.com
comnieusaigon.com.vn

Cue Cach Quan

Deservedly one of the highest ranking Vietnamese restaurants in Saigon on Trip Advisor, this delightful restaurant serves up traditional, country-style foods and contemporary alternatives in two character-filled wooden houses located on opposite sides of the street from each other. Unique food in a unique setting and an unbelievably large menu.
10 Dang Tat, D1
028 3848 0144

Hum

Hum is a vegetarian restaurant where food are prepared on site from various fresh beans, nuts, vegetables, flowers, and fruits. Food are complemented with special drinks mixed from fresh fruits and vegetables.
2 Thi Sach, D1
028 3823 8920
www.hum-vegetarian.vn

May

Fine Vietnamese fare served in a character-filled three-story rustic villa located up a narrow alley, off the beaten track. Watch the chefs prepare authentic food from a varied menu in an open kitchen.
19-21 Dong Khoi, D1
028 3910 1277

Mountain Retreat

Home style cooking from the Vietnamese north in a quiet alley off Le Loi, Mountain Retreat brings a rural vibe to busy central D1. The breezy and unassuming décor nicely contrasts the intense northern flavors ideally suited for the international palate.
Top floor of 36 Le Loi, D1
+84 90 719 45 57

Nha Hang Ngon

Possibly the best-known Vietnamese restaurant in Ho Chi Minh City, Nha Hang Ngon serves up hundreds of traditional local dishes in a classy French-style mansion.
160 Pasteur, D1
028 3827 7131
www.quananngon.com.vn
8am - 10pm

Temple Club

Named after the old-style Chinese temple in which the venue is located, the ancient stylings of this impressive restaurant make for an unforgettable evening spent somewhere in Saigon's colonial past. Beautiful oriental art that will please all diners and great local cuisine.
29-31 Ton That Thiep, D1
028 3829 9244
templeclub.com.vn

The Hue House

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

INTERNATIONAL



Madcow Wine & Grill

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

30th Floor, Pullman Saigon Centre
(0)28 3838 8686



Tomatito Saigon

Tomatito won the award for Best Restaurant of Saigon 2018. This sexy tapas bar is Chef Willy's casual interpretation of the prêt-à-porter concept. Willy has a very personal perception of style, that is reflected in all his creations. His universe is colorful, funky and eclectic.

1st Floor, 171 Calmette, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City

www.tomatito.vn

www.facebook.com/tomatitosaiagon

+84 869 388 864



twenty21one

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

Crispy shredded duck spring

rolls and Bacon-wrapped

dates stuffed with Roquefort

blue cheese There are two

dining levels: an upstairs mezzanine and downstairs

are tables with both private and exposed positioning

(open-air streetside; and a terrace by the pool out back).

21 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3

TWENTY21ONE



Saffron

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

51 Hai Ba Trung, D1
(0)28 3824 8358

Also Try...

Blanc Restaurant

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

178/180D Hai Ba Trung, Da Kao, D1

02862663535

www.blancrestaurant.vn

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

FORK Restaurant

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

15 Dong Du, D1

028 3823 3597

info@forksaigon.com

www.forksaigon.com

Noir - Dining in the Dark

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

178/180D Hai Ba Trung, Da Kao, D1

02862632525

www.noirdininginthedark.com



Travel & Wellness

PRAGUE







Goa

With The Kids

A visit to these beaches will
get your children a step closer
to the sun and the sand

Text by **Denise Ottman**

REWIND BACK EVEN JUST

to the beginning of the '90s and you didn't see many children on the beach here in Goa—but now traveling has become so much easier and hotels and restaurants welcome families with open arms. Sunset time and you see babes-in-arms and teenagers enjoying the beach and the waves.

How did I find myself traveling in Goa, India with kids? In 2008, I had left my life in Chicago as a fashion buyer and started designing my own label with my friend, Jessica. We had a kiosk at pop up shops and street fairs. In 2012, I was pregnant with my first child Ruby and so happy to be bringing up my family in Goa. Later, I had my son, Rex. Both Jessica and I were pregnant at the same time and started designing our organic cotton square tops to make breastfeeding in public easier.

Over the years with my kids in Goa, I have naturally learned a few things along the way about traveling with kids in Goa and have hosted friends who have brought their children over on vacation. Luckily there is also a conscious expat scene and some amazingly innovative schools and friendly local doctors and dentists.

With a few conscious adjustments and compromises, bringing up children or traveling with kids in India is simple and rewarding. It's a kid friendly place and over the past few years, I have gotten to appreciate even more the abundance of nature that the children get to experience each day... not only the beach and rock pools but the banyan trees, the jungle, the wandering cows, clucking chickens and chatty monkeys—nature's playground.

What to Pack for Kids

Medical items to bring with you:
Bring the tried-and-tested

medicine from home that you know works for your child, rather than playing roulette with new brands. For my kids, I always bought baby Nurofen and Calpol for fevers; Savlon (the dry spray is good for little cuts on tiny toes if they are in and out of the water) and gripe water for Rex when he had colic—although alternatives in India are available.

There is a fantastic ayurvedic (Indian holistic medicine) and homeopathic pharmacy called Union in Mapusa (any taxi driver will know this place); this is a great place to stock up on homeopathic treatments and creams.

My friend Angie, who is an acupuncturist with a 10-year-old daughter, here swears by the Apis Meluca cream and globules for insect bites; arnica cream is great for bruises and they have a good homeopathic starter kit which is a great travel set. Naveena who worked as a midwife here in Goa for many years recommends a travel kit including Nux Vomica (sickness), hypericum (cuts), arnica (bruises) and aconite (for onset of colds).

For stressed out moms, there is always Rescue Remedy! My all-time

favorite solution is Kailash Jeevan—an ointment for every cut, scratch, pimple, unidentified sore or rash! It's available in most general stores as well as pharmacies. People buy it by the armload to take home with them. Calendula powder is also available at the pharmacy for prickly heat or other rashes.

Baby wipes and nappies are horrible for the environment, especially in India where the garbage is such an issue... but I know as a traveler it's very hard to not use them unless staying put for a while. I used washable nappies with Rudy, but I did have my own washing machine. But the holy bum spray (spray gun in almost all bathrooms here) also is a godsend for horrible poo situations!

Rehydration salts (or diabolites) are essential for keeping your kids hydrated—there are some orange flavored ones here but I found the



blackcurrent flavor ones from the UK went down much better with both my kids.

Toys & Other Bits

Naturally you are not going to leave the front door without your child's favorite teddy, car or blanket—certainly bring your kids' favorite stuff. You can get plastic beach toys, buckets and cheap boogie boards in many of the general stores. And for longer stays or Christmas vacations amazon.in is fantastic.

It might sound obvious to say buy sunscreen, but although we used to be able to buy known-brands in Goa, often the sunscreen available these days is not of the same quality as it is at home, so stock up on creams and lotions for the kids and your self.

Getting Around & Safety

Got little ones? Taxis will very rarely have access to a car seat so if you are planning to do a lot of traveling you might want to invest in one—you can order on Amazon India if you don't want to bring one long haul. Roads are lumpy so strollers can be an issue, although it's great for sunset beach walks; probably best to invest in a comfortable baby sling.

You'll probably be bringing extra luggage if you are traveling with small children! Don't worry every train station has a porter... and hotels will always help you with your luggage. It costs roughly 100rs for a porter at the station.

Before you fly book a bassinet well in advance of flying long haul. Few flights go direct to Goa, so you will probably be flying into Bombay (or Delhi first) therefore consider breaking the journey and staying overnight near the airport to avoid too long a day.

Jet Airways have a very luggage friendly allowance of 46kg per person; however most Indian airlines do not provide great kid friendly food, I always pack a lunch and treats for my kids when we're flying. If you are transferring from international to an



Indian domestic line though check the baggage allowance as a lot of the domestic carriers have a stingy allowance and you might need to pay for extra luggage.

What to Expect from Local People

Child friendly waiters! This is not like Starbucks, waiters here will occasionally take your child off your hands (if you approve) to show them how chapattis are made in the kitchen, or teach them to make pizza, or simply walk them around the restaurant if they are crying.

Cheek pinching... the locals have no qualms with getting physical with kids cheeks—but if you (or more importantly your child) is not up for this... just let them know.

People here are super friendly and tend to ask a lot of questions, but you are not obliged to answer them all. Practice the same kind of awareness at the beach as you would wherever you take your kids—it's a really safe place but you always need to keep your wits about you.

It is totally acceptable to breastfeed in public here, but wear a shawl or scarf.



Kids, Beaches & Jungles

Goa is a full nature immersion and I'm not just talking about frogs in the bathroom or geckos on the walls. My kids are at their happiest when they are in the sand or in the jungle.

For little kids, the beach is the best playground. There are lifeguards and in the beaches of Mandrem and Aswem, a wide beach with shallow sea (only just after monsoon should you be aware of riptides).

Also be aware that as lovely as Keri beach in the north and Agonda beach in the south are, the shelf falls away very quickly and is not so safe for little paddlers. There are starfish and rock pools and you can go out dolphin watching.

Over the last few years, a grassroots beach market has grown across the beach in Arambol, selling all types of things like macramé bracelets, paintings and handmade clothes. The kids love going there as many foreigners make yummy treats inspired by their countries and there is a big drum circle where people dance and the kids love to join in.

On the beach, all dogs with a clip in their ear have been sterilized and vaccinated against rabies by International Animal Rescue or WAGS. Maybe best to give other dogs a wide berth, just to be safe.

For bigger kids, Pink Orange Events run surf camps for kids with yoga, beach cleanups, and surf lessons. Vaayu in Aswem offers kayaks, which is a great family outing on the river.

We also always love to relax at Palm Grove beach resort in Ashwem and drink fresh juices, a great place for the grandparents to stay when they come, quiet and serene.

Going inland, my favorite places to take my two kids are the beautiful Redi Fort where the jungle has reclaimed an old fort, it's a great place to explore. What kid doesn't love a fort?



In Arambol you can do a short jungle walk to a beautiful Banyan Tree via the sweetwater lake and mud bath. And in Mandrem, there is a banyan tree so large that you'll often find a cricket match going on beneath its branches.

Rahul Alvarez offers bird and wildlife walks or you can go into the Western Ghats and stay a few nights at the beautiful Wilderrest eco-resort. There are morning wildlife walks, a stunning infinity pool and amazing local food. For less jungle wildlife, head to the petting zoo at Goa's Ark in Anjuna. There is a lovely play area and many animals to meet. They also have a kid-friendly menu.

If your kids want a rest from all that wildlife and nature and they love to dance and sing, there are ballet classes, capoeira and thai boxing classes at

Tito's White House in Anjuna. You can also look into lovely music classes with Ranjit at Shala 142 in Assagao.

There are swimming lessons at Jungle Dance in Arambol and you can stay there for lunch or evening performances and support the children's charity that also operates out of here. Also in Arambol (if you are thinking to come for the long haul) is the Yoga Arts Centre (kindergarten and school), a sanctuary for our children using arts, yoga theory and nature to bring up the kids. Built by the expat community in a small coffee shop and now a fully operational education center.

I love watching my children grow up here, inspired by nature and plugged into an international community. It's a great playground and education alike. ■



Footsteps in the Past

A self-guided walking tour of Prague's turbulent past

MODERN PRAGUE CONTAINS

few obvious reminders of the 41 years Czechia spent as a communist state. Go on a walking tour of the city to discover what is left of this turbulent period: from brutalist architecture to haunting memorials to victims of the regime.

In the fairytale streets of Prague's Old Town, it's easy to forget the city once stood on the western frontier of socialism. When the Iron Curtain fell and Czechoslovakia was dissolved, most of the country's communist paraphernalia was resolutely scrubbed from the fabric of everyday life. Even as you leave the winding streets of the city center for the rolling suburbs, traces of this past remain difficult to locate, mostly confined to the boxy prefab apartment blocks that make up the long-renamed neighborhoods built under socialism.

If you want to trace the journey of Czechia's turbulent 20th century, you'll need to break free of the Old Town. Start your journey at the Monument to the Victims of Communism at the base of Petrin Hill on Újezd Street (it's easily reachable on foot from the Old Town, but you might want to hop on a tram on line 9, 12, 22, 23, 87, 98 or 99).

Now you'll need to leave the main road, turning left to reach Bartolomějská Ulice—the former home of

Czechoslovakia's Secret Police. The dusky red building at number 4 was a convent until 1950, when it was commandeered by the feared StB (the nuns were removed to a detention camp). It is still used by the Prague police today and you will see a few police cruisers parked outside. Until a few years ago, there were crouching figures of revolutionary workers above the door. But now these have also been swept away, leaving only a few socialist-style reliefs above the windows.

Head back toward the main road (Národní 340/21) and you'll find a tribute to the protesters who fought those same policemen at the Monument to the Velvet Revolution. This small bronze plaque marks the student demonstrations, which took place here on November 17, 1989, which are now widely regarded as the beginning of the end for the regime. The students had planned to march to the nearby Wenceslas Square but were stopped here, on Národní Street. The crowd was confronted by riot police and hundreds were badly beaten. Instead of scaring off demonstrators, however, the incident sparked mass protests across the country, destabilizing the government. Continue a little further and you'll come to Wenceslas Square itself, which became a

focal point for later rallies.

Modern Wenceslas Square is better known as a bottleneck for trams and tourists than protests. It's easy to hurry through the crowds, but instead look out for the Monument to Jan Palach and Jan Zajíc, set into the cobble outside the National Museum. The monument marks the spot where Palach set himself alight in January 1969 to protest against the regime. The student's self-immolation made global news, and his grave at Olšany Cemetery soon became a shrine. The authorities dealt with the problem by exhuming and cremating the body, a move that backfired when fellow student Jan Zajíc also set himself alight. The simple bronze cross rising from the pavement now stands as an understated monument to both men: a quiet reminder of the many people who struggled for years against the system.

At this point, if you're bored of walking, worry not: take the escalators down to Můstek station on the Prague Metro. Officially opened in 1974, the Prague Metro is best known for its Instagram-friendly metallic sheen and dimpled surfaces. But the Soviet designers who created it thought about more than just looks: the color scheme for each stop on Line A was chosen to reflect local landmarks. The golden



the Monument

uncertain future. Once the plinth where the metronome now stands hosted Czechoslovakia's own tribute to Soviet dictator Josef Stalin, a 16-meter granite monument rising above the capital. The statue's creator, Otakar Švec, committed suicide several days before its official unveiling, and the authorities destroyed the sculpture in 1962 during the de-Stalinization movement. Head up to the monument for panoramic views over the Old Town, or to check out the local skate scene. The metronome is a 10-minute walk from Staroměstská metro station via the Svatopluk Čech Bridge.

Lennon Wall

The heart of Prague's creative rebellion, the Lennon Wall was a flashpoint for protest and anti-communist rhetoric throughout the turbulent 1980s. Originally used as an impromptu graffiti memorial for murdered rockstar John Lennon, this small wall on the west bank of the River Vltava became a canvas for disillusioned young people. Despite multiple attempts by the authorities to paint over dissident graffiti, more would always appear. Tensions reached their peak in 1988, when police fought nearby with hundreds of students. The wall today remains a place for political dissent, with layers of modern artwork proclaiming peace, love and rebellion. You can find it on Velkopřevorské náměstí, not far from the famous Charles Bridge.

Zižkov TV Tower

The futuristic pinnacle of the Žižkov Television Tower looms over the spires of the Czech capital. At 216 meters high, the tower was designed in the 1980s, but wasn't actually completed until after the Velvet Revolution. With its bulbous metal pods, it is routinely criticized as an unsightly blot on the city's skyline—a complaint its owners have apparently tried to rectify by placing statues of giant, crawling babies on its facade. You can see more of these babies—created by Czech artist David Černý in 2000—up close in Kampa Park. If you're visiting, go to the observatory for a view of Prague from 90 meters up, or check into the tower's luxury "one-room hotel". You can find the tower at Mahlerovy Sady 1, less than 10 minutes walk from the Jiřího z Poděbrad metro station. ■



Stalin's Metronome

hue of Hradčanská station symbolizes nearby Prague Castle, for example, while the green of Malostranská represents the Royal Garden. Although originally conceived as an underground tramway, Czechoslovakian officials in the 1960s bowed to prevailing Soviet trends and commissioned a full subway (they were obliged to import metro cars from the Soviet Union).

Where next? If you're tired, then here, in the heart of central Prague, is a good place to stop. But if you want to

go a little further, there are some great socialist-era sights dotted further outside of the city:

Stalin's Metronome

Walking through the center of Prague, you might notice a large sculpture perched in Letná Park on one of the city's hillsides. This is a moving 23-meter metronome created in 1991 by Czech designer Vratislav Novák—the endless ticking symbolizes the slow march away from socialism towards an

Lennon Wall



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>>The List Business

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animaldoctors.vn

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38-40-42 Nguyen Thi Thap,
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>> The List Travel



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www.anamandara-resort.com



Anantara Quy Nhon Villas

Surrounded by mountain on three sides and overlooking the Bay of Quy Nhon, Anantara Quy Nhon Villas offers beachfront basking and adventurous discoveries. Laze by the pool snacking on gourmet street eats served by your butler. Luxuriate with a synchronised four-hand massage at Anantara Spa. Explore surrounding ruins, fisherman's villages and uninhabited islands just off the coast.

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+ 84 256 3840 077

quynhon.villas@anantara.com



Lotte Legend Hotel Saigon

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www.lottehotel.com/saigon



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

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www.nhatrang.intercontinental.com

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Kids & Education



A Question of Me

A morning with Andrew Lam: accomplished author, regular commentator on National Public Radio's All Things Considered and co-founder of New America Media

Text by Rebecca Jones

Images by Ha Tran



“WHO AM I?” IS A QUESTION

celebrated author and journalist Andrew Lam is, arguably, obsessed with. From his earliest published work *Perfume Dreams* through to his latest novel, *Birds of Paradise Lost*, the question of identity is pervasive. In the wider sense Lam is interested in how we construct our sense of self using language—written, spoken and remembered—and how we continue to shape and re-shape who we are in different cultural and relationship contexts.

More specifically, however, Lam is interested in the unique experience of the Asian in America, and even more specifically than that—the southern

Vietnamese in California, where traditional Asian family values clash with the sharp individualism of the West. In an essay for the *Huffington Post*, *The Education of a Vietnamese American Writer*, Lam (whose full Vietnamese name is Lam Quang Dung) writes:

“Part of America’s seduction is that it invites betrayal of the parochial. The old culture demands the child to obey and honor the wishes of his parents. America tells him to think for himself [...] Many children of Asian immigrants learn early to negotiate between the “I” and the “We,” between seemingly opposed ideas and flagrant contradictions, in order to appease and survive in both cultures.”



A French Vietnamese American

The son of a government official, Lam fled Saigon on the eve of reunification in 1975, the family landing in Guam and later settling in San Francisco. In the US, an already complex sense of self grew more tangled; the Vietnamese that had wrestled with the French for the first 12 years of his life now wrestling with English—all three languages vying for a place to make new meaning in his life.

More than 40 years later and back, once again, in his home city, the writer addressed a packed workshop of middle school children and described how he chose his name in his adopted languages, encouraging the children to think about why they had chosen their own English names:

“My French schoolmaster could not pronounce my Vietnamese name and so he asked me to choose from a list of French names. I remember I looked at ‘Alexandre’ and I thought it felt too strong—like Alexander the Great. ‘Andre’ seemed more like me. Then it became Andrew in the US and felt different again—like me, but not exactly like me. A name can say a lot about us.”

Meaning Making

Earlier, Lam had faced a larger crowd of children in the assembly hall at ISHCMC-American Academy, all listening—much to their teachers’ surprise—with rapt attention as the author answered the many questions directed at him. One question seemed of particular interest, and indeed kept emerging in one form

or another throughout the day: “Which language do you like to talk in more?”

Lam was amused, but seemed to understand completely. Arguably, the author was facing his own dilemma reflected back at him in these children, most of whom may feel like outsiders in their countries as their education, experiences and language skills set them apart from their peers. For them, the question of identity is perhaps equally pressing.

Laughing warmly, Lam answered: “It is not so simple as one language is better than another. Each brings its own meaning to your life. For example, there are many words that mean nothing to me in English. Like ‘sour’ for example. I feel nothing. But ‘chua’ – ‘chua’ fills me with joy. It makes me think of the first tamarind I ate as a child, how I had never tasted anything so ‘chua.’”

From the languages we speak to the cultures we live in, Lam explained later in the school library, we must find a way to bring them together to construct our own identities. To take the best of all of them and find the exact combination that creates us. The trick, he confided in one curious young fan, is to keep working on it. “We’re always changing—whether we want to or not.”

Crossing Cultures

Returning to the subject of his essay, Lam later explained to me that much of what he had said may have been difficult for the children to hear, or understand. He again recounted the experience of breaking ranks with his family and

revealing that he was going to be a writer, not a doctor, and how it had been a long, hard road to acceptance.

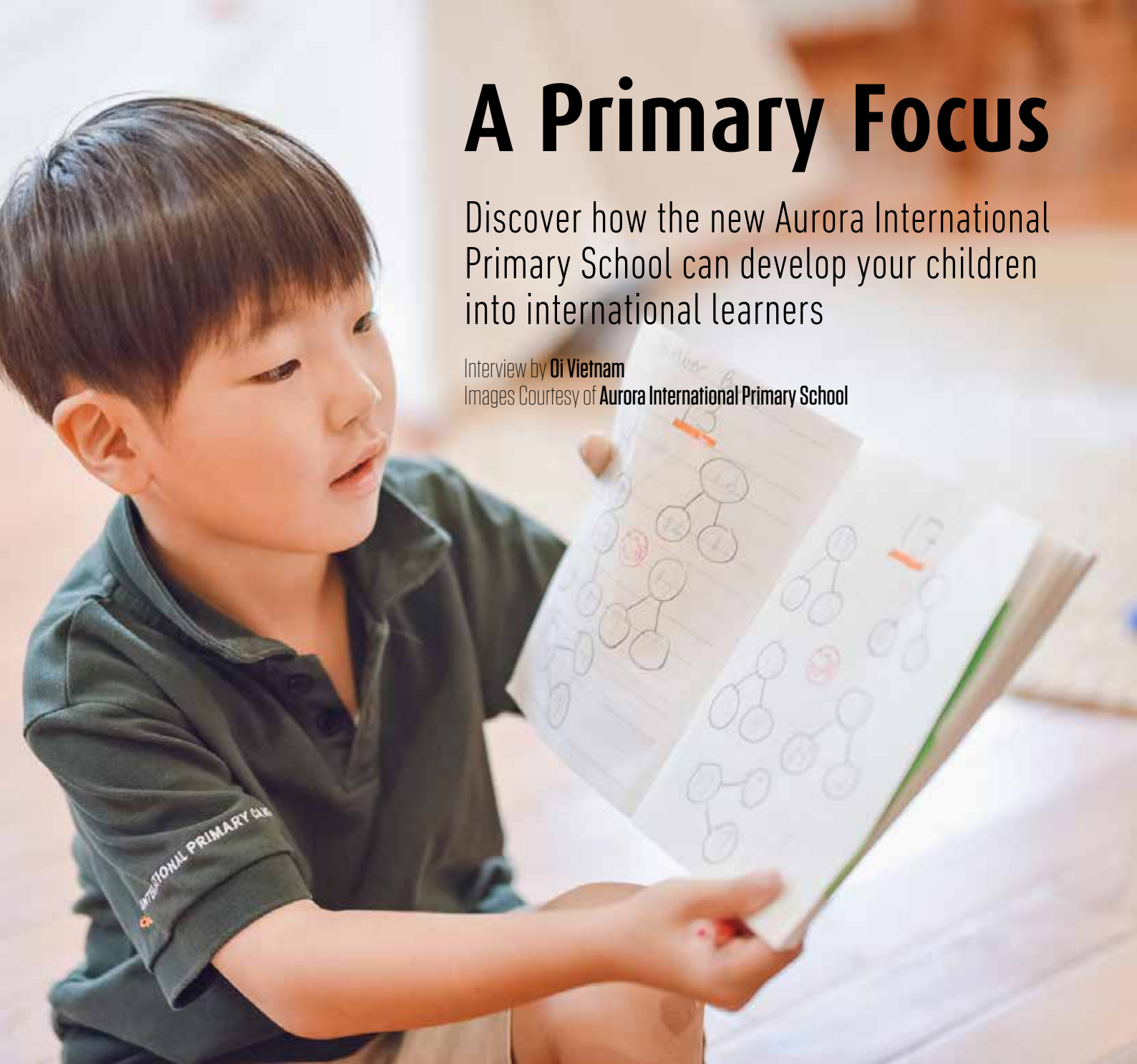
“My father was furious, he demanded to know—not expecting an answer—how many Vietnamese writers there were in the US. I said: ‘None. I guess I’ll be the first.’ From then on I worked hard to make sure I succeeded. Failure wasn’t an option. Just like it wasn’t for the many boat children whose families put every last penny into getting their children to the US to become doctors and lawyers.”

For Lam, the gamble paid off. As a young journalist writing for the Pacific News Service he won the Outstanding Young Journalist Award from the Society of Professional Journalists and has enjoyed a long and successful career with US NPR radio while gaining critical acclaim for his published non-fiction. These days, however, Lam is putting the reportage on hold and focusing on his creative writing.

“I’m a little tired of the politics,” he confided wearily to me. “There’s always something happening but nothing ever really changes. I want to focus on culture where things are fluid and changing—that’s more interesting for me right now.”

I get a sense that still waters are perhaps beginning to run a little deeper for Lam. Movement is tiring, and also perpetual: lasting growth rarely comes from it. Perhaps in the slower, more contemplative place of his fiction, then, the author is finally finding his way back home, to a place of more lasting change rooted in the quiet reserve of the East. ■





A Primary Focus

Discover how the new Aurora International Primary School can develop your children into international learners

Interview by **Oi Vietnam**

Images Courtesy of **Aurora International Primary School**

How was Aurora International Primary School born?

Following in the footsteps of the wonderfully successful Aurora International Preschool of The Arts program is Aurora International Primary School for children ages 6 to 12 years. Aurora International Primary School is committed to the implementation and development of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Programs. Aurora officially applied for candidature to offer the Primary Years Program (PYP) by the IB in September 2018. The PYP is to be followed from the Discovery Class (preschool age 5) up through all primary aged levels.

Can you give us some insights into the Aurora International Primary School's teaching philosophy? How does it differ from other pedagogues?

The aim of the PYP, to create a curriculum that is engaging, relevant, challenging and significant, is achieved through structured inquiry and the development of five essential elements: knowledge, concepts, skills, attitudes and action. While the PYP acknowledges the importance of traditional subject areas (language, mathematics, social studies, science, personal, social and physical education, and arts), it also recognizes the importance of acquiring a set of skills in context and of exploring content, which transcends the boundaries of the traditional subjects and is relevant, authentic and has meaning and purpose to students.

At Aurora International Primary School, our mission is to “inspire brave learners to shape the future” through our unique combination of the Reggio Emilia philosophy, the rigorous IB framework

and Vietnamese's cultural immersion. We embrace the Reggio Emilia philosophy of education for a variety of reasons. The approach honors the whole being and also holds a holistic “image of the child”—the physical, intellectual, emotional and social. Students are also understood as leaders and active protagonists in their learning, and teachers are viewed as facilitators and researchers who provoke student learning and help students generate their own hypotheses and theories. The approach also invites students to intrinsically develop the courage and confidence to further recognize their unrealized potentials. We offer a unique and complementary combination of the IB continuum of international education and the Reggio Emilia approach to honor and celebrate student-centered, constructivist, and inquiry-based approaches.



community to share their personal histories as well as their cultural identities. In gaining an appreciation of themselves, the students are then exposed to other cultures, making use of our diverse student population. With this in mind, cross-cultural celebrations are encouraged throughout Aurora. We encourage students, their families and friends to lead these events, whether it is reading stories to students in English or in another language, sharing food or celebrating festivals.

Tell us about the diversity of the teachers at the Primary Campus.

Our educators are greatly respected and valued at Aurora International Primary School. We fully understand that the quality of education and care that your child receives each day rests on the shoulders of these very special people. Indeed, all primary educators are carefully selected based on their experience, personal qualities and overall commitment to meeting Aurora's standard of care and professionalism. Aurora teachers hold a wide range of qualifications in education, and their expertise is highly respected within the educational community. Aurora teachers receive on-going professional development and its commitment to a quality PYP learning environment means that parents can feel confident and secure that their child is in professional caring hands. ■

At Aurora International Primary School, our curriculum is described as 'inquiry-based and conceptually driven', the daily routines included whole group, small group and individual investigations and research where concepts and issues were explored, and questions and provocations posed for the children to think about and explore more deeply. We promote the use of a range of assessment tools and strategies that are designed to give a clear picture of a student's prior knowledge and progress. Examples of these include daily reflections, individual children's learning journals, mid and end year research project publications, peer reviews, presentations, performances, installations and continua of learning.

At Aurora International Primary School, opportunities to share experiences between students, parents and teachers are a critical element in developing a sense of international mindedness. This begins with each student's ability to develop a sense of personal and community identity. We encourage all members of our

Aurora International Primary School is now open for enrolment for scholastic year 2019 – 2020, and offers special promotion for the 20 first children.



Aurora International Primary School
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Across Asia Youth Film Festival 20th April, 2019 - Vietnam

Text and Images Provided by ISHCMC

FOUNDED IN 2017, THE AAYFF gives emerging filmmakers from schools and institutions from around Asia the chance to reach a broad audience, and also generate conversations on their independent films. This year the third Across Asia Youth Film Festival (AAYFF) will be held at the International School of Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC) in Vietnam, after Singapore hosted the first two editions.

David Procter, AAYFF's founder, believes this move presents a great opportunity for both the festival and the country. "I'm really excited that the AAYFF has moved to Vietnam, where it can take in the rich culture of one of the most rapidly developing countries in Asia," he said.

"The festival has already seen a number of winning films from students in Vietnam, but I'm looking forward to seeing more submissions from the country this year. The AAYFF also provides a wonderful opportunity for the media and film industry in Vietnam to get involved with supporting youth film."

AAYFF also focuses on making local connections in the host country, which Procter hopes to achieve with this

year's edition. "It was very useful for the founding hosts, Tanglin Trust School, to have Disney, Lucasfilm, Mediacorp and HBO as neighbours in Singapore, but given how the Vietnamese film industry is blossoming, it will be exciting to see what connections can be made in HCMC," he shared.

For the 2019 edition, the festival will be joining with HBO who has been a loyal supporter of the AAYFF and young filmmakers. Canon will also join as a supporter of this year's festival in Vietnam.

Young filmmakers will have the exclusive opportunity to join workshops run by professionals within the industry on Saturday 20th April, hosted at ISHCMC's state-of-the-art Secondary campus. An Oscar-themed gala event will be hosted in the evening to honor short-listed films with the filmmakers and their families.

The gala event is open to all filmmakers and the community who would like to experience the AAYFF. You can reserve your place by emailing the team at info@aayff.com.

Learn more about the Across Asia Youth Film Festival at www.aayff.com.

International School Ho Chi Minh City
Secondary Campus
1 Xuan Thuy, Thao Dien Ward, D2, HCMC, Vietnam
Tel +84(28) 3898 9100



Bathwater Quality and Your Baby's Skin

Atopic Dermatitis - The hidden trigger





Dr. Jonathan Halevy is a graduate of the Sackler School of Medicine of Tel Aviv University and underwent his residency in the Pediatric Department of the Wolfson Medical Center in Israel. He is a published author on pediatric care—his Vietnamese-language book *Nuôi Con Sao Cho Đúng* on the subject of children's health was released in 2015.

OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, we have seen a dramatic rise in the number of babies who suffer from atopic dermatitis—both in Vietnam and around the world. Recently we have noticed more and more babies coming to our clinic with severe and hard-to-control eczema.

We know that genetics plays an important role in the development of atopic dermatitis. If there is a family history of atopic conditions (such as eczema, asthma, hayfever or food allergies in close relatives) the baby will have an increased risk of developing atopic dermatitis, as well as other atopic conditions. About 30% of babies who suffer from atopic dermatitis will also have food allergies that may exacerbate their skin inflammation.

Many children with atopic dermatitis, however, don't have a family history of atopy—which means genetics are not the only culprit. We know that there are many environmental factors that can affect the development of skin inflammation:

- Formula feeding (vs breastfeeding)
- Child birth via Cesarean section (vs natural delivery)
- Overuse of antibiotics early on in life
- Vitamin D deficiency

All of these are risk factors in developing atopic conditions. Environmental pollution also plays a significant role in triggering eczema, asthma and allergies.

It is a known fact and a daily reality to anyone who has been living in Vietnam for a while that our environment is becoming more and more polluted, especially in major cities like Ho Chi

Minh City, Hanoi and Da Nang. When we think about pollution, we usually think about what we see, hear, smell and breathe outside—mainly air pollution, noise, waste, garbage and plastic. We forget to look inside our homes.

It May be in the Water

One of the key factors in triggering atopic dermatitis is water pollution. The same water that reaches our sinks, baths and showers; the water we use to cook with and wash our dishes with is also used to wash ourselves and our babies. It's the same as the water in our swimming pools. What do we know about this water, and about what it may contain? And how might it affect us?

Several studies have been done to investigate the effects of "hard water" on our skin. "Hard water" is water that contains high levels of calcium, calcium carbonate, chlorine, magnesium and other heavy metals. This water usually has high pH levels, while our skin is mildly acidic (low pH). A few studies have been conducted on adults with and without a predisposition to atopy. The results showed that using "hard water" disturbs proteins and the bonds between skin cells, damaging the skin barrier as a result and leaving it prone to colonization and penetration by pathogenic bacteria and other harmful toxins. This triggered an inflammatory response—the eczema. This damage was most pronounced in people with a genetic predisposition to atopy, but also occurred in non-predisposed people.

Another study done on infants showed that babies who lived in areas with high levels of calcium carbonate in the water were more likely to develop eczema.

Urban Development and Water

The pace of urban development in Vietnam is rapid. The astonishing increase in new residential and commercial projects, buildings, apartments, offices and malls is staggering. You can find numerous projects that contain over thousands of apartments and shops, creating very crowded living areas. Urban populations are expanding as more people immigrate to the big cities. This inevitably results in a drastic increase in water demand and an urgent need to build a vast water supply system quickly. On the other hand, Vietnam's water resources are not infinite. In fact, they are probably gradually shrinking. More sources of water (rivers, lakes and reservoirs) are becoming polluted, and more and more households find themselves without easy access to clean water.

These factors combined will affect the quality of water that reaches our homes. It may compromise the ability to adequately control the water quality in water reservoirs and water pump stations; It may force contractors to use inferior water pipes and water systems. All these factors adversely affect the quality of water in our homes.

If your baby suffers from atopic dermatitis that is hard to treat; if his skin gets better every time you travel or go on vacation, then the culprit may be hiding in your shower. Check your home water quality in a reliable laboratory. If you can't, try using distilled bottled water for a few weeks for bathing—it might help improve your child's (and your own) skin condition. ■

>>The List Education

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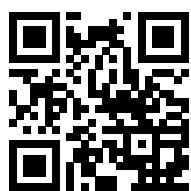
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