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Entertainment

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Read about Dinh Tung and his 3D creations on page 44-45

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Rewriting the Rules

Five steps to help HR prevent sexual harassment at work in the #MeToo era

IN THE WAKE OF THE

Harvey Weinstein scandal in the US, the #MeToo movement received a lot of attention around the world, especially from women. Women started detailing their personal experiences of sexual harassment on Twitter. Vietnam also felt the impact and published policy guidelines for companies under the management of the International Labor Organization (ILO) for reporting and addressing sexual harassment issues in the workplace. In the guidelines, sexual harassment is defined as an inappropriate act of sexual nature, which attacks the dignity of men and women by producing offense in the working environment.

In April 2019 *The Guardian* reported a research, carried out by Care International and the Fair Wear Foundation, which stated that among half of the working women in Vietnam, nearly one out of three has claimed to have suffered

sexual harassment in factories throughout various provinces in Vietnam.

A recent news article published in *VN Express* titled, "Blame the victim culture weakens #MeToo in Vietnam", reported an incident where a police investigation into a case of sexual harassment resulted in the culprit only receiving a fine of VND200,000. The victim was not satisfied with this penalty and was quoted as saying that it was a gesture to support culprits instead of victims by discouraging them during sexual harassment investigations. Today, offenders in Vietnam are only obligated to pay VND100,000 to VND300,000 in penalty for workplace harassment.

Revise Your Company Code of Conduct and Anti-harassment Policies

The first step to prevent sexual harassment at the workplace is to revise the company code of conduct policy according to updated labor laws. New

policies should be introduced to inform workers about the reporting procedure of sexual harassment. The names of people of respected authority should be stated to inform the victims to whom they can connect. It will support the practice of reporting of incidents in a comfortable environment. Every company should define the clear sexual harassment policy under the consideration of company culture by using understandable textual support. It should be included in the employee handbook to create ease in assessment and understanding for workers.

Execute Anti-harassment and Conflict Coaching Training for All Staff

Companies can save costs by moving from rights-based approach to interests-based approach to produce a win-win situation through effective resolution setup. The training of staff should be done not only related to ILO but also



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with personal conflict management coaching to handle real-life problems at the workplace. HR can surely help by designing a setup in which employees can get training from the beginning of their careers about acceptable and non-acceptable behaviors.

Implement an Online System to Report and Monitor Harassment

Online systems for reporting and monitoring sexual harassment incidents at the workplace will help employees to speak up about their painful experiences without fear of getting nominated. There are at least three ways to implement this practice for the benefits of employees. The complaint form can be generated and modified according to company policies and working culture.

a) *Employee Exit Survey*: It will help the employees give feedback on the culture of the company they are leaving. This should be completed by employee and supervisor. The employee will be able to provide more appropriate answers about their jobs and employers.

b) *Incident Report Form*: It includes proper documentation of incident in the company, which will help in reporting the unfortunate happenings to rescue other employees in the future. It will support in keeping detailed records of sexual harassment cases in the companies.

c) *Workplace Harassment Form*: This form is helpful to create awareness among employees and members of human resource department about types of workplace harassment and reporting methods along with penalties.

Apart from all these forms, the manager should try to console the victims by opening the doors for them

to listen about complains on workplace harassment.

Create a Customized Automatic Dispute Resolution System Process

In order to resolve the conflicts in-house, the dispute resolution system can provide essential help. Automatic Dispute Resolution (ADR) system will help to handle manageable conflicts before their landing in courts. Six major steps are included in this ADR system:

a) Checking compatibility of program with organization's goals.
b) Identifying major stakeholders to insert dispute resolution setup
c) Researching all the major types of dispute-resolution programs to find the most appropriate method to support vision of company. It can also include outside mediation or peer review involvement.

d) Designing the appropriate program for company, which is suitable through creating cross-functional teams at HR level.

e) Getting feedback from employees after designing a customized program by using surveys, team meetings, interviews, virtual meetings and roundtable talks. These methods will help you to handle concerns of end-users.

f) Designing an effective communication plan and project delivery strategy. You can decide whether you want to run a pilot program or move towards the widescale launch in the company.

Explore and Implement Flexible HR-Tech: Online Dispute Resolution for HR

When selecting an HR technology for receiving, managing and tracking workplace issues, it is most important to

think about:

- a) Information accessibility
- b) Ease of reporting
- c) Reporter privacy and protection
- d) Managed inclusion of all relevant team members

e) Auditability
f) Flexibility during resolution
When reports are made to the wrong authorities, or when the alleged perpetrator has the ability to be inappropriately informed or involved in a case, many risks emerge for both the company and its employees. These risks multiply in a digital world where data can flow more quickly and be retained more easily than it ever could on paper. Those picking an appropriate technology to support their ADR process should ask whether the platform can:

a) Be accessed through any computer or smart device

b) Let employees read all workplace contracts, policies, or manuals that are relevant to them

c) Understand issues that do not neatly fall into one specific classification

d) Securely report an incident to the appropriate authority

e) Manage asynchronous collaboration during issue resolution

f) Export an audit trail that is defensible if brought to any government agency or court

A customized dispute resolution system complimented with the right technology and training for implementing any ADR solution is often as important as the process itself. Many workplace issues do not fit into simple boxes, so using systems that stifle employee engagement by being overly specific or inflexible can derail any great program before it gets going. ■

Kids & Money

The most important lesson that doesn't always get taught to children

ARE YOUR KIDS SMART WITH MONEY? Almost certainly not. It is a known fact that many adults don't understand the basics of credit and debt. So, what chance do younger minds have at understanding savings and investing?

When I was a kid, all we were told was to open a post office account that gave no interest. It certainly didn't prepare me in any way for understanding basic fundamentals on banking, loans, credit cards and mortgages. It was never a subject that was discussed in my day during my school years. Although some schools have driven forward this topic with fervor in more recent times to prepare younger minds for the realities of the big bad world.

I recently started teaching grades 6 to 9 at ISHCMC as part of a "give back program, gratis" on finance, along with the help of some very good teaching staff. We run a 3-month program as an extra-curricular activity that engages the students to understand the world of finance better and allow them to participate in a 3-month stock trading game at the end of the sessions.

My hope is that this model will be taken up and rolled out to as many international schools that I can reach so as to fully arm students as they move into adulthood.

In Vietnam and in many other countries, the longer-term picture of financial planning never gets dealt with. In America alone, almost 60 percent of working adults have no retirement savings at all! What is even scarier is that many don't even have enough in the bank to pay a small unexpected bill of just USD400. That is reflected even worse in Vietnam.

Therefore it is down to parents to prepare our next generation to help them avoid a similar fate. Teach our children while they are young and it all starts at home. We teach our children about most other things: religion, politics, sex, drugs but financial literacy gets skipped and it should be high on

the agenda with the other subjects mentioned. The problem is what do you say and what do you teach. Kids start learning from the age of 3 on consumerism without you even recognizing it, for example picking up a branded box of cereal at the supermarket that they like.

What can we teach as basics that will set in stone as a fundamental understanding that can be carried into later life once they on their own? Every parent is different and will naturally make their own decisions on how best to educate their children about every subject. Sadly my parents didn't, as they fell into the bracket of not regarding it as a topic worth discussing. I guess it didn't hurt too much as I am now a 30-year veteran broker and financial advisor. So one shoe doesn't fit all.

Let Them Earn a Bit of Pocket Money

Have your children do chores. Some paid and some not. Put different values on different chores with harder tasks earning more pocket money. Cleaning their own room, for example, is not one of those paid chores but washing the dishes could be. The difference between what should be expected as normal behavior and what is a task.

Tax the Earnings

This one is harder because your children will see you as a demon. But as in real life, no one gets away without paying taxes. So take an element of their pocket money as taxes. Explain to them that this is how it will be throughout life and they need to budget accordingly from what they have earned to what they are saving for. Tax them on all elements of income such as birthday money and any other money they receive. And here is the trick. Place that money aside into a separate savings account and hand it back to them when they are looking to buy their first car. All of a sudden you will smell of roses. We don't always get thanks for our decisions as parents because children don't see the end



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game. I don't think too many parents will disagree on that point. It is a case of "being cruel to be kind".

Allow a Bit of Spending

Naturally, all that hard work has to show some benefit. Let them buy items that they have been desperately looking to get— a comic book or toys. Let them consider the cost of the items against what they have saved. Can they afford it? It is very easy to dip into the pocket and just buy it as an adult and that will always happen but should only happen on occasion. We aren't living in Victorian times after all, so gifts will always be offered perhaps for good behavior. It should help enforce a good relationship with money and its value. The key is enforcing a mindset of earn/spend ratios.

Encourage Saving

Disappointment may happen occasionally when your young one realizes that they don't quite have enough money yet to purchase an item. Usually with bigger ticket items for a child—a bike, games console or smartphone—all of which may need to be agreed on even if you are adding a percentage to the pot. Perhaps match a percentage of savings as they build that pot of funds. Training for longer-term goals is exactly the same as saving for a house, car or holidays in the future as an adult.

By teaching our kids foundational principles of spending and saving at an early age, we can help them form positive financial habits that will last their entire lives.

Even my son had to be told "no" on occasion. At the time I was the evil father but now looking back he gets it... Thankfully. ■



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COUPLES TIE THE KNOT IN A MASS WEDDING ON VIETNAM'S NATIONAL DAY.

The event has been organized on this special occasion every year by the Center for Assisting Youths and Workers, under the municipal Youth Union, for over a decade. Some of the couples got their marriage registration done years ago and already have children, but it was not until yesterday that they could finally have a wedding ceremony. Several said that they had been waiting for nearly 20 years to have a wedding of their own. Nhan, a 34-year-old disabled swimmer, has been married to a security guard for years but the couple was never able to financially afford a wedding reception. The Ho Chi Minh City Youth Union has held 12 mass wedding events since 2008, helping 922 men and women tie the knot.

18,000

LETTERS HAVE BEEN WRITTEN BY AN 81-YEAR-OLD HANOI MAN TO HELP FAMILIES FIND GRAVES OF FALLEN SOLDIERS.

Nearly half a century since the American war in Vietnam came to an end, the remains of more than 300,000 soldiers who fell during the war have yet to be reunited with their families, who have spent decades searching for them, according to the *Vietnam News Agency*.

Nguyen Tien Xuan, a Hanoi resident whose eldest brother never returned from the battlefield, understands the sorrows faced by these families. Xuan started writing letters to the families of fallen soldiers in 2007 after discovering a program on Radio the Voice of Vietnam, which shared information on the unclaimed remains of soldiers buried at cemeteries across the country.

While listening to each episode of the program, Xuan noted down all the information in order to send it to the affected families. Once the letter is written, Xuan rides his bicycle six kilometers to the local post office where, thanks to support from the local war invalids and social affairs office, he is able to send it without paying for a postage stamp. So far, he has helped 336 families locate their fallen family members' graves.



5 MILLION

TOURISTS VISITED TRANG AN IN AUGUST. LOCATED ABOUT 90KM SOUTH OF HANOI, NINH BINH IS KNOWN AS "HA LONG BAY ON LAND", GIVEN ITS LIMESTONE MOUNTAINS

rising out of paddy fields. The most famous local attraction is the Trang An Landscape Complex, which has been expanded over recent years and gained popularity for its green fields, mountains, caves and forests. Together with other famous sites in the province such as Tam Coc Grottoes and Van Long Lagoon, the Trang An Landscape Complex was also used as a location for the movie *Kong: Skull Island*.

The Trang An tourism complex has a total of 40 tourism spots of historical, cultural, art and natural vestiges including 20 recognized as national heritages. In 2014, it was officially recognized as a mixed cultural and natural heritage by UNESCO thanks to its outstandingly natural & cultural values.



60 MILLION

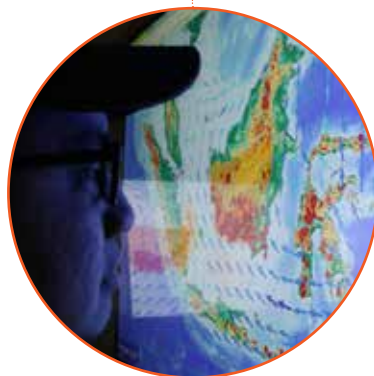
USERS IS THE GOAL FOR THE NEWLY LAUNCHED LOTUS NETWORK.

With the theme "Content is King", the VND700 billion network, run by VCCorp, will attract users with diverse and quality content. Nguyen The Tan, VCCorp's general director, said Lotus was working with more than 500 content creators in various fields such as education, lifestyle and economics to attract users to the network. Lotus also asked celebrities in different fields to add more content and attract more users. There are nearly 100 commitments made for Lotus' content. Tan said, "On Lotus, everyone will be a content creator. We'll provide tools so that the users can easily make their own fresh and beautiful entries." Earlier this year, Information and Communication Minister Nguyen Manh Hung called for the creation of a homegrown social media network and search engine to replace Facebook and Google. The latest data shows there are more than 50 million Facebook users in Vietnam. On September 15, the first made-in-Vietnam social network, Gapo, launched with two million users.

~2,500

FIRE HOTSPOTS WERE OBSERVED IN ASEAN LAST MONTH.

The number of hotspots in the Southeast Asian region vacillated though tending to increase, said Mulyono R. Prabowo, deputy head of the Indonesian Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency (BMKG). The hotspots were observed in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Vietnam, Timor Leste, and Thailand. No transboundary haze was detected in spite of the presence of hotspots. The agency has urged the public to remain vigilant of likely forest fires, air pollution and drought. Indonesia has been facing a severe dry season induced by El Nino that triggered drought and forest fires in several provinces this year. Eight provinces in Indonesia are susceptible to forest fires, but only six have declared an emergency status for forest fires from 90 to 323 days, an official from the Indonesian Environmental Affairs and Forestry Ministry noted recently.



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

Parvo Prevention

Parvo, the number one infectious disease in Vietnam

What is feline parvo virus?

Feline parvovirus is a leading cause of death in cats in Vietnam. The disease is also called feline distemper or feline panleucopenia virus. While cats of any age may be infected with the feline parvovirus, young kittens, sick cats and unvaccinated cats are most susceptible.

The virus has appeared in all parts of Vietnam and can occur throughout the entire year (but more so during the rainy seasons) and in most countries as well. The virus is extremely resilient and can survive in the environment for long periods of time, a constant threat to other cats. Kennels, pet shops, animal shelters, unvaccinated feral cat colonies, and other areas where groups of cats are housed together appear to be the main reservoirs for the virus.

How can you recognize the symptoms?

Symptoms of the parvo virus include lethargy, fever, lack of appetite, bloody vomiting and diarrhea. Affected cats often die rapidly from dehydration and massive secondary infection.

Can feline parvovirus be cured?

There is no antivirus or medicinal cure for feline parvovirus. The survival of affected cats will depend greatly on the health and condition of the cat itself, how quickly the condition is diagnosed, and how the infection is managed as it progresses. Cats will normally be taken in as inpatients at veterinary practices and intensively nursed with IV fluids and supplementary feeding.

Before moving to Vietnam, I've been facing this disease in different countries in Europe and the disease has always been a challenge to treat, but I've never seen such a quick deterioration in cats as I've seen it here in Vietnam.

How to protect your cat?

Feline parvovirus is much better prevented than treated. Highly effective vaccines are available and all cats and kittens should be vaccinated (including indoor-only cats). Most young kittens receive their first vaccination between six and eight weeks of age and follow-up vaccines are given until the kitten is around 16 weeks of age. Adult vaccination is highly recommended as yearly booster as long your cat lives in Vietnam. ■



Pet of the Month



Robinson

Senior cat Robinson has come such a long way. It is hard to recognize him as the emaciated and weak old man who first arrived at ARC last November. We named him after Robinson Crusoe because he looked like he had been lost at sea for years.

Robinson is about 10 years old. When ARC took him in, he was very thin. He weighed only 3.2 kgs on his large frame that should be, and now is, over 5 kgs. We thought that he would need medical treatment forever and that his bald patches were permanent, however, in the care of a dedicated foster, Robinson has made great progress. His hair has grown back, he no longer needs medication, just careful attention to his diet, and he has started to play like a youngster! Robinson is happy with his own company and is used to being alone during the day—he just dozes happily until his human comes home, when he is ready for a cuddle.

Robinson is looking for a loving and peaceful home where he can be the only cat. If you or someone you know could offer him that, please get in touch.



Image by Sawano Newell

Harris

We've featured him before, and Harris is still available for adoption! Harris had multiple health issues when he arrived at Saigon Pet Clinic (SPC) and almost died. Now though, thanks to the expertise of the vets and staff of SPC and the care provided by his wonderful foster family, most of Harris's health issues have been overcome.

Harris is around nine years old, so is in the senior dog category. He enjoys walks, sleeping in the sun, being with people, and spending time around other dogs. Harris has diabetes but this is not the focus of his life, and his fosters have found that his easy-going and loving demeanor make Harris a joy to have around.

Adopting a Senior Pet

We have focused here on senior animals available for adoption through ARC to highlight the plight of older animals in shelters. At many shelters, potential adopters often consider animals over the age of four or five to be old and are less willing to adopt them. However, if you can open your heart and home to a senior animal, you will find yourself blessed with a happy and grateful new companion.

There are many benefits to adopting a senior animal. What you see is what

you get with a senior cat or dog, and there are fewer surprises than with a young animal still pushing boundaries while learning about life with humans. A senior animal still enjoys play and activity, but being less energetic means the animal will be less destructive and generally calmer with children and visitors.

Potential adopters may also believe senior animals are in the shelter due to behavior problems, yet cats and dogs end up in shelters for many reasons

that frequently are not the fault of the animal. Particularly in Vietnam, the animal may have been rescued from a dangerous situation, or it may have been raised on a construction site then abandoned when the building was completed. People also occasionally leave their animals behind when they leave Vietnam, which is incredibly sad, since the cat or dog is left homeless and abandoned for a reason unrelated to the animal itself. ■

If you would like more information on Robinson or Harris, or more information on adopting a senior animal, please get in touch with ARC by email at arcpets@gmail.com. Don't shop, adopt, and if you adopt a senior animal, you won't regret it!

Renew, Restore and Rebalance



Design a life of peaceful intention and laidback luxury at Lobster Bay Lombok Villas and Residences

Text by **Dana McNairn**

Images Provided by **Lobster Bay Lombok Villas and Residences**

THE FIVE-STAR HOTEL MARKET is due for a shakeup and a new boutique resort is planning on doing just that.

Lobster Bay Lombok Villas and Residences is located on Lombok Island in Indonesia, the island right next door to Bali. Andrew Clarke, founder of Lobster Bay Lombok, has spent much time in the region working and traveling, so he has a feel for it when he says the tranquil island is “the next Bali.” His vision is clear. Take a direct flight to Bali for a couple of days of eating, shopping and the nightlife, and then it’s just a short hop to Lombok to take in empty white sand beaches and lush forests. He says the vibe is pure chill out. “We’re laidback and barefoot, not shiny and sparkly,” he says, “without sacrificing the luxury or the service.” Fashion designer and founder of Umbrella, Doan Quynh

Nhi, is Andrew’s wife and Lobster Bay business partner. “It’s an exotic location,” she says, “that maybe isn’t someplace you’ve been to yet.”

Andrew and Nhi, based in Ho Chi Minh City, also have a deep understanding of what it means to live, work and holiday in Vietnam. Lobster Bay Lombok is the opportunity to *really* get away and have that chilled out holiday perhaps previous holidays closer to home didn’t quite deliver. Andrew says the resort offers an accessible exotic adventure.

He describes concepts in the hospitality and tourism industry, citing competitors such as The Anam, Banyan Tree and Six Senses. “Every decade or so someone comes in and shakes up the formula,” he says, clearly placing Lobster Bay as the next disrupter. The resort’s soft opening in summer 2020

will set a new benchmark for five-star eco luxury. Set on generous land parcels and incorporating traditional Indonesian design, each of the 52 boutique villas has its own pool and spacious indoor and outdoor living areas. Buyers have their choice of one- and two-bedroom villas and each one of them has a sea view. The resort is spread out over seven hectares to ensure privacy and tranquility, something else he notes as unusual in this market.

People want experiences and Lobster Bay delivers: a 1,200 hectare eco-park is next door and there’s hiking and biking to waterfalls, tropical forests and volcanic lakes. Marine adventures include snorkeling, diving and sailing. Back on land guests and residents can choose from the Beach Club on the surf’s edge for toes-in-sand drinks,





casual dining at SATU restaurant or in the Clubhouse overlooking the bay below. Lobster Bay operates under a farm-to-table principle with its own organic farm, use of seasonal local produce and chemical-free food, with many options for vegetarians and vegans. The resort also offers day-spa services, gym, tennis court, an organic garden for strolling and contemplation, shopping at the artisan food boutique and best of all, a Kids' Club and pool to keep every family member entertained. Or you can just soak up the chill vibes by your villa pool and completely switch off. Whether you want to indulge, explore or recharge, Andrew says it's all within easy reach.

Also raising the bar is the resort's pledge to sustainability with certified and eco-friendly materials used throughout such as fully certified teak, off-grid water and electricity supply, electric vehicles, solar panels, and the no-waste and upcycling policy. Andrew says he's committed to a "people, planet, profit" philosophy. "We're building a consciously ecologically responsible property," he says. "It's been designed with deep respect for the environment and the people who live here." Future plans include incentivizing rubbish collection and making ecobricks. Anjani Charity Foundation is the philanthropic arm of the resort which provides scholarships and training for youth and adults to transition the local

community from subsistence farming to growing vegetable crops and fruit trees, as well as provide employment opportunities within the resort.

Andrew anticipates high occupancy levels due to basic supply and demand. There are currently no five-star luxury hotels in the area and demand is increasing in an opening market. Over the next two years south Lombok is expected to onstream over 2,000 new four- and five-star hotel rooms. The good news is the local authorities have future-proofed the island. The government has built new roadways and the airport according to a careful eco-tourism master plan, to absorb tourism in an intentional way.

Andrew says this has been a very personal journey of love and discovery nearly a decade in the making. When he first went to Lombok, there was no airport and no roads, and he lost his shoes in a muddy rut heading up the hill that was to become Lobster Bay Lombok. But the footwear was quickly forgotten when he got to the top and saw the view out to the Java Sea. He says he fell in love. Nhi laughs and agrees the views over the bay are stupendous, but there was something else special for her. "Oh, it's the sunsets, of course," she smiles. "They're incredible!" ■

For more info on Lobster Bay Lombok Villas and Residences, visit www.lobsterbaylombok.com





54

Documenting Vietnam's 54 ethnic minority groups

Text by **James Pham**
Images by **Réhahn**

AT FIRST GLANCE, VIETNAM'S population might seem like a rather homogeneous one. The same language is spoken throughout the country (barring slight variations in pronunciation by region) and to a non-discerning eye, Vietnamese people share similar physical traits, with little to differentiate people who live in Hanoi from people who live in HCMC.

However, for culturally curious souls, Vietnam has a rich and diverse tapestry of ethnicities and cultures not found in most guidebooks just waiting to be explored.

While the majority of Vietnamese are "Kinh", tucked away in the country's lightly-touristed highlands, coastal regions, and in quiet villages throughout the Mekong Delta, are approximately 14 million people who belong to one of Vietnam's 53 other ethnic minority groups, many with distinct languages, fascinating histories, and rich cultures.

In the larger cities, members of these groups can often be found in small ethnic enclaves far from the typical tourist areas, bounded together by the draw of better education and jobs. If casual visitors do

interact with ethnic minorities, it's likely to be in the hills of Sapa in Vietnam's north, where many H'Mong and other minority women and children leave their homes in the terraced rice fields to sell trinkets to tourists.

It was here in 2011 that French photographer Réhahn had his first serendipitous encounter with Vietnam's ethnic groups. "Initially, when I moved to Vietnam, I was interested in visiting and photographing the epic landscapes that the country is known for; however, the more I started to travel the more I realized how rich and diverse the different cultures are depending on the region that I was in," he explained. "The first ethnic groups I met were the Dao and the H'Mong in Sapa and I was intrigued by the differences in their traditional costumes and language. I wanted to learn more to truly understand the heritage of this beautiful country."

That first contact served to whet Réhahn's cultural appetite. "Little by little I met more groups and each time it was like looking through a small part of a window but not being able to see the whole picture. When I finally decided to attempt to meet all 54 officially documented groups the rest of the project fell into place."

Based in Hoi An, Vietnam, Réhahn's nearly decade-long quest to meet, photograph, and document all of Vietnam's ethnic groups recently came to an end this summer when he met members of the 54th and final group. The result of this Herculean task is the Precious Heritage Museum, a simple yet meaningful 500sqm space opened in early 2017 dedicated to showcasing the entire range of Vietnam's ethno-cultural diversity.

"I feel that knowledge can create understanding," Réhahn says of the motivation behind his project. "My goal is to document these 54+ different cultures with respect so that others can witness the beauty of their traditions."

The museum offers free entrance to view Réhahn's mesmerizing portraits



as well as rare costumes and artefacts from the groups he's visited in hopes that increased interest in these minority groups may encourage them to maintain their traditional yet fast-disappearing way of life.

His photographic journey has taken him to extremely remote areas of Vietnam, searching for tribes with only a handful of remaining members. Asked which group left the biggest impression on him, Réhahn said: "It's hard to choose one group because there are so many that have enriched my journey. As part of my Giving Back project I built a museum for one ethnic group called the Co Tu because I was inspired by their passion to preserve their culture. I visit them often because they live near my home in Hoi An. I was also touched by some of the smallest tribes such as the O Du and the Brau because their dwindling populations mean that their languages and cultural traditions risk disappearing over time."

His travels have resulted in some incredible images, providing a rare glimpse into scenes few are privileged to witness. One image that deeply resonated with us shows an intimate moment between a young M'Nông girl (taken near Dak Lak, in Vietnam's Central Highlands) and her elephant, a clear bond of complete trust between the two.

While some of Réhahn's images capture children, he's best known for his portraits of elderly men and women who are bursting with personality, wisdom and stories. "I like very old people with wrinkles and a beard that takes 30 years to grow," he says. When he enters a village, he'll also look for older ones because they're typically the only ones still wearing traditional costumes featuring handmade



textiles, which often feature dyed hemp using natural indigo dye and intricate needlework or even batik.

"I know from my travels that Vietnam is quickly in the process of changing and developing," he told My Modern Met. "I believe that it is important to create a record of Vietnam now. It is a rare moment in history to find a country so open to the world but still containing an incredible amount of diversity and untouched terrain."

However, that window into areas virtually untouched by the outside world is quickly closing. "Many of the tribes are being confronted with new access to the modern world as roads are built closer and closer to their tribal lands. It is a challenge for the ethnic groups to try to find the balance between technology like smartphones and the internet, and the old ways of their culture. Some of their ancient traditions are already on the way to disappearing. Everything has two sides. Tourism can help the tribes get more income for their villages but it can also change, and even erase, the culture."

If in Hoi An, visit the Precious Heritage Museum at 26 Phan Boi Chau, a quiet, leafy street known for its many colorful art galleries just east of the Hoi An Market.

While many of Vietnam's ethnic minority groups are tucked away in difficult-to-reach places, here are some ways to enjoy authentic experiences with relatively minimal fuss:

* In the Mekong Delta, south of Ho Chi Minh City, there's a vibrant Khmer community based in Can Tho, the Delta's largest city. Just minutes from the Cambodian border, the riverside town of Chau Doc is also home to a few Cham villages, complete with mosques and communal halls.

* In Dalat, hire a guide and driver (motorbike tours are also available) for the day and explore the lovely countryside filled with waterfalls

and greenhouses. Many of the coffee plantations are owned by the Co Ho tribe, some of the original residents of the area before it became a French hill station during colonial times.

* In Vietnam's north, why not book a homestay with a local H'mong family and see first-hand how they live? The options are incredibly varied, from multi-room, dorm-style buildings to single family homes set right in the middle of the terraced rice fields. Closer to Hanoi, the Mai Chau Valley is home to the White Thai with their unique stilt homes. Mai Chau is fast becoming known as an adventure destination, where cultural visits can be combined with outdoor activities including kayaking, rock climbing and caving. ■



URBAN SCRAWLS

Images by David Dredge











Premier Village Phu Quoc Resort

Where The Sun Meets The Ocean

Text and Images Provided by Premier Village Phu Quoc Resort

PHU QUOC ISLAND IS HEADING to the most beautiful season of the year. Premier Village Phu Quoc Resort—a 5-star resort on the pearl island where guests can watch both the sunset and sunrise—is the perfect choice to enjoy sunny days with family and friends. Uniquely locating at the southern tip of the island, stretching along the strip of Ong Doi Cape and inheriting two sides of the sea, Premier Village Phu Quoc Resort is one of the rare resorts in the world for travelers to experience the nature of its best beauty. The resort is referred to by tourists as a true paradise with silver sunrises and purple sunsets, blue sea in harmony with endless sky, pristine beaches stretching around the curves of the mountain.

Catch the Sunrise or Sunset from a Private Villa

Premier Village Phu Quoc Resort owns 217 villas with modern luxurious amenities and private pool, suitable for couples, families or groups of friends. With a wide selection of Villas: On the Rock Villa, Ocean View Villa, Beachfront Villa, and Island Villa. Every stay at Premier Village Phu Quoc Resort, guests will have different exciting experiences.



Villa

Relaxation for a Wonderful Trip

One of the prides of Premier Village Phu Quoc Resort is its infinity pool stretching from the East to the West sea. Next to the pool are the Kids' Club, Deli, and Grocery Store for guests' convenience.

No vacation will not be complete without relaxing moments at the Spa. Nestled on a high hill overlooking the resort, Plumeria Spa is loved for its sophistication and lightness, and beautiful sunset view. Wellness, yoga, gym, or recreation activities will help

visitors regain positive energy, making every vacation full of pleasure.

At dawn or dusk, Premier Village Phu Quoc Resort is dressed in an enchanting and splendid appearance. In the peaceful nature of Premier Village Phu Quoc Resort, let yourself immerse in a happy holiday on the tropical island. ■

For reservation and more details, please contact:

Email: HB2R4@accor.com

Phone Number: 0297 354 6666

www.premiervillage-phuquoc.com



BBQ on the beach

Every morning, the sun's first ray of lights will shine on your bed, or every afternoon your family can watch the sunset from the balcony. All your stress erased by the splendor of nature.

Culinary Arts for a Balanced Life

Located within Premier Village Phu Quoc Resort are several classy and cozy restaurants. Corallo restaurant, situated by the beach, serves international dishes with carefully selected and fresh ingredients of the highest quality. The menu is designed by a 5-star chef to bring an interesting culinary experience to customers. A BBQ every weekend will definitely make the s even more wonderful with seafood and wine right on the beach.

The Market Restaurant serves traditional Vietnamese dishes. With the philosophy of balancing the Five Elements in culinary art, The Market is the choice for family and friend gatherings.

What could be better than a seaside meal, enjoying not only the delicious food but also traditional culture and a relaxation. With dedication and experience in every dish, dining is sure to be one of the most impressive things about Premier Village Phu Quoc Resort.



Spa



The Market

A woman with long dark hair and bangs, smiling, is wearing a black Vietnamese dress with pink floral embroidery and a black sheer scarf. She is holding a large bouquet of pink roses. The background is a light-colored textured wall.

Coming Home **Again**

In 1974 Thanh Lan was at the height of her career in Saigon, now 45 years later she returns to the city to relive her glory days

Text by **Michael Arnold**

A VOICE HAS RETURNED TO

Saigon that has been absent for a long time and is once again home. First returning to Saigon in 2017 after an absence of 24 years, Thanh Lan has come back to us, singing once more the ballads and old folk songs that recall a lost age for a new generation of admirers, the children of those who loved her decades ago.

It was during the city's "golden age" of music—which lasted from the 60s into the early 70s—that Thanh Lan was considered one of Saigon's sweetest songstresses and a darling of the romantic movies that were made at the time. In 1974, she was named Saigon's most beautiful actress; she was the last woman of her era to receive the award, making her something of a time capsule of the age.

A large part of her appeal was the fact that she seemed to do it naturally; the music seemed to come to her as easily as speech, and her honeyed vocal notes were all the more intoxicating in Saigon's 60s and 70s for being steeped in the passionate inflections of an eternal romantic.

"I did not have to fight to become famous. I did not look for fame. I just wanted to look for love," breathes Thanh Lan, now in her early 70s and yet still lit with the enthusiasm of the young performer she once was. "So when I sing, and people love me, I feel good. And so I did that. I never guessed that one day it would be my profession."

Thanh Lan is back, but Saigon was already fading before the slow cascade of modern development caked over the soporific grace of the city she remembers. Her childhood, spent in the outskirts of Dakao where she would often wander through the stately open courtyards of the Jade Emperor pagoda neighboring her home, is a story that could only have belonged to that age. The granddaughter of a mandarin who once taught the last Nguyen emperor Bao Dai, she was raised in a multilingual household where French and sometimes English were spoken as often as Vietnamese.

She was also schooled from an early age in the sounds of the music her parents loved; heavy vinyl records scratching out wonderful old crooners like Johnny Mathis and the smooth pop vocals of Connie Francis. At the age of nine, she began to study music herself with a nun at her Catholic elementary school, St. Paul's—and by the time she attended the prestigious Marie Curie High School, she was already singing

solo on Saigon radio.

Thanh Lan's education in French gave her a different view of the world than most people living in Vietnam had at that time. She read at least a book a week, submerging herself in literary romances and classics in translation from English and Spanish. She was a language lover, studying German and Russian and Japanese, and was intent on becoming a teacher one day and passing on her gift. She retains her multilingual talents even today; our interview is conducted effortlessly in English.



Thanh Lan Miss Cinéma, 1974

Her destiny, however, proved to be music—much to the delight of the legions of fans who fell for her, and who still love her today.

"At first I sang classic songs from the 40s and 50s, written by composers in North Vietnam, before we moved to music from the south, because at that time, there were not many good songs," she recalls. "So we started by singing those old songs. And then in the 60s and 70s, there were a lot of new composers, writing so many good songs about the war, about lovers separated by the war, all that stuff. I started to sing on TV very often, and then I became a movie star."

"I was like the girl next

door," she sighs. "I am not saying that everybody was in love with me. But I was certainly cherished by all the students and young officers. I used to have a lot of photos to send away for my fans. They would write letters, send them to my address, and I would respond and put a signed photo in with the letter. It was very sweet, but sadly we don't do that anymore."

Throughout her early career, Thanh Lan was still living with her parents. "I did not need money to survive," she says, "so what I wanted most in life was to give happiness to people. When I sing, and I look at people looking at me, smiling with bright eyes, I feel close to them. And I feel that I'm doing something good for them, for society. And mostly, since it has become my profession, I can take care of myself with my singing. I don't need to lean on anybody."

For most of the past 25 years, Thanh Lan has lived in the US, where she continued her career singing to the large community of Vietnamese resident in the States. In that different world, however, her music at first took on a different and more painful cultural context. In spite of this, Thanh Lan has remained in the public eye throughout her time overseas, and is now always a cherished entertainer everywhere she goes—Europe, Canada, Asia, Australia and the US—as her romantic performance style has only grown stronger.

"I think my spirit is busy," Thanh Lan explains. "I share people's sufferings, that's why when I sing or when I act, I imagine myself in that position. I don't really act; I became that woman. That's how I do it. There's no technique, nothing—nothing. Nothing I

need to think about. I just live with the moment.

"There were some misunderstandings when I first arrived in California in 1994, before the embargo was released. Anyway—I'm still fine, I'm here to stay as long as I can. Because I still love the stage."

As a public figure, Thanh Lan knows that for those who love her music, there's one thing more than anything else she means to them.

"Actually, it's my fans who are taking care of my life. When they came to see me, it was them who helped me to live happily, helped me to cope with my life," she smiles. "You know, my fans, when they meet me, they still say, 'when we see you, we see Saigon.'" ■

The Woman in *White*

Nha Mot 9192's (www.facebook.com/Nha-Mot-9192) crepe wedding dresses are the epitome of a modern bride and will make you feel royal and elegant. Curve-hugging silhouettes, understated design, and feminine flourishes come together to create the ultimate modern wedding dresses. Whether your wedding will be celebrated under the stars on a city rooftop or in the garden surrounded by delicate spring blooms, these simple, elegant wedding dresses are the perfect option for a modern bride.











METISEKO MOODBOARD
IMAGE PROVIDED BY METISEKO

Designers



Patterns & People

A portrait of Audrey Charles, the Creative Director of Metiseko. She is a woman with dark, curly hair, wearing a dark purple long-sleeved shirt. She is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a calm expression. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some green foliage.

Audrey Charles, the Creative Director behind fashion label Metiseko, talks cultural inspiration, textile designing and respecting local artisans

Interview by **Christine Van**
Images Provided by **Metiseko**

Audrey Charles

Prior to your post as Creative Director at Metiseko, you also worked in interior and furniture design. What drew you to the world of textile art and fashion designing? How are the two industries different and similar?

I studied textile design with a major in print creation, which opens up a lot of opportunities. Prints are not only found on textile; they are omnipresent on a wide range of materials such as ceramic, stone, lacquer, brass, wood, etc. In Vietnam, they are also prevailing in lots of crafts and products made of woven materials like rattan, sea grass, bamboo, etc., which connects textile design and interior design. Thus, I've also worked with interior design brands as a print designer. It was an enriching experience because it allows for many different approaches with endless possibilities, especially when working with three-dimensional objects.

What makes the two fields different is volume. To create the impression

of volume on a 2D surface in textile, designers have to come up with different types of graphic treatments.

Textile design and design, in general, is everywhere but we oftentimes don't think about the people who create these omnipresent parts of our lives. Can you walk us through the process of designing a pattern?

It's true that the textile design sphere is unknown and overlooked by most consumers, although it represents a considerable share of the creative fashion process. In its simplified terms, the steps are: inspiration, research, ideation, concept, sketching, coloring, print repeat composition, technical package for supplier and sampling.

Textile design is one of the key elements that sets Metiseko apart because our fabrics cannot be found elsewhere. Therefore, this plays a big role in the information we communicate to our

customers, so that they understand the uniqueness of the fabrics and the story that each one of them tells about Vietnam.

Metiseko's brand identity is strongly linked to Vietnam's culture and identity, how is this reflected in its textiles and collection?

Metiseko tells stories about Vietnam; it's about anecdotes referring to things we experienced. Our creative process comes from the surrounding elements, traditions, culture and details that make up this country. Vietnam has a strong impact on our thematic prints, colors and graphics.

How do you ensure you are honoring their cultural significance when using them in your collection?

We make a point to sticking to reality, to inquire about the subject we deal with in order to highlight and respect culture and traditions. There is a respectful transformation and recognition of traditional cultural expressions that are evident in our prints and company ethics.

Metiseko partners with one of the last silk hand screen-printing workshop in Central Vietnam for all its silk items. How did you find them and why choose this traditional method when digital screen-printing is available and faster?

Metiseko aims to showcase local *savoir-faire* and that is why we make a point of working with local artisans who are still using traditional hand printing techniques. While digital printing may be faster, it is more expensive and we find the finish of the colors less interesting than hand screen-printing.

Working closely with skillful artisans that are fighting to sustain their livelihood is very important to us. Each step is managed by skilled artisans who have a keen eye, which is an important aspect of quality control. These artisans have often spent several years honing their craft to ensure the perfect final product. It's a way of paying tribute to the Vietnamese heritage.

What media/design tools do you like to use? What are your go-to-sources for design inspiration?

For research I use Pinterest and for general trends I browse digital channel NOWNESS and Instagram. Blogs such as printpattern.blogspot.com, patternbank.com, www.creativeboom.com, www.itsnicethat.com and www.dazeddigital.com are great online resources, too. For runway inspiration I go to *Vogue*, *Elle*, *NowFashion* and *The Cut* along with French magazine *ETAPES* and the French press.

Favorite tool you use in your creative practice?

Always a notebook and felt pen because hand sketching remains a key component of the creative process.

What are the best things about working as a designer in Vietnam?

I would say it's the constant inspiration the country has to offer, especially being able to work with diverse local talents and artisans who are experts in their field—this allows us to explore different techniques in both fashion and production. Seeing the country's booming art scene evolve is also a great experience for a designer here.

Artists and designers who inspire you?

There are too many to list, however, some names that come to mind are Baskia, the Bouroullec brothers, Egon Schiele, Marimekko, Rothko, Daniel Henri Studio, Zika Ascher as well as plenty of unknown local artists.

What type of materials do you prefer to work with?

As much as possible, sustainable materials, natural, local and recycled. I personally also have a strong interest in textile innovation such as high tech textile.

What would you describe as the most significant development in contemporary textiles within the last five years, especially in Vietnam?

The most significant by far is the recent rising awareness on sustainability in the production process in the textile and garment industries. It triggers a strong reaction within the fashion community as a whole—it's a big step forward.

What prints and colors do you see becoming more popular in the future? Gingham, camo, something we might not expect?

Fashion is a never-ending cycle; old trends will always make a comeback as mainstream trends. I would say extra large-scale prints and stripes, ethnic-inspired prints and the abolishment of boundaries between fashion fabrics and upholstery fabric are part of the upcoming trends. Also look out for unexpected mix and match prints.

What are your current favorite print and pattern trends right now in fashion?

Oversized and bold graphic prints.

Metiseko prides itself on being a sustainable fashion brand, any tips on being a more conscious fashion consumer?

Answering this question is very complex and it's not all black or white. Like in *The Legend of the Hummingbird* by Pierre Rabhi, we think that making a small difference matters.

How many collections are launched per year or are there no limits to the collections?

Metiseko follows the slow fashion movement, as opposed to the current fast-fashion trend. This means that we do not necessarily follow the same cycles that are common in the fashion industry. Within a year, we aim at launching 2 collections, one main collection (50 to 80 references) and 1 capsule collection (25 to 30 references).

How long does it typically take from concept to finished collection in store?

It is a lengthy process that encompasses textile design, fashion design, printing, sampling, producing, etc., therefore it can take anywhere from six to eight months to complete.

It is worth noting that although creating a new collection takes time, this is counterbalanced by the fact that Metiseko products have a longer lifecycle than the industry average. As long as we have sufficient fabrics on hand and that demand sustains, we keep on producing. By doing so, we avoid "scraping", which is a common practice in the fashion industry to make room for the next collection.

What are you currently working on?

We are working on a new print and fashion collection to be launched in the upcoming months. We are also expanding the area dedicated to Metiseko within Tanmy Design in Hanoi, where we will start selling the latest silk collection, *Sống*, later in October.

Metiseko will showcase its collection at the upcoming Vietnam International Fashion Week in Hanoi. It is a big project in the making because VIFW is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year and this will mark Metiseko's first participation.

We are also currently working on the concept for a new website and online shop that will also be launched in the near future, to ensure that the design is more consistent with the brand image



Printing



Workshop



Photoshoot

and to offer an optimized shopping experience to our customers.

Last, but not least, we are working closely with our business partners on expanding Metiseko retail outlets at airports throughout Vietnam. A Metiseko corner will soon open inside the international terminal in HCMC. ■

For more info on Metiseko, visit metiseko.com

IN AND OUT OF THE BOX



Tung

Meet the multimedia visual designer and innovative art solution gurus behind The Box Collective

TRUNG LE, FOUNDER OF VISUAL design studio The Box Collective (www.theboxcollective.tv), has an office with a glass door that on *Oi's* visit bore the dry erase markers plans of their upcoming project: the 2020 New Year's countdown on Nguyen Hue.

It's a simple box-and-line chart with "2020 Countdown" in the center. Stemming out are two different, complementary thought clouds titled "is" and "is not." What "is" the new year? According to The Box Collective, it should be fun, innovative and simple, words listed under the affirmative. Things that 2020 "is not": robots, EDM and edgy.

The Box Collective is responsible for almost everything you'll see at Nguyen Hue this New Year's, which could be an interactive projection of a 3D rendering

or a smartphone-enabled, augmented reality show taking place within the celebrations. We won't know for sure until the time comes. Le and the team's Art Director Nhat Nguyen were relatively tight lipped about the New Year's celebration otherwise, but they promised it would be a show. "Hopefully, we can do something very cool on the stage this year," Le said. "We're looking to adapt AR (augmented reality) technology" and integrate high-resolution graphics.

Where Le is less tight lipped is in the marked drawing on the adjacent wall: a series of drawings that depict a pair of screens arranged as a corner. The center of the audience's gaze are at the corner's horizontal line. Le explained that this drawing depicts work completed for a Samsung Note 10 presentation. It's a complicated-sounding set up that involves one of the mobile phones, an Xbox Kinect motion-capturing camera and wall-sized LCD screens. The objective is to have the touches and interactions a user makes on the phone at the conference be replicated with lights and sparks on the screens. Meanwhile, a person in front of the screens is having their motion replicated by a delayed, lighted silhouette behind them at the same time. With this many moving parts and this ambitious of a concept, it seems lucky that nothing failed.

In the four years that The Box Collective has been active, time where the firm's work has appeared in a number of big and prominent places (both visually and in terms of firm profile size) like at a Budweiser event and Ho Chi Minh City nightlife hotspot Envy, Le said he's had his fair share of blunder, technical malfunctions and glitches. "The show must go on," Nguyen said explaining that failure at the live shows can usually be fixed on the spot. In dire circumstances, a backup visual product is on the bench ready to be rolled out, he said.

"We're professional. We have to have a backup," Le said. Take the Samsung presentation, for example. Le explained that a suitable backup in this situation would have been creating a video that mimics what the visual asset would have



Text by Jesus Lopez-Gomez
 Portrait by Vy Lam
 Other Images Provided by The Box Collective



looked like, but having that recored previously versus having that in real time. This is ideally what would have happened, Le reasons. It's fortunate that the set up worked during the presentation because, he sheepishly added, no such backup measures had been created.

It's this aesthetic, a right balance of talent and freewheeling, Eros versus erudition, do it well against just do it that seems to be The Box Collective's *je ne sais quois* that's made its services highly sought after by numerous actors of repute. It's a thing many of Vietnam's biggest venues and shows have wanted a piece of as they deliver their own entertainment experiences. An incomplete list of their clients includes music festivals Ravolution and Hanoi's Nex as well as Kasho Club. It's a portfolio served by The Box Collective's 12-person team, which includes artists, designers and programmers mostly in their 20s who help craft the visual excitement the group has been known for.

Le describes the broad category of his team's output as "innovative art solutions," a label that can be placed on things as distinct as an interactive face filter to a live projection blanketing an entire pagoda, like what they did for nightclub 1900 in Hanoi. Their Instagram account is always a reliable source of fun things to watch, like Le playing with an augmented reality statue that appears only on the screen of his phone.

Here's another broad category that loosely captures what the company does: if you'll forgive the cliché, out-of-the-box ideas. Sort of.

"We're questioning about what's inside and outside the box," Le said. But the group is also like a metaphorical curator "collecting all the good things... inside the box."

Then, "the client comes and you give them the box," Le added, extending the metaphor with seeming ease.

"It's a metaphorical box," Nguyen adds supporting the effort. "Family is a box, work is a box."

"The whole world is a box," he says with previously unseen excitement.

"You'll never get out of the box," Nguyen declares thoughtfully, which one would have thought thankfully ended the metaphor before Le added, "You know... we smoke w#\$d," a thing one does to get outside of the box, he explained.

The Box Collective doesn't really belong in any box, be that one of graphic design or performance-centered visual art, though both tags certainly apply to a number of assets in their portfolio. The four-year-old firm seems to be deeply interested in, if you'll permit one more cliché, making art for art's sake.

Take, for example, the dome projection of a stylized starry night they did for a Capella Holdings event, a piece that recalls a little bit of the famous Van Gogh piece but instead with purple swirls and it's been backed up timewise to dusk rather than stark night. Under the superimposed night, a star sky that looks better than any anyone has ever or will ever see, a single couple dance in a pool of ice blue spotlight in the middle of the event space. Just calling it "cool" seems to miss so much of the visual power of what's there the same way that single syllable words fail to really say

anything meaningful about Van Gogh's *The Starry Night*. It's like art because it is art.

Le is a classically trained painter, a skill he learned as an art student in Hanoi before discovering Photoshop and the software illustrators that became his tools of choice in advertising. Le worked with Nestle, Oppo, Audi, "so many brands I can't remember." He did that for four years before putting two years in at YanTV, a popular Vietnamese media outlet Le calls "MTV in Vietnam."

Then, "I just wanted to do something else," the 31-year-old said. He didn't expressly set out to create a business and become a design firm head, but that's just how it went. "It's not about having my own business. [The company is] something that happened along the way. Personally, I just want to approach the new things," Le said obliquely.

It's an individual motto as well as a company value. Le showed off some business cards The Box Collective did that, when seen through a smartphone screen, would display a three dimensional cube, perhaps the box the company's name is alluding to. But, why? Doesn't everyone know what a box is? Your question for another one: why not? It could be a thing, a good thing. And we know all good things belong in the box. Maybe it's the thing Le's on the hunt for. "Lucky for me... I'm still searching," he said. ■

Less, Better and With a Vietnamese Soul

Find out why industrial designer Neo Nguyen describes himself as an idea-to-product translator

Text by Dana McNairn

Image by David Dredge

MODERN MINIMALIST

design was first championed by architect Mies van der Rohe, who famously used the words “Less is more” to describe his design style, referring not only to how something looks, but also the components that make it function. Industrial designer Dieter Rams took this philosophy a step further and declared “Less, but better.”

Ho Chi Minh City-based industrial designer Neo Nguyen agrees. If architects design a house or a building, then industrial designers design everything inside. Industrial design and product design are terms sometimes used interchangeably. The Industrial Designers Society of America (IDSA) says product design is about designing a product to be sold to consumers and is how new things or new versions of things are created. Industrial design adds a functional value. Functionality may require more industrialization to produce such as in a motorbike or a shopping mall, but industrial designers also improve functionality for manufacturers, as well as the end users. “It’s just like translation,” Neo says. “You translate an idea into visible design for useable tools that are helpful, valuable.”

Typically this process includes technical drawings, concept and final renderings, mock-ups, models and prototypes, through to manufactured final product. Neo takes my notebook and pencil to further diagram an explanation. Industrial design, he says, should also include knowing how to produce a comprehensive brief that reflects back to the client things like their ideas, constraints, purpose of the product and end users. Crucially, he says, industrial designers should also be able to make the mold of the product in question, something he

says he wasn’t taught at university. He remedied this by taking an extra mechanical engineering class. He says what’s currently taught is design only: sketching and 3D modeling. “We were just taught to draw, draw, draw,” he says, waving my pencil. “So products don’t have functionality or usability designed into them.”

NEO Studio (www.neonguyen.co/neostudio) was founded in 2015 to showcase Neo’s commitment to these skillsets, and his philosophy of minimalism not compromising functionality. He says his firm is a two-way studio that offers client-centric design services and teaches industrial design skills. “I opened this studio because I love beautiful products and I love beautiful design.” His locates this design aesthetic squarely in central Vietnam and in particular, the old capital Hue. For him, this describes design that reflects humility, subtlety and grace, without shouting to be seen.

Some say minimalism is just lazy design because it appears so basic and elemental. Neo takes out an elegant pen, which I promptly scribble with in my notebook. Back in his hands, he hefts it gently and describes how it’s used to write with, has high usability and yes, a clear minimalist design. He says a laser pen or a pen with multi-colored inks-in-one, for example, confuses too many functions. “Less is better, that’s why we use *this* pen. It’s smooth, well-shaped and writes nicely.” With minimalist design he says it’s important for consumers to be comfortable using a tool and not be confused by these gimmicky add-ons. He calls it “cutting the exuberance.”

Neo laughs when he says his best design so far is also the one that made him the saddest. He designed a set of luxury speakers that didn’t make it past the design stage. However, NEO Studio does specialize in electronic products

design, such as those stylish speakers and high-end turntables. Neo shows me another example from his studio, a backpack or rather, a “modular gear bag” designed with three detachable, but usable components. It’s a great visual for the essence of industrial design: make products perform better in order to improve our day-to-day life.

He explains Vietnam has design and computer-aided design (CAD), but prototypes typically are modeled by the manufacturer and further, there is a lack of designated prototype manufacturers here. This presents both challenges and opportunities for design in Vietnam. Neo says, for less money, clients can purchase designs from China, modify them slightly and have a prototype ready to go. That same client can also purchase the 3D model and the mold, thereby eliminating the need for Vietnamese designers at any stage. The solution lies in greater demand for in-country design and less copying.

He says design originating in the US, for example, is a potpourri of styles with little inherently recognizable about its origins, whereas he believes Vietnam doesn’t have that mix. He’s aiming instead for design that is recognizably Vietnamese and mentions how other countries such as France, Italy and Denmark have identifiable styles. He pauses while reflecting on the future of design. “There is a rich Vietnamese history here that needs to be mined,” he says. “We can design with the inspiration of this history.” He sees interior, graphic and industrial designers working together to create a shared definition and vision for a Vietnamese style and do it while unearthing that rich past. This is industrial design that includes culture, traditions and experience. “I want to create new design,” he says, “and it’s minimalist design with a Vietnamese soul.” ■





Invitation to Travel

Interview by **Christine Van**
Images by **T3 Architects**

Oi speaks to Charles Gallavardin, Founder, General Director and Architect at T3 Architects, on their first project designing the cruise ship Emerald Harmony

What was it like to work on the design of a ship compared to a land-based project?

It is very exciting to work on a river cruise ship project as it was a new challenge for T3 Architects (t3architects.com). The main difference is about the constraints that we had compared to a land-based building because the space must be very well optimized and details must anticipate any problems because the partitions of a ship are made in welded metal and participate to the general structure, so there's no way to move it or demolish it when it is built.

You've designed luxury hotels (for example, Bioclimatic 4-star Hotel Myanmar) and restaurants (Spice Viet Organic Hue, etc). In designing Emerald Harmony, what were you able to adapt from those venue types and what had to be rethought to meet the demands of a ship?

Compare to any land-based project, T3 could not make the ship "bioclimatic" knowing that sun orientation, main winds, and surroundings are "moving" all the time. We know that it had been designed by a naval architect from Croatia to be as sustainable as possible in terms of energy consumption, waste water

treatment system, no use of plastic on board, etc. and on our end we tried to use materials that follow specifications that promote "safety first", especially fire safety, which is the main risk on a ship.

Of course, you have to take into consideration the elements when designing a ship, so how did you decide what building materials to use for long-lasting durability against the extreme sunlight and water damage?

Our client owns several other cruise ships, both in Europe and Southeast Asia, so we had their feedbacks and experiences to make this ship very sustainable and resistant to tropical conditions. It is probably one of the most luxurious and sustainable cruise ship in the region.

We have used Low-E glass to reduce sun exposure and save energy, the white color of the ship is also a manner to reflect the sun and limit energy consumption. All materials used have some international certification to get proper "air quality" and limit chemicals as much as possible. Water treatment has also been considered to offer the cleanest system as possible.



Did you use elements or materials that we don't usually see aboard a ship?

We have design a specific oversized pending lamp, inspired by the conic hats, but installed it upside down and with the possibility to dim the light and change the color to create different ambiances in the main Lobby. Sebastien SICOT, the best art ironmaker in Vietnam, tailor made the metal structure while the Barrisol team did a great job by supplying the specific textile and under-structure.

What was your overall concept for the design of interiors onboard Emerald Harmony?

The main challenge in terms of interior design was to follow Emerald Brand standards (based in Europe and quite minimalist) but bringing the Indochina atmosphere carefully, considering that the main brief was "Saigon River".

Furniture, art pieces, tropical plants and color palette bring you into Vietnam and Cambodia but the general feeling is also Western minimalist.

T3 wanted to create a "chic" atmosphere in reference to a private yacht and absolutely avoid the impression of a "floating hotel". Acoustic, comfort and privacy have been carefully considered to give the impression of a privileged person experiencing the connection from Vietnam to Cambodia through the charms of the Saigon River. In terms of facilities, Emerald Harmony offers an amazing lobby spread over four stories, a comfortable lounge, a nice restaurant, a library with board games and books available, a pool with a nice wooden and outdoor bar, an authentic spa, a hair-dresser and a gym, and even a mini-golf on the rooftop.



Where did you look for design inspiration, in general, and specifically for Emerald Harmony?

T3 inspiration coming from curiosity first, a lot of traveling around the world, good connection with artists, a real conviction that we, architects and interior designers, must be a model in terms of sustainability and be an example to others.

For Emerald specifically, I would say that T3 had to carefully bring together Vietnamese and Khmer cultures, but with a really good understanding of the client's expectations (mainly from Anglo-Saxon culture) in terms of comfort, standards and needs but also not to be too conservative as to surprise them and make their experience unique.

What room or feature presented the most challenges?

The most important challenge when designing a cruise ship is to give the impression of space and offer the widest panorama view of the river wherever you are in the ship, even if the rooms are usually smaller than a similar land-built hotel. Similar challenges with the ceilings, which are quite low in a ship so we created several designs to maximize it from a guest's point of view: installation of mirrors or reflective materials, openings between the different floors to get double or even triple height (lobby), etc.

So, what's the most rewarding aspect of designing a cruise ship?

The most rewarding aspect of designing a ship is to see it to cast off and see it start its real life on the water. A ship is a great "invitation to travel" and T3 is proud to have designed such a poetic project. ■





MOVING FORWARD

Diablo 3 - by Vinh



Tung

Welcome to the third dimension of graphic designing

Text by **Jesus Lopez-Gomez**

Portrait by **Vy Lam**

DINH PHUONG TUNG HAD BEEN working as a career 2D graphic designer when he decided to make the turn into 3D design two years ago. He's taken an autodidact approach to the career change electing to teach himself, which he described as "a painful process. A lot of research."

Learning 3D design, "You have to accept the fact that you're totally stupid," he said laughing. Dressed casually with a ponytail and smoking a cigarette, the industrious Tung spoke in a rare moment of repose. He said his path is not recommended, "if you

don't want to die young."

Tung works as a visual designer for IPS, a design studio that creates a range of visual products tailored to brand needs for advertising. But recently Tung has been tapped to work on a new project: a childrens' mobile game and accompanying digital store set to launch in October. Making games has been a childhood dream. "I never thought that I would have a chance [to join the industry] when I was a kid," he said. "That's very lucky for me."

Tung works under and has been mentored by Vinh Vu Anh Quang Vinh, Tung's colleague and a senior designer with IPS. He said taking an untried designer like Tung on in this new game product



By Tung



Steel Samurai - by Vinh



Vinh

appealed to him because, although he lacked the experience of a more seasoned developer, "... mobile games need a fresh mind to produce games that don't look like games."

Tung's background in 2D design and more conventional arts doesn't marry him to the design habits of his contemporaries or make him as susceptible to creating the same designs as other, more experienced 3D artists. Tung's reason for making the change from 2D to 3D is simple: "I don't want to be outpaced," he said plainly. "The design industry [is] moving forward and I want to catch up. 2D won't be able to express the idea."

The type of work Tung has done mixes both 3D and 2D work. Tung describes himself as a middling Photoshop and Illustrator user. The 3D design work allows him to create things that would be more difficult within just a 2D design program. Two dimensional- and three-dimensional designs are not inferior and superior modes of expression, but two different ways of visually telling a story, Tung explained. In branding, 3D work can build an image of a brand that's modernized and forward looking, which is why Airbnb uses three dimensions in its branded material. Much of the design work Tung has done for his client Wecheer.io, a firm whose offering to the world is a smart bottle opener, is in three dimensions. Contrast that with another firm like Grab, that tends to use a flattened, almost cartoony design aesthetic in some of their company's graphic design work. Tung explained that 2D art can communicate a "classic" or established image that some firms find attractive.

Part of Tung's role is to decide

where these modes of expression intersect, draft a design concept according to a prompt and see the asset through to fruition as it becomes a game character or an in-game menu, for example. Vinh's role is to manage the development cycle of the visual work and coordinate the work of the artists so that the project collectively advances toward its intended goal.

A decade ago, Vinh explained that decision-making creative positions like his in design—especially those within the game industry—would have been held by those working in a foreign firm. Until 2010, he said Vietnam was known as a source of strong visual talent, but added that Vietnamese game designers would usually see their work in games owned by foreign companies intended for a foreign audience. Lack of console and smartphone saturation in Vietnam at that point was an obstacle for Vietnamese designers who wanted to create products for a Vietnamese audience, as both men are now doing in their careers in their studio IPS.

Small, relatively inexpensive design firms like theirs are increasingly becoming the norm as companies seek to secure a share of the mobile game industry's revenue, which is set to top USD68 billion globally this year, according to consumer intelligence firm Newzoo. For comparison, *Avengers: Endgame* fell just short of breaking USD3 billion in ticket sales globally.

Vietnam is poised to become a leader in the game production industry. Vinh said the missing link is people like Tung, people who have both art training and have a technical understanding of how to develop a concept into a usable, interactive design asset. ■

The Design Less Drafted

Cross ventilation, natural sunlight and community development are some of the building blocks that make this architect couple the ones to watch

Text by Daniel Spero

Portrait by Vy Lam

Other Images Provided by K59 Atelier

CHOOSING THE PATH LESS

traveled often proves to be the more difficult journey, but that scarcely used track is often the more enriching path, leading to innovation, and it's there where Phan Lam Nhat Nam and Tran Cam Linh, the brains behind K59 Atelier (k59atelier.com), can be found.

When Nam went into the field of architecture it was with avid optimism. He wanted to build on his expertise in order to make a positive impact on his community. However, the reality never met his expectations. "When we studied, we studied architecture, but we did not study about basic human needs," he explained. "Then after I graduated and started to work I felt like I needed something more, something innovative. A building cannot just be beautiful, but it has a duty to the occupants, so I went to Belgium to learn more about human needs. Then I went to Ecuador to work with endangered communities due to climate change. After that my mind changed a lot about what I can do for my community."

Following these international experiences Nam reclaimed his sanguinity, however, it wasn't long before he encountered more obstacles. For

instance, he noticed that a group of orphaned and underprivileged children living in the Mekong Delta weren't receiving an education, so Nam designed a structure to solve this—a floating school. Unfortunately, due to a lack of community and government support it didn't go anywhere, namely because most of these children were migrants from Cambodia. "They have no birth certificate so they cannot go to school. So they're just floating in the Mekong Delta, in places like Long Xuyen, Chau Doc, along many rivers. They live on the boats and cannot go to school, so we tried to help them to go to school but failed."

Still Nam pushed on. He drafted a design of steel houses on tiers that could rise and lower depending on the water levels for families who lived in regions prone to flooding, but again he faced rejection because they wanted fixed structures on the ground, structures that would inevitably flood. This disconnect was a tipping point, driving Nam to a dark place. He felt lost. The confidence in his vision had evaporated.

As fate would have it, at Nam's lowest he met Linh, also an architect. It was Linh, his future wife and design partner, who encouraged him, reassuring him

that he was doing things the right way and to just keep doing it. Linh's love and encouragement brought new inspiration and the impetus for their studio, K59 Atelier. Nam realigned his drive, "We can do something for the community, but it's not a straight way, it's a circle way."

Nam and Linh, together as K59 Atelier, have gone on to design a number of homes, from the traditional 4 x 16 meter plots in Saigon to larger spaces in the suburban districts. They've continued to look at solutions for the impoverished as well, specifically those living in slums. But what makes their designs unique? For one, their use of natural light to improve the ambiance of the interior. For another, they work within the community to educate locals that with the right ventilation natural light doesn't have to mean living in a hot



house. An additional focus is on keeping living areas open and airy, creating interior coolness using cross-ventilation rather than the unnatural, air polluting air conditioners most of us rely on.

How did they settle on the open concept conclusion? “We think about the daily lives of people. In Vietnam people live in the kitchen, the dining room, in the living room, so how can we connect all of these spaces together?” he explained. “We try to maximize openness to the surroundings and for people to easily feel comfortable when they go inside the house. So we divide the house into two parts. One part is the closed part, which are the bedrooms, and the living areas while the areas of movement are left open, connected within a single section.”

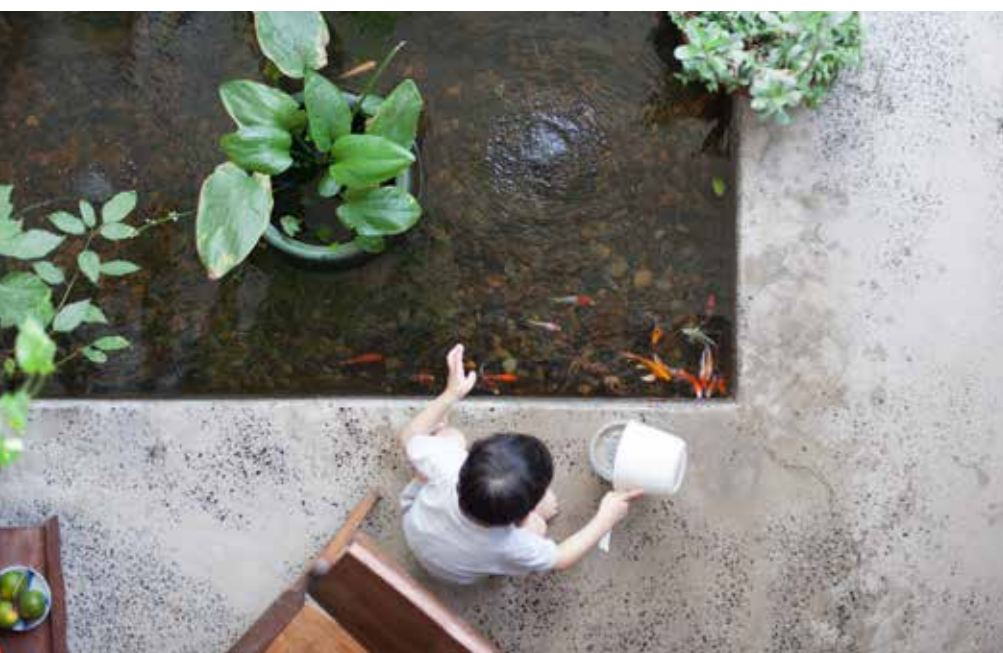
Nam and Linh wants people to embrace the sun. They show them how an open plan home allows in light but remains breezy and cool. “They close the windows and don’t even know if it

is raining or sunny outside. So we often think, how can we get them to change their minds from closed off rooms to something open? So we just provide awareness that you don’t have to use air conditioners all the time. Having the wind in a cross-ventilation system can make your life a bit better.”

The evidence provided is their own home and office space in District 7, which they designed. “If you have a client who wants to live like this the best place to take them is to your home. When I bring my clients home they often say, ‘oh, I want to live like this,’” Nam added. Their house is an open concept, filled with natural light and plants, both airy and cool; no need for air conditioning.

Beyond the open airiness of the structure, much of it is simplified: unpainted cinder block walls and unvarnished concrete floors. This is not because it’s unfinished; in fact, it’s precisely the opposite he explained: “We try to find beauty in the raw material so

sometimes the raw material becomes the finished material. We take the material, the design and the budget into consideration. And the other thing is that we are dealing with environmental issues, so we cannot think about only our one plot, we have to think about how it fits into the greater urban context. Our thinking about architecture is that we are providing a system and we need to figure out how to make the system work well for the community. Right now our priority is educating people. For the starting point of education we can do a lot for the community and we can connect people. We love to do that.” ■





Walk With Purpose

Saigon Photowalk (SPW, www.facebook.com/Saigonphotowalk) is a group of local and international photography enthusiasts who regularly explore and capture the essence of Ho Chi Minh City. Started in 2018, Juan Carlos Duran Solorzano created a movement of like-minded creatives, aiming to document Saigon's dynamic street scenes, daily life and more. Built on the foundations of respect for other people and

cultures, this group has grown as more artistic individuals seek to explore the city's unseen places and interact with the welcoming locals. Every week the photo walks meander through the bustling districts of Saigon, delving into traditional marketplaces, tranquil temples, lively parks and charming alleyways and *hems*. Enjoy, embrace and engage with the city through their lens: 8 photographers, 8 sets of eyes and 8 different perspectives of the city they call home. ■



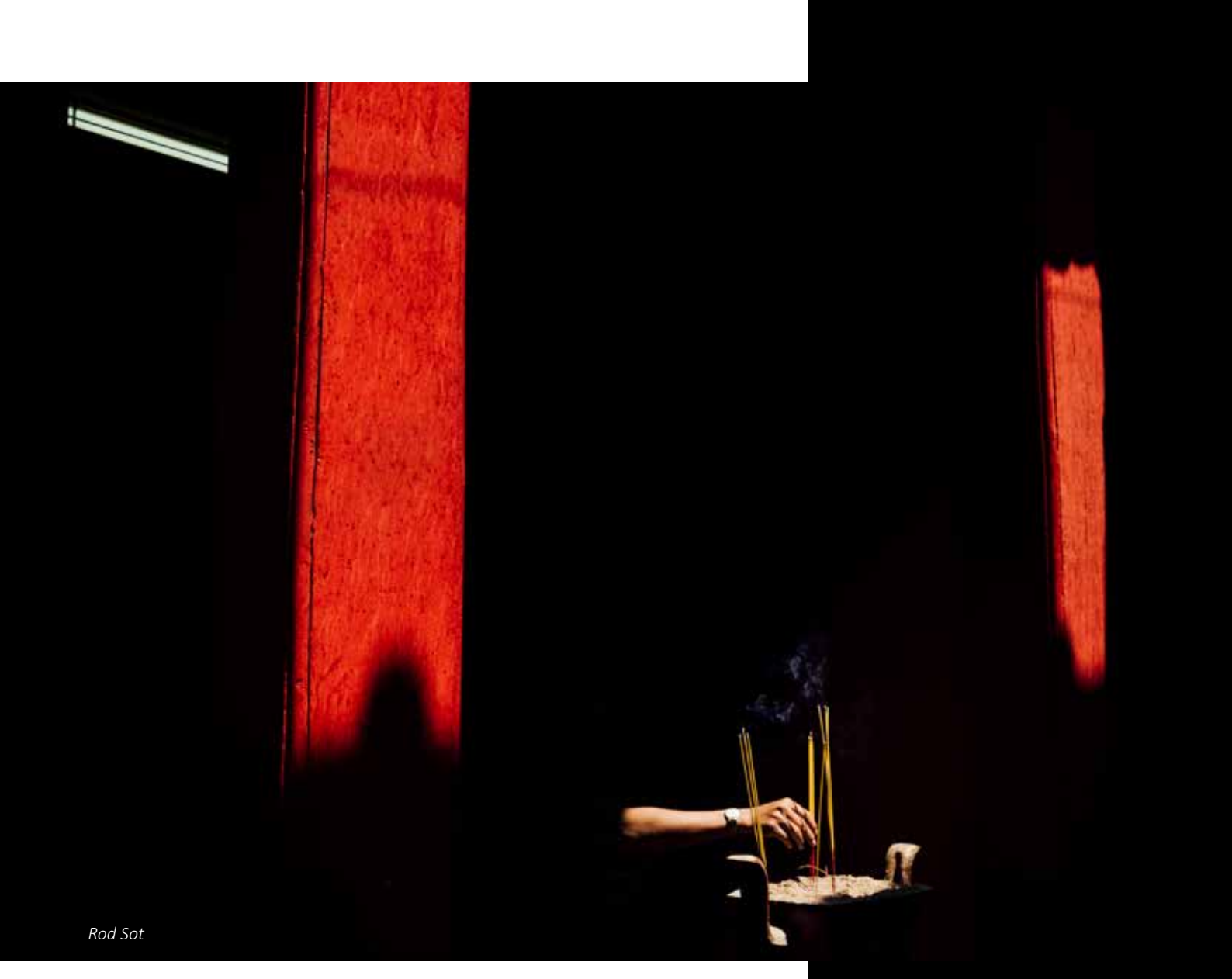
On The Go - Image by Luke Neville



Gentleman - Image by Jose Pablo Tur



The Mechanic - Image by Ricky Pulido



Rod Sot



Vietnamese lady - Image by Juan Carlos Duran Solorzano



La penseuse - Image by Bui Quoc Kiem



Dreaming - Image by Sawano Newell



Laughing to meet foreigner in Vietnam local market - Image by Romain Berion

Wine & Dine

NEW YORK STEAKHOUSE SAIGON / IMAGE BY VY LAM







New York Steak of Mind

Reminiscent of a mob hangout, this classic steakhouse slings mouthwatering dry- and wet-aged cuts with a side of Hollywood glamor

Text by **Grant Hawkins**
Images by **Vy Lam**

NEW YORK CITY OF THE EARLY 20th century has been immortalized in film like perhaps no other time and place ever will be. From the opulence of Jay Gatsby to the secret dealings of Michael Corleone, it represents success, exclusivity and above all, luxury. On a bustling corner in Da Kao, **New York Steakhouse Saigon** (25 Nguyen Dinh Chieu, D1) is an open love letter to 1920s New York City that manages to be authentic in its own right with outstanding food and an intimate atmosphere.

New York Steakhouse occupies an (appropriately) art deco-themed structure near the corner of Nguyen Dinh Chieu and Dinh Tien Hoang. Inside, one is greeted by plush

red cushions, dark wood furniture and crisp white tablecloths. Black and white photos of vintage movie stars adorn the walls. There are romantic booths for couples as well as large tables for group celebrations. Most of the tables line the walls of the room so each guest has an exclusive, private dining experience.

Our evening began with a 2016

Chateau Le Grand Verdu Bordeaux Supérieur (VND1,340,000) and a bread basket. This simple starter, like all of the dishes, comes with an array of condiments—in this case butter, roasted garlic and chicken liver. The menu is as expected for a traditional luxury steakhouse. Appetizers include soups, salads and small bites of meat or seafood, and the sides are considered vegetable dishes and some decadent treats like Mac & Cheese and Parmesan Truffle Fries. We began with a Caesar Salad (VND250,000) and Potatoes Au Gratin (VND120,000). Both are good-sized portions, expertly prepared and thoughtfully presented.



The decor of New York Steakhouse consistently points toward vintage cinema and New York City. One standout is the Alfred Hitchcock smoking room, enclosed by a sliding glass door and with a large window overlooking Nguyen Dinh Chieu, which doubles as the restaurant's wine cellar. The space is decorated with the same vintage actresses, this time all smoking, surrounding portrait of the legendary filmmaker himself. There are large, plush sofas and chairs and beautiful flourishes of decoration throughout. One can't help but imagine a banker and a gangster enjoying a celebratory cigar after a secret handshake over dinner.

Before the main course, the server brings a selection of steak knives for each diner to choose from. Entrees include steaks from 230- to 800-gram, and most are available Dry-aged or Wet-aged. Dry-aging, as our server explained, slowly removes much of the moisture from the meat resulting in higher saturation of flavor and a more tender steak, due to the natural enzymes being in an ideal environment to break down the connective tissue of the meat. In addition to steaks, poultry and seafood options are also available in individual and group portions.

Our first choice was the 300-gram Dry Aged Ribeye (VND950,000) served without the bone, cooked a juicy medium rare with a light searing. Three different sauces, pepper, mushroom and onion, are served on the side. While dry-aging results in a slightly denser steak with a thinner line of fat around the edge, the process only removes the moisture, so the flavor is more concentrated. It's a dish to be eaten slowly and savored. We also had the Broiled Salmon Filet with Sautéed Haricot Vert (VND500,000). The large portion of salmon is well marinated, tender and fatty with a crispy skin, and is served with a rich sour cream and onion sauce. Both dishes show an uncompromising selection of meats and an artful skill in preparation.

All entrees at New York Steakhouse are served with an array of condiments: a spice rack with salt, pepper, basil, thyme, paprika and garlic, and small jars of tomato preserves, walnut butter and two types of mustard. Although each dish comes well seasoned, all desires are anticipated and accounted for.

As dinner ended, it was difficult to leave—due in equal parts to the inviting ambiance and to the extravagant portions of rich food we had just consumed. But we were happy to linger. A celebratory feast is best followed by a long, warm conversation, just as a rainy Saigon evening is well spent escaping to the glamor and elegance of 1920s New York. Come for the steak, and stay for the memories. ■





Refined/Redefined

All-day experiences at the new Park Hyatt Lounge

Text and Images by James Pham



CERTAIN THINGS HAVE THE power to simply whisk you away as if by magic. The smell of Sunday morning pancakes, the chill of crisp autumn nights by the fireplace, an old photo that you had completely forgotten about. Close your eyes and you're instantly transported to another time and place.

Fresh off a soft upgrade, the **Park Lounge** (Park Hyatt, Ground Floor) is one of those magical things. Already one of Saigon's most refined spaces, the lounge recently received a facelift in both menu offerings and design. While the signature double-height windows sheathed with plantation shutters, the grand chandeliers, and the majestic cream-colored pillars edged in gold trim remain the same, the rest of the space now feels even more sumptuous.

Regular visitors will likely notice the bar is now gone, replaced with a simple backlit serving counter for coffees and spirits which serves to open up the space.

In its stead is a fabulous crystal table, dozens of prisms reflecting the light, to go along with new crystal wall sconces that accentuate the seriously sexy curve of the feature windows.

To temper the opulence, the Park Lounge cleverly includes several design features that lend a easy coziness to the space. Underfoot, the new plush area rug features soothing tones of turquoise and aquamarine, and all the seating is also new, an elegantly eclectic collection of plush sofas, armchairs, and high chairs set in intimate groupings, and covered in exquisite damasks, chintzes, and velvets.

While all the fittings and furnishings are sourced from France, the Park Lounge retains its East Meets West aesthetic with the addition of antique lacquer furniture, dramatic Asian artwork in pops of red, and a spectacular larger-than-life gold and silver embroidered wall display by noted fashion designer Mai Lam. Taken together, all of these elements combine



true feast for the eyes. Each small bite reveals careful forethought in flavor combinations and presentation, garnished with tiny edible flowers and served on Hanoia lacquerware and graceful Ercuis silver stands. The Iberico pork belly reuben had layers of flavor while the Phu Quoc pepper crusted salmon on a crunchy sesame cracker was an inspired pairing. Scones with house-made jam and Tahitian vanilla cream arrived warm and soft, while the signature blueberry crepe cake had a wonderfully spongy texture created by alternating layers of delicate crepes and tartly sweet filling. For serious tea connoisseurs, the Park Lounge has unveiled the Tea Trolley serving gourmet Mariage Frères blends like the White Tea Himalaya (VND380,000) with notes of wild orchids and mandarin orange, and the Namring Queen Upper, a Darjeeling tea picked at altitude with hints of floral and citrus notes.



As day turns to night, the chandeliers dim and the lounge takes on a sultry softness, backed by an enchanting singer accompanied on the piano (daily starting at 7:15pm, except for Sundays). The jazzy arrangements set the scene for the Lounge's sophisticated tea-infused evening cocktails which we pair with a set of canapés (12 for VND900,000). The Longan Tea (VND280,000) may be more of an acquired taste with hints of Darjeeling, dried longan and mellow Havana Club 7 Year Rum but it went well with the Quail croques, a flavorful croquette of breaded fish salpicon. The winners of the evening were the Provence Negroni (VND260,000), a fragrant blend of homemade bergamot liquor and orange bitters backed by gin and vermouth, vibrant in both color and flavor, the perfect companion to the earthy Foie gras tucked under a gelatin beetroot dome.

As the final strains of music fade and the last cocktail sipped, we reluctantly return to modern-day Saigon, but what an escape it was. ■

to transport guests to a different time and place, Old Saigon at the heady height of 1920s Indochina, the perfect place to while away the day.

We arrive just before noon, as businessmen are wrapping up informal meetings, their silver laptops reflected in the mirrored tables. Park Lounge's revamped menu now has Well Being Selections to accompany old favorites. We opt for the Superfood Salad (VND240,000), a healthy yet tasty combination of organic red quinoa, avocado, frijoles, and feta that's lightly filling, and the Yellowtail Kingfish (VND310,000), wonderfully marinated in a perilla vinaigrette with pomegranate seeds to provide bursts of brightness.

The Park Lounge has always been known for its decadent afternoon tea (VND990,000 for two) where beautiful people come to nibble on beautiful food, and it's still as good as ever. Sweet and savory bites are veritable works of art, a



Wine & Dine

ROOFTOP BARS



Escape Lounge and Rooftop

Escape Lounge and Rooftop, a new stylish, sophisticated lounge in Thao Dien is a reminder of the time when flying was elegant and romantic. You can enjoy the view from their rooftop surrounded by palm trees, bamboo, murals, relaxing music, all in a vacation atmosphere. Escape serves tropical cocktails, spirits, great food, and Saigon's best craft beers.

11 Thao Dien Street, Thao Dien District 2
083 827 9179/escapelounge.vn



Also Try...

Air 360 Sky Lounge - Events

This rooftop bar combines vibrant music, fancy designs and 360 degree view of Saigon's skyline to make it one of the best spots for drinks, lounging and events.

0974 58 77 88
136-138 Le Thi Hong Gam, D1
www.air360skybar.com

Broma Saigon Bar

Famously known for 'not being a bar' Broma is one of Ho Chi Minh City's most popular hangouts with prices ranging from VND30,000 - VND500,000. Broma is a more upscale option for those wishing to escape the cheap drinks in The Pham.

41 Nguyen Hue, D1

Chill Skybar - Dining

A modern lounge, bar and dining space that is considered the first "skybar" concept in Vietnam. It is perched on top of AB Tower, exclusively on the 26th and 27th floor with views of the city's skyline

0938 822 838
Level 26, AB Tower, 76A Le Lai, D1
www.chillsaigon.com

Eon Helibar

This cosmopolitan nightspot is an ideal venue for a vibrant night out with live acoustic performances and DJ's spinning nightly, EON Helibar has a non-smoking section. Rental of the entire restaurant for larger functions is also available.

Level 52, 2 Hai Trieu, Ward Ben Nghe, District 1

Shri Rooftop Bar & Restaurant

Shri Rooftop Bar & Restaurant at Centec Tower overlooks some of Ho Chi Minh's top attractions, including Reunification Palace, Notre Dame Cathedral, Kumho Plaza, and Lotus Building, as well as the Phu My Suspension Bridge over Saigon River. Open all day, you can savour modern European and Vietnamese fare at the indoor dining area before enjoying the rest of the night at the rooftop bar and lounge.

Centec Tower, 72-74 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai

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

Saigon Saigon Bar

This iconic bar is a great place to watch the sun go down over the lights of the city and relax with friends. Live entertainment nightly, including their resident Cuban band, Q'vans from 9pm Wednesday to Monday.

19-23 Lam Son Square, D1
(028) 3823 4999
www.caravellehotel.com
11am till late

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

MICROBREWERIES & CRAFT BEER BARS



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



Also Try...

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/

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 their 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

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 2: 144/3 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

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

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

Café RuNam

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

96 Mac Thi Bui, D1
www.caferunam.com

La Rotonde Saigon

Situated in an authentic French colonial structure, this relaxed cafe 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

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

The Workshop

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

27 Ngo Duc Ke, D1

FRENCH

Le 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, Idécaf.

31 Thai Van Lung, D1

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

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.

17B/4 Pasteur, D1 - www.tycozsaigon.com

ITALIAN

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

Giao 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

La Forchetta

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

24 Hung Gia, PMH, D7
028 3541 1006

Italian Trattoria Oggi

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

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

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

INTERNATIONAL



L'Adresse Bistro

L'Adresse Bistro is a place where traditions & culture meet. It combines the rustic, modern feel of the west & the authenticity of Bedouin traditions of the Arab.

Multi-themed with laidback tent, group family sofa, Barrel sections for two & Palette seating arrangements guests would benefit from variety of style, look & feel under one roof.

With more than 20 brands of beer, bar, coffee, L'Adresse Bistro meets everyone's expectations.

ladressebistro.onuniverse.com

ladressebistro@onuniverse.com

+84906707900



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 Vodra 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

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 offered – 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

+84 869 388 864

www.facebook.com/tomatitosaiгон

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

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

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](https://www.facebook.com/chayavietnam)

Gyumaru

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

8/3 Le Thanh Ton - 028 3827 1618

gyumaru.LTT@gmail.com

Ichiban Sushi

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

204 Le Lai, D1

www.ichibansushi.vn

Kesera Bar & Restaurant

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

26/3 Le Thanh Ton, Ben Nghe Ward, Dist 1

028 38 270 443

Sushi Dining Aoi

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

53-55 Ba Huyen Thanh Quan, D3

028 3930 0039

www.sushidinginaoi.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

KOREAN

Lee Cho

The venue may be upscale, but the service and feel of this local-style Korean restaurant is very much down-to-earth. Enjoy the pleasure of casual outdoor street-style Korean dining without worrying about the proper decorum for an international venue. Great Korean dishes at good rates.

48 Hung Phuoc 2, D7

5410 1086

Galbi Brothers

Superb casual BBQ venue focusing on every foreigner's favorite K-dish: galbi. Home of the only all-you-can-eat Korean BBQ in Saigon, GB is distinguished by its inexpensive lunch sets and unabashed enthusiasm for Korean spirits.

R1-25 Hung Phuoc 4, Pham Van Nghi - Bac, D7

5410 6210

Seoul House

Long-standing venue serving Korean delicacies in this city for many years, Seoul House is simple on décor and strong on taste. Specializes mainly in Korean hotpot and grills.

33 Mac Thi Buoi, D1

3829 4297

THAI

Koh Thai

Supremely chic Thai venue with all the authentic burn you need – or without if you prefer. An opulent, fashionable decor with the cuisine to match – often reported to serve dishes comparable with those of Thailand itself.

Kumho Link, Hai Ba Trung, D1
028 3823 4423

Lac Thai

Hidden away down a narrow alley in the heart of downtown this unique Thai restaurant boasts authentic flavours and surprising character. Eat downstairs at tables in a cosy, themed environment – or be brave and climb the narrow spiral staircase to the attic and crouch on cushions in true Thai style while attentive staff serve plates to share.

71/2 Mac Thi Buoi St. D1
028 3823 7506

Thai Street

Authentic Thai Food in a fun street-food setting. All the favorites of Thailand – Tom Yum Goong, Red and Green Curries, Som Tum – prepared by their Thai chef.

26 Thao Dien Road, Thao Dien, D2
028 6654 9525

The Racha Room

Brand new fine & funky Thai venue with kooky styling and a great attitude – and some of the most finely-presented signature Thai cuisine you'll see in this city, much of it authentically spicy. Long Live the King! Reservations recommended.

12-14 Mac Thi Buoi, D1
090 879 1412

Tuk Tuk Thai Bistro

Kitch and authentic, Tuk Tuk brings the pleasure of street-style Thai food into an elegant but friendly setting. Now a fashionable venue in its own right, Tuk Tuk's menu features some unique dishes and drinks you won't see elsewhere.

17/11 Le Thanh Ton, D1
028 3521 8513 / 090 688 6180

VIETNAMESE



Ngoc Chau Garden

Serving up fresh and traditional Vietnamese fare since 2015, Ngoc Chau Garden is a centrally located gem in District 1, just a stone's throw from Nguyen Hue. The menu has local favorites, such as Vietnamese Grilled Pork Patties with Citronella and Pork Ribs. The menu and decor reflect Viet Nam's countryside with vintage window shutters and walls made from mud and straw with oil lamps – giving the restaurant a charming, homely atmosphere.

116 Ho Tung Mau, District 1, HCM City
(028) 6687 3838
ngocchaugarden116@gmail.com

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

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, W 1, HCMC
0901 26 28 30

Open Time: 09:00 AM - 01:00 AM

FB: BenThanhstreetfoodmarket
Instagram: benthanhstreetfoodmarket

Cha Ca La Vong

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

36 Ton That Thiep, D1

Com Nieu

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

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

Cuc Gach Quan

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

10 Dang Tat, D1
028 3848 0144

Five Oysters

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

234 Bui Vien, D1

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

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

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

Travel & Wellness

IMAGE PROVIDED BY INTERCONTINENTAL PHU QUOC LONG BEACH RESORT





An aerial photograph of Niagara Falls, Canada. The image shows the massive waterfall cascading over a rocky cliff. In the foreground, a large tour boat filled with people is on the water. The surrounding area is lush with green trees and vegetation. The sky is blue with some clouds.

Chasing Waterfalls

A day out at Niagara Falls, Canada

Text and Images by James Pham

Journey Behind the Falls



WHAT IS IT ABOUT WATERFALLS that intrigues us so? Is it the constancy that provides an antidote to the usual chaos around us? Or the awesome power of falling water that reminds us of how little we truly are? Or could it be the ultimate human desire to try and tame one of Mother Nature's strongest forces?

Comprised of three waterfalls (The American Falls and the Bridal Veil Falls on the US side, and the Horseshoe Falls on the Canadian side), Niagara Falls isn't the world's tallest. That distinction belongs to Venezuela's Angel Falls, whose drop of 3,212 feet dwarfs Niagara's measly 110. It doesn't have the fastest flow rate at just 85,000 cubic feet per second, compared to the astonishing 910,000 cubic feet per second of Inga Falls in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It's not even the widest falls. Adding up all three falls, from the American extremity to the Canadian extremity, Niagara measures about 3,500 feet across – a drop in the bucket compared to the 35,376 foot-wide Khone Falls in Laos.

Numbers aside, there's something simply magical about Niagara Falls that draws up to 28 million visitors a year. To uncover the secrets of the world's most famous waterfalls, we set out to discover Niagara from every angle possible.

Nestled between lakes Ontario and Erie on the Canadian-American border, the Niagara region is home to much more than just the falls. To get an overview of this historic area once populated by native peoples and French settlers, we make our way to Niagara Helicopters for an aerial tour.

Safely harnessed into the rainbow bright helicopter, the group collectively yelps in delight as we swiftly lift off, the initial butterflies yielding to amazement as we smoothly climb higher and higher. The landscape unfolds below us as we follow the path of the Niagara River, carrying water from Lake Erie as it tumbles over the edge of the Niagara Gorge and on to Lake Ontario. Our flight path takes

us over the Whirlpool Rapids and the Rainbow Bridge on our way to the American Falls and the seriously sexy curve of the Canadian Horseshoe Falls. On a clear day, it's said you can see as far as Toronto and Buffalo, but today, we satisfy ourselves with panoramic views of the forested countryside, home to sprawling wineries, sandy beaches, and vast green spaces. At the Horseshoe Falls, we hover over the plume of mist, created as water roars over the edge and crashes into the water and rocks below, smashing into tiny droplets. The ride is only 12 minutes long, but it's given us a thrilling glimpse into what the region has to offer.

The Niagara River is relatively young, only about 12,000 years old, formed from the meltwaters of the last Ice Age. A pivotal moment in its history happened about 5,500 years ago, when the waters tore through a narrow gorge, clearing out glacial debris and leaving a 90-degree bend in its wake. For a bird's eye view of the resultant whirlpool, we board the Whirlpool Aero Car, a cable car designed by Spanish engineer Leonardo Torres Quevedo and put into operation in 1916. Held up by six sturdy cables, the 1 km-long return ride offers mesmerizing views over the tumultuous waters below as they abruptly change direction in the gorge on their way to the falls.

Since being introduced to the outside world by French explorer Father Louis Hennepin in December 1678, people have tried to conquer the rushing waters of the Niagara River by raft, barrel, boat, tightrope, and even swimming, with many losing their lives in the process. We see the power of the river up close as we stroll along the quarter-mile-long boardwalk at the White Water Walk, taking in the Class 6 rapids of Niagara's Great Gorge. Traveling 30 mph, and creating standing waves 10-16 feet high, it's unfathomable how daredevils have managed to make it across the deadly, deafening waters.

A much better use of Niagara's

raging water has been in generating electricity, the site of the world's first hydroelectric power plant designed by none other than Nikola Tesla. In the so-called "War of the Currents", Tesla's design to generate alternating current beat out Thomas Edison's direct current system, tapping into the kinetic energy of the Niagara River to generate electricity which could be transmitted over long distances, cheaply. "It is a monument worthy of our scientific age, a true monument of enlightenment and of peace," said Tesla at the opening of the Niagara Falls hydroelectric power station in 1896. "It signifies the subjugation of natural forces to the service of man, the discontinuance of barbarous methods, the relieving of millions from want and suffering."

Nowadays, up to 75 percent of the normal flow of the river is diverted through hydro tunnels to power plants that have the capacity to power nearly 4 million homes in Ontario and New York State.

To feel the full force of the Niagara River, we make our way to the base of the Canadian Horseshoe Falls, following in the footsteps of Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur, a French diplomat who made the first recorded descent in 1785. His journey required six hours of harrowing climbing, scrambling down boulders and sheer cliff, sometimes with the help of Indian ladders – two tree trunks notched by tomahawks. Fortunately for us, our Journey Behind the Falls required nothing more than a rain poncho and an elevator ride 125 feet down. At the bottom, we navigate the narrow 130-year-old tunnels to viewing portals cut straight through the rock revealing an impenetrable curtain of water, the sound of 681,750 gallons falling per second reverberating in our ears. At the main outdoor observation deck, the awesome totality of the falls is on full display, one-fifth of the world's fresh water crashing down 13 stories at nearly 68 mph onto the rocks below.

Before our final viewing of the falls, we detour to the gorgeous glass-domed Butterfly Conservatory. We walk the



Whirlpool Aero Car

nearly 600 feet of paths through the climate-controlled greenhouse featuring ponds, tropical plants and shrubs, and even a small waterfall. However, the star attraction are the 60-odd species of free-flying butterflies which flit their way amongst the flowers and feeding stations. Opened in 1996 to educate and entertain visitors on the life cycle and habitat of butterflies, the conservatory offers a quiet respite from the crowds. Watching the butterflies leave their pupae and dry out their wings through the Emergence Window is magical, as is simply standing still amongst the 2,000 brightly-colored butterflies.

For over two centuries, Niagara has hosted honeymooners, famously starting with Napoleon Bonaparte's brother Jerome and his American bride in 1804. Nowadays, some 50,000 couples still



Butterfly Conservatory



Skylon Tower



Journey Behind the Falls

honeymoon here every year. As the sun begins to set, we make our way to one of the most romantic spots in the area, the iconic Skylon Tower. Opened in 1965, the 775 feet-high tower features two levels of restaurants and an observation deck. The yellow elevators on the outside of the building zip us up to the Summit Suite where a gorgeous buffet dinner of prime rib, BBQ ribs, and steamed mussels await. From anywhere in the circular dining room, diners can look out over beautiful views of all three falls and beyond. After dinner, we head up to the 360° Observatory, Niagara's highest panoramic vantage point, for a final look at the falls bathed in fading light, a wonderful way to end a day out at one of Nature's most incredible places. ■

IF YOU GO...

Niagara Helicopters (www.niagarahelicopters.com) has been offering scenic flights over Niagara for over 50 years. No reservations are needed for the 12-minute flights which operate every 10 minutes, 7 days a week, year-round. Flights are CAD 149 per adult or CAD 288 per couple, well worth it for a bucket list experience.

The Whirlpool Aero Car trip (CAD16) takes about 10 minutes, with a brief stop on the other side for passengers to change sides, ensuring everyone gets a great view of the gorge scenery. To access the White Water Walk (CAD14), take an elevator down 230 feet and walk through a 240 ft tunnel to view the rushing waters, which get their emerald green color from limestone, shale, and sandstone sediment. The self-guided Journey Behind the Falls (CAD21.95) is truly spectacular, and takes 30-45 minutes to complete, not including wait times. The Butterfly Conservatory (CAD16) is located on the grounds of the Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens (free entry), so budget some time before or after your visit to walk through the beautifully landscaped gardens. All these attractions are operated by Niagara Parks (www.niagaraparks.com). Tickets can be purchased individually, but a better idea is getting the Niagara Falls Adventure Pass Plus (CAD90) which includes entry to all of these attractions and more, as well as a hop-on, hop-off bus transportation system.

The dome at Skylon Tower (www.skylon.com) is home to a Revolving Dining Room (one revolution per hour) which serves fine dining lunch and dinner, and the Summit Suite Dining Room where the lunch or dinner buffet (CAD44.95) also includes admission to the indoor/outdoor Observation Decks.



Skylon Tower



Niagara Helicopters



White Water Walk



Teamwork Makes the Dream Work

Oliver Horn, the newly appointed General Manager of InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort, discusses sustainability, hashtags and the importance of the right team

Interview by **Christine Van**

Images Provided by **InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort**



You have worked in many different countries (Russia, UK, South Korea, Austria, etc.) before becoming General Manager (GM) at InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort. What are the advantages of working in various countries and cultures?

I think working in different cultures has made me understand the importance of trying to understand the culture of the country that I am in. There is an old saying about the fact that you “don’t go into a monastery with your own rule book” which I love because to me it means that I don’t try to “bend” the people in the countries that I work in towards what I want, but rather I work with their culture and in their culture so that we can together achieve what we want to achieve. This is actually a fun and exciting experience, and I learn something new in every location that I have worked in. This ongoing learning is one of the main motivators for me.

You started at InterContinental Hotels & Resorts with an apprenticeship at InterContinental Cologne in your native country and have worked your way up to a GM position. What have you learned during the different positions you held and what would you describe your management style as a GM?

The biggest learning for me is that you can only achieve something if you have your team with you—if my goals are aligned with the goals of my team, we can (almost) do miracles. And for this to happen, it does not matter which role I am in—if teams are aligned in their goals, every single person is excited to do their best to reach that goal. As a leader, it is my job to make sure that every colleague in the hotel understands what it is we want to achieve—and I am not talking about a poster on the wall with the latest slogan that has been devised by a marketing agency—I am talking about tangible actions for each other and for our guests. In this way, we can do amazing things.

For travelers who love the beach, why should they put Phu Quoc on their list?

Long Beach, where our hotel is located, is a fantastic part of the island. I love Phu Quoc because, unlike many other places, not everyone has been here yet. And in our 'Instagram-able' world, going to places that are not overrun by tourists, to places that are still new and unspoiled, is quite unique. Phu Quoc Island is truly a wonderful and serene place.

From your experiences, how do resort guests differ from city hotel guests?

Resort guests tend to stay longer than guests in city hotels, so we can build a better relationship with these guests. Most of our guests come for a relaxing vacation to the resort and are in a more relaxed mood—that makes it easier to approach them. On the other hand, most resort guests pay for their stay with their own money, and are perhaps having their one holiday of the year, so they have higher expectations that we have to meet in order to make sure they are happy.

Phu Quoc has seen a recent boom in five-star resorts, how does InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort position itself differently from others?

We are lucky that we have many unique offerings here at the resort. One thing that I love about the resort is that it is 'real'—the service and hospitality here is genuine and heartfelt. In terms of hardware, we have some of the best facilities for families, including a 250sqm children's club, and a dedicated swimming pool for children, complete with waterslides and fun toys. I think our dining is very special, from the fine local and imported seafood and steaks at LAVA restaurant to authentic Vietnamese and Japanese cuisine at Sora & Umi. And the incredible sunset views from the highest rooftop bar on the island at INK 360.

For those coming for destination meetings and events, the resort has some of the finest conferencing facilities, including two ballrooms, meetings rooms and the island's only theatre. Finally, and almost more importantly, it's the colleagues who work here who make this resort special. I have worked all over the world and I have rarely met a group of such engaged and engaging people who really care and want to provide great hospitality to our guests.

Where does the resort stand on its environmental impact on the island? What eco-friendly initiatives are implemented in the resort?

We are very well aware of our responsibility to protect the environment—after all, the beauty of the island is one of the main features we are trying to sell. So we are working together with WWF to reduce garbage, separate garbage and make sure that it is reused or recycled. We have already fully abolished the use of plastic straws in the resort and will shortly remove the small plastic amenity bottles that

we use for shower gel, shampoo, etc. in favor of more environmentally friendly dispensers—using the same quality product as before, just more environmentally friendly.

Our biggest change will come within the next few months when we will remove plastic water bottles from the resort completely and bring in glass bottles for water. We are currently working on installing our own bottling plant—given the number of guests at the resort this will have a substantial impact in reducing the number of plastic bottles that would go to a landfill.

What five hashtags would you use for InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort?

#Unexpected #Stylish #Extraordinary
#GreatMemories #GreatCare

This is your first appointment in Vietnam, first impressions?

My Vietnamese colleagues are incredible, I am so impressed with how happy they are to learn, how much they want to develop and improve and how well they look after our guests. It is amazing to see how quickly they pick up new ways of working, how adaptable they are and how they want to win. And they are great fun to work with!

We will soon enter 2020, what vision do you have for the resort in the new year?

For InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach, 2020 will be the year where the resort will "take off"—we opened in 2018 and spent the last year consolidating our ways of working, both commercially and from a service-delivery point of view. The team has planted the seeds since the opening of the hotel and I am excited to see how we will bring our ways of working to life in 2020!

Christmas, New Year and Tet are around the corner, what can we expect?

We are lining up some very exciting

experiences at the resort over the festive season. For Christmas we will be having all the traditional yuletide fare along with some great regional cuisine at our restaurants, and we are hoping that Santa Claus will be visiting us to keep all of the children staying with us entertained. On December 31 we have some fabulous menus available at our restaurants and afterward, for those wishing to ring in the New Year bells in style, we will be throwing one of the biggest parties on the island at INK 360.

The Tet holiday is obviously one that is very important for everyone at the resort, and we will be arranging some very special seasonal activities and dining experiences to celebrate the Lunar New Year and to ensure that all our guests have a truly memorable holiday with us. ■

For more info, visit phuquoc.intercontinental.com



>>The List Business

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>>The List Travel



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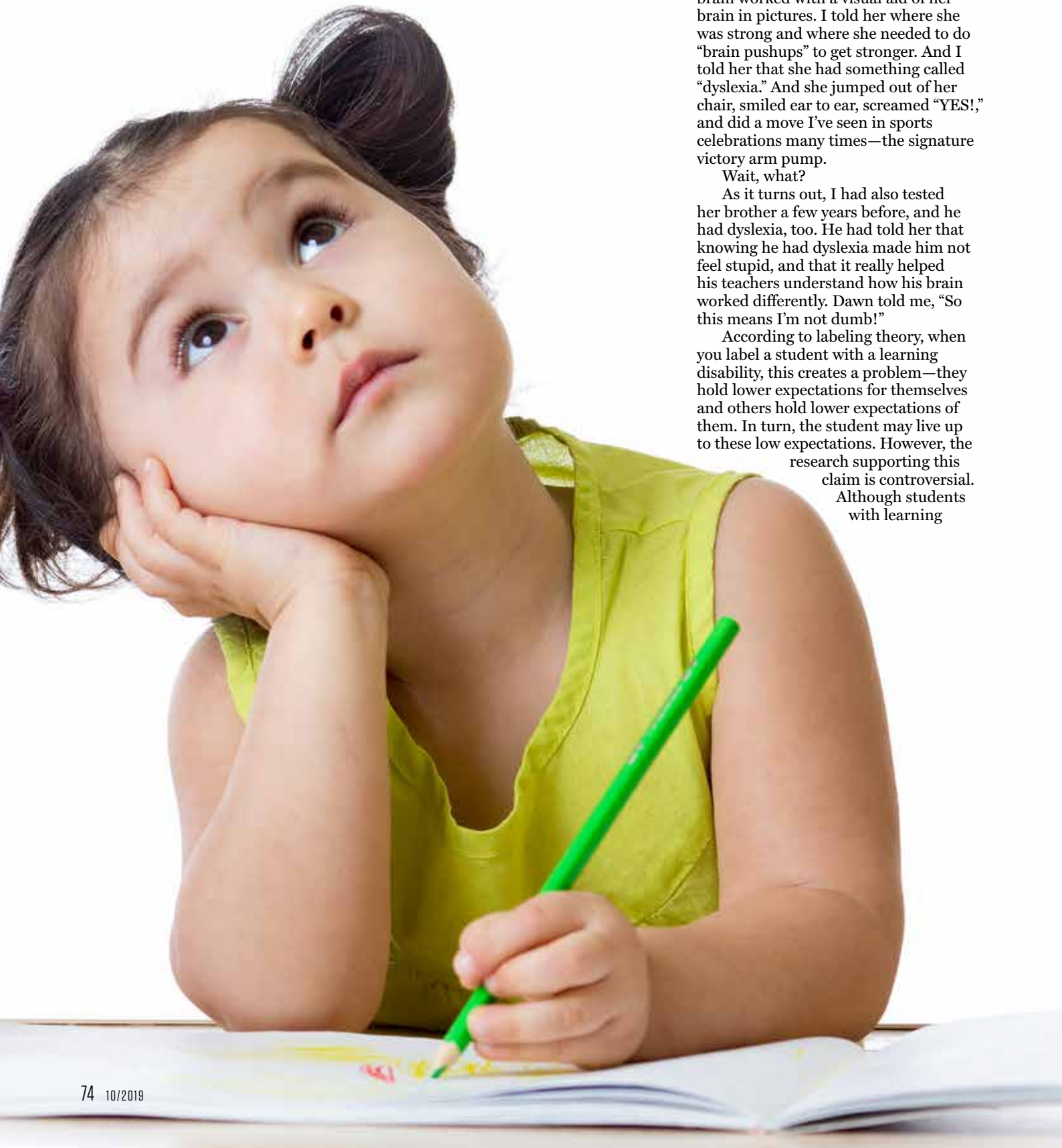
Kids & Education



Sea of Strengths

How to help students with learning disabilities focus on their strengths

Text by **Rebecca Branstetter**



I SAT ACROSS THE TABLE FROM Dawn, a wide-eyed eight-year-old girl in pigtails, bracing myself to tell her the news. I have told students they have a learning disability hundreds of times over my 20 years as a school psychologist. But there was something about her earnest and expectant face that made me pause.

Was giving her an official label going to make her feel stigmatized and defeated? Would the benefits of having access to more specialized services outweigh the cost to her academic self-esteem? I carefully explained how her brain worked with a visual aid of her brain in pictures. I told her where she was strong and where she needed to do “brain pushups” to get stronger. And I told her that she had something called “dyslexia.” And she jumped out of her chair, smiled ear to ear, screamed “YES!,” and did a move I’ve seen in sports celebrations many times—the signature victory arm pump.

Wait, what?

As it turns out, I had also tested her brother a few years before, and he had dyslexia, too. He had told her that knowing he had dyslexia made him not feel stupid, and that it really helped his teachers understand how his brain worked differently. Dawn told me, “So this means I’m not dumb!”

According to labeling theory, when you label a student with a learning disability, this creates a problem—they hold lower expectations for themselves and others hold lower expectations of them. In turn, the student may live up to these low expectations. However, the

research supporting this claim is controversial. Although students with learning

disabilities do tend to struggle with lower achievement and hold negative beliefs about their academic abilities, some researchers point out that it is difficult to disentangle what is causing these challenges. It gets murky—would Dawn be behind her classmates in reading because she has dyslexia, because she doesn't have access to high-quality support programs, or because her teachers and parents now hold lower expectations for her?

We don't really know. But the reality is that, in our public schools, access to special services sometimes depends upon having a diagnosis or label—and it's possible that the way we treat students with these labels is holding them back. Here are several research-backed tips for educators and parents to reduce the negative effects of labels and the stigma around them.

Don't Focus on the Labels

Language is powerful. Even a subtle shift in language can influence how students see themselves and how stigmatized they feel. A 2018 article by researcher Mark Weist and his colleagues offers a number of suggestions for reducing the stigma of labels:

1. When a label is required, describe to the student why labels are used. For example, "Labels help us understand why reading is hard for you and what the research says about how to help. Labels can also give you more specific help that you might not be able to get without the label. But we are all going to focus on what we are going to do to help, not what we call it."
2. Use person-centered language. Instead of referring to a student as a "dyslexic student," refer to them as "a student with dyslexia."
3. When possible, especially with younger students, use less stigmatizing language in describing their challenges (e.g., "learning differences" versus "learning disorder" or "severe dyslexia").

By using this language, we're trying to prevent students from overidentifying with their challenges and weaknesses.

Focus on the "Sea Of Strengths" Around the "Islands of Weakness"

What if you were defined only by your greatest weakness? Focusing on strengths isn't just a nice thing to do; it's essential for students with learning disabilities (and all students) to feel good about themselves as learners.

Renowned dyslexia expert Sally Shaywitz of the The Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity coined this phrase: "Dyslexia is an island of weakness surrounded by a sea of strengths." When students see their weaknesses as "islands," their challenges become more specific and manageable (e.g., "I need

help figuring out long words") rather than global and difficult to tackle (e.g., "I am not good at reading").

Using specific language can also foster a "growth mindset" more conducive to learning. Rather than thinking, "I don't have a math brain because I have dyscalculia," students might say, "I need to do brain pushups in math." The same goes for adults when we talk about students; instead of saying, "He has a major reading and learning deficit," we can make it more specific and manageable by saying, "He has areas of strength and weakness in learning to read that we can address through phonics instruction."

Research is also emerging on the sea of "hidden strengths" of students with dyslexia and other learning disabilities:

- Strong visual-spatial thinking and skill in figuring out patterns
- The ability to make unique associations between concepts
- Strengths in seeing the "big picture" and creative problem solving

As educators and parents, we can highlight these strengths with students like Dawn (who, incidentally, scored off the charts on tests of visual logic puzzles). Indeed, all students would profit from having a spotlight on their unique talents and skills and not just on their core weaknesses.

"Often times we focus on the difficulties, but they have these incredible superpowers," says psychologist Tracy Alloway, whose new children's book series turns children's learning disabilities into superpowers. Bringing those "superpowers" to the front of the discussion is a tool for empowering those with learning disabilities and helping other children appreciate their classmates' unique talents, as well.

Foster Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy Skills

Not only can we focus on the extraordinary strengths these students already have, but we can also help them cultivate other strengths they'll need to be successful.

Being diagnosed with a learning disability does not have to resign students to a life of struggle, frustration, and poor achievement. In a 30-year study by the Frostig Center, students with learning disabilities did better in their academic and personal lives if they had these six skills and resources:

- Self-awareness: Recognizing their unique talents and accepting their challenges.
- Proactivity: Believing in the power to make changes,

taking responsibility for their actions, making decisions and acting upon them.

- Perseverance: Learning from hardships and not giving up when tasks get hard.
- Goal setting: Making realistic and attainable goals, taking into account strengths and areas of need.
- Support systems: Identifying people who can provide support and actively seeking out support.
- Emotional coping strategies: Recognizing stress triggers for learning difficulties and developing effective means of coping with them.

As parents and educators, we would be well-served to focus on cultivating these social-emotional and behavioral skills so that students with learning disabilities can emerge from their educational experience with success in school and life.

Several researchers offer practical ways to support these resilience skills, using brain-based research. In their book *The Yes Brain: How to Cultivate Courage, Curiosity, and Resilience in Your Child*, psychotherapists Dan Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson share how parents and educators can help students strengthen their sense of balance, resilience, insight, and empathy. This "balanced brain" helps students with different learning profiles think more flexibly, be more willing to take chances and make mistakes, and manage adversity and big feelings. All of these traits are essential for learners, especially those who have additional frustration due to the challenges of their learning differences.

Tapping Into Our Students' Potential

At home and in the classroom, educators and parents can easily get tripped up on the language to use with students with learning disabilities. Having a strength-based lens and a few scripts ready can make a big difference in how the students we interact with see themselves as learners.

We could all take a lesson from my student, Dawn, on positive mindset. When I later shared Dawn's reaction to being diagnosed with dyslexia with her mother, we both teared up a little. Dawn gave me hope that as educators and parents, we can cultivate that resilience and strength in all the students who come to us with diverse learning needs. ■

Rebecca Branstetter, Ph.D., is a school psychologist, speaker, and author on a mission to help public school psychologists manage their stress, improve their efficacy and enjoyment in their work, and prevent getting burned out so they can focus on what they love to do—being champions for helping children be the best they can be in school and in life and supporting educators and families. Learn more at www.thrivingschoolpsych.com.

Fight, Flight, Freeze

Do schools in Vietnam care about mental health?

NOW THAT SCHOOL IS BACK in full swing in Vietnam, a question that has often been in the background, under the radar, is now becoming voiced more often: Is my son or daughter getting the mental health support they need at school?

What we already know is true: students perform much worse academically when they are stressed, anxious, worried and dealing with social and family pressures. During this time, a student's nervous system is likely in 'fight/flight/freeze' mode. Physiologically, a person's nervous system is most primed

for learning and achievement when in a state of 'rest and digest.' This is the opposite of 'fight or flight' that we hear about so often. What many people don't know is that the common stress our students deal with results in them being in 'fight/flight' more often than they are not, and this is obviously not a beneficial state for learning and success in school.

We all know that mental health services have been lacking in our schools for a long time. Western schools have made focused attempts to increase the access students have to mental



Robert is a licensed psychotherapist (www.herosjourneytherapy.com). Similar to counseling, therapy is for those who are struggling with problematic behaviors, beliefs, feelings or relationship issues. Robert has been to over 30 countries, a highlight being riding a motorbike from the south of Vietnam to the north. He now lives in Saigon and focuses on working with expats in Vietnam.

challenges. Not the least of which is the pressure from family and friends to excel academically. Combined with challenges to fit in socially, have an adequate social media presence, cyber-bullying, and the other normal and intense difficulties of being a teenager, these kids need help. Sometimes, a safe place to talk to someone provides a much needed outlet and release. Also important is the opportunity for the student to listen to someone who can help them see their challenges from another perspective. Additionally, students need to be taught how to manage their difficult emotions, which is what psychologists call the ability to 'self-regulate.' Instead of 'acting out' in ways that are harmful to themselves or others, students can learn how to *respond* to their difficulties with skill and wisdom, instead of their old ways of *reacting* impulsively.

Mental health professionals on campus, available to students, is ideal but not always realistic. An alternative is what's been trending in Western schools, a practice called "mindfulness". Students (and school staff/adults) who engage in mindfulness learn how to use the breath as an anchor to get back into 'rest/digest' and out of 'fight/flight.' Additionally, mindfulness practices have shown to be helpful with focus, increased compassion and inter-personal relationships. People who practice mindfulness learn how to 'drop the story' and come back to the present, which can be a very helpful tool.

Although mindfulness is not a substitute for mental health interventions, the science is becoming clear that it can be effective to help students deal with stress, social pressures and challenging emotions.

The Mindful Schools Curriculum is now being used in schools worldwide. This curriculum involves trained personnel coming into the classroom to introduce mindfulness practices and strategies to the staff and students. Mindfulness is a secular (non-religious) practice that can be integrated seamlessly into the classroom. ■

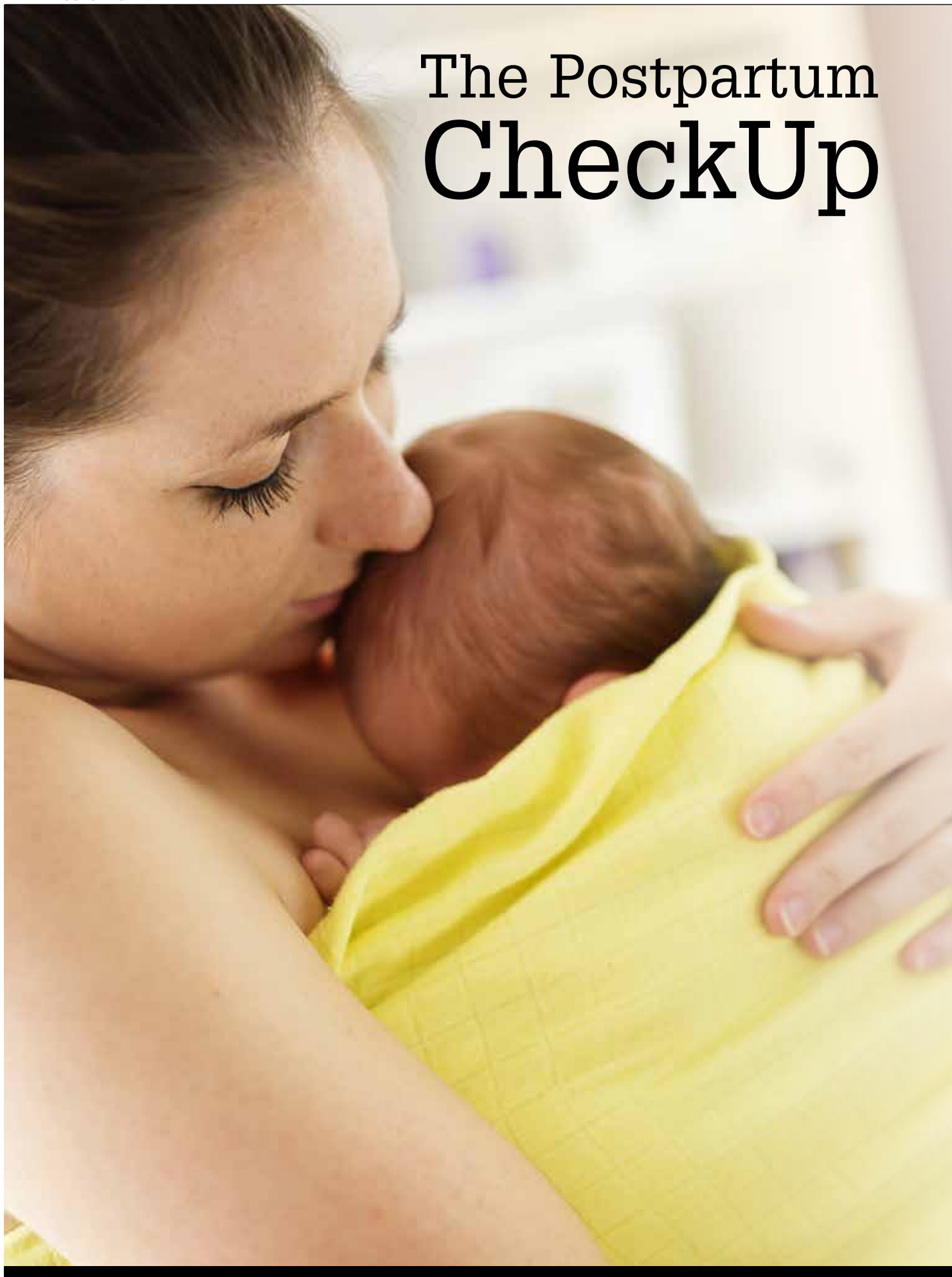
health resources (increased counselors, psychologists, mindfulness programs, etc.). Of course, much more needs to be done in order to address the mental health issues in the West.

In Vietnam, until recently, mental health hasn't been acknowledged as a vital element of student health. Now, it seems the tipping point may be approaching. According to a recent article about student health in Vietnam, close to 80 percent of students have problems that needed to be shared and want a private space in the school to seek help and talk about their

problems. The same article mentions the recognition that psychological counselors are now very much needed in Vietnam, and perhaps should be seen as of equal importance as teachers. The article states that there is currently a massive training underway to train school staff as psychological counselors. How this training is done, and to what degree the training is effective, remains to be seen. However, it can be viewed as a good sign that the powers that be are supporting student access to mental health.

Students in Vietnam deal with many

The Postpartum CheckUp



What to expect and why your first checkup after having a baby is just as important as your newborn's

THE FIRST THREE TO FOUR

months of having a child can often be the most challenging by far, especially for first-time mothers. People usually talk about how wonderful it is to have a baby—and it is wonderful! But people don't always talk about the struggles and the isolation, the sleep deprivation and the monotony of spending time with a newborn who can't communicate their needs. These things can be difficult, especially with social media adding pressure to look like you're enjoying every minute—because that's all you see in the snapshots from other moms and babies. Often a mother can feel like she is the only person struggling with such a big change to her life.

Many women experience a difficult child delivery, which can take a serious toll on the body and the mind. Doctors often place a great deal of importance on monitoring a baby's health and development in the months after birth, but due consideration isn't always given to the mother—and sometimes important medical issues can be missed while everyone's focus is fixed on the baby.

In many developed countries, it's now standard to perform a postpartum checkup on the mother around six weeks after delivery to ensure she is physically recovering from the pregnancy, as well as to check that her emotional needs are being met, while addressing any medical needs she may have going forward. These check-ups are a great opportunity to talk to mothers about how the labor went, to ask if there were any difficulties that she had in the first few months of the baby's life, and to discuss issues like contraception and psychological wellbeing. They also provide an opportunity to ensure there were no physical consequences of the labor, including checking scars, wounds, and so on. We can also perform a Pap smear or HPV screening, something that can otherwise tend to be delayed following childbirth.

Having a child can greatly change the dynamic of the relationship between a woman and her partner as well, and this can be another difficulty that people

can't easily prepare for before the baby arrives. Being able to talk these things through with someone can provide a therapeutic reassurance that everything is completely fine—and that postnatal worries and sleep deprivation are all part of the normal spectrum of being a parent.

Many mothers suffer from emotional difficulties in the months following birth. Sleep deprivation can be brutal—which is why it's a torture technique! By its nature, it reduces your ability to objectively assess what's happening around you, and can result in stressful changes in hormone levels. This is when physical health and mental wellbeing can become intertwined and take a toll on the mother. This typically involves feeling overly worried about small matters, ruminating, and not being able to rest as a result. It's often very important for mothers to reach out to other families for support and to meet with other moms in their situation, especially if they are going through emotional difficulties. If possible, they could also seek community support services such as playgroups or professionally led groups to share and discuss maternal and child care issues.

For mothers in this situation, the postpartum checkup can be an opportunity to assess these emotional upsets, restoring some perspective and relieving stress—or otherwise to initiate medical treatment in serious cases.

The check-up also allows the physician to examine any physical consequences of the birth. These can include recovery from stitches or scars, as well as check if there is any separation of the abdominal muscles. A doctor will also check for issues such as blocked ducts that may interfere with breastfeeding. We can give advice on the types of exercises that a mother can do to aid recovery of normal movement, or refer the mother to a physiotherapist if the need is there.

Contraception is also an issue that can be overlooked by new mothers, which is why a postpartum check-up can be helpful in providing information on this issue—it's not unheard of for a

woman to find herself pregnant again just two months after giving birth, which can be quite a surprise! Generally, if a mother is exclusively breastfeeding, the body's own hormones will work to prevent conception—although this method is not 100% reliable, especially when the baby is taking even a little supplemental formula milk. Mothers can consider taking a contraceptive pill from six weeks after delivery—and while combined oral contraceptive medicines used to be not recommended for breastfeeding mothers, it has recently been shown to be a safe method of contraception even at this time. This can be a relief for mothers who experience negative side-effects of progesterone-only pills, as evidence suggests combined pills have no detrimental effect on a mother's breastmilk supply, which was previously thought to be the reason for caution.

The beauty of this examination is that so many issues can be dealt with during a single consultation at six weeks after delivery. If any issues are identified then—either physical or mental—it provides the opportunity to follow up in a structured way.

While postpartum checkups are rarely done as a matter of course in Vietnam, new mothers can schedule appointments with physicians who have experience in the procedure overseas. Additionally, our practice's SIMBA group for new mothers is currently the only professional lead support network for women with babies, helping mothers to network and support each other during this challenging and rewarding experience. ■



Dr. Anna Donovan studied at the University of Manchester and then at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine before serving the San bushmen as a volunteer physician in rural Namibia. She has extensive experience in giving postpartum check-ups from her time working in the UK.

>>The List Education

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS



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www.aivietnam.com

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Primary Campus:
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Secondary Campus:
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www.bisvietnam.com

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www.kidsclubsaigon.com

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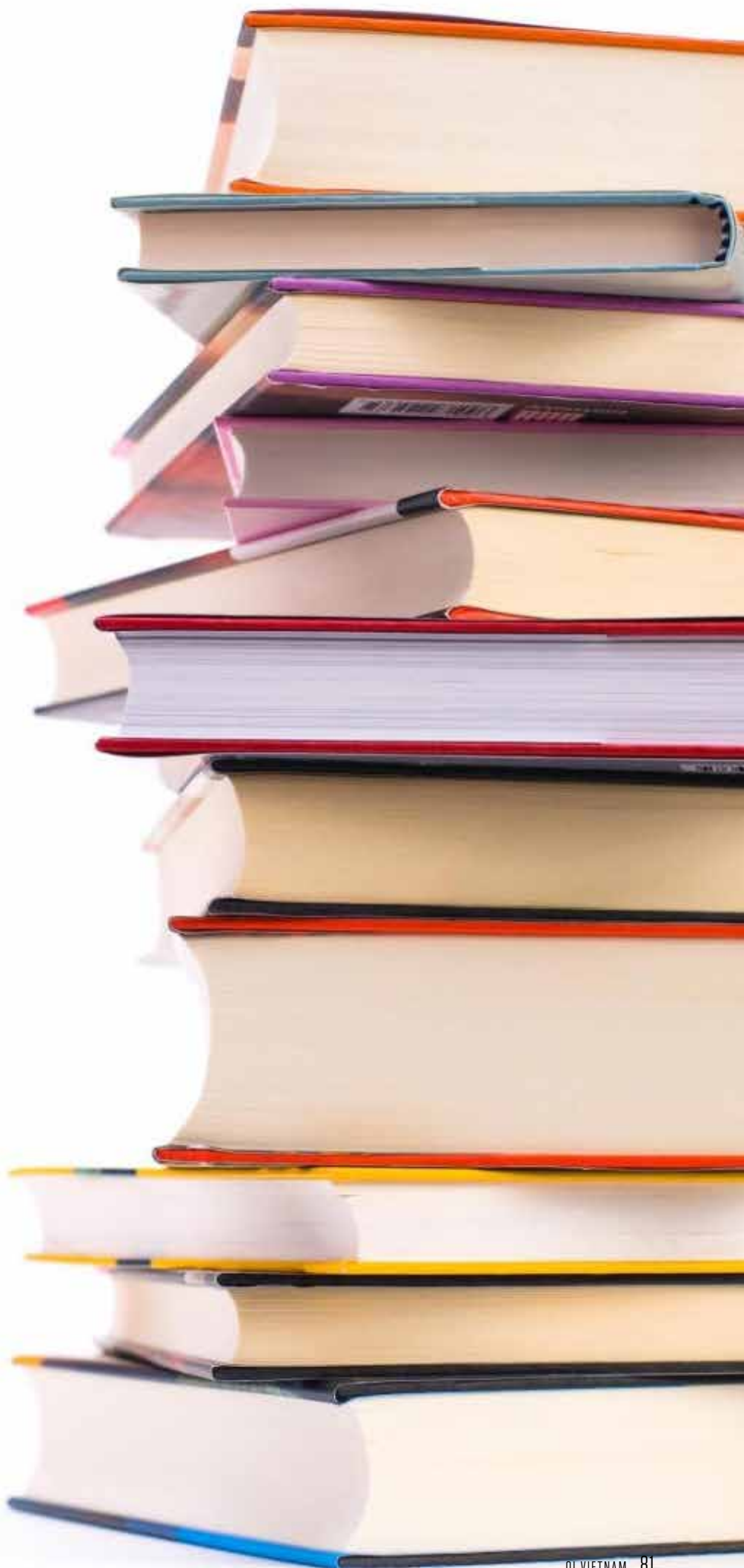
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Renaissance International School Saigon

Renaissance is an International British School offering the National Curriculum for England complemented by the International Primary Curriculum (IPC), Cambridge IGCSE and the International Baccalaureate. The school has made a conscious decision to limit numbers and keep class sizes small to ensure each pupil is offered an education tailored to meet their individual learning needs. It's a family school providing first-class facilities including a 350-seats theater, swimming pools, mini-pool, drama rooms, gymnasium, IT labs, music and drama rooms, science labs and an all-weather pitch.

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