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12-2019

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University of Cambridge




Nguyen, Le Doan My (Cindy)
Political Science
University of Melbourne




Phan, Truong Vi
Political Science
Anthropology
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Vu, Thi Tu Oanh
Bachelor of Arts
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Kim, Jin Hyen
Mathematics
Computer Science
KAIST




Lee, Hamin
Engineering
University of Hong Kong




Kim, Yelyn (Lyni)
Biochemistry
Seoul National University




Arora, Sara
Bachelor of Commerce
University of British Columbia




Cho, Min Ji
Management
LSE




Phan, Thanh Thien Phu
Computer Science
New York University




A SELECTION OF THE OUTSTANDING UNIVERSITY DESTINATIONS AND DIVERSE COURSE CHOICES FROM OUR CLASS OF 2019.

62% OF ALL A LEVEL GRADES WERE A*/A AND 92% OF STUDENTS GAINED A PLACE AT THEIR FIRST CHOICE UNIVERSITY.

WE ARE INCREDIBLY PROUD OF ALL OF OUR GRADUATES;
PLEASE SEE OUR FACEBOOK PAGE AND SCHOOL WEBSITE
FOR THE FULL LIST OF DESTINATIONS FOR OUR CLASS OF 2019



Lawrence Young (FCSI) is the Senior Associate for Holborn Asset Management Group (HCMC office). Originally from the UK, Lawrence has been a finance professional for 30 years having worked across Europe and Asia as a stockbroker, Eurobond trader and interbank money broker. His areas of expertise lie in offshore tax efficient saving structures, higher education fee planning, inheritance tax planning, pension planning, life and health insurance, global investment property, offshore company formation and offshore banking. Email lawrence.young@holbornassets.com if you would like him to answer your questions on these topics.

The Panama Papers

What is the scandal about and should you watch the movie?

THE BIGGEST LEAK IN HISTORY.
Fix your washing machine.

I wonder how many may have taken the time to watch the recently released film *The Laundromat* by Steven Soderbergh? It was based on the biggest data leak ever known. *The Laundromat* tries to tell the story of the two lawyers in charge of the Mossack Fonseca law firm that helped create thousands of offshore accounts and shell companies for the wealthiest people around the world.

Unfortunately, I watched it. Twice. That's 180 minutes of my life I won't be getting back, but had to watch it twice to be factually correct. It seems a lot of people agree with me as it only rated 42% on Rotten Tomatoes, a review-aggregation website for film and television, that is extremely low as ratings go.

This was a golden opportunity to explain the Panama Papers and understand more about the offshore world. The intent at the beginning of the film was correct and Soderbergh looked to humanize the story. A great start but it didn't last long.

The story unfolds, obviously, not showing any offshore operations in a favorable light with Meryl Streep tracking down an insurance Company to Nevis that was falsely run and unable to meet any obligations. But the stigma attached is pointed at offshore jurisdictions and attempts to suggest that all offshore companies are just bad. Although the owners of the boat that capsized admits that he tried to save money and took an insurance policy that didn't actually cover them anyway. Illegal activity is pure and simply just that—illegal. The actions of unscrupulous individuals cannot be blamed on the offshore entities or structures, especially when just as much tax evasion goes on in the onshore world. It is individuals not structures that are the issue.

The film goes off in multiple tangents suggesting that all offshore company/structure owners cheat on

their wives and have affairs with their daughter's college friends and then moves on to murder in China somehow, which is totally confusing.

The final scene has Streep suddenly jumping out of a chair looking like a bedraggled Statue of Liberty and this is where the only real decent part of the film occurs—the closing credits.

In that closing, a slide comes up that discusses how the US is the biggest global tax haven and billions are never paid by large companies in corporation taxes; probably the best part of the film. And certainly not happening in some tiny island in the middle of the Pacific!

One shot during the film asks, "When will the meek inherit the earth?" It implies also that the use of offshore facilities is only for the rich and famous. This could not be further from the truth.

Offshore jurisdictions are available to absolutely everyone, including your normal average person who will take the time to look. There is a huge difference between tax avoidance and tax evasion. One will put you in a jail cell and the other will hopefully get you closer to a banana daiquiri on a beach somewhere, retired. Possibly even in an offshore jurisdiction? Who knows?

Tax avoidance is perfectly legal as opposed to tax evasion. The former should be adopted by all, to mitigate tax burdens that are simply not necessary. As individuals, it can be used in regular monthly savings structures, such as inheritance planning and trusts. If you have spent an entire lifetime of paying into the tax system, why should you pay even more if you don't have to or your dependents should? Wouldn't you rather a lifetime of work and earnings were passed down to your loved ones rather than the taxman? And if you are the person that wants money to be used elsewhere then get a will written and offer charitable donations from your estate.

It is a question I get asked so often.

The average person, sadly, simply doesn't know that these possibilities exist. This belief probably exists because the average person thinks that only corporations and rich individuals can use these strategies. Probably because the average person is under the false impression that it is expensive to utilize an offshore facility. It really isn't!

It doesn't help that it is usually high profile persons that are "exposed" by the media. Lewis Hamilton being a prime example of the Panama Papers leak. But at no point has he ever actually broken one law or been charged with such. But funnily, it does sell a lot of newspapers doesn't it. So, who is corrupt? Perhaps the newspaper for insinuating that something has occurred illegal using sensationalist headlines and profiting from it? Or Hamilton? I'll give you a hint. It isn't Hamilton.

Rupert Murdoch, along with other media moguls, have been criticized for the way they reported and went after wealthy business figures and some political leaders while largely shying away from the corporate side of the story that has enabled trillions of dollars, euros, pounds and rubles to be hidden offshore.

So what do we take from all of this?

Well, the film was an attempt to show the misuse of a system, which, in all fairness, holds merit. But, this could be said of any industry and jurisdiction. Corruption exists everywhere.

I personally feel that offshore entities get a bad rap overall. Stick to the letter of the law and take into consideration the home laws of your country of citizenship. The laws of your resident country and the laws of the offshore jurisdiction and you will be able to secure a better financial future. But, it all starts with an initial question. Do feel free to ask me anything regarding both onshore and offshore jurisdictions for personal finance if you want the correct answer... ■



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TROI OI!

The country in numbers

USD1.9 BILLION

**TO BE CHanneLED
INTO RACETRACK,
GOLF COURSE IN
DA NANG.**

The chairman of the Da Nang People's Committee, Huynh Duc Tho, signed a proposal on October 21 to the local decision-making People's Council for considering adding horse racing and golf course construction to a master plan for socio-economic development in Da Nang from now until 2030. A racetrack is to be built in order to help diversify tourist options, adding to local socio-economic expansion. Such racetrack and golf course projects will help spur local tourism as well as that in neighboring Thua Thien-Hue and Quang Nam Province. The project will feature a stud farm covering 93.1 hectares and a horse racing track spanning over 42.5 hectares, all costing \$200 million. A hotel-golf course complex will also be constructed in Hoa Phong and Hoa Phu Communes, located in Hoa Vang, measuring 497.4 hectares in area. It will boast a 2,000-room hotel, 410 villas, an ecotourism site, and a 36-hole golf course. Its development will last from 2019 to 2028, with the 200ha golf course to be built between 2020 and 2022.



~30

**MOBILE PAYMENT SERVICE PROVIDERS ARE
AVAILABLE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, BUT ONLY A FEW KEY
PLAYERS HAVE MANAGED TO ASSERT THEIR PRESENCE
IN THE FIERCELY COMPETITIVE MARKET.**

Alibaba-owned online marketplace Lazada debuted its own digital wallet, eM, in Vietnam on the e-commerce firm's biggest annual sale event last month, becoming the newest competitor in the market. According to data by the payment department at the State Bank of Vietnam, Payoo, MoMo, SenPay, Moca and AirPay were the five largest e-wallets in Vietnam by account balance as of August 2019, making up more than 80 percent of the country's total market balance. A report forecasts that e-wallets will account for 19 percent of e-commerce transactions in Vietnam in 2019, equal to cash payment. The remaining 62 percent of transactions were paid by card (34 percent), bank transfer (22 percent) and other methods (six percent), according to the report. SenPay, AirPay, and ZaloPay are three outstanding examples for the symbiotic relationship between e-wallets and e-commerce sites. SenPay is an e-wallet integrated into Sendo, which was listed as one of the four most visited e-commerce platforms in Vietnam in the second quarter of 2019. Both SenPay and Sendo are developed by leading Vietnamese technology corporation FPT. Meanwhile, AirPay is the only accepted e-wallet for food delivery app Now and e-commerce site Shopee, both of which are invested in by Singapore-based Internet company Sea Group. In the same fashion, the online marketplace Tiki accepts payments via MoMo and ZaloPay, the latter of which is an e-wallet developed by Vietnam's tech giant VNG, which has shares in Tiki.

104 MILLION

**PEOPLE BY 2030 IS
THE PROJECTED
POPULATION FOR
VIETNAM.**

The strategy aims to maintain the replacement fertility (each woman of childbearing age has 2.1 children) while reducing the fertility gap between regions and subjects. Vietnam also expects to have an average life expectancy of 75 years with a minimum healthy life of 68 years. The country will bring the gender (at birth) ratio to the natural balance and maintain a reasonable age structure. Specifically, the percentage of children under 15 years old will be 22%, the percentage of elderly people aged from 65 and older will be 11%, and the age dependency ratio will be 49% of the national population.



58%

OF SAMSUNG'S GLOBAL SMARTPHONE SALES GLOBALLY COME FROM ITS PRODUCTION FACILITIES IN VIETNAM, according to Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc. In 2008 - 2018, Samsung increased its investment in Vietnam from USD670 million to over USD17.3 billion, a 26-fold increase.

According to Samsung's statistics, around 50% of the giant's smartphones and tablets are produced in Vietnam and exported to 128 countries and territories, including the US, Europe, Russia and Southeast Asia. Last year, Samsung's combined revenue in the global market reached USD221.6 billion, slightly up from US\$217.8 billion in 2017, while after-tax profit increased from USD38.3 billion to USD40.3 billion. Economic cooperation is one of the major pillars in the Vietnam-South Korea relations, stated Phuc. Bilateral trade in 2019 is estimated at USD67 billion, accounting for 40% of total trade turnover between ASEAN and South Korea. Vietnam and South Korea are targeting USD100 billion bilateral trade by 2022, Phuc noted.



250,000

CASES OF DENGUE FEVER HAVE BEEN REPORTED AND 49 PEOPLE SUCCUMBED TO THE DISEASE AS OF NOVEMBER.

Compared to the same period last year, dengue is increasing at a higher rate than any other communicable disease, with a 300 percent increase in infection cases; moreover, the number of dengue-related deaths increased by 26. The disease has been increasing in suburban districts and spread to inner districts.

More elderly people and pregnant women have been infected with dengue including some suffering serious complications including shock, encephalitis, or Myocarditis. Pham Hung who heads the Department of Preventive Medicine's Ward of Infectious Diseases said people should dispose of unwanted containers where water may gather (such as lunch boxes and soft-drink cans), cover water containers, wells and water tanks tightly, and use mosquito nets when sleeping.

By June 2021, Vietnam will install a surveillance system to warn dengue epidemic in the capital city of Hanoi, the southern province of Dong Nai, the central province of Khanh Hoa, and the central highland province of Dak Lak basing on satellite data. The global incidence of dengue has grown dramatically in recent decades. About half of the world's population is now at risk.

~63 TONS

OF GOODS FROM A COMPANY IN THANH HA DISTRICT, HAI DUONG PROVINCE, HAVE BEEN DESTROYED, ACCORDING TO HANOI'S MARKET MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT.

The goods were counterfeit, poor quality, banned goods and those without origin, owned by the Green Environment Trading and Services Production Co Ltd. The destroyed goods, worth nearly VND6 billion, include cigarettes, cigars, electronic cigarettes; nitrous oxide cylinders; alcohol, books, mobile phones, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, foods, GPS navigation devices and animal organs. Kien said the destruction was to prevent the low-quality and counterfeit goods from affecting the health of consumers.

In the same month, customs officers at Tan Son Nhat International Airport in HCMC discovered three suitcases containing 112 boxes containing 2,487 cigars that were made in Cuba. The goods came on a flight from Bangkok to HCMC, owned by a passenger of Vietnamese nationality. The passenger could not show a license or related documents, customs officers said. Under current regulations, people entering Vietnam are only allowed to bring a maximum of 20 cigars. The airport officers seized the goods for further investigation.



A Hard Day's Work

JUANCARLOS DURAN SOLORZANO

(www.facebook.com/Juancaphotography)

is a professional photographer with more than six years of experience in the industry. His latest solo exhibition was a collaboration between his native Mexico and Vietnam titled "Mexico - Vietnam Cross borders". It was showcased in the Ethnology Museum and in Deutsches Haus in Ho Chi Minh City. He also inaugurated the first editions of the Saigon Photo Walk exhibition that took place in Common 9 in September this year.

Juancarlos' passion for capturing people's culture led him to work overseas. He has learned and shared experiences with talented people, who have helped him improve his photography skills. He strives to capture people's emotions through his lens. With Saigon Photo Walk (SPW) he aims to nurture his passion and give something back to the community and, for this reason, he created SPW.

In this photo essay, Juancarlos documenting locals in their diverse places of work. ■

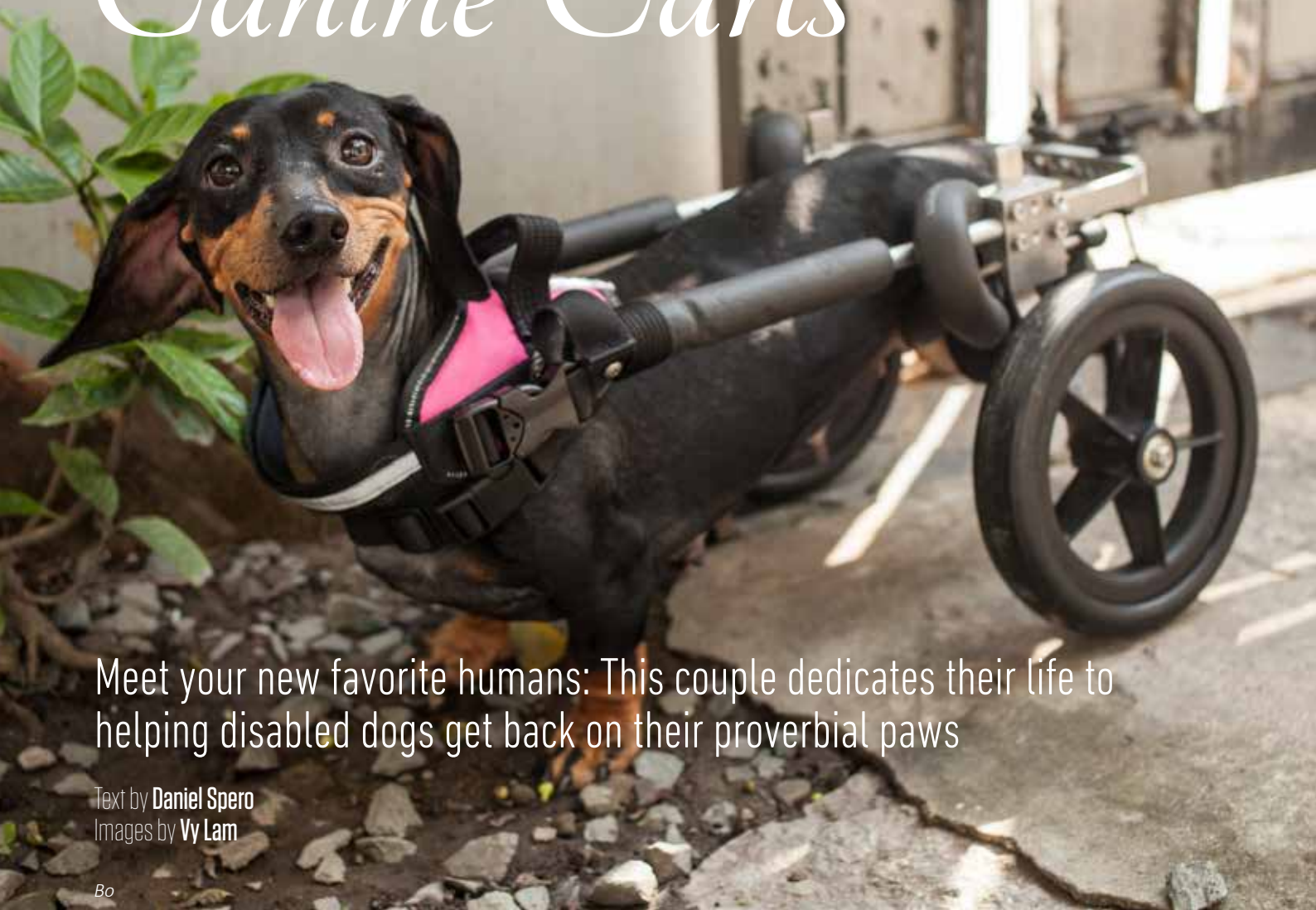








Canine Carts



Meet your new favorite humans: This couple dedicates their life to helping disabled dogs get back on their proverbial paws

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

Bo

IF YOU'VE EVER HAD MOBILITY issues you know how much it affects everything you do, from getting around to using the toilet. For dogs, this can be a death sentence because crippled dogs often get abandoned due to the mounting medical bills and additional responsibility they require. Thankfully, Forever Wheelchair, a non-profit founded by Oscar Fernando Ruiz Bonilla (Fernando) was formed to address this problem.

Just a few short years ago Fernando was living in Colombia and taking care of dozens of dogs he'd rescued from the streets. He'd spent the last four years working in a hospital when his contract finished and he needed to find a new employment opportunity. It was at this crossroads when a call came that took him in an unexpected direction. "In 2016 my sister got pregnant and she already had two kids, so it was quite complicated for her to take care of the kids, so she asked me to come to Vietnam to help her for a couple of months because she was having so many problems with her pregnancy. She was really sick; at risk of

losing the baby," said Fernando on why he moved to Vietnam.

Fortunately, his sister delivered a healthy baby, yet Fernando decided to stay to assist her and to remain close to his family. His biggest obstacle in Vietnam was that he couldn't speak English, so he began to practice regularly. After about a year he became more acclimated to Vietnam and conversational in English. It was then that he gravitated back toward his love of helping animals.

Unfortunately, the moment that turned Fernando's love of dogs into his vocation is rooted in a horrible incident, but one which gave him the determination to be a greater force for good—a protector of dogs who needed help. As he explained, "In 2017 someone killed my dog. I had a Labrador that I was training to become a guide dog for the blind, but unluckily when she was eight months old someone threw poison into my yard, and into many other families' yards. On that day, on Street 4 in Thao Dien, at least nine dogs and some cats died. There were a couple of

months that were very sad, and in that moment, I don't know why, someone contacted me and asked if I could take care of this handicapped dog. They said maybe it will help you to heal."

He hesitated initially, knowing how much care is required for a disabled dog, but after an encouraging conversation with a friend from back home, he decided to adopt it. "This was the moment when I learned how to help handicapped dogs. Before I would care for dogs, like cleaning them, but now I had to make a wheelchair."

He helped the dog, which he named Moto after his love of motorbikes, treating Moto's skin problems and by building a rudimentary wheelchair. But Fernando decided that maybe he could do more for Moto; maybe he could help rehabilitate him. "So I read a lot about orthopedics and massage and physiotherapy and I made many different kinds of wheelchairs for him to assist this process, and now he can walk. He walks funny, but he can walk. And now this year he is learning to climb the stairs."



Fernando and Joy



During the period it took to rehabilitate Moto, Fernando built more than 10 different wheelchair prototypes while also finding inspiration from Moto's progress. "When Moto walked I felt like, wow, I can do this. Then a person who saw the videos I posted on Facebook asked me to help them with another handicapped dog."

From there he built new, improved wheelchairs using better materials like PVC pipes and aluminum that were more durable and flexible, and wrapping them with foam to make the dogs more comfortable and minimize chafing. As he improved his knowledge and expertise more pet-owners reached out to him for help. "I started to help more people and

more people were contacting me, mostly because of what I posted on Facebook. I heard from dog lovers and shelters. I would go to the shelters to take measurements of the puppies and to see what the problem was. I learned more about orthopedics and physiotherapy, but I'm no doctor."

Fernando, along with his girlfriend Joy, now travels all over Vietnam building customized wheelchairs for dogs (and cats, too) along with providing physiotherapy under his charity Forever Wheelchair. When people have the resources to pay, he accepts it, and when they don't, they find a way. "We ask that if a family or shelter has no money, to send us videos of the dog so that we can show it to try and raise money to cover the cost of the materials," said Fernando.

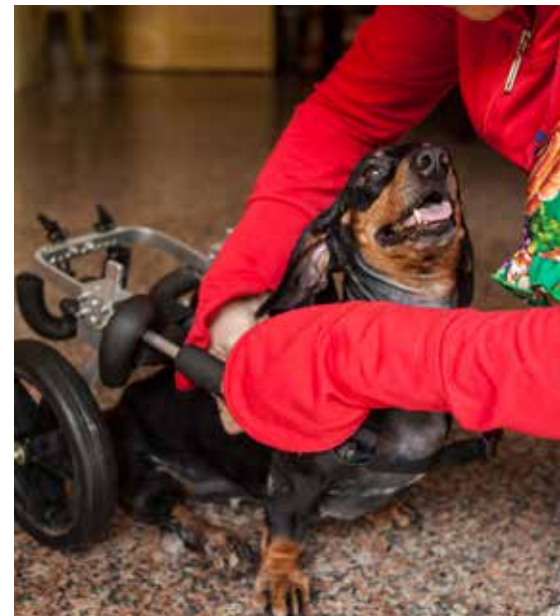
The wheelchairs range in price, anywhere from VND3 million and up, depending on the problem with the dog and its size. While it used to take longer, Fernando can finish building a typical wheelchair in one day. However, these days much of his time is focused on the rehabilitation aspect. "Some of the dogs adapt very easily. You put them in the wheelchair and, vroom, they run, but some of them cannot. They feel scared or they were abused so they get aggressive or they cannot control their bowels. Beyond the personality or reaction of the dog, every handicapped dog has a different problem; a twisted spine or broken legs or hip problems, so every dog needs something different."

Forever Wheelchair is doing great work helping disabled dogs and Fernando wants to encourage people about the benefits of adopting disabled dogs because they are often overlooked. "Try adopting a handicapped dog, especially if you have kids. The kids will have fun, but it will help teach them a higher level of responsibility and care, and also a higher level of love. Then in the future, if mamma or papa were to become handicapped or feeble, those kids will be psychologically prepared to take care of them and know how to do the job properly." ■

To donate, volunteer and more info on Forever Wheelchair, visit www.facebook.com/foreverwheelchair



Pepsi





Open for Business

What you need to know about setting up a company in Vietnam

Text by **Damian Ferreira**

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE

arrived at the decision of setting up a company in Vietnam after identifying the great potential it has for business growth, this article will serve as an easy-to-understand guide about company incorporation in Vietnam. So follow the guidelines and get on with the process of establishing your company in Vietnam.

The types of business entities that can be formed in Vietnam under Vietnam's enterprise law are:

- Limited Liability Company
- Joint Stock Company
- Representative Office
- Branch Office
- Business corporation contract
- Public Private partnerships such as BOT, BIT etc.

All of the above entities can be formed

by an individual or a registered corporation hence the kind of entity you need to have for yourself in Vietnam is a matter of your objectives with which you wish to open a company. The registration records, however, show that in Vietnam most of the companies are Limited Liability Companies (LLC). The main reason for this is because LLC's are easy to incorporate and simple to operate.

The next step is to know the requirements to form a company in the backdrop of the business entity that you have decided to form. The following are the pre-requisites for the company registration in Vietnam.

1) Shareholders – A minimum of 1 is required for a limited liability company and 3 for a joint stock

company. Unlike Singapore, no local shareholder/ investor is needed for almost 95% of the business lines.

In Vietnam, an equity holder can also act as the director of the company. It is also permissible to appoint a director who is not an equity holder. This person can either be a local resident or a foreigner. In legal parlance, this person is also often referred to as the legal representative of the company. If the legal representative is not a capital contributing member and a foreigner then he/ she will additionally need a work visa and work permit to legally work in Vietnam.

As per the existing law, once a company has been incorporated, the legal representative of the company is required to remain in country to manage the affairs of the company. This

becomes a problem in a one member LLC where the equity holder is the legal representative of the Vietnam entity as well as the director of another entity that is located overseas and subsequently remains out of Vietnam. In these cases, an alternate legal representative must be appointed. One easy solution is to appoint a management company to oversee the affairs of the Vietnam entity. To do this the entity needs to provide a time bound power of attorney and company seal to the management company. In turn the management company, after consultation, will appoint an independent director/legal representative. The benefit of this arrangement is that the onus of sponsoring a work permit now lies squarely with the management company who may or may not choose to appoint a foreign director.

It is worthwhile to note that in Vietnam, the seal of a company is an integral part of any business transaction as the seal and authorized signature are required for any document to be considered an official correspondence.

2) Legal address - A local Vietnam address is necessary to register a company. This address becomes the registered address of the company post incorporation. To use an address for office registration, a notarized copy of the lease agreement and the land use rights certificate of the property must be submitted. The latter is to ascertain that the lessor executing the lease agreement is indeed the owner of the property. The other reason for having this is to determine if in fact the property can be used for commercial purposes. The land use right certificate will have this information listed and it is common for a landlord to provide a copy of this to the lessee at the time of signing a lease agreement.

An apartment address cannot be used to register a company since it is only meant for residential purposes. A townhouse address, however, may be used to register a company if the land use right certificate permits residential and commercial use.

When using a serviced office or a co-working space, in addition to having a lease agreement, the serviced office or the co-working company also needs to provide a copy of their business licenses as well as a notarized copy of their lease agreement with the building owners which should expressly permit them to sublease the premises to a third party.

3) Paid-up Capital - Similar to Singapore there is no set minimum paid up capital in Vietnam. The government, however, assesses each project capital vis-a-vis the intended business lines before issuing a business registration certificate. For this reason it is not possible to setup a USD1 company in Vietnam.

The rule of thumb is that the paid-up capital should be sufficient to carry out the intended business. For most businesses a

paid-up capital of around USD10,000 is considered sufficient. The breakdown of the USD9,600 is as follows:

- Office rent - USD400/month
- 1 X staff - USD300/month
- Misc costs - USD100/month

From this simple calculation, you will notice that the monthly operational costs are around USD800. This translates to USD9,600 per year, hence the paid-up capital of around USD9,600.

Unlike Singapore, there is no need to appoint a company secretary in Vietnam. A company is, however, required to appoint a chief accountant. The role of this chief accountant is to sign off on all the bank documents, such as withdrawal slips, payment orders etc., as well as company documents such as payment vouchers, VAT invoices, etc. In practice, the director of the company can also sign off as the chief accountant though under a pseudo name. This is common/acceptable practice for small companies that have opened a company bank account immediately after incorporation and have not yet appointed a chief accountant. In the long term, however, the accountant who handles all the bookkeeping and tax reporting typically assumes the role of the chief accountant. In some companies where there are only 1 or 2 staff and a part-time accountant, the practice of signing under a pseudo name is typically continued.

There are 7 forms that need to be filled out in order to register a company. These forms have to be filled out in Vietnamese, which means that any foreign investor will need the assistance of a consultant, like Mahan, to handle the paperwork and guide them through the process. To give you an idea of the application pack, the following forms typically need to be filled out. This may increase depending on the business lines being registered.

The standard forms are as follows:

- 1) Form I.1 : Written request for the implementation of investment procedure (Article 33,34,35,37 of Investment law)
- 2) Form I.3, Proposal of investment project, (Applies to projects not subject to investment policy decision - Clause 2, Article 37 of the Investment Law)
- 3) Explanatory statement, financial capacity and experience of investor's experience.
- 4) Appendix I-2, Proposal for business registration one member limited liability company
- 5) Company Charter
- 6) Notification regarding the use of the enterprise's seal sample
- 7) Authorization letter
- 8) Appointment of legal representative

With this paperwork completed, now you are ready to go through the process of company incorporation, which is essentially a four-step procedure:

- Applying for an Investment

registration certificate (IRC)

- Applying for a Business registration certificate (BRC)

- Registering the company seal

- Making a public announcement

In a nutshell, an investment registration certificate is an approval from the government of Vietnam to carry out investment activities in the stipulated business lines. It contains details of the investor, the approved business lines, location of the investment project, approved investment capital and other guidelines for the execution of the project.

The business registration certificate, on the other hand, provides information of the entity namely the business registration number, the shareholders, office address, phone number, email address etc. of the company.

The most important piece of information in the business registration certificate is the business registration number, which is at the top of the certificate under the title and in Vietnamese is referred to as the *Ma So Thue* or MST. This is also the tax registration number of the company and is to be quoted in all transactions.

Unlike Singapore, there is no need to get prior approval for a company name. The way this works in Vietnam is at the time of registration you are required to provide 3 names in the order of your preference. If this 1st name is taken, you will be allotted your 2nd choice. If the 2nd name is taken you will be allotted the 3rd choice.

Once the documents are submitted to the government, there is a processing time of 20 working days after which the investment registration certificate is issued. Post this, the application for a business registration certificate is submitted. The business registration certificate is issued in 5 working days. Company seal preparation and registration takes 1 working day. Public announcement and registration on the national registration portal takes 1 working day. All in all, after 30 days a company gets incorporated and is ready to start operations.

You can now go ahead and open a bank account, register your tax code, etc. Your company is also liable to pay the annual business license tax, which should be filed within 10 days after registration. This is an annual tax collected by the government from all businesses operating in Vietnam. The amount is fixed based on the investment capital. Typically this ranges from USD100-USD200 per year. Depending on the type of your business, you can also apply for any sub-licenses if required.

After this, your company will be fully compliant and as such free to proceed with carrying out your business activity and expanding your business footprint as a Vietnam registered company. ■

Mahan (www.mahan-vn.com) provides a complete suite of services that span all aspects of company setup and on-going company administration. No matter what stage of growth or development your company is at, they guide clients of all sizes on market entry, establishing the right relationships and provide your business with a strategic advantage in the market in which it operates.

Cryptocurrency

BTC
Bitcoin



Changing Block by Block

The Vietnamese startups
using blockchain to fix broken
economies

Text by **Chris Roper**

ETH
Ethereum

LTC
Litecoin



ETC

VIETNAM HAS ONE OF THE fastest-growing economies in the world. Its startup scene is thriving. It regularly wins awards for entrepreneurship and innovation. Its people are some of the smartest, most influential thinkers in the world.

And yet, Vietnam's inflation is among the highest in the region—double that of the USA, according to *tradingeconomics.com*. Worse still, 69% of people don't have access to a bank account or financial services. Those that do, are forced to pay heavy fees for withdrawals or sending money overseas.

But there's hope. A surge of blockchain startups is working on solving these economic challenges both at home and abroad. But what exactly is blockchain technology? And how are these businesses using it to enact change?

What is blockchain?

Blockchain is similar to a shared database. Rather than one person or organization controlling the database, everyone shares a copy and helps maintain it. You can think of it as a collaborative online ledger—like Google Sheets—except all changes are irreversible and stay on the blockchain forever.

You can't just make any old change, though. Blockchains use a consensus model to verify and validate new transactions, which prevents fraud. The two main ones are Proof-of-Work (PoW) and Proof-of-Stake (PoS):

- In PoW, network computers, called miners, compete to solve a cryptographic problem. The first to solve it with 51% network approval wins a cryptocurrency reward and the honor of adding a new "block" of transactions to the chain. This model was first popularized in the Bitcoin whitepaper in 2009.
- In PoS, new transactions are added by validators—people who've invested (staked) cryptocurrency in the blockchain and therefore have an interest in maintaining its integrity. VeChain (VET) uses this consensus mechanism, and it's generally considered faster and more efficient than Proof-of-Work.

Vietnam is fast becoming a blockchain hub. It held its first national blockchain summit in 2018, and projects like Infinity Blockchain Labs are helping agriculture and supply chain businesses exploit this new technology to save costs and track goods.

But blockchain's potential is perhaps most keenly felt in finance. Everything from money (USD, for example) to physical assets (like gold and property) can be digitized and securely stored, transferred, and exchanged on blockchain for almost zero cost.



And when *value* can be manipulated as easily as email, the possibility of an accessible financial system for everyone, no matter where you live or how much you have, is suddenly within grasp.

Constant: secured P2P lending for all

In a bustling office, deep in the dusty heat of Saigon's Phu Nhuan District, a team of engineers is helping people do more with their money. Founded in early 2019, Constant (www.myconstant.com), a secured P2P lending startup, has been using blockchain technology to offer secured loans and investment opportunities to anyone with an internet-enabled device.

Constant matches borrowers and investors on their chosen interest rates and terms. All lending is secured by cryptocurrency collateral, meaning investors get a return whether borrowers repay or not. With publicized returns of 10% or more, it's an enticing, accessible alternative to stocks, and just wouldn't have been possible without cryptocurrencies.

"Cryptocurrencies make great collateral," said Nguyen Bui, Head of Growth at Constant. "If a borrower defaults, or if their collateral devalues too much, we can easily sell the collateral to repay investors. This protects investors and means borrowers can get loans regardless of their credit history and without having to cash out their cryptocurrency investments."

Incognito: protecting your privacy

In another Saigon workspace, a team of cryptographers is building a private transaction network for digital currencies. Incognito (incognito.org) styles itself as "Incognito mode for your crypto," a way to keep your transaction history private. But it's also a platform for building "privacy-first" applications (pApps) and you can even issue your own private cryptocurrency.

Blockchain is praised for leaving an indelible transaction record, but

this isn't always a good thing. For one, a public history can be a honeypot for hackers. It's also possible to deduce someone's identity from what they spend and where. Incognito therefore solves a problem that's only going to get worse the more popular these assets become.

"Privacy shouldn't be playing catch up when cryptos go mainstream," said Ning Tan, Incognito's growth lead. "The market is maturing fast, with more data and things being tokenized and represented on-chain, but there are few practical ways to protect your digital footprint. There needs to be a fast, easy, yet private way to transact on the blockchain and that's where Incognito comes in."

National institutions are also taking note. Recently, TPBank joined RippleNet, a blockchain network, to offer low-cost, fast remittances between Japan and Vietnam, and Vietnamese lawmakers authorized the country's first cryptocurrency exchange earlier this year.

Will blockchain fix Vietnam's socioeconomic problems? Time will tell. But with a talented workforce, a fertile startup scene, and the right regulatory framework, Vietnam could very well be a global leader in blockchain-driven change. ■



The Art-Tech Revolution

Seven expert opinions on how mediation and legal-tech are revolutionizing art provenance

Text by Thomas G. Giglione

THE RIGHT TO RESALE

royalties, or *droit de suite*, is the right of artists to receive a royalty payment each time their work is resold at an appreciated value. This viewpoint has historically been aimed at the likes of recording artists and filmmakers. However, most of the world's visual artists rarely have an ongoing source of income from their work. The majority of visual artists have little in the way of protection via contractual agreements and/or strict intellectual property, or IP laws with which to earn royalties for their work.

Recent statistics published by the Milan Chamber of Arbitration in Italy (CAM), advised that only 10% of art mediations of 2018 were deposited because of a contractual ADR-clause included in the agreement between the parties.

Between 2015 and 2018, ADR Arte handled over 60 art mediation cases involving a broad spectrum of issues, with a high rate of effectiveness. Whenever the parties chose to continue with the mediation process after the first session, over three-quarters then went on to reach a final agreement even though artists had no contracts. ADR Arte reported that 70% of the art disputes did not involve contracts. Over 1/3 of the art pieces in dispute had values between 150,000 and 1,000,000 Euros.

For any dispute to be satisfactorily

resolved, the matter of provenance must first be proven. The term "art provenance," from the French word, *provenir*, meaning "to come from." Provenance is the documentation that authenticates an art piece, sometimes claiming the work is created by someone else or is from a different era.

For any form of technology to be useful to the artists, gallerists and owners must be available, security, be transportable, and accessible. Traditional methods such as Authenticity Certificates can easily be faked and, as such, are unreliable.

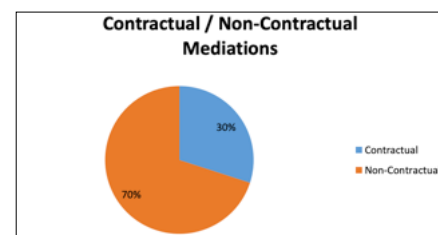
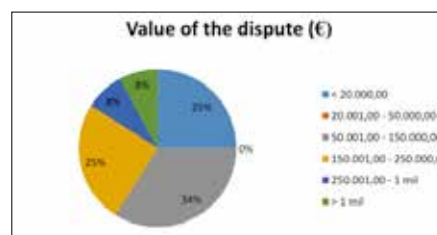
So, it is with this concept of smart contracts on a computer protocol intended to digitally facilitate, verify, enforce negotiation, which makes performance of contract appealing. Smart contracts allow credible transactions without third parties. They use blockchain, which is a decentralized system that exists only between all permitted parties— as such, there is no need to pay intermediaries that is

secure; as it saves time and money. While blockchains have their issues; they are rated faster, cheaper and more secure than traditional system.

The Legal Experts Analysis on Provenance and Royalties

Jeffrey Aresty - Texas, USA

Jeffrey is the founder of the Internet Bar Organization and is a lawyer from Houston, Texas who specializes in law-tech and smart legal contracts. He partners with companies that use blockchain technology to protect musicians and artists' intellectual property rights. An example of this partnering effort is to bring the US-based Trokt platform, which certifies the "digital thumbprint" as a piece of artwork, and saves it on the Trokt blockchain, with the Canadian-Vietnamese start-up joint ventures Royalty Guaranteed Art and Find My Art Online in Vietnam.



Federico Vasoli - Milan, Italy

Federico is an Italian lawyer from Milan, the international art capital. He specializes in blockchain technology with offices in Italy, Vietnam, Singapore and Malta (a country commonly referred to as "Blockchain Island"). The laws and legal implications vary between countries, hence the initial digitization, privacy policy, guarantees to buyers, and volatility of digital tokens to evaluate the work of art. Malta and Singapore have developed distinctive expertise in blockchains and digital tokens. Blockchains and all that they entail offer potentially tremendous utility to verify identity and ownership to the art industry.

Thomas Giglione - Mediator- Arbitrator, Toronto, Canada

Thomas has recently focused on art provenance, and will be relaunching his website www.mediation.vn to include a directory of international mediators, arbitrators, art appraisers and experts in art provenance. He believes that resolving

art disputes through the mediation process thus by offering the artists a win-win outcome rather than litigating through the courts. The directory will include a list of mediation and arbitration centers such as the Milan Chamber of Arbitration in Italy (CAM) that specializes in art dispute resolution.

He explains: "We are presently bootstrapping Royalty Guaranteed Art along with the associated paired mobile app, Find My Art Online. The start-up is in the seed stage of the investment round and we are now considering offering convertible notes and series A financing to angel investors. The smartphone app simply reads a NFC label that is affixed on the back of the canvas of a painting, photo or the bottom of a sculpture or any art collectible along with the integration of smart legal contracts, IoT technology and NFC readers for Android and Apple smartphones."



Thomas G. Giglione is a Canadian court-appointed commercial mediator for the Ministry of the Attorney General in Ontario, Canada, he currently lives in Hanoi, Vietnam. He is a court accredited mediator under the Ministry of Justice of Vietnam, and the Vice Director and mediation trainer (VEMC) Mediation Center www.vietnamadr.com. He is also a member of the Internet Bar Association IBO.org, World Mediation Organization WMO.org and member of the European and Italian Chambers of Commerce under the auspices of ANT Lawyers specializing in resolving cross border, workplace, and disputes involving art provenance.

The Artists, Photographers and Galleries Francesco Gibbi - Founder @ LOT-ART.com | The Art Investment Platform | Alternative Assets Management

Francesco is from Italy; he launched his company "Lot-Art" in 2017. Lot-Art is the leading search engine for fine art and luxury collectibles—it is an investment platform for serious investors. "Legal smart contracts and blockchain, through online platforms, will help art investors track art ownership and will be able to track the increased prices of art. Investors will know that that they are not buying fakes, so that investors will feel secure with their art investment," says Francesco.

(Above and below are some examples of Lot-Art painting that he offers to investors)

Ronald Paderes, Artist - Caracas,

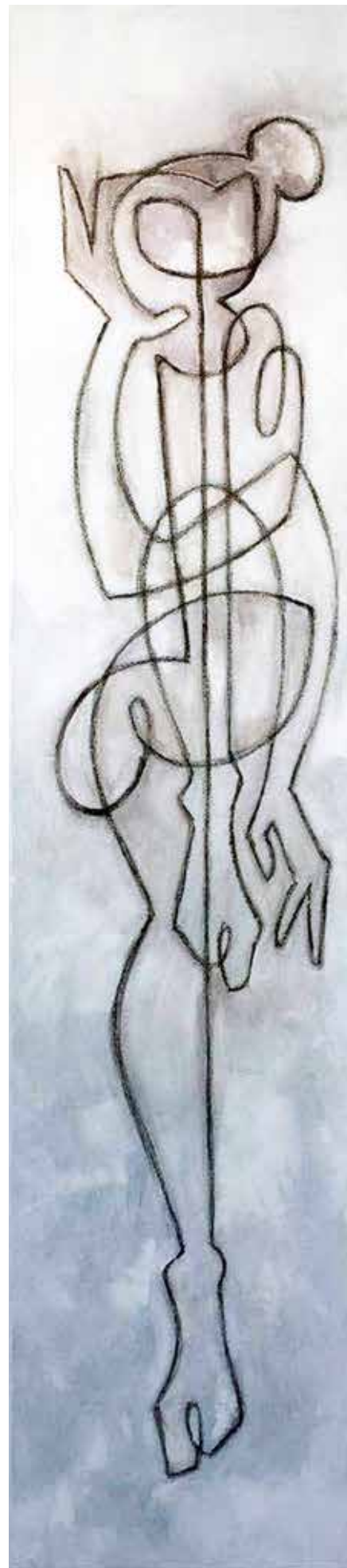
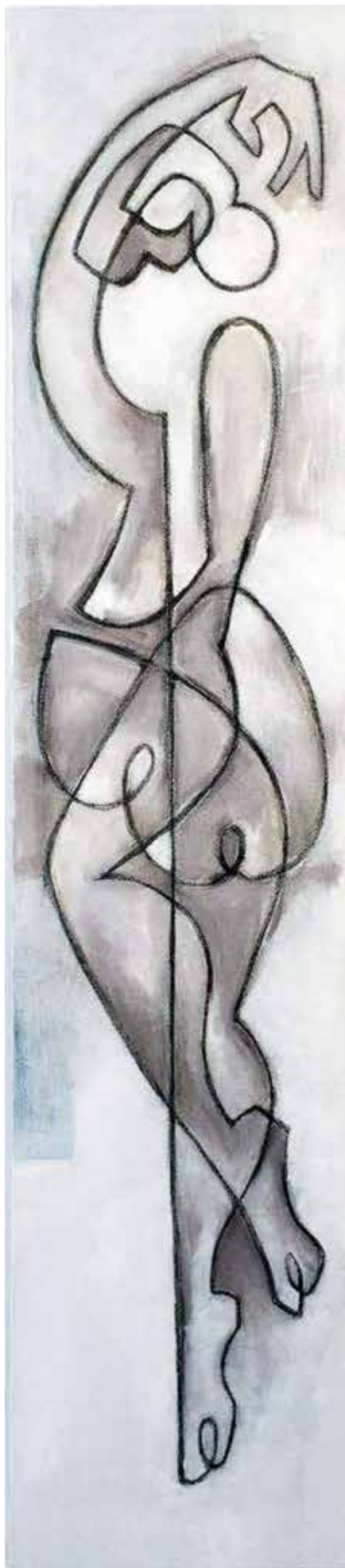




Venezuela

Ronald is a Venezuelan artist, working for over 20 years in graphic design and visual communication, now residing in China where there has been dramatic growth in demand for art as an investment because of the declining Chinese currency. Art Basel and UBS Global Art Market Report finds that China accounted for 21% of USD63 billion global art sales last year in a market dominated by the world's super-wealthy.

"My work as an artist consists of compositions made from continuous lines and basic colors. As a graphic designer, I wanted to continue producing work with a very strong graphic feel. The major issue in the art market is outrageous speculation when talking about price and value. Electronic provenance tracking will make art pieces more accessible and resourceful. There will be a complete database of each artwork including legal ownership, price and trade information."





Barry Penter, Artist – Australia

Barry's work focused on realistic drawings. Having found his talent after a detailed and real working life with special attraction. Currently, he enjoys the exuberance of the city of Hanoi. He has been invited to exhibitions, and has provided workshops in realism and discussion groups on art.

"Artists are more interested in earning income from ongoing royalties. This will be equally important to galleries and art dealers, but for the artists to come on board they have to see an advantage," he says. "Remember, the ability to have an ongoing income is a new paradigm and is the ideal quest for an artist wanting to retire with no pension or retirement income."

Tran Chinh Nghia – Photographer; Hanoi, Vietnam

Tran Chinh Nghia was recently interviewed in his home in Hoan Kiem District in Hanoi by Thomas Giglione. (An excerpt from the interview, a full transcript is available upon request.)

Thomas: Please tell me the interesting story behind the beautiful photos that you displayed here about Lunar New Year, which portrays the late artist Bui Xuan Phai?

Nghia: Mr. Bui Xuan Phai and my father were friends. He had over 12 paintings symbolizing the lunar holidays as a symbol of their 12-year friendship.

Thomas: Can you tell us a little about the photo that you took of Bui Xuan Phai_Bai Phong Van? And the story behind this, how it was chosen as the approved image for next year's national postage stamp?

Nghia: In 2019, to celebrate the anniversary of his 100th birthday, the Ministry of Information and Communications used this photo that I took as a symbol on the stamp. This picture shows that he is standing in front



John Crain, Artist - US

John's interest is in digital art and crypto collectibles. He has formed SuperRare.co, an online platform and marketplace for one-of-a-kind unique digital art.

He is partnering with Asian start-ups working in the area of art provenance that allows artists and galleries to cryptographically sign certificates of authenticity on blockchain using smart legal contracts, thus allowing collectors

to buy and sell art from a global community of artists. These certificates prevent forgery, track provenance, guarantee ownership and authenticity—creating a global economy built around creativity and art. This new technology allows investors to invest in incremental art by not having to buy the entire art piece but rather purchase a percentage of the art and thus leverage revenue with a smaller initial investment.

of his painting in the Old Quarter of Hanoi.

Thomas: What happened to all Bui Xuan Phai's paintings? Who owns them now?

Nghia: I am now keeping some copies of his drawings—for other paintings, I don't know where they are because whenever he finished drawing he sold them right after that to earn a living. There are a lot of fake works of his art, it is a tragedy that we don't know what is fake or not.

I really hope that the technology you speak of will come soon to Vietnam to help Vietnamese artists and their families for future generations. ■



Bui Xuan Phai with Photographer Tran Van Luu





Read the Book

A intriguing novel set during the bygone days
of Old Saigon

AUTHOR CHARLES GERARD

recently published his first book called *Yen's White Lie*. The following description comes from the book's back cover:

Saigon, 1997 - Vietnam has opened its borders to adventurous travelers, who stay on and make the country their new home. A culture-shocked foreigner, who makes his living by teaching English and doing odd jobs for casting agencies, befriends a young Vietnamese woman at the Saigon Café, an infamous expat hangout. Unaware that she is not who she says she is, he flirts with her during

his heavy-drinking sessions, and their friendship deepens. Their appetite for kinky sex soon turns their relationship into a tumultuous competition where they vie with each other in the quest for novel erotic adventures. Five years after they have parted, he returns from Helmand, Afghanistan, and learns the staggering truth about her identity. Then he discovers he has only been told the truth so someone close to the young woman can exploit him—with tragic consequences.

The following are excerpts from *Yen's White Lie*:

Yen arrives at the Saigon Café shortly after me, and we both order coffee at the same time.

We talk about the people that walk by and their negotiations with the local street vendors.

Yen finds it all very amusing and often taps me on my arm or leg to let me know what's going on, in case I miss something.

Three girls from England are thrilled to see a young Vietnamese woman helping a decrepit old European gentleman walk down the street.

"Oh. Look at that! That is SO cute!

A young girl is helping an elderly tourist walk down the street," an English girl says excitedly.

The English girl's excitement gets my attention, and I look to my right and see why the girls are animated.

It's The Captain and Phuong!

They both stop, and I assume The Captain is out of breath, but no, he sticks his tongue in Phuong's mouth.

"Oh, my God! Did you see that?" the English girl says.

The three girls are appalled by what they see, and when it becomes clear to them that The Captain and Phuong are coming to the Café, they pay their bill and leave.

The reaction of the three English girls, who are shocked and disturbed by the unexpected turn, is epic.

With a crackle, I turn to Yen to ask her if she noticed what I saw, but before I can say anything, she tells with a smile why the English girls were appalled, pointing at The Captain and Phuong.

"The old man is my friend. I invited him because I want you to meet him. He is a friendly and charming man," I tell her.

Yen leans against my shoulder and whispers, "dâm tặc!" then laughs, hiding her face behind my shoulder.

"What does that mean?" I ask Yen.

"Trâu già thích ăn cỏ non," she says with a grin.

"Old buffalo likes to eat young grass? What does that mean?" I ask her with a grin.

"Good morning. You must be Yen," The Captain says, reaching out his hand to introduce himself.

Phuong and I help The Captain in his chair, and I sit next to him so that Yen can talk to Phuong in Vietnamese.

Yen wants to ask The Captain why he is walking with difficulty and turns to me to translate her question for The Captain.

The Captain who is conscious of the age difference between Phuong and him and therefore reluctant to admit that his disability is due to old age, asks me to tell Yen that it's an old war wound that is playing up.

"Did I tell you that I was a soldier in the Korean War?" The Captain asks.

"Yes, you did. Several times," I reply.

"After the Malaya Campaign, I was sent to the Korean Peninsula. Our fatigues were suitable for the tropics, but not for the cold winters in Korea. The Americans were kind enough to give us proper gear. But after I got wounded, I woke up on an

American hospital ship. They must have assumed I was an American soldier."

"Do you have any old photographs? I'd love to see what you looked like when you were young and handsome," Yen says, expecting me to translate this in the same provoking fashion.

With his middle finger, The Captain pushes his glasses with aspherical lenses that magnify his eyes to the size of golf balls further up his nose and stoically says, "You mean when I was younger and more handsome."

Right in front of us, a Japanese tourist is asking for a ride to the war museum.

Two cyclo (Pedicab) drivers run towards her, pulling their cyclos behind them.

One of the cyclo drivers is a tall, lanky Vietnamese man, the other a short, stocky Khmer-looking man.

They both offer to take her to the museum, but the woman is so intimidated by their aggressive behavior that she cannot make a decision.

The two cyclo drivers start an argument over who saw the Japanese tourist first and, therefore, gets to take the new customer to the museum.

The argument soon turns violent, and the two exchange punches in the middle of the street.

The tall driver has the upper hand because he has a greater reach.

The short man is taking punches, and it seems that he is losing the fight, but with a swift dive, he manages to grab the taller man's legs.

He lifts him off the ground and slams him hard onto the tarmac, his back lands on the ground first, followed by the back of his head.

His head bounces like a coconut, and the fight ends abruptly with a fraught silence.

The tall man has stopped moving and is not responding to his friend's efforts to revive him.

To the relief of many onlookers, there is a sign of life; he's still breathing.

Two street vendors rush over to carry the poor man, who is unconscious, to the sidewalk next to the Café in front of a travel agency that hasn't opened for business yet and still has the shutters closed.

The owner of the café, Mr. Viet, is closing in on the spot where the cyclo driver's head hit the pavement and points to a liquid on the ground.

He turns around and looks at me, shaking his head gently, then slowly walks over and says, "He die soon," and explains that the liquid on the ground is, in fact, cranial fluid.

Yen looks at me and tries to tell me we should finish our coffee and move to a more peaceful place.

I concur and ask for the bill, which takes a while to arrive, and when it takes even longer to get my change, I ask The Captain and Phuong if they want to join us, but they decline the invitation.

We walk to the travel agency next to the café where I parked my bike.

The injured man is still lying on the ground with his eyes now open, but he doesn't seem to be aware of what is happening around him.

I start the bike and follow Yen's directions to a coffee shop she frequents during her lunch breaks.

We get to the corner of Le Lai Street and Nguyen Trai Street, where the coffee shop is.

The coffee shop that looks like a pavilion in a park has an entrance on the Le Lai side of the corner where we can park my bike.

We walk into the place that has no walls, and we pick a table away from the street and the traffic noise.

"Em oi, can we have something to drink?" I ask with a voice, loud enough for the young waitress in the coffee shop to hear me.

The young waitress slowly approaches us with a timid expression on her face but keeps a distance.

I ask Yen what she would like to drink, but instead of telling me what she wants, she turns to the young girl and speaks to her in Vietnamese, presumably telling her what she would like to order.

Although I prefer fresh milk in my coffee, I am in no mood to explain to the waitress how I want my coffee, so I ask for a hot coffee with condensed milk.

Without talking to each other, we sit and look around the coffee shop.

We are the only customers in the coffee shop of Yen's choice, but that doesn't surprise me.

Who would want to sit in a pavilion in the middle of one of the busiest intersections of this city?

We do, and that worries me a bit.

The young girl returns with our drinks and carefully places my coffee in front of me before she gives Yen her drink.

She walks around Yen's chair and gives her a bottle of Tri soy milk with a straw.

Tri soy milk comes in a bottle that resembles a Pepsi bottle, but what is even more striking, is the label on a Tri bottle.

The colors of the label are exactly like the colors of a Pepsi label.

Even the font of the letters T, R and I, is the same.

Watching Yen drink her soy milk is amusing, and I wonder how a girl can be so comfortable and content with a bottle of her favorite drink.

Between sips she looks around the coffee shop like a child in a theme park, but once she is aware that I am watching her with a tender smile, she stops looking around and laughs with her chin down and her eyes up, looking me in the eye as if she just got caught doing something silly.

I tell Yen that my ex-brother-in-law, Wayne, is coming to visit me in Vietnam for two weeks.

She raises her eyebrows and asks, "Were you married?"

"No! My ex-brother-in-law is the man who was married to my sister. He's coming to Vietnam because he's having a tough time back home. He lost his job a few weeks after the divorce, and now he's about

to have a nervous breakdown. My sister asked me if he could come to Vietnam for a visit. She thinks a trip to Asia will clear his mind. At first, I was skeptical about the whole idea, mainly because my ex-brother-in-law is an over-opinionated moralist and a narcissist, but after a few days I relented and called him to tell him to come over."

I am tempted to tell Yen why my ex-brother-in-law got fired from his job, but I promised my sister not to tell anyone that he got the boot for sexually harassing his boss, Mrs. Wheeler, the owner of Galaxy Dance School where Wayne worked as a salsa instructor.

"Oh!" Yen says, surprised to hear my opinion of him, "When is he coming?" Yen asks.

"Tomorrow afternoon, I believe. I'll have to check."

"Oh, Sa Lee. That reminds me," she says, "Tomorrow I will go back to my hometown in Phu Yen Province. I will move out of my room, so I don't have to pay rent for the time I am away. When I get back to Ho Chi Minh City, I will move to a bigger room."

"When will you come back?"

"After the Tet holiday. I will be away for three weeks, I think."

"When you get back, give me a call at this number. If I am away, you can leave a message with my landlord."

I write my landlord's telephone number on a piece of paper and give it to Yen.

We kiss each other goodbye, and I get on my bike and ride back to the Saigon Café to get the lowdown on what happened while I was away.

With very few bikes on the road, I go full speed down Pham Ngu Lao Street and slow down to make the turn into De Tham Street where the Café is.

I want to park my bike, but several people are blocking the parking space.

They are all standing around the tall cyclo driver who is still lying there motionless.

A street vendor turns to me and says, "Chết rồi!" ("He's dead.") ■

BUY THE BOOK

The book is available at these websites:

www.amazon.com/Yens-White-Lie-Charles-Gerard-ebook/dp/B07X1PWWVT
www.bookdepository.com/Yens-White-Lie-Charles-Gerard/9781080767854

Cat Flu

Cat flu is a common disease in kittens and unvaccinated adult cats

CAT 'FLU' IS CAUSED BY A combination of viruses affecting the eyes, mouth, nasal passages and throat in cats. None of the viruses are actually influenza, so it is a badly named condition.

The main viruses involved are Feline Herpes Virus and Feline Calici Virus.

Many kittens become infected with herpes in the first few days after they are born, picking up the infection from their mother. Once they become infected they will always harbor the infection (just like a person harbors a cold sore virus).

Because of the wide prevalence of these viruses among the feline population, it is extremely important to vaccinate young kittens against them.

Once infected, cats and kittens display many of the classic symptoms of the flu, namely fever, sneezing and loss of appetite. In

addition, severe blisters of the mouth and painful inflamed eyes are common. There is then also a risk of secondary bacterial infection, which could lead to pneumonia.

While most infected cats will recover within seven days or so, severe cases can take much longer. Unlucky individuals could be left with permanent respiratory complications and damaged eyes.

If you notice any of the above symptoms, it is important that you bring your kitten to a veterinarian immediately. The disease can be very severe or even fatal if left untreated.

Depending on severity of symptoms your veterinarian will offer inpatient or outpatient treatment. Some cases require hospitalization, IV fluid therapy or even an X-ray of the chest to assess the lungs and check for pneumonia.

In every case antibiotic therapy is necessary to fight secondary bacterial infection. In case of fever or painful oral ulcers your veterinarian will prescribe anti-inflammatory and pain relief drugs. Eye drops are often used to treat infected eyes.

The kitten's face needs to be cleaned daily to remove ocular and nasal discharge. Due to blisters and ulcers in mouth, cats often refuse to eat, they can also hypersalivate. Feeding soft food mixed with water helps. Sometimes it's necessary to force feed patients with a syringe until they start eating on their own. If your sick kitten is dehydrated the vet will offer to replace fluids in its body by subcutaneous fluid

administration or IV fluid therapy. If your kitten is treated as an outpatient provide a quiet and secure place at home. It can be a separate room, bathroom or even a box. Make sure the kitten is warm. Little weak body can get hypothermic very easily. Place some bottles or latex gloves with warm water (not too hot!) under a towel or blanket when kitten sleeps.

When you introduce a new kitten into your household do not mix it with other animals for two weeks. New family member might carry cat flu viruses and pass it into healthy cats at home. It most likely carries internal and external parasites, so make sure you deworm and deflea the kitten as the first thing. Also, meeting other animals might be too stressful for a weak or sick little one. Just give it time.

How to Prevent Cat Flu?

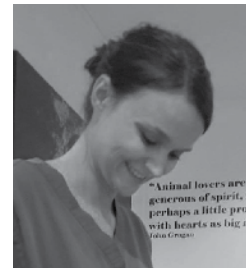
Vaccinate! Vaccination is an easy, inexpensive way to prevent diseases like cat flu, panleukopenia and chlamydia all in one shot.

The patient needs to be in good health and at least eight weeks old to be vaccinated. If your kitten is weak and has big parasite burden, the vet will run necessary therapy first and vaccinate when it is healthy enough. Usually it is done five days after the first deworming.

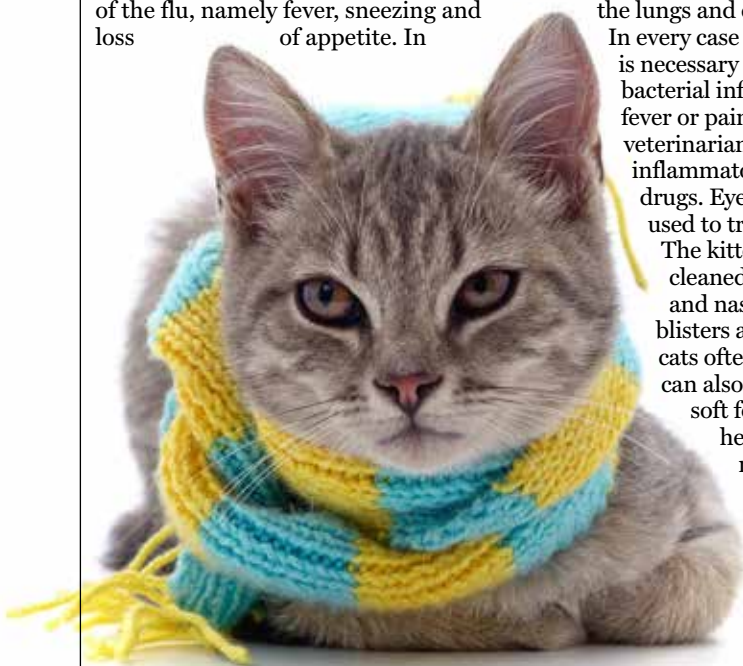
It's recommended to vaccinate kittens three times for feline diseases and two times for rabies. Vaccination schedule is as follow:

Vaccination Schedule:

- 8 weeks – 1st vaccine (core vaccine: cat flu (herpes, calici-virus), panleukopenia (parvo-virus), +/- Chlamydia)
- 10 weeks – 2nd vaccine
- 12 weeks – 3rd vaccine + 1st Rabies vaccine
- 6 months – 2nd Rabies vaccine.



Dr. Martyna Lukmin is a veterinary surgeon who graduated from Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences in Poland in 2015. After graduation, she gained experience at veterinary clinics in Poland and Cyprus with a focus on small and exotic animals. She traveled around Southeast Asia and South America working with animal charity organizations before coming to Laos. She has been with Animal Doctors International since 2016. Martyna loves the ocean and sharks, and spends her free time traveling, diving and reading.



Pet of the Month



Why You Should Adopt a Black Cat

BLACK CATS ARE HALLOWEEN icons, and a black cat costume is often the first Halloween costume a baby wears. Why? Because babies dressed as little animals are even more cute and cuddly than usual. But why are black cats associated with Halloween? It seems that during the Middle Ages many people believed that witches kept black cats as companions or could even change into black cats to travel around in secret while casting their spells. And since witches were feared for their magic, black cats in turn were feared and subject to many superstitions. This was contrary to the belief in many cultures that black cats are good luck, but the superstitions persisted and have led to the cute renderings of black cats in Halloween cartoons ever since.

Unfortunately, the superstitions have a non-funny side in that they stop many people from adopting black cats, leading to black cats being among the longest held in shelters around the world. But black cats aren't bad luck at all and under that dark fur, black cats

are just as loveable as any other cat.

In fact, there are lots of reasons for adopting a black cat. For example:

- Black cat fur won't show on your little black dress or on most tuxedos.

- You can tell your friends and family that you adopted a mini panther.

- Black cats

are just as sweet and loving as any other cat.

- A black cat never goes out of style.
- In many cultures, black cats are a sign of good luck and happiness.

But wait. What is this about black cats being a sign of good luck and happiness in some cultures? Yes, it's true! For example, in some areas of the UK, black cats are signs of good fortune and a happy marriage. In Japan, having a black cat is said to bring a single woman good suitors. Also in Japan, black Maneki-Neko (lucky cats) bring good luck and scare off demons and stalkers. Meanwhile, in the theater world, black cats in the building during plays are said to bring long



Wasabi and Oreo



Boef and Bandiet

prosperous theatrical runs. As if the above wasn't enough good news, in the ancient art of feng shui, it is said that if you have a black cat and keep it happy and safe, it will keep you happy and safe in return.

As you ponder all of the above information, hopefully you are now better equipped to consider your answer about adopting a black cat. If your answer is, "Yes! I want to adopt a black cat", you are lucky indeed because currently ARC has four black kittens and one black cat available for adoption. The kittens were dumped at a vet clinic in Saigon while the adult cat was rescued from a perilous situation in which he was kept in a cage. All five are being fostered and enjoying life in a caring, nurturing environment, but are all ready at any time to be welcomed into their forever homes. The kittens are sleek and shiny Oreo and Wasabi and fuzzy heart-stealers Bandiet and Boef; all are around five months of age. Black shadow Vincent is around two years old and is a handsome, friendly lad. ■



Vincent

If you would like more info on any of these lovely mini panthers, or more info on adopting any ARC animal, email arcpets@gmail.com. Don't shop, adopt, and if you adopt a black cat, both you and your adopted lovely will be very lucky, indeed.



Beso de despedida by @beaacevedo (Mexico)

Global Families

Photographers from all corners of the planet submitted their best family shots to the #Family2019 Contest organized by Agora images. Agora is a free-to-use social app and global photography community with more than 3.5 million users from 193 countries. Every week, Agora users participate in international photography contests around one of the 52 annual hashtags representing universal themes (such as #Fun, #Work or #Beauty), and vote for the best photos in the world while curating quality content for a chance to win awesome cash prizes, photo gear and other life-changing experiences. ■



Orca family, aka Killer Whales by @viggolundberg (Sweden)



Happy Share by @pranab_basak (India)



*Marius and Stephan
by @inthpeck (France)*



*Lunch
by @myothen (Myanmar)*



Bajo tribe family by @rustamawat (Indonesia)



Bedtime stories by @froirivera (Philippines)



Family by @yechitpaing (Myanmar)



Father and son by @ptkhanhvhnh (Vietnam)



Las pescadoras de Tanji
by @wmr.valdez (Dominican Republic)



The heart of my home
by @dianagorin (Moldova)




2019



Holiday Gift Guide



Live the Pretty Simple Life



your lifestyle, and that means all of the ups, downs and go-go-gos. They get it. They're women, wives and mothers too.

In a world of fast and forgettable fashion, they know the real answer is to go slow. Slow as in timeless designs and use of renewable materials that last longer than a season. Slow and fair in production for proper compensations and safe work environments.

At Pretty Simple, the founders don't approach style carelessly. They dream and design with our beautiful planet in mind, knowing that our future depends on the decisions we make today. It's with this environmental consciousness that Pretty Simple strive towards mindful production and offer pieces that will last by using materials that will last. Timeless designs that do less harm and more good offering vegan alternatives to customers looking for a real choice.

The partners make Pretty Simple accessories in Vietnam because it's their home, a place of incredible opportunity making strides in Southeast Asia towards a greener global future. All Pretty Simple Bags are handmade with fine attention to detail and impeccable workmanship: Locally designed and crafted, they are proudly made in Vietnam.

They are also dedicated to an ethical production process from start to finish. That means fair wages for labor force, an outright refusal of sweat and child labor and ethical working conditions that are safe, clean and accessible for their staff. The founders want you to see the connection in the choices you make. It's why they sew the names of every individual responsible for the making of each Pretty Simple accessory into the bags themselves.

The Pretty Simple Collection is designed with a sustainable vegan



leather material called washable paper. The material is made in Europe under FSC Certification and Oeko-Tex Standard 100. Washable paper is developed from natural plant fibers and guaranteed non-harmful substances in the production process from start to finish. The washable paper is natural, biodegradable and eco friendly. In addition, the bags are highly tear and water resistant and durable, making them completely washable.

Unlike genuine leather, washable paper is completely cruelty-free but thanks to innovation it's similar to genuine leather in appearance, function and durability. Pretty Simple washable paper bags are made to last and can be washed multiple times so there's no need to worry about marks and stains. Simply wash your bag on a gentle machine setting, with your preferred detergent, ideally at 40 degrees Celsius (use a laundry bag is optimum). ■

For more info and where to purchase Pretty Simple - Washable Paper Bags, visit www.facebook.com/prettysimplebags

PRETTY SIMPLE - WASHABLE PAPER BAGS was created by two Vietnam-based designers who share a deep appreciation for craftsmanship and a response to the call for sustainable fashion. Pretty Simple accessory line is everything they love and believe in. Bags designed to seamlessly fit you and

Raising the Bar



PUTTING THE 'ART' IN ARTISAN soaps is what this passion project is all about. **Blue Moon Handmade** takes natural skincare to the next level with their unique and mindfully crafted products. 'Natural' is a surprisingly broad category these days but you can count on Blue Moon to make mindful ingredient choices. "Natural soap doesn't have to be 50 shades of beige or tainted with chemicals, synthetic fragrances, micas and other nasty additives," said co-founders Tom and Laura. "There's a whole world full of natural colorants like spirulina, clays and turmeric which are also full of beneficial minerals and nutrients for the skin and hair."

Their beautiful soaps are bright and creative, taking inspiration from local flavors and ingredients. *Ca Phe Kon Tum*

features the finest Alambé coffee from the Central Highlands. *The Moon Flower* includes coconut water for extra bubbles and swirls of rose clay and indigo. Rich and creamy *Gac and Lavender* uses cold-pressed Vietnamese *gac* fruit oil while the *Nuoc Mia and Lemongrass* is made with freshly squeezed sugar cane juice. If you want to treat someone to something extra indulgent for Christmas, try the gift set with Cocoa Butter Lotion Bar, Freshly Minted Shave Bar and limited edition Pumpkin Spice Latte Soap.

Focus on scent was an important element when designing their new natural deodorant. *Jasmine Green Tea* is sweet, soft and comforting. *Lemongrass Lavender* is powerful and refreshing and *Fresh Citrus & Woods* is mellow and earthy. All three use arrowroot powder to absorb

moisture and feature tea tree, zinc and vegan probiotics to keep body odor at bay. "We're really proud of the deodorant, we both use it every day, so that speaks for itself," said the duo.

This philosophy of attention to detail features heavily in their new mandala shampoo bars, available for the first time this Christmas season. *Lavender and Rosemary* includes fresh aloe vera juice for normal to oily hair, *Bo Ket and Lemongrass* incorporates *bo ket* pods (a traditional Vietnamese tonic) for shiny, healthy hair while *Jasmine Green Tea* features coconut milk for normal to dry hair.

When asked what's the next project, Blue Moon replied, "We're looking forward to more collaborations. There are so many great ingredients, artists and local businesses available in Saigon to work with. We've been taking some custom orders as well which is really fun."

All Blue Moon Handmade products are 100 percent vegan and palm oil free, with reusable packaging and no single use plastic. No synthetic fragrances, mica, SLSs, parabens or artificial preservatives are used. The full range includes soap, beard oils and balms, deet-free bug repellent, shaving bars, lotion bars, deodorant and solid shampoo—all handmade in small batches. ■

Blue Moon Handmade products are available at Green Around the Corner (32 Tran Ngoc Thao, Thao Dien, D2), soaps at Kashew Cheese (14 Tran Ngoc Thao, Thao Dien, D2) and full range of products for cash on delivery in HCMC via www.bluemoonhandmade.com or www.facebook.com/bluemoonsaigon.

Wax Lyrical

Vu Vo-Dinh, the creator behind Candle Cup, talks about his newest hobby-turn-business and how each scent tells a personal story

What inspired you to start a Candle Cup?

Growing up in the countryside in Vietnam, every household would have candles ready to burn whenever there was a power outage, which was quite often back then, so this memory made me especially interested in candles. Over the year,

I started to collect scented candles, not only for lighting purposes but also to add fragrances to my living space. However, it was hard to find good quality scented candles in Vietnam that met my requirements so I decided to make my own that smell great, safe and affordable for daily use. Most commercial scented candles are toxic because they are made from paraffin wax—a petroleum based product—

and cheap fragrance. Also, imported high quality scented candles are expensive for daily use for most Vietnamese people.

Another reason I was making candles was to release stress. I was giving the extra candles to family and friends on special occasions and they liked them and asked me to make more for them to buy and that was how I started my business.

How did you learn to make candles?

I have a bachelor's degree in chemistry and nanotechnology from the Ho Chi Minh City University of Science. After graduating, I worked for an international company that provided solutions for a manufacturing company. During this time, I learned a lot about materials and the manufacturing processes when I worked on a new product or was doing quality control checks. On one of these projects helped me find the key ingredient for my candles—palm wax, an extract from palm trees. Palm trees were grown from non-GMO seeds therefore the lack of pesticide and fertilizer makes it a great choice for making non-toxic candles.

The technical requirements of candle making I learned from the National Candle Association. I did tons of experiments to find out the right ingredients and formula to make great candles that are safe, aromatic and long lasting.

You do everything yourself, from production to marketing, tell us how long does it take to make a batch from start to finish?

I make candle in batches, from 50-100 pieces for each scent. The production includes preparing wicks, attaching them into the glasses, melting the wax into bowls, mixing the fragrance with the melted wax, pouring the mixture into glasses, waiting for the wax to cool down and solidify. After that, put each into individual boxes, and then labelling. Depending on quantity, a batch can take me six to 12 hours.

For sourcing raw material, it takes me about 30-45 days to order and





wait for the package to arrive at my place since most of the ingredients need to be imported from the US.

Tell us about the six different Candle Cup scents.

Most of the scents are personal to me.

The most important first scent is *Citronella*. It's made from 100 percent citronella essential oil, which helps to keep mosquitos away because they're very attracted to me during the rainy season. The citronella smell is effective as an insect repellent and as a deodorant for those who cook in small spaces, which is also me.

The *Bamboo* scent reminds

me of my grandmother's garden, of the happy memories when I was a kid.

I like to spend time in the lab, or cooking or making candles, and sometimes I like to merge these things together. I liked the dish *ngheu hap sa* (clams steams with lemongrass) and its smell and came up with the idea of incorporating its spice into my candle. The result is *Gingergrass*, an experimental combination of ginger and

lemongrass.

It smells tasty, too.

When I was a kid, sometimes I would wake up in the morning by the aroma of my mom frying green tea with jasmine flower and peppermint leaves she had just harvested. So I created *Jasmin* as a gift to my mother.

Teakwood is my signature smell. It's a scent I made to express my character: Energy from bergamot, some spice from black peppers and ginger but warm and rustic from ginger and sandalwood. It smells masculine, of course.

Saigon is always hot; I really missed the winters I spent in Switzerland when it was so cold and snowy. *White Birch* tries to capture the feeling of a cold breeze blowing through the window and a bit of sweetness that fills the loneliness of an expat life. ■ Candle Cup candles start at VND120,000. For more info or to place an order, visit www.facebook.com/candlecup





Forever in Bloom



WILD BLOOM'S STORY STARTED

in February 2019 when co-founders Hang and Bella partnered together to open a beautiful, yet sustainable, flower business. Hang originally wanted to sell fresh flowers but the latter's passion for sustainability and eco-friendly living created a compromise that resulted in long lasting dry flowers and flora arrangements.

Wild Bloom (www.facebook.com/wildbloomvn) focuses on developing products using dried flowers to provide a variety of needs such as gifts, event decorations, wedding bouquets and home interior statement pieces. Their product portfolio includes all products related to dried flowers and eco-friendly gift products, including floral candles, black soap and bamboo tumblers.

The next time you're in District 2, stop by their floral concept store at 81 Xuan Thuy, Thao Dien, D2) and smell the dried roses... ■



digital world by journaling meditation sessions, recording moments of gratitude, collecting recipes, or fine-tuning your drawing skills.

They are patiently bound by hand and covered with beautiful printed cotton. Each pattern is purchased in very limited quantities so each series is unique. Charlotte now uses mainly cotton from Japan because she says "it's not only beautiful but also of outstanding quality. I particularly love the golden details on some patterns, it makes the notebooks really elegant." It feels special to put down your phone and pick up a lovely, handmade notebook for a few moments of creativity and relaxation.

Pilgrim now makes photo albums as well. These are popular as gifts for weddings, anniversaries, birthdays, graduations, farewell parties and other celebrations. The photo albums can be custom made and you can visit the Pilgrim workshop and select your favorite fabric from amongst more than 50 patterns.

Out of concern for the environment and for the rainforest in Borneo, which is rapidly being destroyed by palm oil companies, Charlotte has decided to take action and partner with One Tree Planted (onetreepanted.org), a non-profit organization that plants trees all over the world. For each notebook

purchased at a bazaar or selected shops, Pilgrim donates funds to plant one tree. In just one year, sales of Pilgrim notebooks subsidized the planting of enough trees to cover an area the size of a football field!

Where to find Pilgrim?

For notebooks, photo albums and obi belts, visit the Pilgrim workshop in D2 (by appointment on [facebook.com/bypilgrim](https://www.facebook.com/bypilgrim) or Instagram: [onlybypilgrim](https://www.instagram.com/onlybypilgrim)). You can also find notebooks in stores in D1 and D2 listed on their Facebook page. ■



Mindful Writing

Have you heard about journaling?

IN THIS DIGITAL, FAST-PACED world it is sometimes hard to settle down. Did you know writing a journal can be a powerful way to be more mindful in your daily life?

Pilgrim is a young label created by Charlotte Zaslavsky, a French designer based in Saigon. Charlotte formerly worked in marketing and communications, but a couple of years ago she found a way to combine her passion for beautiful fabric and her skill at bookbinding with her love of Asia. She began making notebooks as a hobby. As a compulsive buyer of printed cotton, every time she traveled she would bring home souvenirs: fabrics that she fell in love with. Noticing that her collection of fabric from her journeys around Asia was getting bigger, she decided to use some of her printed cotton on the covers of her notebooks... and Pilgrim was born.

Pilgrim's notebooks are the perfect companions for stepping away from the



Biker Chic/k



ON ANY GIVEN DAY, you might find Nguyen Tran Phuong Hien rocking up to her Hanoi leather workshop on a handsome Harley-Davidson Iron 883. On the weekends, she prefers something with a bit more heft, like her Heritage Softail with its gangster-era style and vintage details. One of, if not the only, female riders who've cruised the length of Vietnam on a Harley, there's nothing typical about this 29-year-old from Thai Nguyen.

Born to a family of shoemakers, one of Hien's earliest memories is of her father and grandfather handcrafting shoes in their home workshop. After earning a Master's degree in Industrial Design from the UK, Hien soon found herself back in Vietnam, marrying her three true loves—biking, fashion, and leather.

Established in 2011, BHorse Leather is a mashup of Hien's nickname along with the first hides she had to work with. Inspired by her fashion icon Alexander McQueen, the signature BHorse aesthetic is clean, minimalistic, and expertly crafted, but with a healthy dose of theatricality.

"People don't want to see clothes. They want to see something that fuels the imagination," said the famed British designer who might as well have been talking about BHorse.

"The difference in BHorse products is that they have soul," says Hien. "When you pick up a BHorse product, it's incredibly distinctive." Starting from those first rare horsehides, Hien and her team of artisans now work with a range of exotic



skins, including lizard, python, ostrich and crocodile from reputable farms with CITES certification to craft beyond-beautiful works of art, like python Vespa saddles or crocodile Vertu cases.

While the boutique has some ready-made items for men and women including bags, wallets, clutches, and briefcases, BHorse excels in custom leatherworking. Customers can commission a piece inspired by their favorite designer (with their initials in place of a logo so the piece can confidently be used anywhere in the world without fear of copyright infringement), or something truly bespoke where Hien and her team will come up with a one-of-a-kind design

after consulting with the client.

Widely known in the high-end motorcycle community for its gorgeous saddle bags and custom jackets, BHorse has a range of gifts that double as everyday art form. For this holiday season, Hien recommends a finely crafted cigar case for the sophisticated gentleman in your life, while you simply cannot go wrong with a python bag for the discerning woman who has everything.

See the complete collection at www.b-horseleather.com or visit the boutique and workshop at 101- 4B Ly Nam De, Hoan Kiem, Hanoi. For a limited time, receive a charming leather ornament with purchase. ■



Sunken Treasures

BENEATH THE MURKY

surface of the Brokopondo Hydro Lake in Suriname, South America, lies a hidden treasure that's over 60 years—a 150,000-hectare underwater tropical forest. However, harvesting this submerged wood is difficult because divers must venture 15 meters deep into the lake to recover it. Through innovation and technology, **Brokopondo Lakewood** (www.facebook.com/Lakewoodvn) brings unique wooden products from the lake right into your home.

Forest harvesting has negative environmental, economic and social aspects, such as the destruction of natural habitats of many species. But, because Brokopondo is harvesting trees that have sunken in the lake, no negative impacts arise that will damage the environment and they're committed to working towards a more sustainable future. Approximately 100 local employees work at the company's sawmill, which helps to empower Suriname's ethnic groups and native tribes by giving them an opportunity to earn a livelihood.

Although the trees have been submerged in the lake for over 50 years, the integrity of the wood has not been altered but rather preserved quite well by the fresh water from the lake. This, actually, has made the wood highly resistant to rotting, bending and cracking and is, therefore, suitable for both outdoor use and indoor use.

From these recovered trees, Brokopondo Lakewood has created outdoor decking, indoor eco-friendly solid hardwood flooring, live-edge tables/slabs, surfaces, wall cladding/table and counter tops, and charcuterie boards.



Lakewood Handmade Charcuterie Boards

Their unique charcuterie boards are made from wood recovered from Brokopondo Lake, handcrafted and designed by local artisans in Vietnam. The boards' natural colors are enhanced by natural tungsten oils, which are made in Vietnam, and are FDA/EU food safe graded. The charcuterie boards are great for entertaining dinner guests, but also great as décor accents in the home. They're ideal gifts for your foodie friends and families this holiday season.

For this year's festive season, Brokopondo Lakewood is offering **Oi Vietnam** readers a **10% discount on their 8 different styles of handmade charcuterie boards**, simply bring a copy of the this article with you to their showroom at 28 Thao Dien, D2. You can also buy the charcuterie boards online at Tiki with a 10% promotion code at: tiki.vn/cua-hang/lakewood-homemade  For more info, visit www.lakewoodvn.com or call (028) 73002610

Oils For Your Health

NATURAL ESSENTIAL OILS

have been used for thousands of years in various cultures for medicinal and health purposes. Essential oil uses range from aromatherapy, household cleaning products, personal beauty care, natural healing and medicinal treatments. Their benefits come from their antioxidant, antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties. **Purnatural Oils** (www.facebook.com/purnatural.oils) brings 100% natural essential oils to you and your family.

This holiday season, Purnatural offers gift box sets of 100% organic essential oils. Choose from a set of 6 x 10ml (VND600,000) or a set of 3 x 15ml (VND450,000), with 9 different fragrances to choose from: Peppermint, Y-lang Y-lang, Teatree, Grapefruit, Sweet Orange, Lavender, Lemongrass, Lemon and Cinnamon. Individual bottles available in 10ml go for VND120,000; 15ml are VND170,000 and 50ml are VND420,000.

They would also like to introduce Purnatural Coconut oil as being the highest standard of

quality that Vietnam has to offer and as the perfect carrier oil to partner with their essential oils. The highest quality that will nourish hair, skin and body to bring glowing results naturally, and also certified safe for use in cooking.

Their Extra Virgin Cold Pressed Coconut Oil is 100% organic and by using a centrifuge separation technique to obtain the highest quality coconut oil, Purnatural can offer customers a more efficient product for improving their health and beauty. The coconut oil is sourced direct from local farmers in the Mekong Delta from sustainably grown coconuts. Purnatural are happy to support these small local farming communities in remote areas. They're available in 100ml (VND60,000) or 200ml (VND90,000) convenient, easy to use pump bottles. ■

For more interesting facts and uses for these versatile products and

to order visit, (www.purnaturalvn.com) or contact Hanh (076) 669 5979 or Jillian (077) 419 1395. Free delivery within HCMC for orders of VND200,000 or higher.





DOG, MOTORBIKE

Chó,
Xe Máy

2020 Calendar

Tess Cheevers



Woof! Vroom!

Cho, Xe May/Dogs on Motorbikes is a watercolor calendar portraying local Saigon dogs and their owners on motorbikes and scooters. Painted by expat Tess Cheevers, the calendars are available in English and Vietnamese and come in two sizes: large wall hanging (30 x 42cm, VND250,000) and smaller triangular desk calendars (13 x 21cm, VND200,000). All profits raised go to charities.

You can pick them up in Thao Dien at Saigon Vet Clinic (Number 33, Street 41- Thao Dien, D2). Delivery is available for orders of 10 or more copies, please contact tess.jane.m@gmail.com. ■





Minimalist Leather

LANG DA VIET WAS FOUNDED in 2014 in a small rental room in the center of Hanoi based on a simple product—a wallet—a wallet that is able to hold two smartphones because most Vietnamese professionals usually carry two phones at the same time, one for business and one for personal use.

Lang Da Viet believes in the philosophy that “all great thing starts from small ones” and this is why they have focused on improving every small details of their product over the past five years. And, because of this attention to details, their wallets stands apart from others in the market and have been the brand’s bestseller and popularly recommended by Vietnamese.

“Although our products are fashion accessories, we do not let it overwhelm our philosophy on product design. All our products bring convenience to our customers. Each product has been researched to suit the Vietnamese customer’s habit and behavior

before market launch and we believe we can do the same thing if we are going to reach out to the global market,” says Lang Da Viet’s founder.

Lang Da Viet’s minimalist style is also reflected in their packaging, where recyclable materials are used, and are always conscious of the environment over profit. ■

Visit www.facebook.com/LangDaViet for more info on their products. Free delivery within Vietnam, including the islands.





The Sambal Lady





**FOR
IMELDA
VAN DER WULP,**

a housewife and mother of three, cooking for her family is always her favorite part of the day. She tries to keep mealtime fun and creative, making a wide range of cuisines, from Mexican tacos to Japanese sushi, but the one ingredient that never leaves the dinner table is the chili sauce.

"My husband, my oldest and I eat it with every meal. I naturally just started to create and design my own sauce because it was hard to find one that suited our high standards because we come from Indonesia, and spicy sambal is part of our culture," explains Imelda of her homemade chili business



Imelda's Kitchen!.

From her small apartment kitchen, Imelda's sambal was introduced to friends at barbecues, then to neighbors. Through their positive responses and recommendations to more friends, Imelda decided to spread her love of spice to a bigger audience in Saigon.

"I started advertising my fried sambal on Facebook, more specifically expat groups in Saigon at first. Surprisingly, pictures of my chili paste taken by my simple iPhone had been posted on various accounts, receiving positive comments. My authentic Indonesian fried sambal found it's way to other dinner tables in Saigon," she says.

Imelda is proud to bring authentic Indonesian flavors start to Saigon and even prouder to have been awarded the "best spicy sambal in Saigon 2019" at Soul Burger's chili competition last month, competing with many other local and expat homemade sauces. "I'm truly pleased that I could make everyone's meal more exciting with an Indonesian kick," she says of her win.

All ingredients are fresh and hand picked by Imelda herself and contains no preservatives. The sambal sauces are 100% natural and it's truly direct from her kitchen to yours. "I

also put some diversity using various kinds of chilies, spice levels and flavors. The unique taste of my fried sambal fits any types of food; from snack dips, in soups, and even when marinating any meat for a barbecue." Imelda's chili sauce is her culture packed in a jar, containing flavor, love and, of course, spice. ■

To order, visit www.facebook.com/imelda.vanderwulp, Instagram @imeldavanderwulp16, or email imeldavanderwulp16@gmail.com





*Cool
&
Breezy*

At Cosette (www.facebook.com/cosette.vn), the look is linen and cotton for spring and summer. They offer a wide range of women's linen and cotton clothing that will make you feel like you're on an African Safari or walking on a tropical beach in Southeast Asia. Whether you are searching for a classic and elegant summer outfit or want a fresh and modern look, they've got

an outfit you need, from luxurious 100% linen dresses, to affordable and easy to care for cotton tops. You'll find timeless pieces that are perfect for the humidity and tropical holiday destinations, luxe linen tops and easy to style cotton trousers. Cosette designs for modern women who care about the environment and live an eco-friendly lifestyle. ■







Wine & Dine

MEZZE SAIGON RESTAURANT / IMAGE BY VY LAM





Must-Try Mezze

Red drapes and technicolor red and blue orange booths conjure up distant bazaars at this festive spot where crowds pack in for expertly crafted Middle Eastern cuisine

Text by Paul Kim
Images by Vy Lam



Mezze Saigon Platter

Mezze Saigon (5th Floor, 215 Ly Tu Trong, D1, [facebook.com/mezzesaiгон](https://www.facebook.com/mezzesaiгон)) is the latest addition to the moderately shortlist of Middle Eastern restaurant lounges in Saigon, which is remarkable since shisha or hookas seem to be omnipresent at clubs and bars all over the city. The word “mezze” or “meze” means “small plates” or “tapas”. Maybe Middle Eastern-inspired establishments are on the brink of becoming en vogue in Ho Chi Minh City. Before the dust had the chance to settle on the newly constructed restaurant, another unaffiliated Middle Eastern establishment is in the midst of building a lounge directly one floor beneath Mezze. You won’t receive any objections from me. The more, the merrier I say.

In true Byzantine fashion, Chef Kemir, originally from Turkey, brings the flavors and cooking traditions that makes Turkey the intersection between East and West. The combination of cuisines from Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia, Turkey—too diverse to list here—are all rendered masterfully. I gauge the quality of a Middle Eastern restaurant by looking prime towards their hummus. Chef Kemir must share the same sentiment as three samples of hummus sit on the pinnacle of the menu. You can pick from the classic version of hummus, hummus harissa, and the hummus spinach. We decided to order the Mezze Saigon Platter (VND520,000) as it has a desirable mix of the menu items, which comes with the classic hummus. Mezze’s hummus is smooth and airy but still retains its earthy grainy character.

The baba ganoush comes with a



Grilled haloumi cheese with chili jam



pomegranate reduction, which produces a sweet citrus flavor. The platter also comes with kofte, kebbeh, tabouleh, chicken shawarma, and shish kebabs. It's ideal for sharing and sampling. The *sepzali pide* (VND140,000/VND170,000) is a Turkish version of a veggie pizza. A crispy, crunchy crusty bread topped with cheese and fresh seasoned vegetables. My regret in life is that it has taken me this long to discover this fantastic dish. If you love all classifications of pizza and if you love carbs, this is a must-order. Finally, we also had the grilled haloumi cheese with chili jam (VND75,000). The proper amount of dairy fat with the accompaniment of spicy and sweet never goes awry in my book.

The wine list is an assortment of Old and New World. While the beer selection has a smattering of local brews including an offering of a great Indian beer called Bira—a choice of either a white wheat ale (VND81,000) or an IPA pomelo (VND92,000). Both are sessionable and a welcome change if you feel that microbrews tend to make you bloated. You can, of course, order the stand-bys: Tiger, 333 and Saigon Special.

The dining room decor is subtle and distinct. The red veils draped overhead the booths and tables are an alluring touch, being seductive and providing an illusion of intimacy. There are features of the atmosphere that lean on the clichés linked with that region but without being pretentious. As the restaurant is still embryonic, I am eager to see what type of diners it will attract among the Saigoneses. On that Friday night, it was jammed with friends and family of a couple celebrating their anniversary, the table beside us had a European tourist couple dining, and a nearby table was entertaining a girls' night out full of Viet local cougars outfitted like teenagers from the '90s. Fun indeed!

Whichever reason you choose to dine at this establishment and no matter what type of palette you might possess, there is certainly no disputing that the food will delight. I am excited to see a Byzantine dining subculture emerging in Saigon that already boasts a considerable representation of different cuisines. ■



Sepzali pide



Country Roads, Take Me Home

There's nothing better than simple, delicious
American comfort food from Grandma's kitchen

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

FOOD, LIKE MUSIC AND SMELL, can be a time machine. Your mom's mashed potatoes, your favorite burger joint, or the waffles from the 24-hour café in your hometown; they bring us back to another time and place. **The Wagon Wheel** (200 Le Thanh Ton, D1) is serving third-generation American comfort food for the displaced American and the curious diner.

The Wagon Wheel occupies a first-floor suite down a narrow alley near Ben Thanh Market. Exposed brick walls, dark wood and soft lighting mixed with the smell of steak grilling in the kitchen to create a classy yet cozy atmosphere.

The walls are adorned with southern American memorabilia, and you'll surely hear the song Wagon Wheel along with other country and Americana hits. There's a bar area for sampling cocktails in the front, a



Chicken Burger



Chicken and Waffles



Bacon Balls

dining room for 30-40 people, and a small balcony for catching some fresh air. It's great for a family dinner, an evening with close friends, or a date.

A glass of house red wine (VND105,000) started the evening. The Wagon Wheel's menu is the answer to the question, "What is American cuisine?" Fried pickles and chicken poppers, curly fries and potato salad, country fried steak and cheesy broccoli soup. We chose the Bacon Balls (VND120,000), mashed potatoes with bacon and cheese, breaded and deep fried; a rich, creamy treat to set the tone.

At the chef's recommendation, our first entrée was the Fried Chicken and Waffles (VND225,000). The Wagon Wheel does justice to this southern American classic with deep fried chicken legs, house-made waffles and authentic maple butter. It's a unique mixture of tender and crunchy, sweet and savory that will seem puzzling to outsiders, until they try it. While it isn't the first restaurant to offer chicken and waffles in Asia, it's likely to be the best.

The star of the show was the USDA Ribeye (VND575,000), one of the best-tasting and best-value steaks to be found locally. This 350-gram American steak is juicy, tender, aromatic and enormous. Together with a side of Mash and Gravy (VND65,000), it's big enough for two people or one American. Next, we tried the Fried Chicken Burger (VND190,000) which also has southern roots with chipotle mayo and a brioche bun.

The Wagon Wheel has a special significance for Logan, the owner. In 1955, his grandparents opened a steakhouse of the same name in their hometown of Clinton, Oklahoma. They bought an old townhouse on Main Street, refurbished it and opened for business with Toots (grandpa) in the kitchen and Pappy (grandma) working the floor. Prohibition in Oklahoma lasted until 1959, so The Wagon Wheel has a 'bring your own

booze' policy and made the necessary arrangements with local authorities.

Logan moved to Saigon several years ago and was a co-founder of TNT BBQ, a local favorite among expats for many years. When TNT closed, he saw an opportunity to continue what his grandparents had started. Early this year, Logan teamed up with the chef from Phat Cat in Phu Nhuan to open Wagon Wheel. After a month renovating the space, they had their soft opening in October. The 1955 menu from Toots and Pappy's Oklahoma restaurant hangs on the wall—you won't believe the prices.

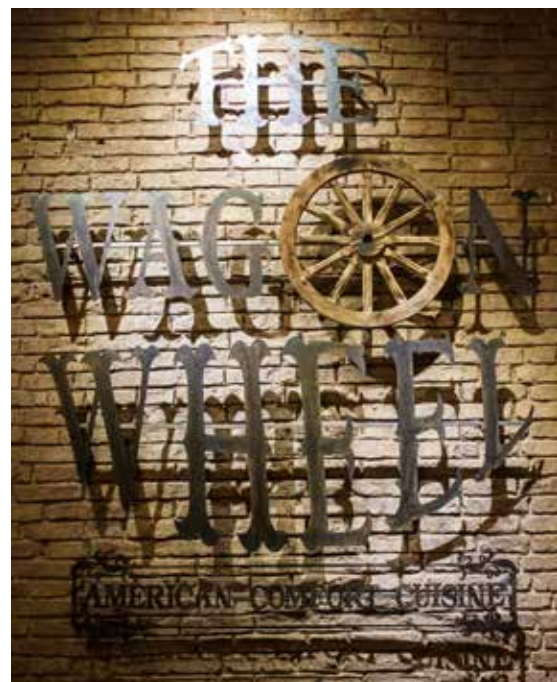
The Wagon Wheel is American comfort cuisine at its most authentic. From the menu, to the soundtrack, to the memorabilia hung on the walls, it's a time machine with outstanding eats. Next time y'all Americans have that yearning for home, or want to experience something authentically American, head to The Wagon Wheel—just make sure to come hungry. ■



Mashed potatoes, Mac and Cheese



American Steak



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 Buoi, D1
www.caferuam.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, l'ecaf.

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

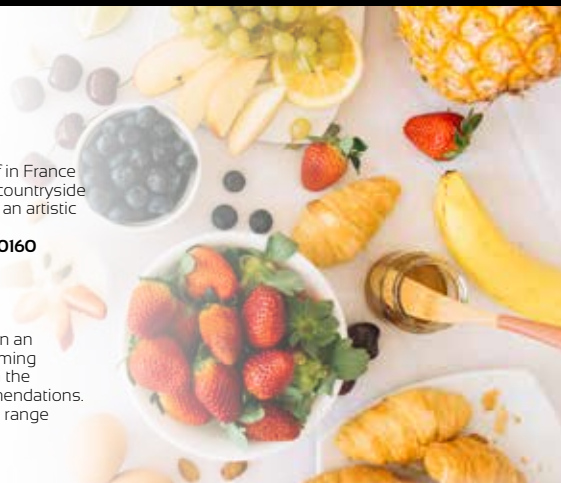
Chef Thierry Drapeau a 2 star Michelin chef in France takes his inspiration from the surrounding countryside and its top-quality ingredients, then adding an artistic flourish to his fine regional cuisine.

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



Ciao Bella

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

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

Ciao Bella

Also Try...

Casa Italia

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

86 Le Loi, D1
028 3824 4286

Carpaccio

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

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

La Forchetta

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

24 Hung Gia, PMH, D7
028 3541 1006

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

In solidarity with my free fellow Lebanese L'Adresse Bistro has celebrated the Independence Day with families & friends hoping Lebanon would soon be governed by true Lebanese who would work with us on building our new Lebanon. Our dog-friendly bistro welcomes those who fancy Mediterranean cuisine with a twist in a modern Arab themed place that suits every member of the family. Our bistro also serves craft beer, juices, smoothies, cocktails, coffee etc.
+84906707900 ladressebistro.onuniverse.com
Insta & FB @ladressebistrosgn
2 Phan Van Dang, VistaVerde, District 2.



Tomatito Saigon

Tomatito won the award for Best Restaurant of Saigon 2018. This sexy tapas bar is Chef Willy's casual interpretation of the prêt-à-porter concept. Willy has a very personal perception of style, that is reflected in all his creations. His universe is colorful, funky and eclectic.
1st Floor, 171 Calmette, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City
www.tomatito.vn
www.facebook.com/tomatitosaiogn
+84 869 388 864



Saffron

The first thing that will strike you when you enter Saffron is the terracotta pots mounted on the ceiling. Located on Dong Du, this restaurant offers Mediterranean food, some with a distinct Asian influence added for further uniqueness. Prepare to order plates to share and don't miss the signature Cheese Saganaki! Guests are welcomed with complimentary Prosecco, fresh baked bread served with garlic, olive tapenade and hummus.
51 Hai Ba Trung, D1
(0)28 3824 8358

Also Try...

Blanc Restaurant

How to listen with your eyes? Blanc. Restaurant employs a team of deaf/hearing impaired waiters. Try a new dining experience and order your dishes from the a la carte menu in sign language; communication will take on a new form.
178/180D Hai Ba Trung, Da Kao, D1 - 02862663535
www.blancrestaurant.vn

Butcher MANZO & Craft Beer Bar

Manzo means "Beef" in Italian and as the name implies, it's a "Meat Bar". Manzo also offers several different dishes matched with local craft beer and selected wines, set in a classic European bar atmosphere. Butcher MANZO & Craft Beer Bar was established in the heart of HCMC on Le Thanh Ton Street in District 1.
17/13 and 17/14 Le Thanh Ton street, District 1, HCMC
028-2253-8825 **www.butcher-manzo.com**

FORK Restaurant

Open from 11 am till 11 pm everyday, Fork Saigon gathers Spanish tapas and asian one going from 50.000 VND to 160.000 VND. It offers an expensive list of international wine and 16 available by the glass. A mixologist corner is also present with Gin and Vodka base in addition to local craft beers and seasonal white or red sangria. A set lunch at 190.000 VND served Monday to Friday from 11 am to 3 pm is also available. It allows you to pick any 3 three items between a large selection (Montaditos, meat, fish and vegetable), iced tea and dessert of the day included.
15 Dong Du, D1 - 028 3823 3597
info@forksaigon.com **www.forksaigon.com**

Noir - Dining in the Dark

Can you differentiate beef from duck? Mystery meals are served in complete darkness by blind/visually impaired waiters. Select from one of the three-course set menus from the East, West or Vegetarian. Mystery wine pairing available too. Discover with taste and smell, embark on a culinary journey of the senses.
178/180D Hai Ba Trung, Da Kao, D1
02862632525 **www.noirdininginthedark.com**

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

twenty2one

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 street-side; and a terrace by the pool out back).
21 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, D3



JAPANESE

Chaya Restaurant

Chaya, a new small Japanese Cafe is coming to town. We are here to bring the best Japanese atmosphere to Saigon customer. At Chaya, customer can relax on the Tatami, taste some delicious Sushi Roll, Japanese sweets or local cuisine while enjoying Japan historically decorated space. Most of our ingredients are imported directly from Japan, especially Kyoto Matcha. Welcome!
35 Ngo Quang Huy Street, Thao Dien, District 2
0938 996 408 (Vietnamese)
0939 877 403 (Japanese)
chayavietnam.com **Facebook: chayavietnam**

Gyumaru

Gyumaru is a quintessentially minimalist Japanese dining experience rotating around the style of meat meal Westerners would be quick to link to a gourmet burger, but without the bread. Fresh, healthy, innovative cuisine in a relaxed, cozy environment and regular specials including quality steaks.
8/3 Le Thanh Ton **028 3827 1618**
gyumaru.LTT@gmail.com

Ichiban Sushi

Ichiban Sushi Vietnam serves fine sushi and signature drinks/cocktails in a lounge setting. Featuring one of the most eclectic Japanese menus in the city. The current Japanese venue to see and be seen in – everyone who's anyone is there.
204 Le Lai, D1 **www.ichibansushi.vn**

Kesera Bar & Restaurant

An Ideal place for your city escape and enjoying Japanese fusion foods. We have the best bagels in town, fine wine and cigars in a custom cabinet and is a must-do for anyone visiting the city.
26/3 Le Thanh Ton, Ben Nghe Ward, Dist 1
028 38 270 443

Sushi Dining Aoi

Sushi Dining Aoi is one such restaurant, where the whole atmosphere of the place evokes the best of the culture. With its typical Japanese-style decor – the smooth earthen tones of the wooden furniture and surrounds, the warmth and privacy of the VIP rooms – it's possible to believe you're in a more elegant realm.
53-55 Ba Huyen Thanh Quan, D3
028 3930 0039
www.sushidiningaioi.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

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

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 Cach Quan

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

10 Dang Tat, D1
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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.

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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

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19-21 Dong Khoi, D1
028 3910 1277

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160 Pasteur, D1
028 3827 7131
www.quananngon.com.vn
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400/8 Le Van Sy, D3
012 0880 5905
Facebook: Reddoorrestaurant

Temple Club

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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 centerpiece 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
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0909 246 156 / 0906 870 102

Also Try...

3T Quan Nuong

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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



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

Drink in the Holidays

Start a new Christmas tradition with these festive wine that is sure to warm the soul

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS "Christmas wines", however, most people tend to change the type of wines they drink during the festive season, and also tend to spend more for them.

The first change is the increase consumption of sparkling wines. Christmas is the best time of the year for Champagne houses because most people go deep into their pockets to buy Champagne, a product that is already quite overpriced.

If you want to enjoy a good sparkling wine, start looking outside Champagne. France has great sparkling wines made outside the Champagne area and at a fraction of the cost, check the crémant.

Italy would be a great choice for a great champagne alternative; but forget prosecco and get yourself a bottle or two of Franciacorta. And don't forget Spanish Cava, which can be exceptional. You can also find

interesting sparkling wines from California and Australia; avoid the cheap ones and you may be positively surprised.

The big dinners demand a good aged Bordeaux, or perhaps not. Again both Burgundy and Bordeaux are overpriced, and quality has been decreasing for the last few years. So again, start looking at other wine producing areas in France.

For example, Cote Rotie or Chatuneauf du Pape, although probably not cheaper than Bordeaux, produces amazing wines. Vacqueyras, Gigondas and the whites of the Loire Valley will bring lots of pleasure for less money.

If you are a Bordeaux lover, give Rioja wines a try, if you do your homework you will find them to be of similar quality but 30 to 70% cheaper. You can also have a look at Ribera del Duero and

Navarra (all of these areas in Spain) for amazing good value wines. In Italy you can find great Nebbiolo wines (avoid Barolo if you are on a budget) as well as wines from Brunello de Montalcino or Taurasi that will make you forget the entire buzz about Bordeaux.

If Burgundy is your preferred area, you are not in luck for finding good substitutes. However, New Zealand Pinots are getting better and better, and so are those from Oregon and Washington. And if you want an alternative, look for quality Mencia from Bierzo, a hidden jewel that not many know.

In general, less well-known areas and less well-known grapes are likely to offer you more pleasure for the money, so be adventurous and try new things. ■



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Travel & Wellness

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Time for Taiwan

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Text by Jesus Lopez-Gomez

Mei Tea House

THE A MEI TEA HOUSE IN

Jiufen—a three-storey restaurant done with an exterior of darkened wood fringed with red, bulbous lanterns on the building's façade—is a sight to behold in its own regard. The pleasure is increased for fans of the Japanese animated filmmaker Hayao Miyazaki who will immediately identify the building's uncanny similarity with *Spirited Away*.

Nevertheless, it's an association that Miyazaki himself has vigorously denied, The A Mei Tea House's owner said. A tour of the restaurant includes a visit to a set of masks that bears a distinct appearance to the masked figure inside of the film, No Face, where they mention the film by name. It's clear that Miyazaki's denials have done little to convince the owners that his artistic property is distinct from the tea house.

Nor are the denials meaningful seemingly to visiting press who paid the site a visit before *Oi Vietnam's* visit in October. A reporter from *Vice* filed a story in 2018 under this headline: "Eat All the Food from *Spirited Away* in this Taiwanese Town," referring to the abundance of snacks inside Jiufen's tight, winding and—forgive the description—spirited alleyways as well as the A Mei Tea House's undeniable similarities to the film.

As a souvenir for our visit, A Mei Tea House gives us a postcard showing the exterior of the film at night. The red lanterns' glow gives everything in the

frame a reddish-orange hue and it all looks frankly like a famous anime film that allegedly has nothing to do with the tea house.

The tea house owners pointed out, however, that the lanterns are probably more closely associated with traditional Chinese decorations of the same style. The note makes explicit not just Jiufen but greater Taiwan's place as a meeting point for various Asian cultures. *Oi's* reporting was unable to settle the debate on whether or not Miyazaki took inspiration from the Japanese-style tea house in rural Taiwan, but rather what became evident at various site visits throughout the country was the nation's inextricable ties to its nation neighbors to the north and west.

Chenggong Township in Taiwan's Taitung County is a sleepy town nestled next to a mountain. The clear skies and vacant roads give it an almost Colorado-like feel, except for the Chinese script on the business signage. But even with the language differences, an air of familiarity prevails over the village. Perhaps its town's removed, rural—Chenggong is a full 217 miles (349 kilometers) from the capital, Taipei—and related lack of tourist- and visitor-facing infrastructure that gives a sort of plainness and normalness. It's special, yet nothing is presented as special. The language is untranslated, the experience is unmediated, yet it clearly means something.

It's in this unassuming, secret-keeping quiet locale that mochi maker Dong Ban Xiang sits. At the intersection of two sloping roads within walking distance of an active local produce market that's bustling by mid-morning. Inside, owner Liu June Ling work making the traditional hakka treat, the third generation of his family to maintain the culinary tradition. The mochi shop was originally opened by his grandmother.

Maybe you've tried mochi before. Maybe you've tried a recipe that placed mochi firmly in the dessert camp: chewy, almost sticky but super sweet. It's the kind of thing you'd need to follow with a drink of water to clear the palette. Those are not the Liu family's mochis. Greeting traveling press in a visit, the owner lays out the restaurant's treat: a white mochi cake with sesame inside, a red mochi covered in a layer of peanuts. The glutinous treats have an overall neutral flavor that doesn't overpower another light flavor like peanuts. He serves them with a sticky rice pudding with pork and steamed brown sugar rice cakes.

Mochi was originally believed to be a type of food for the gods by the Japanese who created and popularized it. The ascendance of this belief tracks with a belief that the mochi could be used to enhance the eater's strength—a belief which led to the food's popularity among samurai—and even build healthy teeth. How this Japanese dish came to

be part of a food tradition belonging to an ethnicity that hails from southern China isn't known exactly, but the Hakka adoption of another food traditional mirrors the Hakka adoption of Thai food. In certain parts of India, diners there eat a Hakka-nized Indian food.

Originally nomadic people of northern China, Hakka have over the years been spread out over the globe. The name Hakka in Chinese reflects this visitor status; The Chinese characters for Hakka (客家) literally means "guest families". A Hakka saying: "Wherever there is sunshine ... there are Hakka."

Today, the Hakka are the second largest ethnic minority in Taiwan, about a fifth of the 4.6 million who live on the island. The Hakka were key allies in the fight to rid the island of Japanese invaders, which ended at the close of World War II. As a point of historical healing, the Japanese have worked to rehabilitating the symbols of their imperial past in Taiwan by, for example, converting one of their old military ports into the Sanxiantai ecological reserve. It's also not uncommon to enjoy tea in a ceremonial manner that identified as distinctly Japanese.

Mochi is strongly identified as a Japanese dish, but in fact both Hakka and Japanese have their own take on the dish. The mochi prepared by Lui, with its crushed peanut exterior, is done in a Hakka style. A Japanese-style mochi might be sweeter, like the red rice-filled cake Lui also served for visiting press.

To a certain extent, asking whether or not Miyazaki borrowed from Jiufen is a bit arbitrary. The centuries intermingling between Japanese and Taiwanese, the presence of cultural intermediaries like the Hakka and Taiwan itself, make it clear that cross pollination likely occurred if not with Miyazaki then with someone who tutored him.

The question is a bit like asking whether the green, turtle-shaped mung rice cakes he served to us and other visiting press actually bring good luck. Something else is at work, something bigger may be at stake in the question. There is something more interesting

than "true or false" as a feature to those questions. Exploring the governing logic behind asking a question like that seems equally if not more fruitful. The questions themselves deserve careful processing, something to chew on albeit slowly, like the foods of the mochi maker Lui.

Don't Miss Out

Visitors to Taiwan will likely touch down in the country's international airport near Taipei. If you're looking for something more removed from the typical, consider taking the two-hour journey to Lukang Township. There, you'll find Wu Yi Hsiang Oyster Omelet. Enjoy its offering of oysters in a range of recipes: oyster omelets, oyster vermicelli stew and a sharp-yet-distinct oyster and ginger dish with wasabi sauce. The early fall months are the best time to go. The bigger oysters are available during the months of August and September. While you're in town, stop by the Osmanthus Alley Humanities Tea House and sample the osmanthus cakes and tea made in this cozy shop, which was converted from a home to the business it is today. If you've never had osmanthus before as either a food or a drink, the slightly spicy, warm aroma that greets you as you enter the tea house will give you a good sense of what you're about to get yourself into. This tea house is not only a business but a home base for a collective of local artists and creatives fostering homegrown talent—painters, designers and more—who sell their wares at this unique tea shop. This township is also the home of Dingtaixing Cuisines, a quiet bakery that sells a selection of traditional steamed cakes. Select from a range of flavors: taro, matcha and even pumpkin. The cakes are said to be prepared in a way that removes toxins and promotes health. Enjoy these fluffy, low-fat cakes with a perfect pairing



Lukang Township

of brewed coffee.

Fun fact: Lukang Township gets its name from the Chinese word "lu" meaning "deer." The region is famous for its deer population. The city was once a primary hub of the region's deerskin trade.

If you're going to make the trip out to Lukang, Donggang Township is just within reach to another couple hours away. The coastal city is renown for its offerings of seafood. Would you take a suggestion? Head to the Arong Square Seafood Flavor restaurant. Dine on the red coronet fish, a seafood delicacy only found here. Those who prefer to eat with their eyes first are in for a treat: the restaurant's specialty dish is a bluefish tuna doused with a whiskey glaze that's set aflame at the table. The resulting fish is gently cooked and still tender. The whiskey is aromatic but added a light bite to the creamy fish. Head to Jiazhen Seafood Restaurant to enjoy more of the region's seafood in recipes particular to the area, like the fried tuna cake made with leeks served with a side of papaya in an arrestingly delicious passion fruit sauce. Be sure to try their fish filet in a soy and vinegar sauce, which has garnered the restaurant an award. The shrimp is served in a crispy cake known as a "beehive" for its appearance. This restaurant is owned by a fisher-turned-entrepreneur, a second-generation fisher who knows the catch best.

This township is also the home of the centuries-old Donglong Temple. This storied temple holds a collection of ornate carvings done as an homage to the gods guarding the seafarers the area harbored in the past as today. You'll know this temple by its massive, gold leaf-covered gate. Once you've seen more of the city, head to Dongsheng Restaurant to savor the region's crab and the *harpodon macrochir*, a kind of light, buttery fish that's very trout-like in mouthfeel. You'll hardly hear anyone call it by this scientific sounding name. Curiously, locals tend to refer to it as "that fish," a name that's perfectly teed up for the joke you're itching to make with it. ■



Hakka

>>The List Travel



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Kids & Education







The Application of the Treker Safety Check System

By partnering with American company Treker to apply safety check system on buses, The American School (TAS) is working to enhance students' safety

Text and Images Provided by **TAS**

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Treker has ever partnered with an international school in Vietnam to introduce an innovative safety check system. Treker offers a communication platform that touts a proprietary, hands-free check-on system for students, an app for parents, a tablet for drivers, and portals for administrators. The system and solution from Treker were certified by the state of California and have been applied in many schools across America.

For students, Treker will check to see if they get on and off the bus as parents and administrators are notified in real time. Marketed as the only solution of its kind in

the industry, Treker technology is also the most accurate and easy to use. The checking device that Treker offers is a fob, which can simply be clipped to students' backpacks, and Treker will automatically check the students in or out as they board or get off the bus. Any worry from parents about their children's privacy invasion will be eliminated: the Treker system does not track students' location, only the bus location. Personal data is not stored on the fob and will only be used to check students onto the bus. If students forget or lose their fob, drivers can still manually check students in or out. Therefore, the whole Treker system is not completely dependent on technology, and drivers can always



Keeping her safe is job one.

Keeping you sane is right up there, too.

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 **Treker**
Go safely

TAS buses are also equipped with wireless TrekAlert, in which drivers must press a button at the back of the bus within three minutes of the vehicle being turned off. If the button is not pushed, an alarm is triggered until the system is reset. By this way, Treker forces drivers to go down to the back of the bus and check to make sure that there is no student left on the vehicle. Drivers are encouraged by this system to be more responsible towards the students they are driving, which will tremendously increase students' safety when traveling to school and back home. No other solution offers students this degree of protection.

As mentioned above, Treker also empowers school administrators and transportation directors with admin portals—a tool that offers real-time visibility and tracking of the entire bus fleet, plus accurate details of each student on every bus. All data about bus fleets is stored inside the portals, allowing for comprehensive, customizable reporting with just a few clicks. School administrators can now save a lot of time and reduce cumbersome paperwork when managing the students' arrival and departure.

The comprehensive Treker safety check system has been on trial in some school buses at TAS, and the school will officially put it in to use at TAS new campus in Palm City Residence, An Phu Ward, District 2. This is just a part of TAS Child Safety Initiative, and there will be more to come. With the opening of the new campus, and a safety check system at hand, TAS is heading to a new future full of promising development—the next chapter in the school's growth. ■

actively do their job of checking students without the fear of not being able to due to unfavorable circumstances.

For parents, the Treker app is available and will help them track their children's buses as they travel to and from school. Parents can set up alerts on the app for when the bus is approaching their children's bus stop, when it arrives at school or when their children board or exit the bus. Treker app will notify parents of all real-time events happening regarding students' commuting on school bus and allows parents to follow the trips to and from school with a map view. Treker app brings peace of mind to parents at the tip of a finger.

For drivers, the driver tablet installed next to the steering wheel will display rider information, route details, upcoming stops and more—all in real time. Thanks to this function, drivers can accurately manage the number of students boarding or exiting the bus at each stop, making sure no one is left behind or checked as boarding but does not go to school that day. Drivers can also send information to school administrators and parents when needed.





How to Help Young People Transition Into Adulthood

Modern "rites of passage" can help teens prepare for an uncertain future.

Texts by BETTY RAY

WITH SO MUCH RAPID-FIRE change in the world, the job of preparing our young people for the future has become increasingly daunting. The Institute of the Future issued a report in 2017 that declared that 85 percent of the jobs in 2030—when today's second-graders will graduate high school—have not been invented yet. On top of that, we're facing an unfolding crisis in the environment; rampant racial, ethnic and gender inequities; the impending confluence of bioengineering and artificial intelligence; and escalating craziness on the geopolitical stage.

Over the past decade, I talked to thousands of educators grappling with the question of how to best prepare young people for the uncertain future. The vast majority agree that skills like critical thinking, resilience, creativity, systems thinking and empathy are crucial and must be prioritized over compliance and standardized test scores. But, more recently, there's a sense that young people need to gain real-world experience in navigating the unknown through some kind of authentic rite of passage—and more and more research is exploring what that might look like.

For millennia, elders have led youth through scaffolded rites of passage. French ethnographer Arnold van Gennep analyzed rites of passage across cultures in history and found that they have a universal three-part structure—separation, liminality and reincorporation—to help

people make sense of great transition. A young person undergoing a coming-of-age rite of passage must leave her "normal world" (separation) and enter into a situation where she experiences the free-fall of being no longer a child but not yet an adult (liminality). Once the initiate has successfully mastered the liminal phase, she returns to the normal world as an adult (reincorporation), having "leveled up" with skills that are needed to function as a healthy member of the community.

But meaningful rites of passage are not as common today. In fact, 75 percent of people between the ages of 12 and 25 lack a clear sense of purpose and many young adults are intimidated by "adulthood." This led me to wonder: How might we combine what we know from psychology and education research with traditional rite-of-passage rituals to help youth practice dwelling in the unknown, while building up critical skills for the future?

Over the past two years, I have worked with individuals and small groups of graduate students and educators to prototype a more contemporary approach to rites of passage. The updated three steps we designed—now preparation, threshold and reflection—revolve around a student-centered project that allows youth to deepen their self-knowledge while learning to be comfortable in the unknown. Dozens of young people have gone through this process, and I hope teachers, community leaders, and others can use this model to facilitate meaningful and impactful rites of

passage to support the development of the youth in their communities.

1. Preparation: Student-centered project design

Rites of passage provide a safe and structured container for young people to undergo a metamorphic shift in identity from youth to adult. The goal of the first phase is for you (as a teacher, leader or parent) and the initiates to develop a deeper understanding of themselves: their character strengths, interests, skills, and passions.

Student inventory. Ask students the following questions (inspired by Project Wayfinder and Angela Maiers):

- What are your strengths? This can be skills such as math, drawing, or swimming, or dispositions such as patience, leadership, or the ability to focus.
- What do you love to do? Note that many teens' first answer will be something to do with video games or social media. Capture these ideas, but dig a little deeper to see what else is under there. Do they enjoy strategizing with friends in Fortnite? Or creating beautiful images for Instagram? Once you've captured the digital stuff, be sure to find out what else they love in the "offline" world, just for balance.
- Is there anything that you wish you knew how to do? A skill or disposition that you want to develop? Again, see if you can find both digital and offline answers here.
- What issue or cause out in the world

do you care about the most? Climate? Gun violence? Homelessness? Animal welfare? Government corruption? Talk to them about a few specific issues.

Brainstorm projects. Using the student's answers to each question, begin to brainstorm project ideas that would be meaningful. Projects should be designed to use the initiate's skills to help solve a community problem that he deeply cares about.

For instance, say you are working with a 19-year-old named Sam who loves to draw, write fiction and make short videos with her friends. She wants to learn business skills and how to make better videos. The daughter of immigrants, Sam is deeply troubled by the racist attacks to which she and her friends are increasingly subjected.

Sam and her mentor brainstorm some ideas for projects. For instance, she might make a short video interviewing three immigrants in her community about their experiences with racism. Or maybe she could illustrate t-shirts with messages of equity and inclusion, and set up a pop-up shop. A third idea might be to write, illustrate, self-publish, and sell a book of short stories about a teenage immigrant.

Discuss viability of project. Have your student review the projects and select a couple of favorites to evaluate what it will take to pull each off successfully. Will it require a lot of money or volunteers? What about location? What is the scope? Are there a lot of interdependencies? Involve the initiate in brainstorming solutions. Ultimately, as in the real world, the final project scope will be determined by a combination of will and resources.

Because it will be a ton of work to fill up an entire shop, and then organize a pop-up, Sam settles on the video project, which seems very doable within her three-month summer break.

Write a project plan. Written as much as possible by the student with support as needed from their mentor, a project plan should include real-world skills like calling venues, organizing volunteers, setting up a Kickstarter campaign, writing a basic budget, using social media for promotion, gathering sponsors, writing and performing speeches.

Sam's project plan outlines in detail the content, production process, budget, and timeline for her documentary short. Using her mentor's connections, Sam reaches out to a local nonprofit that has a video-editing suite and asks if she can use it after-hours.

Prepare for departure. Integral to the design of a rite of passage is that the initiate must leave the comfort of home and venture out into a new realm. This separation is baked into the experience of going away to college or summer sleepaway camp, but it can also be engineered in other ways: a summer or gap-year project, or over a holiday break.

The night before Sam is to shoot her

first interview, her mentor and parents invite eight adults—family members, former teachers, and friends who know and love Sam—to an opening circle to witness her at the beginning of her journey. The room is illuminated with candles. Each adult speaks to Sam of her strengths and their belief in her, offering one piece of advice and one thing they appreciate about her. The adults have also made a short video of each of them repeating their wishes for her. Sam speaks of her intentions to learn more about filmmaking and to speak out against racism.

2. Threshold: Tasks must be hard (and relevant)

The ordeal will be a challenge. Students need to feel frustrated—pushed as close to the point of giving up as possible—or it won't have the impact.

This is the time when we as facilitators have to step out of the way and let the student work on her own, grapple with setbacks, and, yes, fail. If they show signs of withering, you can support independent problem solving wherever possible. There are several research-based practices you can share that will help build resilience and well-being during the ordeal and well into adulthood, as well.

Growth mindset. If she is not already skilled at learning from mistakes, remind your student that every failure is a learning opportunity. If she starts to internalize negative self-talk, such as "I will never be able to do this!," remind her of the power of "yet"—as in, "You don't know how to do this, yet. But you will get it."

Three Good Things. This is a super simple and proven practice of writing down three good things that happened at the end of each day. Research shows that this can help us sustain a sense of happiness and fend off depressive symptoms for up to three months—an excellent practice to build while amid an ordeal.

Cultivate awareness. Have the initiate reflect on how he's doing and identify any challenges with self-compassion. Bring any negative self-talk to awareness. Help the initiate become aware of what he does when he starts to experience the frustration of obstacles. Keeping a regular project journal can help facilitate this reflection.

Ethics. In the real world, we come up against ethical challenges all the time. Especially now with the ever-shifting sands of ethical standards in our public discourse, it is important that adults model respect, morality and ethical decision making during an ordeal. It will be tempting for your student to make some unethical choices. You will want to make it safe and supportive to make the right choice.

Awe. Awe, "numinosity," or the sense that there is a larger force at work in the world is key to meaningful rites of passage, as research shows it is a positive way to catalyze the identity shift

necessary to leave childhood and become fully adult. This can be designed into the experience by taking young people out into awe-inspiring nature for several days, creating a deck of personally meaningful cards as in Soul Collage, or reading the poetry of Rumi, Lucille Clifton, or Mary Oliver.

3. Reflection: Completion of project

Once the ordeal has concluded, it is time to celebrate the accomplishments of the initiate! Like the departure, this return is a time of celebration and welcoming back to the "normal world." Many traditions have the initiate stand up in front of his peers and community and speak about the experience. This celebration can be big and formal, or small and intimate. The key is that the initiate should be able to answer the following questions:

- Why did you do this project?
- What did you hope to learn?
- What did you learn?
- What will you take with you?
- What is one of your best memories?

Ideally, there is time to help the initiate integrate the experience and set about planning for another self-designed goal. In Sam's case, her family and mentor will invite the same adults to come over for a special screening of her video, and she will give a short introduction to the video offering her reflections.

In traditional rites of passage, the initiate returns home as an adult, having been prepared for adult responsibilities—mind, body, and soul—through the ordeal. We don't really have a similar expectation in our contemporary communities, and of course there are myriad reasons why young people are taking longer to find their footing as adults.

But we can certainly help young people deepen their self-knowledge and strengthen their sense of identity, develop real-world skills, and (most importantly) experience the state-change that comes with accomplishing a major stretch goal. We can provide a model for navigating the unknown as a means of strengthening their identity and engaging community support.

Indeed, I would like to live in a world where each child is initiated into adulthood—not to fit them into a prescribed societal box, but to help them understand who they are, why they're here, and how they can share their gifts with the world. ■

Betty Ray, M.A., is an author, speaker and consultant. She spent the better part of the last decade in senior editorial leadership roles at Edutopia, published by the George Lucas Educational Foundation. Now, her work explores the question: How might we design educational experiences that cultivate the inner life of young people so that they know their own purpose, and can apply that purpose to solving some of the most vexing problems we face today?

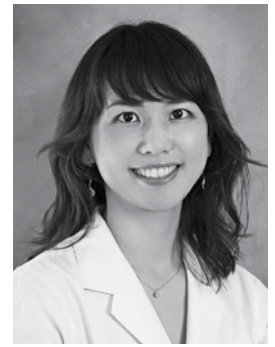
Abnormal Uterine Bleeding

Whether you're 13 or 53, this may affect you

IN MOST CULTURES, IT'S RARE to talk about menstruation—which downplays the universal role it has in the lives of women. It's very important for women to understand their own cycle, because abnormal bleeding may be the first warning sign of a deeply concerning health problem she may otherwise be unaware of.

Between menarche and menopause, a woman has an average of 400 to 500 periods. That is a lot. Back in the time when it wasn't uncommon for women to have 8–10 babies, they would have perhaps 80 to 100 menstrual periods in their lifetimes. This is because when pregnant and during breastfeeding, periods do not occur. Now we only have from zero to two babies, meaning that for most women bleeding occurs almost every month.

Because menstruation is so frequent, it can be difficult to know when abnormal bleeding happens. There are many things that cause it, but the most common causes differ widely between the various age groups—from as young as 20 to 40 years old; after 40 years old; and beyond 50 years of age. It also ranges from benign causes—such as a slightly shorter or longer period, or the early stages of a



Dr. Nana Akino's medical studies in gynecology and the aging process in women inspired her to conduct in-depth research on counteracting the effects of aging on the ovaries during her Ph.D. studies. She is particularly interested in supporting women's health, reproductive health and all gynecological issues, including hormone replacement therapies.

perfectly normal pregnancy—to life-threatening causes such as cervical cancer, endometrial cancer, or ectopic pregnancy (which happens when the fetus develops outside of the womb).

For the 20–40-year-old age group, the common causes of abnormal bleeding are usually fertility related—such as spotting in the early stages of pregnancy, conditions such as PCOS (polycystic ovary syndrome), medicines such as birth control pills or the IUD (intrauterine device) used for contraception, or an infection of the pelvic organs. Excessive bleeding can be a sign of problems such as miscarriages and ectopic pregnancy.

The worst case scenario for this age group is cervical cancer—caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV), which is a preventable condition. I recommend that young women and girls receive an HPV vaccination before they are sexually active, as it is the most reliable, accessible, and economical option to avoid infection and a higher risk of cervical cancer.

For women over 40 years old but who have not yet experienced menopause, the most serious cause of abnormal bleeding can often be endometrial cancer.

In post-menopausal women, abnormal bleeding can be caused by

hormone therapy such as tamoxifen for breast cancer, or hormone replacement therapy used to treat menopausal issues—or it can be a sign of cancer itself of the cervix or endometrium.

Frustratingly, it is tricky to recognize when bleeding is out of the norm, as there is a high level of variance in period frequency and the volume of blood loss during a period between individual women. What is a normal period for one woman may be too long or too much for another. Outside of excessive bleeding, there is little to clearly distinguish between normal and abnormal bleeding, as they have mostly the same texture and consistency.

For that reason, it's advisable for women to keep a detailed record of their normal periods. Information such as the frequency of their menstruation or how many tampons or pads they usually use can be very valuable for a doctor. This will also help women to identify when bleeding happens at an unusual time. If this happens, it should be taken seriously and women should consider a check-up, especially if the bleeding is excessive. For all age groups, excessive bleeding is a definite call for an immediate visit to your gynecologist.

Knowing what to do when a woman

has determined that her bleeding is not normal is the next important step. I have read worrying research that indicates as many as 50 percent of college-aged women are unaware of dangerous conditions such as cervical cancer. They may know even less about what signs to look out for and what to do if they recognize the signs.

Tests such as Pap smears, which can help pinpoint a woman's health issues in the very early stages, are now standard in most Asian countries. I would recommend yearly testing, as it is relatively accessible in most countries. HPV testing is a good option also, especially in countries which are relatively advanced with their HPV vaccination programs.

Menstruation, bleeding, period pain, and related issues are often hard topics for women to discuss even among themselves, as many cultures still view them as taboo. Many women are taught that it is shameful to discuss their own bodies in such a way. It is nonetheless important to recognize that each woman has a right and obligation to take care of her body and health, and that starts with becoming more aware of what your body is telling you, and making sure you have the necessary knowledge and vaccinations. ■

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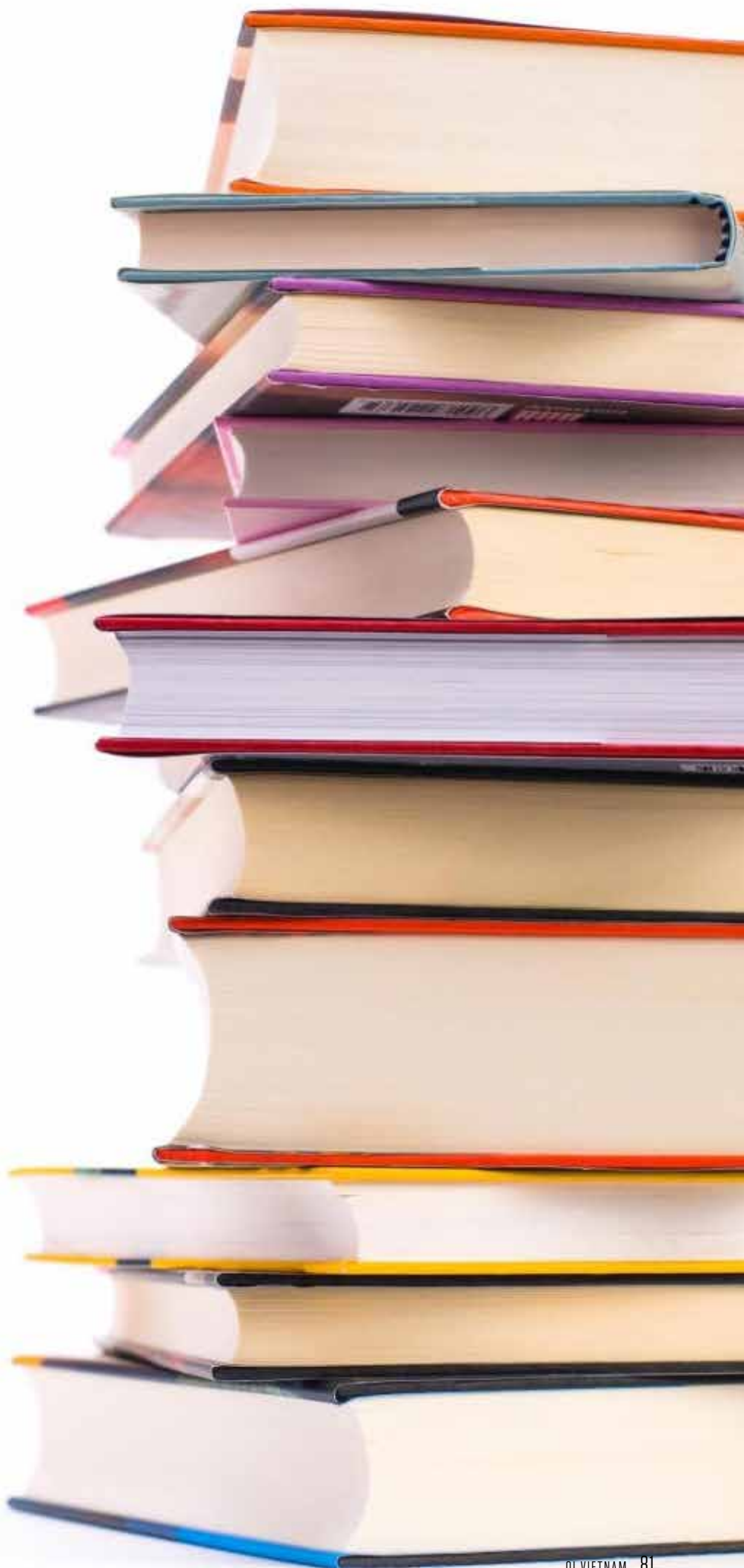
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