



VIETNAM

01-2020

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Meet Me in *The Maldives*



End of Year

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NHIỀU TÁC GIẢ



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This Month's Cover

Image provided by
LUX* South Ari Atoll Resort & Villas
See our review on pages 38, 39
www.luxresorts.com

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University of Cambridge




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




Phan, Truong Vi
Political Science
Anthropology
Columbia University





Vu, Thi Tu Oanh
Bachelor of Arts
University of Toronto




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

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Smile all the stay in the Maldives.

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*LIGHTER. BRIGHTER.

Tis the Season to be Jolly

And probably the season most are in more debt than any other time during the year...

I WAS ASKED A VERY UNIQUE question this week by a young lad not quite into his 20s yet, which actually stopped me and made me think very hard before answering. Although the question was quite simple, “I have a little money saved, should I pay for university or invest it instead?”

It was not a choice. It was one or the other. Had it been a choice I would have considered suggesting investing. But, as there was no choice then it was an obvious call to suggest university because on completion of studies and successfully passing exams he would have a better chance of increasing his earning potential over a long period of time during his future career path. With a degree, however, it is common to leave uni with a debt that will follow you around after you have completed your higher education and you have joined the workforce for years to come. I do sometimes question the relevance of certain degrees and the eventual path an individual takes in the work arena—saddled with a debt that will take years to work off in a field that has no relevance.

It does lead to the question of debt, which can be a very slippery slope. Personal debt is on the rise, which can be either from very bad luck but, unfortunately, and most commonly, from simple bad spending habits. Reducing debt will always have to start with recognizing that fact and adjusting accordingly. The good news is that in most cases there is a way out if determination and hard work are applied and getting back on track becomes the priority.

There are millions of people who have gotten themselves into big debt. The unfortunate truth is that many people take their money for granted until it is too late. If you do this, there is a good chance that you're going to get yourself into trouble as well. Just

remember that there are plenty of things you can do to dig yourself out of that rut.

Understand your debt and fully find out what it is you owe. Too many bury their heads in the sand with the view if it cannot be seen, it cannot exist. Probably the worst thing that anyone can ever do is to ignore it and do nothing, as interest will accumulate, as will the fees/fines from lawyers and debt collectors if you end up down that route. Everyone can find out what their credit score is. Strangely, your credit score can become better having debts through loans, but only if you pay them off when you are supposed to. Many people don't realize that having a car loan or paying off your credit card each month adds to your credit worthiness as you are a good money manager of your own personal finances. That credit score only gets impacted when you don't keep up. If you never have any kind of loan or credit card you could also accidentally end up with a weak credit score as there isn't enough information held on you. Strange, but true.

The first method to use should be the snowball method whereby you pay off any smaller debt balances first and the minimums on larger debt balances. As you clear off the smaller ones you move on to the next larger one and so on. Eventually all is cleared out.

Some major questions should be asked about debt: How did it actually occur? Can you self-audit yourself and introspect yourself? What could have happened differently to avoid the position? Responsibility is half the battle ultimately through behaviors. But do remove all thoughts of self-doubt or blame. It will not solve the problem but cause major anxiety leading to a higher chance of reverting back to the “head in the sand.”

It is sensible to look at your expenditure. What are my monthly liabilities? Just because you are paying

a current bill with a provider you have always used doesn't necessarily make it the right one. Question everything. Can I get a cheaper internet provider, mobile phone operator, insurance quote, credit card fees, and gym memberships? All should be scrutinized thoroughly and ask are all of these absolutely required? If there is no better deal look at switching providers.

First and foremost, you need to understand that paying more than the minimum on your debt payments is recommended. Many people prefer simply paying the minimum. This is great if it is all that you can afford.

However, you should definitely pay more if you're able to do so. After all, this is going to get the debt paid off much quicker. It will also help you avoid being hit with those hefty interest rates. Just don't overdo it. Make sure that you stay within your needs or you may regret it.

There is never enough education regarding debt to younger minds and how to deal with it. Too much credit is thrown in the faces of individuals far too often; especially at university/college student age with student credit cards and other offerings in the hope you will become a client. Once a client, banks generally know you will become a lifelong client. Get to you early and you stay forever. There is a very simple rule though to debt—“Live within your means!”

Sounds quite ridiculously easy, but it can be so easy to step outside of this simple philosophy without a bit of self-governance. Naturally, once out of any debt, it will put you in a mental state of good governance going forward and eventually lead to building a pot of savings and emergency funds.

Does anyone really need the absolute latest mobile phone out there on offer just to keep up with the latest trend? Not really. I'd still be walking around with my Nokia 2110 if it still worked and wasn't the size of a house brick... ■



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.



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Happy Lunar New Year!
YEAR OF THE RAT



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FROM THE OI FAMILY
TO YOURS

TROI OI!

The country in numbers

114

BUS DRIVERS AND ATTENDANTS WERE FINED A COMBINED OF VND58.6 MILLION IN 2019 FOR SMOKING.

The statistics were announced by Ho Quy Vinh, from the Ho Chi Minh City Management Center of Public Transport, in a meeting to sum up what have been done this year in the campaign.

Transport officials have clamped down on smoking at the Saigon Bus Station in District 1, which is the city's CBD, and the Mien Tay (Western) Bus Station in Binh Tan District since January 2019, when the municipal People's Committee issued a fiat asking them to launch the campaign, Vinh said. The management center has cooperated with relevant agencies to put up "No Smoking" signs on the buses at the two stations and 500 other bus stops across the city, he added.

Smoking rooms have been built at many bus terminals and cameras have been installed there to detect smokers. Seventy percent of the fines will be submitted to the national treasury and the remaining 30 percent will be invested in public transport, Vinh said. Over 3,000 drivers, vehicle owners, street vendors, and passengers have been given warnings for smoking in no-smoking sites at the Mien Tay Bus Station since July this year, said Tran Van Phuong, deputy director of the station.



130

KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS IN THE NORTH CENTRAL VIETNAMESE PROVINCE OF THANH HOA WERE HOSPITALIZED BECAUSE OF FOOD POISONING LAST MONTH.

The incident happened at Vuon Mat Troi Kindergarten in Dong Ve Ward, Thanh Hoa City. Many of the young patients were in stable conditions as of the same evening and were allowed to leave the infirmary.

Nguyen Ba Can, the deputy director of provincial Department of Health, said the agency had collected samples of the students' school meals to conduct lab tests. The school cafeteria has been temporarily suspended until further notice. Vuon Mat Troi Kindergarten has a total of 650 students divided into 20 classes.

150,000

STUDENTS TO JOIN GOOGLE-BACKED FREE PROGRAMMING COURSES IN VIETNAM.

Google Asia Pacific Pte. Ltd. held a ceremony last month to launch the second phase of the

'Coding your future with Google' project in Ho Chi Minh City.

In the project's first phase, which ran throughout the 2018-19 school year, nearly 1,300 students and 30 teachers in ten public elementary schools in the southern metropolis and the Mekong Delta provinces of Vinh Long and Tien Giang attended more than 10,000 hours of Scratch programming lessons.

In its second phase, Google sets out to train 150,000 students and 350 teachers in 300 elementary and middle schools and vocational institutions in 15 cities and provinces across Vietnam, ten times the target of the project's first phase. The course of the new phase began in September and is set to run until December 2020. The program has so far reached out to 80,000 students at 240 schools, including those in ethnic communities, Ha Lam Tu Quynh, said the director of communications and public relations at Google Asia Pacific.



2 TONS OF PANGOLIN SCALES AND IVORY FROM AFRICA WERE CONFISCATED AT CUSTOMS.

Trade in ivory and pangolin is illegal in Vietnam but wildlife trafficking remains widespread. Customs authorities in the northern port city of Hai Phong found 330kg of ivory and 1.7 tons of pangolin scales hidden in three containers of wood last month, the Customs Department's *Hai Quan* newspaper reported. The containers came from Nigeria, the newspaper said. Pangolins, known as scaly anteaters, are critically endangered. Some Vietnamese people believe that their scales, when ground into powder, have health benefits but scientists say the scales are made of keratin, the same substance that fingernails are made of, and do nothing for health.



96.2 MILLION IS THE TOTAL POPULATION OF VIETNAM AS OF APRIL 1, 2019, WITH MALES ACCOUNTING FOR 49.8 PERCENT AND FEMALES 50.2 PERCENT, ACCORDING TO THE POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS 2019.

Up to 88 percent of the population are in the main working age from 25-59. The Minister of Planning and Investment Nguyen Chi Dung said Vietnam is in the period of a golden population structure but workforce quality remains limited with only 23.1 percent having qualifications and nearly 11.1 percent being highly skilled. In order to avoid middle-income trap, he suggested enhancing vocational training, renewing tertiary education in a way that could meet recruiters' expectation. According to the General Statistics Office, skilled workforce made up 31.8 percent in the Red River Delta, 27.5 percent in the southeast, 22.7 percent in the north central and central coastal regions, and 13.6 percent in the Mekong Delta. Unemployment rate in the rural areas and urban areas stands at 1.64 percent and 2.93 percent, respectively. Most of jobless persons age 15-54, accounting for 91.7 percent. Meanwhile, those working in industry, forestry and fisheries dropped from 53.9 percent in 2009 to 46.3 percent in 2014 and 35.3 percent in 2019.

51 SPRING FLOWER MARKETS FOR TET ARE SET TO BE OPENED THROUGHOUT HANOI FOR THE PURPOSE OF SHOPPING, SIGHTSEEING AND ENTERTAINMENT.

Guests visiting the markets will be able to purchase a wide variety of different types of flowers, ornamental plants, fruit trees and handicraft products which are typical of the festive season. Markets are set to be held across the capital, with Hoan Kiem district hosting a flower market in Hang Ma ward while Hai Ba Trung district will have three flower markets in Mo market, Thong Nhat Park, and Tuoi Tre Park. Hoang Mai district is to have two markets located close to Den Lu market and Hoang Liet Street. More markets will be opened up in other districts around the city, with Bac Tu Liem district set to have five markets, seven markets in Tay Ho district, and nine markets in Ha Dong district, among others.



A 5-Star Culinary Journey in

Phu Quoc

Text and Images Provided by
InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort

PHU QUOC ISLAND IS WELL

known for its pepper gardens, sim wine and pearl farms, but did you know that there is a vast world of culinary wonders for travelers to experience here on Vietnam's Pearl Island?

Duong Dong Night Market and Ham Ninh fishing village are packed with local restaurants and bars serving up fresh local fares at reasonable prices. However, for those looking for more refinement in their cuisine, InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Resort's dining outlets offer the perfect blend of local flavors and world-class techniques. The resort is home to 5 restaurants and bars, each with its own unique taste and style—making it an ideal destination for foodies.

The chefs at InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort take great care to incorporate local ingredients into their expertly crafted menus. This is to ensure that the essence of Phu Quoc is consistently represented in every single dish. On the other hand, there is no limitation to the creativity of the kitchen here, as each item is a unique creation—a combination of different styles and techniques.

Sora & Umi

Serving Vietnamese and Japanese cuisine, Sora & Umi restaurant is located on the second floor overlooking the infinity pools and the ocean. Aside from the sumptuous breakfast buffet, Sora & Umi is also open for lunch and dinner with its attractive "All Day Dining" menu. The cuisine here is a blend of Japanese and Vietnamese, beautifully cooked and tastefully plated. Highlights include herring with rice paper rolls, grilled Phu Quoc hill chicken with bamboo cooked rice or beef jerky salad—

which are must try dishes. Don't forget to dip in the special sauce that comes with each dish—it can be said that this mixture is the soul of Vietnamese cuisine. A bit of spiciness, a bit of sourness, a bit of saltiness—just enough to awaken your senses and whet the taste buds. Finish your meal with a traditional sweet dessert with a twist: lotus seeds with forest honey served in a juicy coconut. The light sweetness and the unmistakable aroma of honey and coconut serve as the perfect end note to cleanse your palate after a hearty meal.

Ombra

Both an Italian restaurant and a bar, Ombra is on the ground floor and located adjacent to Oasis pool. Here you can enjoy light dishes, cocktails, healthy beverages as well as house-made gelatos. "Ombra" in Italian means "shade"—a perfectly apt name for the restaurant as you can relax and enjoy a meal here after dipping in the pool or swimming in the ocean. Lie down

on one of the lounge chairs and sip on an ice-cold cocktail or sample the famous seafood pizza, freshly made with special aromatic dough. Don't forget to try the authentic spaghetti with fresh toppings such as sea urchin, lobster, octopus or crab. All the pasta is made in house with traditional techniques from a team of talented chefs.

Sea Shack

Mere steps from the sea, Sea Shack features a unique rustic design that blends in with nature. Dine on the innovative menu, which incorporates tapas, grilled seafood, craft beer and Tiki cocktails for a wonderful evening. The chefs at Sea Shack work hard to achieve a balance between the ingredients' natural flavors and the use of spices, all the while giving priority to local ingredients. Their barbecued dishes are freshly grilled over charcoal, which not only bring out the smoky aroma but also preserves the texture of the meat, be



Herring salad - Sora & Umi

it ribs or fish. Must try dishes include the seafood platter, which features various types of local seafood and a special Phu Quoc pepper dipping sauce with fresh herbs. Definitely try the outdoor BBQ by the beach here every weekend. The menu changes weekly and the food is served directly from the grill to your table—a heaven for seafood fans. Feel the sand on your bare feet as you wander the shore of Long Beach and take in the beautiful sunset with a cold drink in your hand!

LAVA

Also overseeing the sea, the signature restaurant LAVA possesses a totally different vibe with its elegant arching bamboo architecture. Designed by famed architect Vo Trong Nghia, the interior is also impressive with a prominent fossilized coral bar taking center stage in striking blue. Here you can enjoy an exceptional dining experience with fresh seafood cooked to your preference or premium cuts of imported beef. Nothing like sipping on a fine glass of champagne while watching the sky change color from day to night right in front of your eyes.

Each dish at LAVA is meticulously prepared, from cooking to plating to service at your table, as if you are being presented with a work of art. The menu features exotic local fare such as “fingernail” snail cooked with tamarind sauce or whole seabass fried in a large seashell. LAVA's dishes are seasoned with local spices and herbs and usually served on heated volcanic stones or wrapped in banana leaves in order to preserve the flavors.

Taking full advantage of being on a tropical island, LAVA is stocked with fresh seasonal seafood, which includes many local varieties like red grouper and lobster as well as imported ingredients such as Alaskan crabs and Hokkaido clams. In addition to seafood, premium cut of beefs such as imported Wagyu are also available.

You can't go wrong with an exceptional tenderloin steak with mushroom sauce and a selection of spices such as seaweed salts, pepper salt, Himalayan salt, Tay Giang pepper, red chili pepper, smoked mustard and miso mustard. A glass of One De Napa Valley or Imperial Reserva makes for a perfect accompanying beverage.

INK 360

If you have not been to INK 360, you have not been to Phu Quoc. This is the tallest rooftop bar on the island at level 19 of the Sky Tower. Designed by the famed Ashley Sutton, INK 360 invokes the image of the Kraken—a fearsome legendary sea creature who embodies the mysteries of the deep below. To say that the outdoor deck at INK360 is the best spot to watch the sunset from on the entire island is not an overstatement. Get your cameras ready because the dusk scenery will be breathtaking as day turns into night over the awesome landscape below.

Check out the signature cocktail menu—a collection of original creations made by a team of mixologist here at INK 360. A sublime blend of different ingredients and tastes, from local to international, have added new depth into the drinks here in Phu Quoc. Get ready to go on a colorful journey of taste and smell with every cocktail you sip.

Highlights include the Uncle Ho Penicillin—a highly nostalgic blend made from Scotch Whisky, lime juice, Phu Quoc honey, ginger syrup, Lapsang Souchong and cardamom. And another great choice is the Three Way Mirror, which was designed to offer 3 different



Lobster Linguini - Ombra



Grilled Seafood Platter - Sea Shack

tastes depending on which direction you drink it from—made from London Dry Gin, sparkling wine, strawberry powder & turmeric powder. For a visually impressive cocktail, the Coral Mule is light and easy to drink—made from Triple Sec, Aperol, Luxardo Fernet Brance, ginger beer and kumquat.

Mercado

Located right next to the lobby on level 4, Mercado is a convenient resting spot where you can enjoy freshly brewed coffee and house-made pastries. Fans of sweets will also be happy with the offerings of small cakes and refreshing house gelato ice creams. For more savory fare, Mercado also offers sandwiches overflowing with cheese and cold cuts beef or chicken. For long stay guests, this is where you can shop for various deli items to enjoy in the comfort of our room or to bring back home as gifts. Choices include Phu Quoc pepper, Vietnamese coffee beans, sim wine or premium local honey.

It has been said that those who visit Phu Quoc will always fondly remember it. With the various dining experiences at InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort, you can be sure that those fond memories are well worth the price of admission. ■

For more info, visit phuquoc.intercontinental.com



Australian Grain Fed Wagyu Tomahawk - LAVA



Coral Mule - INK 360



The Night Never Sleeps

Experience the Pulsating
Energy of the City's Nightlife at
Atmos and Kasho Clubs

Text by **Jesus Lopez-Gomez**
Images by **Vy Lam & Atmos Club**

IT'S RARE THAT THE DARKENED, red neon- streaked quarters of **Atmos Club** (2nd Floor, 153 Ton That Dam, D1) aren't at least mostly filled with patrons, almost all young Vietnamese clients who seem to have walked out of fashion magazines dressed defiantly in black clothing. Top charting hip hop courses through the club; the absence of light is made up for by a sound design that could easily fill a space two times the size of Atmos. Sipping champagne or a bottle of top shelf whiskey—the club unapologetically offers a menu made just of bottle service, no cocktails—clubgoers sit on couches arranged around the glowing tanks that hold the chilling liquor bottles.

When Son Tung - MTP wanted to visit downtown Saigon for a performance, this European-style club

was his venue of choice. Atmos is just four months into its reign as the upper District 1 area's only premium club. The club is the concept of Hoang An Nhien Group, an entertainment syndicate that operates Atmos and its brotherhood club **Kasho** (99 Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, D1) in downtown District 1. Both are top-tier, lavish clubs. Kasho's location at the intersection of districts 1, 3 and 5 is a strategically important location.

Atmos looks like the inside of the space station where the end of the universe is plotted. The hip hop is there to take the edge off things as are the bottles of Macallan 12.

Atmos goes from 10 pm to 3 am all seven days of the week. On the Thursday evening when *Oi* visited, the club held around three quarters of its 200-person capacity, a normal night for them. Atmos'

listeners dine on a strict diet of hip hop. Expect to hear that new Travis Scott record. You'll hear it after *In Da Club* by 50 Cent, a song that still sounds brash years later, perhaps given new life inside Atmos' darkened, sound-rich chambers, which feel like the inside of someone's very cool car.

The hosts of Atmos roam the streets in front of Ton That Dam, smartly dressed men and women whose similar color coordination makes them all seem perhaps from the same fashion show. Women in beige trench coats wait in front greeting clients and diverting them to the club. The single entrance is easy to miss. Atmos' visitors have no such auditory clues to follow. Look for the smartly dressed in front of a darkened door in front of District 1.

From there, take the elevator up

to the club itself, which is located above less for views than it is for being an enclosed space tightly containing the venue's cool and abundance sound. Like Atmos, Kasho prefers darkness accented by red lights. Atmos is cozy with a teasing evil-ish motif: skulls around the club.

Large projections of the inside of someone's consciousness display abstract patterns and lights behind the two DJs that play for Kasho's audience. Clubgoers are seat around glass cases similar to Atmos that hold the party's liquor bottles. Kasho serves hookah, but perhaps not enough to create the ambient smoke that permeates the atmosphere around the venue. What you find at Kasho is the polished dark of a place alive with both people and activity. Kasho seems to embrace the dark of the night rather than defy it.

Light is used strategically and with purpose. Lighted buckets hold liquor



Kasho Clubs



Kasho Clubs

bottles in a little pool of light, a relatively subtle gesture compared to the serving process. Ordered bottles are served by a costumed club hosts who dress is hard to make up in the dark. Someone is wearing a hood and another person is wearing a silvery face mask. One person holds the liquor, others hold the indoor fireworks that announce its arrival and two others hold the lighted discs that bear the face of a sinister looking horned figure. The whole thing bears more similarity with a ritual sacrifice than bottle service.

The individual elements of Kasho are found elsewhere. You might hear the music elsewhere in Saigon. The clubs costumes, you've probably seen something like that before if you've played Mortal Kombat. The red, spare looking gate in the middle of Atmos' club floor can be seen at a Shinto shrine in Japan. In combination like this however, these two locations offer a club experience you won't see anywhere else. ■



Atmos Clubs



Atmos Clubs

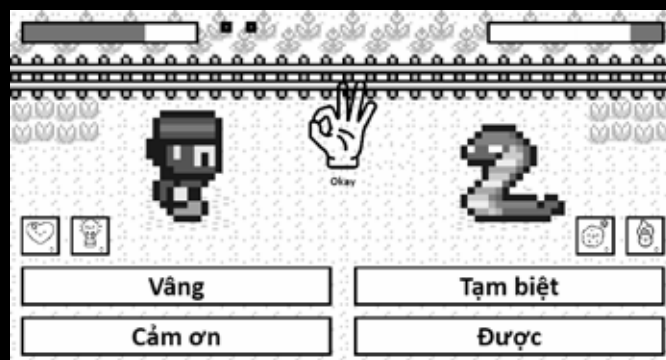
App Learning



Explore the world and collect items!



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Enzo Smith talks about the creation of his Vietnamese language learning game app

Interview by Christine Van
Images Courtesy of TestPlay

DID YOU STUDY A LANGUAGE

for multiple years in high school or college? Did you learn a language while studying abroad? Now ask yourself if you could hold a basic conversation in that language if somebody fluent were to come up to you right now. Needless to say, knowing a language other than your own comes in handy for countless situations, including traveling, business, communicating with family members, and so on.

Why is it that learning languages seems reasonably manageable, but retaining that conversational knowledge is exponentially more difficult? Enzo Smith believes he has an answer, and what he thinks is a solution.

Now, to go back to the beginning, how did you identify the problem and opportunity? What steps did you take to make your idea a reality?

The idea of creating an educational game came to me while I was at the gym in Korea actually. I was at the gym, listening to a Tim Ferriss podcast and the guest was talking about how important it is for startup founders to really understand and have a passion for what they do. Almost all at once, I made the connection between all of my

life's passions (technology, education, language and retro games) and started to work on it that afternoon.

Describe how the app works.

Current language apps (kind of) work, but they are boring. I've used these apps to study several languages and, to be fair, they did help me, but none even came close to what I wanted. The methodology behind them is sound: If you use these apps, you will learn faster. The problem is that no one actually uses them repeatedly for the amount of time necessary. Why? Because they are boring and no one wants to be bored repeatedly.

And so, how does my app work? Well, to demonstrate my point, I can tell you that you need a Thunder Stone in order to evolve Pikachu into Raichu. I can also (after some careful thought) tell you the names of all the other 149 Pokémon. This is largely just a long list of gibberish, made-up, nonsense words and yet I still remember them. I really wish I could recite 151 Vietnamese words to you. And so, I set out to make an app that would use the same formula to eventually allow me to do just that.

Can you really learn a language with an app?

Definitely! I've played through the first level of my game hundreds of times (zapping bugs and tweaking the code) and I know every one of those words in Vietnamese now. When I hear, see or say these words, I even see the images that are used in the game. So, yes, you can definitely learn a language with an app.

Having a holistic study plan gives the best results though. I would recommend using study apps in conjunction with traditional classes.

How long did it take to design the app?

I'm hoping to launch it early next year, at which point, it will have been in development for about 1 1/2 years.

How do you plan on monetizing it?

I'm going to try and put myself in the users shoes. I'll find something that makes the user happy, while also compensating myself for the time I've put in. None of this is set in stone, but I hope to avoid a subscription plan. It takes longer than a month to learn a language, so I don't want to make them pay more than once. I will have some in-game purchases that make game play more fun/exciting, but I need to be careful with that. The bottom line is that they need to learn, so I don't want to allow them to pay to make it 'easier'.

What makes TestPlay stand out from other language learning or flashcard apps? What's the value proposition?

Unlike other language learning or flashcard apps, it's my hope that people will actually want to use/play it. It's going to be fun, addicting and rewarding. Not many of the other apps out there can say that.

What made you focus your efforts on language learning?

I've studied three languages and I'm a university English teacher, so it's something I know very well. I hope to eventually move into other academic areas, but to begin with, it's best to focus on what I know.

What milestones would you like to hit in the next year?

I hope to have the Vietnamese learning version on the App Store as soon as possible. I'm shooting for before May, which is very doable. This is important because I need to start collecting feedback. I will then push to get this feedback integrated into the game and then put out all of the other versions (learning English, Korean and Chinese).

What kind of feedback have you gotten from users?

I've gotten only positive feedback! It's great! People seem to be really excited to give it a try. This has put pressure on me to deliver something good and to get it done in a reasonable amount of time.

Have there been any setbacks or challenges to launching TestPlay?

I started from scratch, with little to no business or coding experience. This was a challenge, but the process has changed my life for the better. I am so much better prepared, by doing this all myself, than I would have been if I just paid someone to do it for me.

What impact would you like to see TestPlay have?

My dream is to change the way people think of school. I'm starting small with this game, but I have been dreaming big since day one. In my mind, wonderful things in education are not only possible, but also so much better than what we currently have. I want to make it happen and TestPlay is my first step into this arena. Wish me luck! ■

Find out more at, www.facebook.com/testplaylearning or email test.play.official@gmail.com



Roar in the New Year

The dance is believed to bring
fortune, but how is the costume made

Text by **NPD Khanh**
Images by **Neil Featherstone**



“LIONS AND DRAGONS ARE symbols of luck and prosperity. For the Vietnamese, without luck there is no life,” says Nhu Tra, a dancer from the Ha Nhan Duong troupe. “Which is why you will see lion dancing not just around Tet but also at many opening ceremonies of new business. It is hard work hoisting a 14kg lion head on your shoulder and dance nimbly on your feet.”

“Over 30 years ago, every single lion dance group in this city had to get their costumes from Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan and China, and they weren’t cheap. They range from USD1,200 to USD1,500—a fortune back then,” explains Tam Quach, owner of Binh Hoa, a workshop in District 6 that specializes in making lion costumes.

But that has since changed. It started with one family learning the basic of how to craft the framework then this knowledge was quickly shared and developed upon. And now there are more than 50 international standard lion and dragon costume producers in Ho Chi Minh City alone—centered around Districts 5, 6 and 11. The workshops are open, with bamboo frames, lion and dragon parts and mixed paints strewn haphazardly from inside the home out into the street.

“Lion costumes made in Vietnam are very popular, you know?” shares Luong Tan Hang, the chief at Hang Anh Duong workshop and dance troupe. “We have developed a reputation for high quality at very affordable prices. Though we lack years of experience, we can still easily compete with our Japanese or Singaporean competitors. Most people don’t realize it but even lion costumes have trends in fashion. This year, luminous paint and beauty marks on the lion’s head are in.”

No single workshop can undertake the creation of a lion costume alone. Instead, the work is split and distributed among collaborating workshops with each team specializing in one task or creating a specific part of the lion’s body such as the mane, the eyes, the frame, even down to seemingly little things like the claws or the nose.

“The work requires painstaking attention to detail. A lion costume is a big thing. By dividing up the parts, we can make sure attention is paid to each individual part,” explains 65-year-old artisan Tu Nhut. One lion costume takes a week to produce while a procession dragon takes two or more weeks to complete. The lion can cost anywhere from VND15 million to VND25 million and, depending on the length of the body, a dragon can cost anywhere from VND50 million to VND200 million.

“Business has been very good despite the state of economy,” says Hang, whose shop recently sold 100 lions and 20 dragons to various Southeast Asian countries. “Or perhaps because of it. The tougher the going gets, the more luck people seem to want.” ■







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

Adopt, Don't Shop

Why you should adopt a shelter animal in Vietnam

THINKING ABOUT TAKING home a new furry friend? Here's why you should head to a local animal shelter to adopt dog or cat... or one of each. You can save a life because every year million of dogs and cats wait to be adopted from animal shelters. Shelters are often overcrowded and the re-homing process is not easy. Adopting a shelter animal not only gives your pet a second chance for a happy home, but can also save it from being euthanized in an overcrowded shelter. By taking home your new pet,

you also make room at the shelter for another animal with nowhere else to go and potentially saving another animal from cruelty that is coming if it ends up being snatched for the meat trade.

A puppy/kitten farm, or mill, is the illegal practice of breeding puppies and kittens for the sole purpose of maximizing profit, without any regard to the dogs' and cats' health or wellbeing. Dogs/cats at farms are forced to breed several times to their detriment and they are often kept in terrible conditions

without basic necessities. Many pet stores, and unethical breeders, do not offer animals the same health services prior to adoption. Dogs/cats in mills and sold at pet stores can carry serious infectious diseases. And at the end of it, there's a high percentage of the puppies and kittens from these farms/pet shops ending up in shelters.

Shelter animals are often healthier than animals bought elsewhere. These animals undergo full physicals when they are brought to a shelter and many shelters have veterinary clinics on site to treat any medical issues that arise. Shelter staff make sure animals are in top shape before they are ready to be adopted into a new home. Many pet stores, and even some breeders, do not offer animals the same health services prior to adoption. Dogs born in puppy mills and sold at pet stores can carry diseases ranging from parasites to pneumonia.

There is one major problem in Southeast Asia, millions of dogs and cats (annually) are sold and consumed on the meat trade market where they have been tortured while waiting for their death. If lucky and saved then some of these animals at some point end up in shelters.

Shelters provide a space for animals of all different breeds, ages, shapes, sizes and personalities. They house so many different pets that you are sure to find an animal that fits your lifestyle and will serve as your perfect companion. ■



For more information, contact local animal rescue groups in Vietnam such as RAD7 (facebook.com/RAD7Saigon), Laws for Paws Vietnam (facebook.com/lawsforpawsvietnam), ARC (facebook.com/arcpetsvietnam), Paws for Compassion (facebook.com/pawsforcompassion) and Wild Dogs Rescue (facebook.com/wilddogsrescue) to name a few.

Pet of the Month



Harris



Spotty

Save a Life

Some important information to know when adopting a rescued dog

IT IS A WONDERFUL THING

to adopt a rescued dog. You will have saved a life and enriched your own. With rescues, remember that the dog may never have lived with people so doesn't know what is expected of him. When you adopt such a rescue, there are two important principles to keep in mind: dogs need exercise and dogs need leadership.

Dogs that are not exercised frequently and dogs that do not have a pack leader can cause a lot of problems after adoption, leading the adopter to wonder if this is the right dog. Usually it is the right dog; the dog just hasn't been given the two important things needed for a rescue dog to thrive.

Adopting from ARC

First, find the right dog by asking us for details on our available dogs, such as Harris and Spotty pictured here. Decide what you want in terms of energy level and dominance. Do you want a highly energetic dog that will want to go for long walks, or do you want a couch potato? Are

you willing to be a pack leader for a dog that wants to rule the roost? Such dogs require a lot of leadership in the form of kind yet firm structure. If you and your family are passive and non-assertive, a dominant dog will not work for you. Consider the information about the dogs carefully.

One benefit of adopting through ARC is that you do not have to take the dog home on your first day. Our dogs are with fosters who love them and want them to go to wonderful homes. So before you adopt, it is possible to visit the dog more than once and decide if it is the right dog for your family. The foster can tell you how best to approach the dog and how it reacts to people and things that happen in daily life. You can take the dog for walks and spend some time with it before you adopt. Taking the time to find the right dog is always a good idea over adopting in a hurry.

Exercise and Leadership

Returning to the two main principles of

adopting a rescue dog: the first is that dogs are energetic. Unless you adopt an older dog, your new dog may need several walks or play times per day. Staying in a crate, for example, is stressful for a dog, so keep your dog calm by only short stays in a crate, if required. Play time can be training sessions, kept at about 15-minute intervals, to engage the dog's mind, which is as important as physical exercise.

The second principle is that dogs need leadership. Beginning when you first meet your prospective new dog, be authoritative but kind. Take him for a walk, leading the dog where you want him to go, not the other way around. When you first take the dog home, keep the lead on while you show him his bed and his bowls. Pet him but remain calm and don't enter his space until he has looked around and relaxed. You set the rules, being firm yet gentle. Give the dog time to adjust and to realize you are the pack leader. Follow the principles of exercise and leadership to be rewarded with the love of a well-behaved calm dog. ■

If you would like more information on adopting an ARC dog, please get in touch with ARC by email at arcpets@gmail.com.



Proving Provenance

Protecting intellectual properties in ASEAN countries using blockchain, IoT and NFC technology

Text by **Thomas G. Giglione**

COUNTERFEIT GOODS CAN BE replicas or first copies, making it impossible for the layperson to differentiate. These counterfeit products can be as expensive as the originals.

According to a recent survey by the Vietnam Directorate of Market Surveillance, 80 percent of consumers buy counterfeit goods because of the cheap price, even if they know the product is counterfeit. Similarly, retailers know the products are fake but do not report it to the authorities over concerns of potential impact on their prestige plus coordination between anti-counterfeiting authorities in Vietnam is still not effective.

Also, in the health sector, about 1% of all drugs in circulation worldwide are fake, rising to 70% in some ASEAN member states. And of course, directly and indirectly, leading to deaths and health complications day in, day out. Goods and construction industries have also had to battle counterfeit products and materials. Local authorities are still struggling to ensure the standards

of even basic goods such as fruit and vegetables.

Every year over 140 companies in 11 ASEAN countries are reported to issue fake organic certificates. The International Control Union Certifications Organization, which operates in more than 70 countries, reported two such companies in Vietnam that issued false organic certificates. There have also been reported incidences that many coffee shops use entirely synthetic replacements.

According to a survey done by the Vietnam Standards and Consumers Association, a third of local coffee products were either of extremely low quality or even completely fake. The results of the report were announced on July 20, 2019, at a conference discussing the issue in Ho Chi Minh City.

Dinh Van Manh, from the Department of Anti-Environmental Crime Police, said the fake coffee was largely a mixture of corn, soybean and flavor powder. "The market isn't only flooded with dirty coffee that is produced

in unhygienic conditions, but also fake coffee made from different powders and sometimes chemicals," he said.

Nguyen Duy Thinh, from the Hanoi University of Science and Technology, voiced concern about the potentially carcinogenic ingredients being used in these cheap coffees. According to Thinh, coffee cheaper than VND160,000 per kilo is extraordinarily likely to be fake and could include moldy corn, soybean and cheap coffee beans that have not been stored properly. "Vietnamese people like a strong bitter taste in their black coffee so those ingredients will be over-roasted. This is carcinogenic," he said.

One of these factories, Thong Phat, had produced around 1.5 tons of fake coffee per day from soybeans, corn and a mix of partially unidentified chemicals that reporters named "life-threatening." The inspectors did not find a single coffee bean.

While one-time consumption of fake coffee should not permanently damage your health, daily intake of chemicals like industrial colorings, sodium



lauryl sulfate, carboxymethyl cellulose, chloramphenicol and sodium cyclamate can poison your liver, bone marrow and kidneys, cause cancer and even genetic defects in unborn children, such as Down's Syndrome.

"Experts said that additives used to turn soybeans into coffee-like beans, which include coffee flavorings, foam-making substance Sodium Lauryl Sulfate mainly used to make shampoo or dish-soap, industrial color powders and Carboxymethyl Cellulose (CMC), can contain impurities and heavy metals like mercury and lead, which may lead to cancer if used for a long time.

Doctor Tran Van Ky warned that the abuse of the antibiotic Chloramphenicol can poison human livers, bone marrow, and kidneys, while chemical sugar Sodium Cyclamate, which is 50 times sweeter than normal sugar, can cause cancers or Down syndrome."

What is the Source of the Problem?

Andrew Hupert, an American expert in cross-cultural studies who has written

articles and books on the subject, stated that "there are 3 generalized cultural trends that make intellectual property theft so endemic in Asia." Chipping in on the origins of counterfeit products, Andrew says, "Why take a risk and spend time and money building a better mousetrap when XYZ Inc. already sells millions of its latest model?"

Expanding on the problem of IP theft that exists in Asia, Andrew says, "Asian leaders and professionals justify IP theft as just part of the rough and tumble game of international economics."

He goes on to explain their legal system as, "Asian governments have traditionally taken a lukewarm approach to write or enforce laws punishing local factory owners for impinging on foreign patents or copyrights."

1) Respect for precedent. Confucian societies tend to put a premium on past successes. Innovation has, until recently, been seen as a lazy alternative to assiduous modeling of accepted templates. Creativity has traditionally been a last resort. Even today, Asian



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students excel at math and sciences where there is a single correct answer, while critical thinking and problem solving remain unattainable challenges. The same logic holds for consumer products. Why take a risk and spend time and money building a better mousetrap when XYZ Inc. already sells millions of its latest model?

2) IP theft plays into the common



Asian theme that the West has plundered Asian resources for hundreds of years— and nations like the US and the UK achieved their wealth stealing IP from one another. Asian leaders and professionals justify IP theft as just part of the rough and tumble game of international economics. Western complaints about IP theft are seen as yet another hypocritical attempt to constrain and contain Asia's rightful place at the global table.

3) Capitalism is a battle for the survival of the “in-group.” Chinese and Southeast Asian economies have lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty—and those gains must be defended and extended. Asian nationalism is often expressed as a struggle for survival against an aggressive, predatory Western enemy. Asian cultures are almost universally collectivist—with an in-group and an out-group. Outsiders are simply not afforded the same rights or protections as members of your own group. Courts and laws of other countries do not have any moral authority in local communities, and Asian governments have traditionally taken a lukewarm approach to write or enforce laws punishing local factory owners for impinging on foreign patents or copyrights.

China the “The Mc Donald’s of the Counterfeit World”



(Dalian is a city in Liaoning Province in China that just announced its “award-winning” city logo. The logo may have won an award however it looks suspiciously to look to be the exact same design as the Disney logo).

Southern China is the world's leading center for mass-produced works of art. One village of artists exports about five million paintings every year—most of them copies of famous masterpieces. The fastest workers can paint up to 30 paintings a day.

Wu Ruiqiu, the founder of “Shenzhen Art Lover” in Dafen, China, ships 300,000 paintings a year and is one of Dafen's model companies. The businessman is dreaming of industrial mass production, complete with assembly lines. The creation of every painting would be divided into standardized production stages. Ruiqiu

wants to “get into the business of oil paintings the way McDonald’s got into the business of fast food.”

Ronald Paredes, a Venezuelan artist living in China, gave us some interesting Western insights as to why forgery is prevalent in Chinese society.

Ronald ponders on the fact that artists are the easiest targets of forgery

because usually “we don’t have the means or the processes to protect our artwork, a signature is easy to forge the same as a certificate of authenticity.”

Forgery even has an adverse effect on consumers. He says, “As they are buying something, they think it is original and pay the premium, but end up getting a counterfeited painting.” Extending beyond counterfeiting being an ethical violation and creativity theft, Ronald explains that it can have far greater consequences. Reflecting on the impact this has had on China’s reputation, Ronald says that forgery has negatively affected “everything that bears the label of ‘Made in China’, which is automatically perceived as being of dubious origins, low quality and even perhaps life-endangering.”

Pondering on a solution to this problem, Ronald posed the idea that

Can blockchain, IoT, and NFC Technology Provide a Solution?




When Chris was posed with the question of how he started to work on Trokt Platform's state-of-the-art technology to battle the problem of counterfeit products, he reminisced on the team's journey towards defining

Then, he expands upon the legal aspect of the issue of counterfeit products by elaborating: “So we get to the courts and we got two sides that say... well, ‘I got the right information my idea was first’, and the other one says, ‘I got the right information my idea was first’. Then we go on to spend USD5,000 to

Original doesn't

Under Chris's management, the Trokt Platform found a way to tackle the

The company is introducing the GO-ID tag-based in Hanoi that can be scanned with NFC technology that is currently available on any smartphone. Basically, the GO-ID will allow consumers to verify the authenticity of any product and help them to stay away from counterfeit products.

Consumers will finally be able to buy products and interact with the seller and add positive and negative reviews with more confidence and feel safe when using them since the GO-ID tag will ensure that the product is Guaranteed Original. 





Meet Me in *The Maldives*





LUX* South Ari Atoll

Beneath the Blue

Life below and above the water in the Maldives

Images and Text by James Pham

THE ENTIRE BOAT IS TENSE, ready to spring into action. As we drive up and down the house reef, the crew scans the water for telltale white spots that mark the whale shark, the planet's largest living fish species, "We might only have one shot. Don't forget that these are wild animals," warns marine biologist Mark McMillan, using a plushie to demonstrate how the boat will try to drop us in the path of the shark. "Otherwise, if you're behind him, you'll have no chance."

All of a sudden, the boat revs its engine and makes for a point in the distance where a handful of other boats have congregated. "Go, go, go!" is the urgent call as we waddle across the deck, clumsy fins and a surge of adrenaline working at odds with each other. In the water, it's a melee of arms and legs and churning bubbles. I orient myself and look down to where the guide is frantically pointing but see only a wall of dark blue. It's crazy to think that I can't spot a 6-meter-long shark until one suddenly emerges from the depths towards the surface. We all momentarily freeze as the behemoth effortlessly swims by, mouth agape, looking colossal. Then, with a flick of its crescent tail, it's gone again.

Back on board, we're breathless and giddy, rehashing our brief but magical experience with various forms of "Did you see it?" and "Yeah, it was AWESOME!" Not everyone joins in

the celebration, though. One green-faced couple dry heave over the side of the boat, overcome by exhaustion and seasickness, while a glum gentleman sits in the corner having lost his mask in the harried dive overboard, his dream of swimming with a whale shark ending before it even began. It seems every Eden, even one as extraordinarily beautiful as the Maldives, comes with a few bitter apples.

Back at LUX* South Ari Atoll, Mark sinks his toes into the sandy floor of his office as the resort's resident marine biologist. "This area is so rich in marine life," he says, recalling a day last year where he spotted three whale sharks and eight manta rays on a single snorkeling trip. "One of the best parts of my job is being able to show guests this side of the Maldives. We do so much more than throw guests in the water to see a shark. The tours are designed to be educational, to set the example on how to interact with the wildlife for both the safety and welfare of people and animals."

While South Ari Atoll is one of the best places in the Maldives for spotting whale sharks year round, the rest of the sealed island nation is no less blessed with incredibly diverse marine life, including sharks, eels, rays, dolphins, whales, and turtles.

Comprised of nearly 1,200 coral islands spread across roughly 90,000 square kilometers, the Maldivian islands began as coral reefs which formed



around volcanic islands. Over millions of years, the volcanoes sank to the sea floor, leaving behind circular lagoons surrounded by reefs upon which waves and wind deposited sand and other materials, turning them into low-lying islands.

"Everywhere else in the world, the continental shelf is very progressive, but here in the Maldives, you get this unique combination of very deep water that suddenly becomes shallow," explains Amandine Vuylstekeat, marine biologist with Pullman Maldives Maamutaa. In addition to creating those gorgeous rings of turquoise water surrounded by deeper blue that the Maldives are known for, it also leads to a habitat where species which normally live in deeper water coexist with those in shallower water.

"It's also why sharks use the reefs as nurseries where they can feed and find protection for their young as the largest predators around," she adds, her eyes sparkling with excitement as she talks about sharks, her area of expertise. "I call them the Architects of the Sea," she continues as we snorkel around the Gaafu Alifu Atoll, home to one of the region's largest and deepest lagoons. "Not only do they eat sick and injured fish, they influence fish behavior—why they come to the reef, how long they stay."

I'm admittedly not quite as enthusiastic as she is, keeping a close eye on the many black-tip reef sharks that dart around us, their perfectly compact yet muscled bodies showing remarkable agility. I feel hopelessly clumsy, my mind wondering what else might be conveniently torpedoing out of the deep and into the shallows of the reef, where we are. However, snorkeling with a marine biologist by your side has a way of calming the nerves. So far, we've seen a sleeping leopard shark, been adopted by a school of bat fish, and observed lots of hawksbill and green turtles.

"The Great Barrier Reef is slowly diverse, but here you have such great diversity where the reef can be different from one side of the channel to the other," she says.

However, the conditions that contribute towards the Maldives' exceptional underwater life don't translate as well to land. "It's a hostile environment for plants," says Amandine as we take a nature walk back at the resort. At 18 hectares, it's one of the larger private resort islands, with surprisingly dense foliage. "The blue part of the Maldives, everyone expects. The green part, not so much. Plants here have to deal with seawater spray and growing on sand. They're hardcore," she says as little lizards scurry across the path. "When I first came here, I saw bats flying out to sea and I was like: 'Where are you going? There's nothing out there!' But it turns out, they can fly up to 60 kilometers, and they are pollinators which is important because there aren't that many insects in the middle of the ocean."



Image provided by LUX* South Ari Atoll

While the sandy islands of the Maldives support very few cultivated crops other than cucumbers and tomatoes, coconuts are abundant. "Plants here either come from the birds or the sea," explains Amandine. "Seeds come from the poo or the feathers of birds, while a coconut can survive up to six months on the sea. When it reaches the shores of a new island, it sprouts into a tree."

In addition to coconuts, the Maldives has an abundance of tuna, mostly skipjack (consumed locally) and yellowfin, the majority of which gets exported to Europe. "We eat tuna for breakfast, lunch, and dinner," laughs Kokko, a guide with Secret Paradise Tours. There's even a dish called *mas huni* which combines the Maldives' two most abundant resources, tuna and coconut, into a finely chopped spread eaten with chapati flatbread. "Yeah, our brains are mercury excess," adds fellow guide Archie as we walk through the Fish Market on Malé, the island capital, where freshly caught tuna costs less than chicken.

Other than tuna and coconuts, practically everything else has to be imported, with the nearest countries of Sri Lanka and the southern tip of India more than 1,000 kilometers away.

"If you run out of something, it's not like you can go to the market and buy some," notes Chef Philippe Wagenfuhrer,

Director of Culinary at the Pullman Maldives Maamutaa. "We have to order things 20 days ahead of time and it then takes 10 days to be delivered to Malé and another two days to get to us." However, such a sparse national pantry does have its benefits. "Because of that, it's an amazing environment where we can import everything we need – corn-fed chicken from Europe, excellent meat from Australia..."

With sustainability in mind, Chef Wagenfuhrer is experimenting with growing organic produce for Phat Chameleon, his 'vegetarian restaurant for non-vegetarians'. Over a divine smoked tofu brick with fig jam, Chef Wagenfuhrer explains the impetus behind his ambitious project. "I don't want to be one of those people who sees the world being destroyed and does nothing about it. While greens don't grow very well here," he says, pointing at the lush gardens growing on sandy soil mixed with enriched earth around the restaurant, "we do grow some amazing tomatoes and aubergine, along with butternut squash, zucchini, cucumbers, and okra."

It's representative of life in the Maldives, a fragile balancing act of transformation, development, and protection in search of the perfect idyll.

"When I first arrived in 2016, there was a strong bleaching event," recalls Mark McMillan of the year which saw worldwide coral bleaching due to high sea surface temperatures. A study undertaken at the nearby North Ari Atoll found between 60-90% of coral colonies bleached. "We've been keeping track and in the last 2.5 years, the temperatures have been relatively stable. In general, the reef is recovering. But the effects are very clear. If you see temperatures of above 30°C for more than a few days, you can see the change. It's a real worry."

One afternoon, we take the ferry from Malé to the nearby island of Villimalé, home to an organization called Save the Beach. Founded in 2007, Save the Beach started as a youth movement to clean up the island's natural beaches, a popular getaway for the nearly 150,000 people who live on Malé. "At our first clean up, we collected three tons of trash,"





Beybe of Save the Beach



remembers co-founder Hassan Ahmed, better known as Beybe. “Most of the islands don’t have very good education. As a result, the people are not very aware of the environment, even though Nature touches them every day. So people would just throw all their trash into the sea.” The problem is compounded by the 1.5 million annual visitors to the Maldives, each generating 3.5 kg of trash per day. “We also saw destruction of the beaches, vegetation, and the surrounding reef due to development – the building of the harbor and land reclamation.”

With land a scarce commodity in the Maldives, which is 99% covered by water, the government practices land reclamation, a process whereby sand is pumped from surrounding atolls and deposited onto shallow reefs. Some argue that land reclamation is needed – to shore up low-lying islands against rising sea levels, to repair coastal erosion, or to create land where none existed before as in the case of Hulhumalé. The Maldives’ best known example of land reclamation, the artificial island was created to ease the overcrowding of Malé where a third of the country’s population resides on less than 10 square kilometers, making it seven times more densely populated than Ho Chi Minh City.

However, the practice isn’t without its detractors. “When you do land reclamation and create manmade harbors, it disrupts natural cycles,” explains Beybe. “The sand cannot move around the island and erosion starts.” Another effect is that dredging stirs up the sand, blocking out the light while some sand deposited onto the reefs also finds its way onto the coral polyps which become stressed and die.

Organizations like Save the Beach are expanding their efforts to educate the people as well as keep an eye on environmental policies. “So far, we’ve stopped twelve lagoons from being reclaimed, and after this year, the government won’t lease out any more



Malé Fish Market





Pullman Maamutaa Resort

Maldives, I find myself just north of the equator on a fishing boat piloted by an affable captain named Ismail. I ask him if he'd ever heard of Moby Dick as he steers the boat towards a flock of seabirds circling over a school of little fish leaping out of the water, a sign that tuna are about. We let out our lines, but nothing's biting. Suddenly, I feel a hard tug and quickly start reeling it in.

I want to say that what I caught was this big. (You can't see me, but I'm holding my hands out as far as they can go.) In the end, it's only a baby shark, abundant in the shallow reefs. The little bugger doesn't know that sharks are protected in the Maldives and we would have had to let him go anyway. He thrashes and fights as if his life depended on it, a flash of white underbelly catching the fading light. Just then, the line snaps and he swims away. In that moment, I know how he feels because if I lived in the Maldives, I'd fight like hell to never leave as well. ■

lagoons to be reclaimed," says Beybe. As we walk the quiet, shady lanes of Villimalé lined by pretty pastel houses, Beybe points out one of the beaches where his organization has installed rubbish bins and signage. "The last time we did a clean-up, there was only 6 kgs of garbage," he says proudly.

Ever since tourism came to the Maldives in the 1970s, it's also been a balancing act to preserve the nation's strict culture where 100% of the population is Sunni Muslim and no other religions are openly practiced. "There were guest houses at one point on two islands, but they were closed because the government didn't want the integration," says Ruth Franklin of Secret Paradise Tours. "Tourists were allowed to visit during the day but not stay overnight. With a change in government came a change in the law."

Since 2008, some of the 200 or so inhabited islands of the Maldives were re-opened to local tourism, with family-run guesthouses providing an alternative to the high-end resorts occupying their own islands where rules prohibiting alcoholic beverages, pork products, and bikini bathing are relaxed.

"Local tourism is good because where properties are owned and managed by local people, the money is going to them. The revenue doesn't leave the country as with foreign-invested resorts," says Ruth, who first came to the Maldives as a scuba diver but returned to live in 2012.

"The local islands have some form of individualist identity. Particularly if someone is coming for a once in a lifetime visit, it's a shame if they never get to see the real Maldives."

"Some people think the Maldives are just expensive resorts," adds Archie, as he chews on a betel nut with a dash of cinnamon and cardamom powder. "Others think we're part of India. But we're run by our own government. We have our own culture, our own dialects. Maldivians are nice, kind people."

On one of my final evenings in the



View of Male from Villimalé

IF YOU GO...

Secret Paradise (www.secretparadise.mv) specializes in daily adventure and cultural tours from Hulhumalé and Malé, as well as multi-day local island hopping tours throughout the Maldives. Ruth and her team took excellent care of us from touchdown to takeoff, organizing a hotel in Hulhumalé so we could spend a day touring Malé as well as a second day trip to the nearby island of Gulhi for a glimpse into local life before our evening flight out. Secret Paradise employs local guides who are able to uncover the real Maldives and promotes responsible and sustainable tourism, in part by introducing guests to projects and organizations which give back, like Save the Beach.

Located in the south of the Maldives with pristine beaches and marine life, the all-inclusive Pullman Maldives Maamutaa is set amidst 18 hectares of lush tropical flora and fauna on the Gaafu Alifu Atoll. Just opened at the end of September 2019, the resort boasts 122 decadent villas, including two exclusive Aqua Villas featuring underwater bedrooms. The resort offers one of the most generous all-inclusive stays in the Maldives, complete with a variety of culinary delights available at six outlets across the island, all with a-la-carte options. For more, visit www.pullmanhotels.com

A 25-minute seaplane flight from Malé, the picture-perfect island of Dhidhoofinolhu is home to LUX* South Ari Atoll where 193 private villas dot the water's edge along 4 kilometers of powder fine beaches or perched on stilts above a crystal clear lagoon. Year-round resident whale sharks make the resort a nirvana for divers and snorkelers while on land, LUX* South Ari Atoll offers two infinity pools, floodlit tennis courts, a Technogym fitness center and the LUX* Me Spa with 11 garden and 4 over-water treatment villas to go along with eight eateries and five bars. For more, visit www.luxresorts.com.

Castaway in Paradise



Perfection at the Pullman Maldives Maamutaa Resort

Text by James Pham
Images by Pullman Maldives Maamutaa

IT'S A SURREAL FEELING TO look around and only see water in every direction. It gives a physical form to the term “far flung”, this island known as Maamutaa in the middle of the Indian Ocean, within a stone’s throw of the equator and literally 1,000 kilometers away from any substantial land mass.

So we find ourselves marooned in the best possible way at the Pullman Maldives Maamutaa Resort. Just opened at the end of September 2019, the resort sits on 18 densely vegetated hectares, a veritable continent in the sealoaked nation of the Maldives where traditionally any pile of sand with at least three coconut trees is considered an island.

Maamutaa is home to 122 gorgeous overwater and beach villas where each beach villa is cocooned by lovely greenery, adding to the feeling of seclusion and space. “As opposed to a resort island that’s artificially expanded by pumping in sand, ours is a natural island with a natural lake which is very unique for the Maldives,” says Communications Manager Selina Chin. “You could happily spend one day on the jungle side of the island and the other on the lagoon side.”

We take up Selina’s advice and do just that, wading at low tide to the island’s sand bank on the lagoon side, juvenile eagle rays zooming past us in the shallows in search of a meal. We meet up with Amandine Vuylsteke, the resort’s resident marine biologist, for a



pinch-me-I'm-dreaming morning of snorkeling. The house reef is situated in one of the largest and deepest lagoons in all the Maldives, which contributes to calm, swimming pool-like conditions on the surface and incredibly diverse marine life below. In the space of two hours, we spot black-tip reef sharks, a docile leopard shark, too many green and hawksbill turtles to count, and dozens more species of colorful reef fish. Every time we surface, Amandine shares another bit of insight.

"Moorish Idols are one of the few fish found in reefs all around the world," she says of the disk-like fish with striking bands of black, white, and yellow. "They clean turtles and rays which sometimes take off before they're done, taking the Moorish Idols with them to the next reef. Otherwise, something that colorful would never last in the open ocean."

Brilliant blue and purple parrotfish swim by, carpet bombing the waters with their sandy poop. "These fish feed off living organisms in the coral, but poop out the hard bits which becomes sand. Think of that when you're walking on the beach tonight," she adds with a smile as we bob in the warm crystalline waters.

I've been snorkeling a million times, but never with a marine biologist by my side which has enriched the experience a hundredfold.

But I come to find out that's what the Pullman Maamutaa is all about—helping guests experience things in a spectacularly new way in one of the world's most breathtaking destinations. You've likely exercised on the beach before, but probably not like in the resort's Raaveriya workout made up of stations inspired by traditional coconut climbers. You've surely enjoyed a massage, but what about one in an over-water treatment room with premium French-made Phytomer products utilizing ingredients from the sea? You've definitely eaten a vegetarian meal before, but your senses have likely never been tantalized by a terrine of confit vegetables as beautiful as a Piet Mondrian painting, accompanied by some plum chutney and chèvre goat cheese smeared on a freshly baked slice of ash bread.

"You'll never go hungry or thirsty here," says Director of Culinary Philippe Wagenfuhrer of the six outlets that combine to create the most generous all-inclusive resort in the Maldives. The restaurants here aren't just good, they're spectacular, the kind you normally save for special occasions. Except at the Pullman, every day is a special occasion.

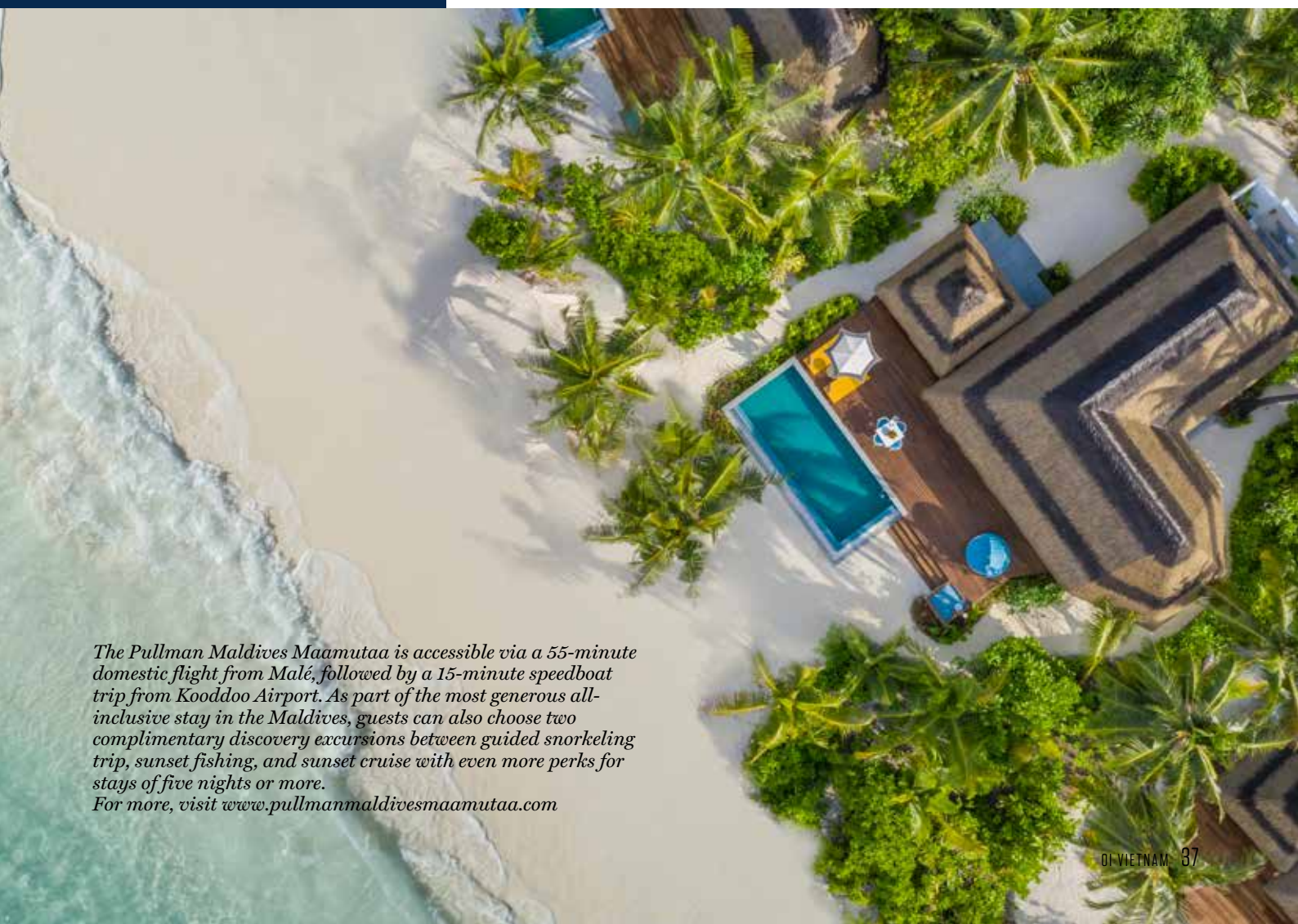
We alternate breakfasts between the sumptuous buffet at Mélange with its six live stations overlooking the palm-tree lined beach and the healthy Sol Rising with its bountiful spread of superfood and detox offerings. In the afternoons,

we make our way to Saffron Affair for our daily dose of sunset cocktails and tapas, floor-to-ceiling windows framing views made up of 50 shades of blue. We also sit down to a vegetarian meal at Phat Chameleon where Chef Wagenfuhrer applies the same French techniques to vegetables as he normally uses with meat to coax all the flavor out of them. "When the dish has everything you need in terms of excitement for your mouth—the texture, the presentation, the balance – the meat is not missed," he proclaims over a colorful dish of roasted root vegetables with onion marmalade tortellini and spicy cashews. But our favorite spot is Souq Oven, with its lighter fare of thin crust pizzas and zesty pasta for lunch, and Levantine cuisine for dinner. An especially soul-satisfying Harira lamb soup with chickpeas and green lentils is so flavorful, we unreservedly proclaim it the best soup we've ever had after just a few spoonfuls. It also helps that the all-inclusive menu includes access to a wine wall stocked with over 80 labels handpicked from across the globe, all there for the taking.

"If you give something to someone, it needs to be generous; it has to be honest. If we decide to be all-inclusive, why be stingy? Let's go all the way," says Chef Wagenfuhrer of the resort's unbelievable food and beverage offerings. "We want to pioneer a new product, not a trend, but a style of hospitality that hasn't been done 100% before." ■

The Pullman Maldives Maamutaa is accessible via a 55-minute domestic flight from Malé, followed by a 15-minute speedboat trip from Kooddoo Airport. As part of the most generous all-inclusive stay in the Maldives, guests can also choose two complimentary discovery excursions between guided snorkeling trip, sunset fishing, and sunset cruise with even more perks for stays of five nights or more.

For more, visit www.pullmanmaldivesmaamutaa.com





Fishes and Wishes

Dreams really do come true at LUX* South Ari Atoll Resort & Villas

Text by James Pham
Images provided by LUX* South Ari Atoll

“WE REALLY WANT TO SEE A whale shark,” asserts the young couple, signing up for the next day’s whale shark snorkeling excursion. “After all, that’s the main reason we chose this resort.”

Mark McMillan, resident marine biologist at LUX* South Ari Atoll, lets out a barely perceptible sigh. His job, amongst managing a coral planting project, rescuing turtles, and conducting educational programs, involves fulfilling dreams of guests who have traveled a long way to the middle of the Indian Ocean specifically to swim with a whale shark.

In fact, the whole property, all 193 private Pavilions and Villas set on

postcard-pretty Dhidhoofinolhu Island, is in the business of making wishes come true. There’s even a wishing tree where guests are literally invited to hang their hopes.

Surrounded by four kilometers of glorious beach, Dhidhoofinolhu is one of the largest resort islands in the Maldives. We spend our days walking along the powdery beach, finding hidden, ultimately Instagrammable corners throughout – overstuffed swings hanging from palm trees, hammocks suspended over the crystal blue waters, a giant Window to the World overlooking the ocean, and the list goes on.

We alternate between wanting to do

everything (the whale shark safari is a must, as the South Ari Atoll is renowned for its year-round sightings conveniently just off the resort’s own house reef) and doing nothing. Thankfully, there are a myriad of spots around the resort island where you can simply while away the hours without feeling guilty about it. One afternoon, we tear ourselves away from our ultra-cute beach villa and make for the Wanderlust Library on the far end of the island. Climbing up to the reading nook, we sink into beanbag chairs and quickly find it hard to concentrate on the pages, distracted by the stunning views of the turquoise sea perfectly framed by oversized windows. We sip



on coffee roasted on-site at Café LUX* in the breezy beach house-chic lobby. At the LUX* Me Spa, recently awarded 'Best Luxury Resort Spa' in the Indian Ocean region by the World Luxury Spa and Restaurant Awards, we settle into an over-water treatment villa for a blissful massage, lulled by the soothing white noise provided by a brief passing afternoon shower.

Mealtimes take us restaurant hopping amongst the resort's 8 restaurants and 5 bars, the most of any island resort in all of the Maldives. We start each day at East Market, home to one of the most jaw-dropping breakfast buffets we've ever seen, offering up beautifully presented "East Meets West" favorites. One dinner, we head to Umami and feast on Japanese cuisine in elegant surrounds provided by dark woods and tastefully recessed lighting. The waiter wheels over a cart which at first we mistake for sake. But no, it's actually six different soya sauces, some aged for an oaky, smoky flavor, others flavored with ponzu and mirin. Another day, we opt for a gourmet Maldivian meal at Senses on the sunset side of the island. Strongly influenced by neighboring India and Sri Lanka, Maldivian cuisine features local products like tuna, coconut, and starches, which we sample in *gulha*, a traditional dumpling utilizing all three ingredients, and the excellent Indian-inspired Mughlai lamb korma, slow-cooked to absorb the fragrant mix of

spices and then smothered in an earthy cashew nut gravy.

In the fading evening light, we spot something in the water just off the beach at Senses which turns out to be the world's largest floating solar farm. In a country with precious limited resources, sustainability is paramount, and the nearly plastic-free LUX* South Ari Atoll is leading the way with its latest project—more than 2,500 solar panels mounted on rooftops and on floating solar platforms built to withstand the harsh conditions of the waves, storms, and saltwater. Together, the harnessed solar energy is enough to power all the guest villas during peak sun hours, saving hundreds of thousands of liters of diesel per year. For its efforts in sustainability, eco-tourism, and marine conservation, LUX* South Ari Atoll was named 'Leading Eco-Friendly Resort in the Maldives' at the 2019 South Asian Travel Awards.

On our final afternoon, I re-visit the Tree of Wishes and peek at what's written in a host of different languages on some of the ribbons. Together with the mainstays of peace, happiness, and love, the wishes represent a wide range from the frivolous (the ability to breathe underwater and a Tottenham victory) to the serious (the recovery of a beloved pet Pomeranian and a

peaceful resolution of Brexit). With the number of honeymooning couples who come to LUX* South Ari Atoll, there are also lots and lots of wishes for babies in exactly nine months.

With the ocean breezes rustling through the colorful ribbons, I rack my brain for something to wish for, but I come up empty because I realize that being here, on this island, at this resort, is everything I could ever wish for. ■

Double-sharing villa for two adults on Half Board meal plan (breakfast and dinner) starts at USD 700 per night. Additional round-trip seaplane transfers will apply at USD 390 per adult. For details and special offers, visit www.luxresorts.com.



A vibrant tropical scene featuring a thatched-roof hut on a small island, surrounded by lush greenery and palm trees. The island is bordered by a low stone wall, and the turquoise water of the ocean extends to the horizon under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds.

My Maldives

From tourist to expat, what life is like for a
single British female in the Maldives

Text by **Ruth Franklin**

WHEN PEOPLE DISCOVER THAT

I live in the Maldives, they always imagine that I am living on a beautiful tropical island, resplendent with coconut palms and white sandy beaches and that life is based around relaxing with a cocktail in hand. The reality of my Maldives lifestyle, however, is quite different to their imaginings but it is still one that I am grateful and privileged to have been given the opportunity to enjoy.

I discovered the Maldives almost 20 years ago, visiting as a scuba diver in search of mantas and whale sharks. My love and appreciation of the country, its people, its culture and traditions was almost immediate and resulted in me visiting the archipelago on over 30 occasions in the years following. In 2012 through a chance meeting over coffee, the opportunity to relocate arose, so I swapped my corporate life in the UK to living and working in one of the most dreamed-about places on Earth, promoting sustainable and local tourism.

Moving to the Maldives seemed the most natural thing in the world to me. I was fortunate that I had an established circle of local friends and an insight into day-to-day life, but I can imagine for others it may be a daunting prospect fused with excitement and intrepidation.

Certainly, living here regardless if it's on a local island or in a resort, is very different to the experience of visiting as a tourist. For me, moving to the Maldives was always about experiencing the Maldives as a local, however, for those who want more, there is now a sizeable expat community living and working in the Maldives that provide a network for social events and gatherings.

As a single female in an Islamic society, many think that life must be difficult or challenging. To the contrary, with the exception of ensuring I dress modestly and respectfully, I have always felt I have lived my life as I would have done so back in the UK. I feel safe, at ease, welcomed, and respected. Living locally, you may see and hear things that you don't necessarily agree with or are not in line with your own personal values and beliefs. My belief, however, is that no country is perfect. While it is my choice to make the Maldives my home, that does not automatically give me the right to criticize or express an opinion on how others should live their lives.

Working in the Maldives has meant adapting to a slower pace of business and I have learnt to accept that responses and action may come tomorrow or maybe next week! In fact, I probably create my own pressure and stress while everyone around me appears to have no care in the world. It has meant adapting to 'on the way' meaning 'will be there within the hour',

that when it rains, everything comes to a standstill, and that locals don't understand why I am not married and have no children!

My home has always been the island of Hulhumalé. Connected to both the airport and also to Malé by the Sinimale Bridge, Hulhumalé forms part of the capital area. Whilst it does have a beautiful long beach, it is not the idyllic image of the Maldives depicted on the internet and in travel brochures. It is what you would describe as suburban and still very much a developing city. It has been an interesting journey to watch how it has grown from a small community with only a handful of cafes and local shops to a bustling neighborhood.

Hulhumalé is certainly not short of local coffee shops, barista-style cafes, and a range of restaurants including a sushi bar, steakhouse, Moroccan, Indian, and Thai. There is a one-screen cinema, a sports track, gym and fitness facilities, banks, hospitals, local shops, convenience stores, and a supermarket. My daily routine is not really dissimilar to how it would have been in the UK, albeit a beer at the pub is now a coffee on the beach and I know not to guarantee to be able to find the same products/brand in my local convenience store from one week to the next!

Like everywhere I have lived, I tend not to always do the things that are on



my doorstep. I dive much less than when I visited as a tourist but whenever I do find myself on the water, traveling by speedboat or ferry to visit and explore other islands, I do look out across the aquamarine water and reflect on how lucky I am to call this tropical paradise home. ■





The Maldivian Warrior

As told by Ali Shareef
Images by James Pham

THE NINTH CHILD IN MY FAMILY, I grew up about an hour's speedboat ride from the Pullman Maamutaa Maldives Resort where I now work. My father was a coconut climber, also known as a toddy tapper. In Dhivehi, the language of the Maldives, we call this job "raaveriya".

In the olden days, the government leased out uninhabited islands to individuals under a traditional system called *varuvaa*. My father leased three islands where he collected the sap from about 800-1,000 palm trees. He was gone for long stretches of time. Sometimes, we didn't know if he was still alive or not.

He lived in a small house made of palm leaves, and every morning, he went out with his coconut knife to tap the trees. He always tried to hire people to help him, but the work was hard and no one had the passion for it.

The rest of the family lived on the island of Thinadhoo, the capital of Gaafu Dhaalu Atoll. Before sunrise, my father would take a small *dhoni*, the traditional boat of the Maldives, and load it with supplies like sugar, rice, and tea to

supplement the fish that he caught. With no motor, it took all day to get to the island. I remember going with him sometimes. On the way, he'd teach us how to sail. On the island, there were no people, only some rabbits and jungle chickens.

It wasn't comfortable on the island. At night, I couldn't sleep because of the mosquitoes and it was very dark. We lit oil lamps and burned coconut husks against the insects. I remember watching him haul containers made of coconuts up the trees, using steps he installed every few feet up the trunk. He would check the containers 2-3 times a day, making sure they didn't overflow. He would then cook the sap down to a syrup and sell it to people in Sri Lanka or India.

Being a *raaveriya*, my father was slim but very fit. In school, I participated in sports. I was a 100-meter sprinter, I was on the national football team, I played basketball and did bodybuilding. Even so, I felt my dad was fitter than

me. I remember once trying to climb a coconut tree, but without the steps, I was exhausted after just one tree. I can't imagine how my father had the strength and stamina to climb hundreds of trees every day for 30-40 years.

He finally retired when he was 50. We had to force him; he didn't want to stop working. When we brought him home, he would still climb the coconut trees around our house.

I call my dad "the Maldivian Warrior". I wanted to find a way to keep his name, so I created the Maldivian Warrior Workout, a training circuit on the beach using all-natural objects inspired by my father. There are dumbbells made from logs, a weight pull using a cluster of young coconuts, and jerry cans filled with seawater and mounted on a yoke which you can use for squats and lunges or carry single-handed. There's also a battle rope, a flat and inclined bench, and a rope climb, combined with running and swimming on the beach. It's a complete way to exercise inspired by my father, Hassan, the ultimate Maldivian Warrior. ■

Pullman Maldives Maamutaa is all about bringing guests as close to nature and the outdoors as you can get. The resort features 26 dive sites with up to 13 species of sharks, as well as a diverse variety of reef fish, dolphins, and turtles. Fitness enthusiasts will love the resort's Fit Trail island jogging track with five fitness stations offering a variety of physical trails or level up with a complete boot-camp Raaveriya Workout experience. For complete restoration of the body, mind and soul, the resort's Spa by Phytomer offers a selection of signature facials, body treatments and massage therapies performed in eight treatment rooms perched over a shallow, white sand lagoon. For more, visit www.pullmanmaldivesmaamutaa.com



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Tet on the Rooftop

WHAT IS TET TO YOU?

It's different for every person, and for Linh -- Nôi's founder and head designer -- Tet is a sensory feast, feeding you with unique sensations only found during this time of the year. It's the rich taste of bone broth cooked by mom, the warm and calming scent of burning incense, the

vibrant yellow chrysanthemum and brilliantly red lucky envelopes, the bustling sound in the early morning market, and the gentle touch of new clothes against your skin. And Tet is even more than that: It's sitting with family, eating delicious home-cooked meals, going to the temple together, laughing, crying, being thankful and

making new memories. Tet On The Rooftop embodies the memories from the past and the simple happiness in the present. Endlessly inspired by the beauty of Tet and of the Vietnamese women, the new collection features traditional elements with a modern fit, using materials that have made Nôi's name, Vietnamese silk and brocade. ■







Designer: **Nôi Boutique**
(www.facebook.com/noiboutiquevn)
Pop-up Store: **Le Saigonais**, 77-79 Ly Tu Trong, 1st floor, D1
Photographer: **cutitsolit**
Model: **Anne Vo**
Makeup: **Nôi team**

Wine & Dine

CHICKITA RESTAURANT / IMAGE BY VY LAM







Healthy Chickens Means Happy Diners

Chickita is farm-to-table, Asian inspired, flame-grilled chicken

Text **Dana McNairn**
Images by **Vy Lam**

RISE IN INCOMES AND SAVVY, educated consumers have helped revolutionize the food industry around the world and Vietnam is a good case in point. Fast food, sugary and processed snacks are fun and yes, fast, but cultural awareness of nutrition is on the rise. Healthy eating trends are seeing consumers demand chemical-free or all natural food, and to make lifestyle choices around how they define their health.

Chickita understands these preferences well. Created and founded by Asif Mehrudeen, Chickita's story is this commitment to health and wellbeing, and not just to diners, but to the chickens themselves. Using the Benja technique (pioneered in Thailand) the chickens are raised on brown rice, purified water, with room to roam around on a purpose-built farm in Binh Phuoc for Chickita—and Chickita only—chickens.

The Michelin Guide notes that the use of chemicals and genetically modified crops in agriculture has become commonplace: cheap, convenient and requires minimal attention. It contrasts Benja-raised chickens as requiring greater care and attention in order to be considered 100% natural, but the end result says Michelin is better tasting, healthier meat.

With a second location in District 1

just opened and sitting down to lunch with Jake Thai, head of marketing for AHM Lifestyles (the creative team behind Chickita and helmed by Asif) to celebrate the Ho Tung Mau location opening, Jake further explains the story behind Chickita and the Benja process.

"Chickita is the first to take Asian standards to develop food," Jake says. He paraphrases Asif's vision: a successful concept is the one that carries the heart, passion and soul in all its food and services. To that end Asif has spent the last 15 years in Southeast Asia and says he's so passionate about this food he knew he'd create his own "flame grilled chicken story." He was determined to create a lifestyle destination true to keeping food simple, fresh and healthy. Corn-fed chicken typically becomes mushy and dry when cooked. Rice-fed chicken holds its form and stays juicier. Ultimately the birds are GMO-free, cage-free, antibiotic-free, raised with zero chemicals and hormones. Chickita says this makes for happier chickens in a happier environment.

Which is why it's important to get this backstory on how these chickens are raised in order to understand the Chickita story and its pursuit of Asian standards and flavors. Jake says the flame grilling gives a natural smoky flavor to the chicken and it's Chickita's

unique strength. And digging in to our plate of chicken, he's right: the chicken is moist, tasty and well, almost succulent. The skin is gloriously smoky and seared perfectly. Jake grins at me, as mouth full, I happily nod my head.

The meat is delicious on its own or paired with one of Chickita's eight signature sauces. The Original Sauces use Asian ingredients like black pepper, garlic, lemongrass and, of course, chilli. Diners can sample Original (mild), Sexy (medium), Flaming (hot) and Dynamite (extremely hot). The Funky lineup has Old Saigon (black pepper garlic), Green Dragon (green chilli), Red Dragon (hot chilli), Sweet Baby (sweet chilli ginger) and Tropical (mango citrus). The chilli is sourced directly from farms in An Giang and Tien Giang. The sauces were carefully developed and crafted by Asif to complement flame grilled chicken. As the sauces are handmade, Chickita can also control the entire process of cooking and bottling. Jake and I agree our favorite sauce is Old Saigon.

Our lunch also includes the fish cake salad, hot crab dip and crispy wontons. Our chicken was the whole chicken combo, but the menu also has quarter and half chickens, as well as single portions. Our sides include kernel corn, coleslaw, special Chickita rice and sweet potato fries. Diners can also choose from



chicken wraps and chicken burgers. Asian influences abound in the chicken wonton soup and curried tofu tacos. Dessert continues the commitment to sourcing the best local ingredients with Mekong fresh fruit, found in the restaurant's play on ice cream sticks featuring mango dipped in chocolate and banana rolled in Ben Tre coconuts.

While we continue to munch, Jake says Europe has Nando's (Portuguese-style peri-peri chicken via South Africa) and we're all familiar with the American fast food chicken joints like KFC or Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen. "But we're not shiny, not Western," Jake says. "We just do flame grilled chicken inspired by Asian flavors." The chicken is never frozen and delivered daily from their farm.

"We're family-focused. Eating here is about family gathering together or being with friends and colleagues sharing a meal together," he says. Grateful parents



will note there is a kids' room to occupy the younger guests. Plans are underway for 3 more locations in 2020 starting with the third Chickita Vincom Center Dong Khoi in January.

To bring this concept to the public meant the product development was meticulous, as Asif (himself a former Executive Chef at the Park Hyatt Saigon and 6 years ago created new concept restaurants such as Sorae, San Fu Lou and Di Mai) experimented with temperature, ingredients and pairings to get the perfect balance of cooked juiciness, matched with the sauces. "It was so fun," Jake laughs. "We ate chicken for weeks. It was fantastic!" ■

Chickita Locations

Chickita Ben Nghe (92 Ho Tung Mau, D1)

Chickita Thao Dien (230 Nguyen Van Huong, D2)

chickita.asia



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.caferunam.com

La Rotonde Saigon

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

77B Ham Nghi, 1st Floor, D1

Chat

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

85 Nguyen Truong To, D4

The Workshop

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

27 Ngo Duc Ke, D1

FRENCH

Le Jardin

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

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

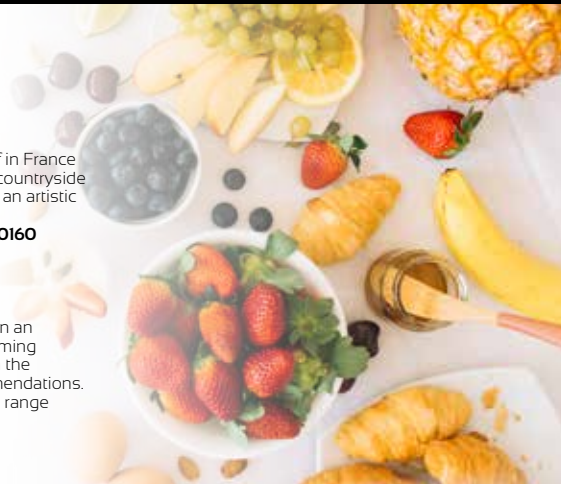
Chef Thierry Drapeau a 2 star Michelin chef in France takes his inspiration from the surrounding countryside and its top-quality ingredients, then adding an artistic flourish to his fine regional cuisine.

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

178/4 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

L'Adresse Bistro, a multi themed bistro, a place where traditions & culture meet, is announcing most unique live entertainment for unforgettable interactive experience as we bring you fresh musical arrangements from Live band, to DJ, to Sax and Dance. Join us on Tuesday for our happy hour and Wednesday where ladies get their first (selected) drink free.
+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/tomatitosaiagon
+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 "Bee" 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

twenty1one

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.

32 Tran Ngoc 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
commnieusaigon27@yahoo.com
commnieusaigon.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
028 3848 0144

Five Oysters

Five Oysters serves authentic and excellent Seafood & Vietnamese food with SG Green beer at VND12,000 as well as a promo of VND10,000 per fresh oyster daily.

There's also a rooftop, a great place to start or end the night! Recipient of Certificate of Excellence 2014-16 from TripAdvisor and Top Choice 2015 by Lianorg.com. Recommended by VNexpress.net, Lonely Planet, Utopia and Saigoneers.
234 Bui Vien, D1

Hum

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

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

May

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

19-21 Dong Khoi, D1
028 3910 1277

Mountain Retreat

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

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

Nha Hang Ngon

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

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

Red Door

Red Door offers traditional Vietnamese food with a contemporary twist. The restaurant is also a platform for art talk, science talk, and social talk; where ideas and passions are shared.

400/8 Le Van Sy, D3
012 0880 5905
Facebook: Reddoorrestaurant

Temple Club

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

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

The Hue House

Located on the 10th floor roof of the Master Building, The Hue House opens up to a breezy space with views over the city. The décor is simple yet elegant – bird cages repurposed into lamps, bonsai 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 port, assorted platter of rice cakes meant to be shared, the sate-marinated ribs come with a plate of crunchy greens and mixed rice, originally grown by minority groups in the Central Highlands, and many more.

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

Also Try...

3T Quan Nuong

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

Top Floor, 29 Ton That Hiep, D1
028 3821 1631
Banh Xeo 46A

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

46A Dinh Cong Trang, D1



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.

Discover Portugal

Get ready to explore the fascinating world of Portuguese wine

ALTHOUGH PORTUGAL HAS BEEN producing wine for some thousands of years, it seems that not many people are familiar with its wines. In fact, Portugal produces wine in all its territory, even on the islands.

Portugal's winemakers have been conservative in one respect—keeping faith with their grapes—and no wonder! Portugal's varieties are unique, with thrillingly different flavors. Yet quality-wise there has been no resting on traditional laurels. A quarter century of investment, education, open-mindedness and flair has brought explosive change to wine making in Portugal.

Choice has multiplied, too. Alongside co-ops and large companies, lots of small wineries now make their own distinctive wines.

Terroir is so diverse: From north to south, from east to west, from mountain

to maritime vineyards, hot and dry or cool and green. In every style, from fizz to dessert, from crisp dry whites to elegant reds, in so many diverse ways, Portuguese wines are unique.

Perhaps the best-known Portugal wine is Port, the fortified wine that Brits used to kill for and that sadly has been losing popularity worldwide. In the same area you can find another iconic wine region, Douro. The name comes from the Douro River that you may have heard as Duero in Spain; and like the amazing wines from Ribera del Duero, you can find real jewels in the Douro region.

Vinho Verde is the biggest DOC of Portugal, up in the cool, rainy, northwest of the country. The vines grow in fertile, granite soils along rivers that flow from the mountains of the east to burst out into the ocean between golden surfing beaches.

Vinho Verde is still distinguished by its high acidity white wines. Flavor depends on the grape varieties used: floral Loureiro, steely Trajadura, mineral Arinto, creamy and mineral Avesso, and the fine, mineral, subtly fragrant Alvarinho.

In the opposite end of the country you have the Algarve. The 'border' with the Alentejo region to the north is a mere 20 or 30 miles from the Algarve coast, yet the Algarve suffers none of the Alentejo's extremes of temperature.

The main white grapes are Arinto, Malvasia Fina, Manteúdo and Síría, and for the reds Castelão and Negra Mole. However, the new wineries are making wine from national and international grapes: Touriga Nacional and Syrah, Aragonez and Cabernet Sauvignon, Trincadeira, Alvarinho, Chardonnay.

And there is much more Portugal to discover. ■

>> The List Business

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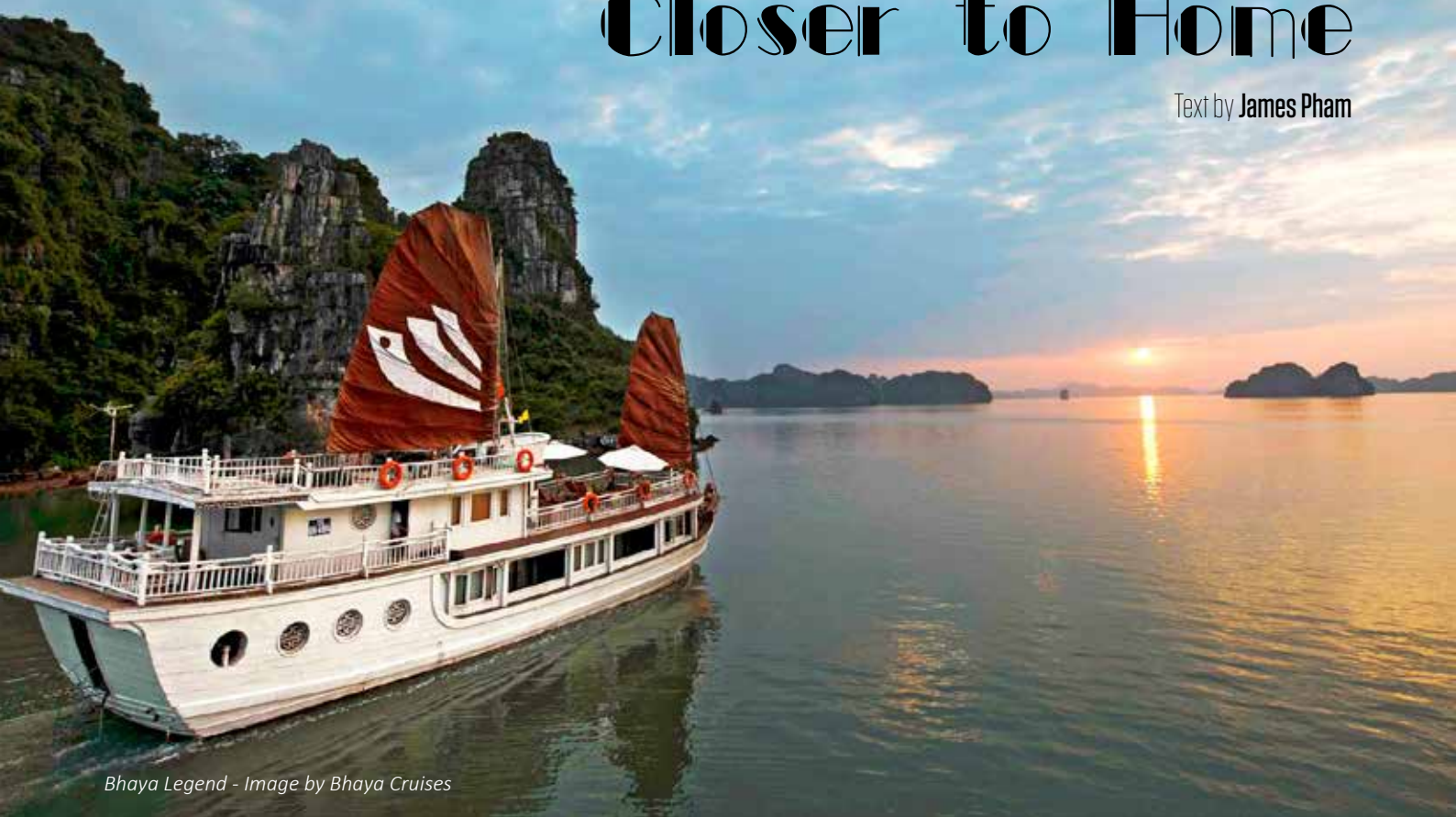
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Ideas for Tet Travel Closer to Home

Text by James Pham



Bhaya Legend - Image by Bhaya Cruises

TET IS A BLURSED TIME TO travel. While it's a great time for a quiet staycation, hanging out with friends and enjoying the blissfully empty streets, staying home feels like a bit of a waste of precious time off. Unfortunately, the alternative is dealing with crowds and jacked up prices if traveling anywhere in Vietnam, or shelling out extra to go to somewhere that doesn't observe Lunar New Year.

However, here are some recommendations for traveling within Vietnam while still avoiding the crowds.

Halong Bay Your Way. Yes, Halong Bay is Vietnam's busiest tourist destination after Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City and it's often packed even during non-holiday periods. But one way to get away from the Tet crowds in Halong is to cruise a different itinerary from the norm. The very pretty Au Co (www.aucocruises.com) has two identical steel-hulled ships that sail true 3-day / 2-night itineraries. The best part is that because Au Co's parent company has several charitable projects on Cat Ba Island, it's currently the only ship permitted to sail from Halong Bay's Tuan Chau Marina through Halong Bay and on to the less-developed yet equally stunning Lan Ha Bay to the south. Sailing farther means it's off the normal "cookie cutter" route which most other overnight boats take, hitting up less-touristy caves

and beaches, and with more time for kayaking and swimming. On a recent cruise, there were several spots where we were the only ship in sight. It's also a true two-night itinerary, meaning no off-loading to a small day boat.

Bhaya Cruises (www.bhayacruises.com) is also worth looking into for its reasonable charter options. With 19 day and overnight boats, it has the largest fleet in Halong, including Bhaya Legend with 1-3 cabin ships available for charter. Grab some friends and book out an entire boat to yourself. Guests are invited to work with the captain to come up

with a completely personalized itinerary, taking in lesser-visited spots timed when no one is around. The next best option is Bhaya Premium, available on a charter or join-in basis. The ships are smaller (3-7 cabins) and feel more intimate. Bhaya also exclusively manages an island with a hidden beach, accessible only by walking through a cave. Few other companies go to this spot which means you very well might have the whole beach to yourself.

Take to the Skies. Another way of enjoying quieter travel moments is by seeing familiar destinations in a new way. Hai Au Aviation (www.seaplanes).



Lan Rung Resort Phuoc Hai - Image by Lan Rung



Danang - Image by Hai Au Aviation

vn) operates 12-seater Cessnas on scenic and scheduled flights all around Vietnam. They're best known for their sightseeing flights over Halong where from 300 meters up, the islands look completely different, almost as if they connect to form the undulating body of a dragon. The water take-offs and landings are pretty cool, too. Hai Au has recently expanded to Hue and Danang with a few more destinations in the works. Sightseeing flights are surprisingly reasonable, coming in at around USD100 for a bucket list-worthy experience. Best of all, you'll only be sharing your bird's eye views with fewer than a dozen other passengers.

Castaway in Vung Tau. Going to the beach is always a popular choice for a Tet holiday. However, instead of busy Vung Tau or glitzy Ho Tram, consider the lesser-known stretch of Phuoc Hai, located right in the middle of the two. A relatively new property here is Lan Rung Phuoc Hai (www.phuochai.lanrung.com.vn/en). Designed by the same architect as Vung Tau's Imperial Hotel, Lan Rung has that same quirky feel to it—a European palace by the sea. While there isn't much else to do right in the walkable vicinity, the gorgeous seaside swimming pool and wide stretch of beach are a true tonic. The property has its own well-stocked minimart (think: cheap snacks) and the wonderfully kitschy Elvis Café connected by a passenger bridge pays homage to both the King and his Vietnamese counterpart, Elvis Phuong. There's a stage for karaoke and Elvis himself (the Vietnamese one) is known to pop in from time to time for nostalgic performances. Toan Thang (www.toanthangcar.com) offers transportation between District 1 right to the resort in just two hours for VND160,000 per person in a 9-seat limousine van.

River Cruising through the Mekong Delta. While there are around two dozen ships sailing across the Mekong Delta, the Victoria Mekong (www.victoriamekong.com) is the only one

that leaves out of Can Tho (rather than the closer My Tho). While it's a bit further to get to (passengers can either meet the boat in Can Tho or pay a bit extra for a transfer from Saigon), the

newly launched 35-cabin ship sails the Hau River (rather than the Tien River), opening up whole new shore excursion possibilities. I was on the inaugural sailing in mid-December, and waking up right in the middle of the Long Xuyen Floating Market was a real treat.

The four-deck ship is one of the most spacious river cruisers I've ever seen, complete with a small pool, putting green, and even a movie theater (with real theater-style bucket seats). The leisurely four-night cruise ends in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. While the ethnic Chinese Khmers take off for Lunar New Year, it's not an official holiday (Cambodian New Year is in April, the same as Thailand's), meaning most shops and tourist attractions remain open. So feel free to stay a couple extra days after the cruise and when you're ready, the return bus trip to Ho Chi Minh City will only set you back around USD12. ■



Trinh Nu Cave - Image by Bhaya Cruises



Victoria Mekong Cruise - Image by Victoria Mekong Cruise

>>The List Travel



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

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www.pullman-danang.com

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Kids & Education



Under the rain by @adeelchishti (Pakistan)



Education Matters

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children who have been to school, sometimes for several years, but who still cannot read.

Attending school helps us learn who we are, what we believe in and what role we play in the world. This sense of self is essential for personal growth. Furthermore, going to school not only has an impact on the future of children but on the future of their families, friends and communities. As more children are educated, the world becomes a brighter place.

These photos, among 50, from all different corners of the world, have been voted among more than 19,513 submissions in the #Education2019 Photo Contest by Agora, a free-to-use photography app that has been rewarding the world's biggest prizes in global photo contests since 2017. ■



Harp learning by @gaukhar_yerk (Kazakhstan)



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My grandmother taught me to study at night
by @nguyenvuphuoc (Vietnam)



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ABCDE

Find out why these five letters are important when dealing with a serious accident

RECENT STATISTICS FROM

Vietnam's National Traffic Safety Committee show that road crashes kill almost one person every hour in this country. More than 9000 traffic accidents occurred in the first half of 2019 alone, killing nearly 4100 people and injuring more than 7000. Foreigners in Vietnam are involved in 500 accidents every year. Most of these crashes involve motorbikes.

With so many bike accidents in Saigon, trauma management is an extremely important part of emergency ambulance response. First responders generally follow two key strategies: "Stay and Play" and "Scoop and Run". What happens at the scene of an incident always depends on the situation and

condition of the victims.

The standard of care for ambulance medicine internationally is to bring patients to the hospital setting in the best possible condition. When the situation allows, ambulance teams will do the most they can to relieve emergency departments, ranging from preliminary diagnostic measures to determine a provisional diagnosis to stabilizing and initiating treatment to prevent the patient from deteriorating. This requires proper medical equipment on board, as well as a certain know-how on the part of the ambulance team. That all falls under the "Stay and Play" category.

"Scoop and Run" is where the situation requires the ambulance to pick up the casualty and then take them to

a medical facility as quickly and safely as possible, where a more complete diagnostic can proceed. In that case, we don't want to have the emergency medical team remain on site for too long. In Vietnam, "Scoop and Run" is the normal ambulance response strategy, partly because the role of paramedics is not recognised in local law.

This means that for ambulance teams, a fast and efficient rescue protocol plays a very important role. In trauma management, the algorithm we use is called ABCDE. It stands for Airway (check the patient's airway for patency), Breathing (check if the patient is breathing sufficiently), Circulation (check that the patient's blood pressure and heart rate are maintained), Disability (check if the patient has sustained any immobilizing injuries) and Exposure (thorough physical examination of the patient to detect less obvious injuries).

This systematic approach is used everywhere in the world. It's a symptom-based method ensuring that whatever might kill a patient first is treated first. For example, a casualty doesn't have much time to live if their airway is obstructed, impairing breathing, so that problem must be treated before anything else—and if the patient is bleeding

from a major artery and the bleeding isn't stopped by putting pressure on the wound, the patient will very likely die.

After completing ABCDE and achieving a stable condition of the patient, the next priority is pain management for patient comfort. Broken bones should be splinted and immobilized to prevent further damage, and open wounds dressed to prevent further infection.

An important and relatively recent change to the ABCDE protocol is that C-spine (neck) trauma has been prioritized further, so a trauma team will check the C-spine simultaneous to looking at breathing, circulation, and so on. The reason is that if an accident is serious, head trauma is usually involved—and this is especially dangerous in Vietnam, where few people wear proper helmets. Bystanders at an accident are usually unaware how serious damage to the C-spine can be, and it is often overlooked by improperly trained medical personnel. People who see a victim lying unconscious on the ground who has just been in a motorbike accident tend to drag them to the side of the road. That isn't necessarily life-threatening if the victim has a broken leg, but if someone has a broken C-spine and is dragged, it can be fatal. Whenever our ambulance team suspects a C-spine injury, they will manually immobilize or apply a stiff-neck collar around the patient's neck immediately to protect it.

In cases of severe and major trauma, every minute counts. It's critical for all members of an emergency medical operation to be trained in the ABCDE method to ensure that to ensure that everyone follows the same protocol—therefore aligning their priorities in the management of trauma victims. This is true of our medical operation in Saigon, where everyone is trained in this method—from the doctors and nurses to the emergency responders in the ambulances.

We also have fantastic resources both on board the vehicles and in our medical centers. I can say with confidence that our ambulances are the best in the country, fully equipped with mobile Intensive Care Unit technology. At our clinic, we have a state-of-the-art CT scanner for precise imaging; an on-site laboratory to perform blood and other specimen testing with the fastest possible turnaround; and in case referral to another hospital is required, the ambulance is right there to transport them immediately.

I've heard about a lot of trauma cases here where people are brought to a local hospital and had to wait to even be seen, despite the fact that time is crucial in trauma emergencies. It's not that they're not a priority, but that these facilities are overcrowded—there can be as many as three patients to a bed, and naturally staff can be overwhelmed by the volume of patients.

When trauma patients come to our medical center, I have seen first hand that they receive priority treatment. All of our emergency doctors are trained in the ABCDE protocol to assess the urgency and risk to the patient. By following the protocols and with the resources we have at hand, we can complete diagnostics and initiate definitive medical treatment time efficiently.

If someone gets into a motor vehicle accident and a bystander calls *9999, the ambulance can be dispatched within minutes—depending on the severity of the emergency, and guided by the same global-standard ProQA protocols that are used by 911 in the US. Our ambulance team—consisting of an ambulance driver, at least one nurse and one doctor—will perform an initial assessment on site (a quick ABCDE) and transport the patient quickly and safely



A dedicated doctor with broad clinical expertise, **Dr. Linh Ngo** is both a German board-certified general surgeon with a colorectal specialty and an emergency medicine physician. He has taken postings in Ethiopia, Sierra Leone and Bangladesh, and plans to engage in volunteer work in remote areas of Vietnam.

to the nearest appropriate hospital, if needed—and is capable of providing lifesaving emergency treatment en route. When the patient is handed over to our emergency doctor at FMP, their condition will be re-assessed following ABCDE (in case it has changed)—followed by a full diagnostic workup (for example, laboratory testing, ultrasound, X-rays or CT scan to objectify the severity of injuries).

Once all the tests and checks are complete, a doctor will have a full appraisal of the situation and will know if a particular treatment or surgery is necessary, if the patient should be kept under observation for several hours or can be sent home. Until that moment, trauma management is all about assessment and treatment of the most urgent symptoms in order of greatest risk to the life of the patient. ■

>>The List Education

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS



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Aurora International Preschool Of The Arts

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11 - 13 Tran Ngoc Dien, Thao Dien Ward, District 2, HCMC, Vietnam

028 3744 2991 | 0982 012 860

info@aurorareggio.com | www.aurorareggio.com

www.facebook.com/aurorareggiokindergarten

British International School (BIS)

Inspected and approved by the British Government, BIS provides a British style curriculum for an international student body from pre-school to Year 13. The school is staffed by British qualified and trained teachers with recent UK experience. Fully accredited by the Council of International Schools and a member of FOBISIA, BIS is the largest international school in Vietnam.

www.bisvietnam.com

Also Try...

EtonHouse International Pre-School

At EtonHouse International Pre-School Franchise - An Phu, children aged 18 months to 6 years experience a Reggio Emilia style, play-based early childhood education. The progressive Singapore-based EtonHouse **Inquire - Think - Learn** curriculum, delivered by dedicated international teachers, enables pre-schoolers to enjoy fun and hands-on learning in Somerset Vista, An Phu.

Level 2, Somerset Vista, 628C Hanoi Highway, D.2, HCMC

028 6287 0804 / 093 868 4676

info@etonhouse.vn

www.facebook.com/Etonhouse.AnPhu

www.etonhouseanphu.com

International School

Saigon Pearl (ISSP)

Vietnam's only international school offering a U.S. curriculum for children 18 months to 11 years old within a 100% English language environment. With a library containing over 13,500 English books and more than 60% of students achieving above grade level English, ISSP graduates are well prepared for secondary school at ISHCMC or ISHCMC - American Academy.

92 Nguyen Huu Canh, Binh Thanh

+84 (28) 2222 7788/99

admissions@issp.edu.vn

www.issp.edu.vn

Kids Club Saigon

Kids Club Saigon is an early childhood center with three campuses in District 7 offering high-quality early learning programs for children ages 1.5 to 6. In partnership with our families, we strive to create joyful childhoods and to celebrate the unique strengths that every child brings into this world.

www.kidsclubsaigon.com

(028) 5412-5232, kidsclubsaigon@gmail.com.

The International School

Ho Chi Minh City - American Academy

ISHCMC - American Academy is a U.S. curriculum secondary school, preparing students aged 11 to 18 years old for success at universities worldwide. Early university credits, through SUPA and AP courses, a 1:1 University Counseling Program, and an extensive EAL program sets our graduates on the road to success with 100% acceptance rate and U.S. \$1 million scholarship fund to overseas universities.

16 Vo Trung Toan, D2

+84 (28) 3898 9100

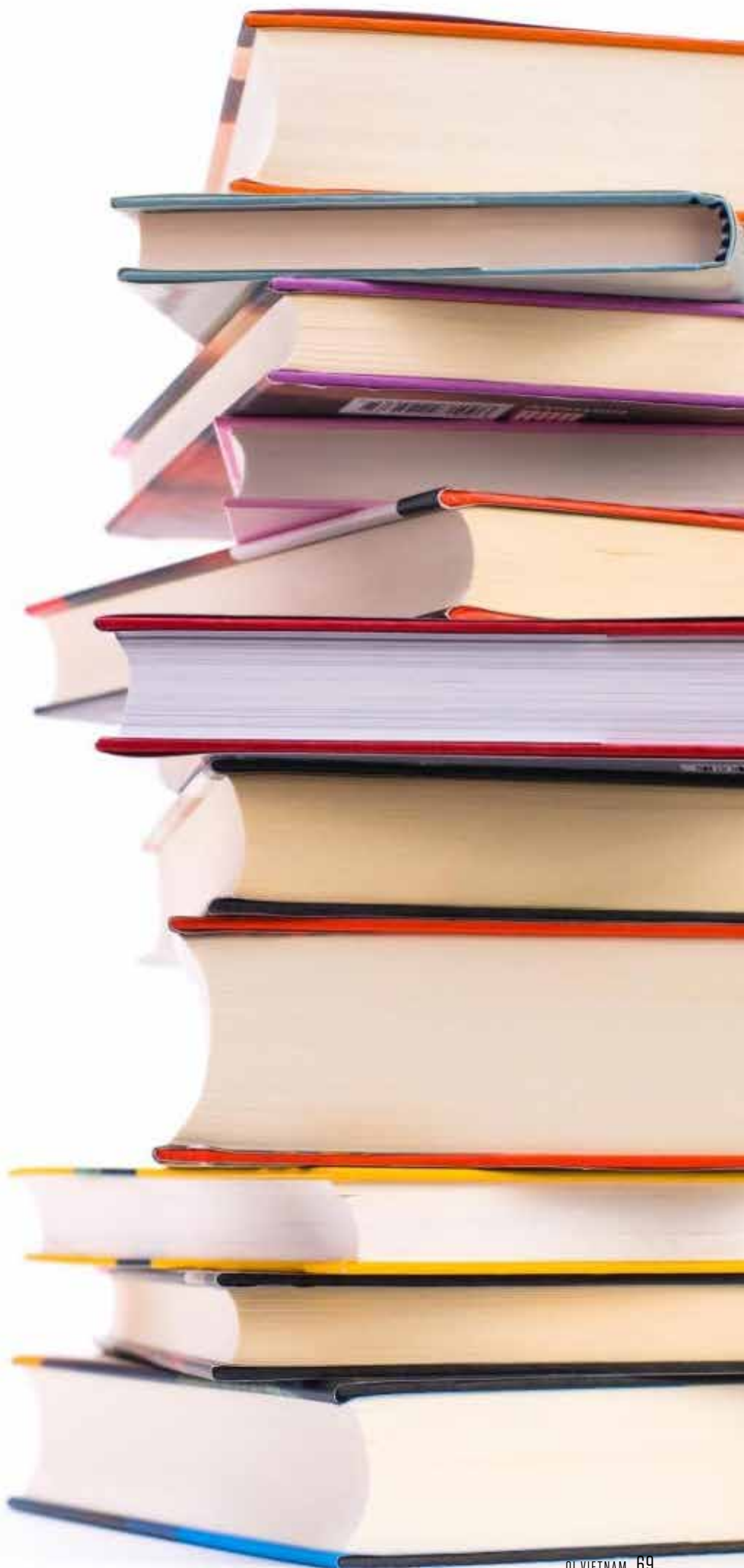
admissions@aavn.edu.vn

www.aavn.edu.vn

Renaissance International School Saigon

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

www.renaissance.edu.vn





THE LONG CAFE

The first coffee shop in Vietnam serving coffee that is roasted no longer than 10 days.

The Long Caffe truly wants its customers to enjoy the best coffee with the richest aroma. Beans are carefully chosen from the best Arabica plantations in Vietnam. With an aim to provide customers the most relaxing moments, the cafe has an open-space design that uses natural materials, such as wood and marble, to separate inner and outer spaces in a harmonious way. Such design gives customers a comfortable and warm feeling right when entering.

THE LONG CAFE

03 Pho Quang, Ward 2, Tan Binh District, HCMC, Vietnam

Website: thelongcaffe.com

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📍 14B15 Thao Dien, Thao Dien Ward, District 2, HCMC.

☎ 028-3636-4635

🌐 kazamatokyo.com

📱 [KazamaRestaurant](#)



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